Managing Anxiety

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the United States, affecting around 40 million adults, or about 20% of adults. Globally, the World Health Organization (WHO), reports that almost 300 million people have an anxiety disorder.

It is understandable and normal to experience anxiety in certain situations. Anxiety becomes a problem when it extends beyond logical worry in an unreasonable, uncontrolled or unwarranted way. For example, situations that should not provoke negative emotions suddenly seem life crushing and embarrassing. There are different types of anxiety as well as many different treatment options for anxiety. If your anxiety is affecting your daily life you may want to consider reaching out for help from a professional such as your medical doctor or a counselor. In the meantime, here are some tips to help:

How to help your child if they are anxious:

**The goal isn’t to eliminate the anxiety, but help them manage it.** We don’t want to see our kids unhappy, but the best way to help them overcome their anxiety isn’t to try to remove stressors that trigger it. It’s to help them learn to tolerate their anxiety the best they can, even when they are anxious.

**Don’t avoid things just because they make your child anxious.** Avoiding things may make them feel better in the short term, but it reinforces anxiety over the long run.

**Encourage the child to tolerate their anxiety**. Let your child know that you appreciate the work it takes to tolerate anxiety in order to do what they want or need to do.

**Think things through with them**. Depending on the fear, sometimes it helps to talk through their fears and what would happen if they came true. How would they handle it? For some kids it may also be helpful to have a plan. This can help reduce uncertainty in a healthy, effective way.

**Try to model healthy ways of dealing with anxiety**. There are multiple ways you can help kids handle anxiety by letting them see how you cope with anxiety yourself. Kids are perceptive and they will notice if you talk about not being able to handle stress and anxiety. Instead, try to let kids see you handle it calmly, tolerating it, and feeling good about getting through it.

If you are struggling with anxiety:

**Get out of your head**. Spending too much time in your

head can be exhausting! Try exercising! Exercising

releases all sorts of happy neuro-chemicals that really

lift the mood. Go for a walk, run, hike, or even start

a new exercise routine!

**Be careful what you put into your head**. Be cautious

about what you watch, read and see. Your brain has an

entrance, but no exit, so it is wise to put a filter on what

you allow in there. A lot of our anxiety can be triggered

by things we see on TV, hear on the radio, or see on

social media. Consciously chose to invest your time

in positive uplifting media. Do not give any time or

space to negative, scary or disturbing media.

**Focus on the positive in a tangible way**. Redirect your

focus to the things that you love and are thankful

for in a way that is more concrete. Write a list of things

and people you are grateful for or draw a picture of

them.

**Don’t give your thoughts and fears too much credit**.

Just because you think it, doesn’t mean it will be so.

When thoughts that worry you come your way,

acknowledge them, but then try to let them float on

by, as if they are branches passing by on the river.

you’re on the shore. You don’t need to wade in there

and gather up every passing stick and strap it to your

back. Your thoughts and feelings are just that:

thoughts and feelings. They do not dictate

reality, and they do not dictate who you are.

You are not your worried thoughts.

<https://childmind.org/article/what-to-do-and-not-do-when-children-are-anxious/>

<https://www.huffpost.com/entry/got-anxiety-heres-what-i-know-about-you_b_57349633e4b06dede18b727a>

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/322877#What-is-anxiety?>

Brought to you by: Kristi VanDeRostyne- Prevention Counselor

