

# Three Areas That Can Produce Anxiety In Your Child

The world can be a stressful place for all of us. This includes your children. They must get up and go to school five days a week and they must perform, yes, I did say perform for their teachers and interact with other students and adults. They have different teachers with different personalities and expectations and they must work to get grades that are acceptable to their parents and teachers. If they fail, they might need to repeat an assignment, test, class or even a grade. In most schools there are standardized tests that are required for promotion at certain grade levels. This causes anxiety and stress for many children as well as educators and parents. Not all children are going to be A students. Make sure you don't pressure your child to achieve something they aren't capable of accomplishing. There are age and stages of development at each age level. (contact CARES for more information). Maybe your child needs testing to check their developmental level.

They also have responsibilities in their home. They have homework and chores to complete. If they have siblings, they must interact with them in productive ways or chaos occurs. What about the child that has a single parent who is often stretched and stressed? The child must be aware of the mood of their parent. If they miss their other parent, then they must manage how to show or not show their feelings to the parent they reside with. What about parent visitations. If there is no routine or if the parents argue often then the child may develop anxiety about this as well. Side Note: Your stress level will affect your children. Some will try to solve your problem and it is not their responsibility.

Extracurricular activities also can contribute to the stress level of a child. They might enjoy a sport, art, musical instrument, club or other activity but they do have to perform in any activity they are involved in. What happens when they fall short, or let their team or group down? How do they feel when they don't prepare or choose to not do their best, for whatever reason? This causes anxiety. Imagine the anxiety a child feels when they make a mistake and their teammates jeer or make fun of them. The next time they are on the field, does the child feel pressure to not repeat the mistake? Of course, they do. If they forget their line in a play or freeze on stage does this produce anxiety?

We are in a world of expectations and pressure daily. Our fast-paced society requires us to often multitask as adults and this has filtered down to our children. Technology has helped in some aspects but it has also created its own set of issues. Children need limits and boundaries, but they also need encouragement, praise and reinforcement. As parents we need to be aware of the issues that contribute to anxious feelings in our children.

## Here are some tools to assist parent with anxious children.

### 1. Consistency.

Whenever possible be consistent. Let your Yes be Yes, and your No be No. Don't fluctuate. This causes inconsistency and confusion. Apply the same respect you want to your children. Don't make promises you can't keep.

## 2. Know your child.

I call this a check in. Parents ask yourself how often you talk to your child about their goals and desires? Do you fuss, nag, correct and criticize and punish your children and don't praise, encourage, or tell your children you love and are proud of them. Do you know how their social skills are? Often kids have disagreements with their peers and it will affect their mood. I do suggest making a list of personal and family goals and putting it in a visible place for your children to see and check on. The kitchen is usual a good place. Post it notes work great and so do pictures.

## 3. Share your own fears or anxieties with your children.

Being vulnerable teaches children that they can be free to be make mistakes and learn from them. Of course, don't overwhelm them with issues a child shouldn't have to deal with. Don't say if your parent really cared about you, they would ....

Do share how you have overcome some challenges in your life and help them problem solve. This is the goal to help them remain calm and learn how to deal with real issues life gives them. Make sure they have a sense of security and contentment.

Ask a trusted adult for support. This could be a parent, teacher staff, family member, social contact, religious support, coach or even a professional counselor, psychologist, or doctor. Make sure you get support, so you don't feel overwhelmed. Check the nutrition and the basic needs of your child. Many children I see in counseling have allergies, food or other, sensory issues or peer concerns and pressures that lead to anxiety.

Last, there is a genetic component to anxiety. If you as a parent deal with anxiety, then there is a higher probability that your child will have some anxiety. Make sure you are taking care of yourself as a parent then you can do a better job with raising a happy, healthy child.