



Anxiety in Children

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What is Anxiety?

- Intrusive thoughts; feeling nervous, restless or tense; sense of impending danger, panic or doom; increased heart rate, breathing rapidly (hyperventilation); sweating; trembling, feeling weak or tired; trouble concentrating or thinking about anything other than the present worry.
- Anxiety is a normal emotion and response to stress that can encourage preparation and appropriate caution required for daily activities.
- Severe anxiety can be debilitating and reduce quality of life
- Mind busy with “what if” and “if then” scenario
- Lack of “internal earth”

Internal Earth

- **Psychologically:** Safe, secure, protected, supported, good boundaries
- **Functionally:** adequate minerals, healthy organ function, metabolically strong, proper breathing
- **Structurally:** proper “posture” and “alignment”



Causes

Lack of Earth

- Nutrition
- Posture
- Breathing
- Lack of / too much sleep
- Activity level
- Time outside
- Type of education
- Environment
- Electronic devices
- Media
- Family dynamics



Symptoms

Symptoms in Children

- Restlessness
- Poor concentration / focus
- Behavioural symptoms
- Breathing problems
- Gastrointestinal symptoms
- Sleep disturbances
- Poor eating habits
- Increase in physical symptoms (headaches, muscle pain)
- Fewer friends / lower self esteem



Solutions

Address the Cause!

- Proper nutrition
- Adequate water
- Proper breathing
- Proper sleep
- Stay active
- Spend time outside
- Learn to think versus memorize
- Avoid environmental toxins
- Minimize screen time / negative media
- Address family dynamics

Nutrition and Anxiety

Causes of Anxiety

- Sugar and caffeine
- Excessive fruit and junk food
- Dehydration (lack of water & good fats)
- Lack of vegetables, especially root vegetables
- Unhealthy snacks
- Imbalances in diet
- Food intolerances / food allergies
- Poor dietary habits / picky eaters
- Food additives and fillers

Solutions for Anxiety

- Healthy nutrition – 3 meals, 2 snacks (children): ½ vegetables, ¼ protein, ¼ starch, 2 fruit a day
- Breakfast high in protein/fat; no sugar
- Snacks – avoid simple carbohydrates (white & processed)
- Ensure adequate fat and water in the diet
- No caffeine or sugary drinks for children
- Avoid food intolerances
- Regular eating habits with the focus on eating
- Avoid food intolerances and fillers / choose whole foods
- Limit junk food and pop, especially later in the day
- Decrease cold food, especially in a cold season

Posture and Anxiety

Causes of Anxiety

- Poor posture
- Rounded shoulders
- Tight diaphragm
- Heels not on the ground
- Too much time sitting / especially if not proper posture when sitting or standing

Solutions for Anxiety

- Pay attention to posture when on a computer / game-boy / iPhone / iPad
- Practise proper standing, walking, sitting
- Stay active, preferably outside
- Children need to engage in activities like crawling, active “play”

Breathing and Anxiety

Causes of Anxiety

- Chest breathing
- Shallow and rapid breathing
- Lack of physical activity limits breathing capacity

Solutions for Anxiety

- Learn to breathe from the abdomen
- Breathing can be the best exercise to quell acute anxiety
- Learn different types of breathing – cleansing breath, alternate nostril breathing

Sleep and Anxiety

Causes of Anxiety

- Too much or too little sleep
- Going to bed too late
- Sleeping too late in the day
- Sleeping with electronic devices in the room
- Poor sleep hygiene

Solutions for Anxiety

- Between 8 and 10 hours of sleep (up to 15 yrs)
- No electronic devices in the bedroom
- Sleep in the dark with minimal sound / practise proper sleep hygiene.

Activity Level and Anxiety

Causes of Anxiety

- Lack of activity / movement
- Too much activity / movement especially if late at night
- Passive “play” increases anxiety
- Lack of varied activities / movement
- Too much sitting

Solutions for Anxiety

- Stay active, preferably outside.
- Active “play” allows children to distinguish between reality and fantasy.
- Engage in all types of movement. Movement should complement life, not mirror it.
- Relaxation time is important (not associated with TV or computer time)
- Don’t over schedule children

Time Outside and Anxiety

Causes of Anxiety

- Not enough time in nature surrounded by trees, plants and/or water

Solutions for Anxiety

- Spending time in nature is one of the best treatments for anxiety
- When in nature, disconnect from the internet / phone
- Spend time gardening, playing in “the dirt”

Developmental Milestone and Anxiety

Causes of Anxiety

- Children aren't able to self-soothe
- Lack of social skills / ability to play and communicate with others.
- Overly protected by parents or lack of attention from parents.
- Lack of parental authority (children run the parents).

Solutions for Anxiety

- Understand the milestones of development and target parenting accordingly.
- Focus on children's ability to self-soothe and to communicate with a range of people of various ages with confidence.
- Recognize the link between activities and development.

Education and Anxiety

Causes of Anxiety

- Children are learning to memorize versus to think and problem solve.
- “Unsafe” school environment – harsh teaching style, excessive demands, lack of / or too much structure, etc.
- School environment too different from upbringing
- Too much information too fast: computerized learning

Solutions for Anxiety

- Engage in activities that teach you how to think and problem solve.
- Practise how to calm the mind / mindfulness
- Spend time in creative activities – art therapy, sculpturing, “active play”
- Young children need to use their imagination and day-dream
- Need time to reflect and absorb information
- Learning / homework should be structured and include “active play”

Environmental Toxins and Anxiety

Causes of Anxiety

- Environmental toxins are associated with anxiety – especially food additives.
- EMF and wireless networks increase the risk of anxiety

Solutions for Anxiety

- Limit the exposure that children have to environmental toxins, food additives and fillers, mold, heavy metals and chemicals.
- Limit the time that children spend “connected” and in wireless networked areas – especially when sleeping.

Electronic Devices and Anxiety

Causes of Anxiety

- Too much time on electronic devices
- Addiction-like behaviour
- Too much on game boy and other gaming programs
- Text messaging vs face-to-face conversations
- Lack of down-time for the senses

Solutions for Anxiety

- Limit the time that children spend on electronic devices
- Control the games, activities that children engage in while on electronic devices
- Encourage / demand “unconnected” time
- NEVER sleep with electronic devices

Media and Anxiety

Causes of Anxiety

- Violent shows / games
- Excessive focus on the problems in the world
- Children too exposed to external issues that they can't process
- Too much information that can't be assimilated / processed
- Increase in TV watching associated with decrease in self-worth
- TV = lack of context, "snippets of life" vs "life"
- Chaotic "music" / "sound"

Solutions for Anxiety

- Control what children (or yourself) are exposed to on television, media, video games, etc.
- Recognize that calmness and groundedness is based on feeling safe, secure, protected, supported, strong boundaries, etc.
- "Doing" is better than "watching" – need feedback and interaction to dispel anxiety.
- Slow, methodical rhythms decrease anxiety.

Social Dynamics and Anxiety

Causes of Anxiety

- Unsettled family or school dynamics
- Lack of / or poor communication at home
- Lack of quality one-on-one social time
- Family stressors – divorce, financial, illness, death, etc – especially if not handled well
- Encouragement of “fears” – too much “don’t . . .”, “be careful of . . .”, etc.
- “mirroring” of parent(s) – learned more than genetic

Solutions for Anxiety

- Be aware of the family dynamics.
- Ensure that there is quality and relaxed communication time at home.
- Encourage social interactions early in life – range of environments.
- Teach / allow children to safely voice concerns.
- Structure a child’s day – eat and sleep regular times, allow for structured “active” play.



Associated Conditions

- High blood sugar
- Digestive disturbances / dietary imbalances
- Depression
- Sleep disturbances
- Allergies / Asthma
- Hormone imbalances



Additional Naturopathic Support

on the advice of a naturopath

- Fish oil (one of the best anxiolytics)
- Passionflower (calms the mind)
- GABA (calms the nervous system)
- Lavender (relaxing, helps with sleep, mild anxiety)
- Magnesium glycinate (relaxes the body)
- Probiotic (especially if associated with digestive problems)
- Homeopathic remedies
- Flower essences



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