



## What is anxiety?

**Fear, worry and anxiety are natural feelings that everyone has from time to time and can be appropriate reactions to certain situations.**

In fact, those feelings can be normal responses to a variety of circumstances or stressful situations. Fear is most easily identified as a response to something specific that is perceived as a clear and imminent threat. When there is something to fear, a person may experience increased heart rate, shortness of breath, muscle tension, and sweating.

Fear can start the fight, flight, or freeze response in a child and can cause them to act out, become extremely agitated, distracted, or withdrawn. At the same time, fear is generally temporary and the reaction calms down when the threat is no longer present.

Worry is closely related to fear. You may have a child who asks lots of questions, like "What if lightning hits the house during a storm?" or "What if I break my leg during football training?" While

sometimes hard to differentiate, worry is the anticipation of something bad, the train of thought before the potentially fearful event. Anxiety is also anticipatory in nature and focused on a possible danger, but it is much more intense than worry.

Anxiety is an overwhelming sense of unpleasantness, discomfort or apprehension which can sometimes be related to a specific thought or feeling but often is unexplainable. As a result of an overactive fight, flight, or freeze response

**We're here. Isle Listen.**



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to anxiety, a young person may feel very uneasy, complain of headaches or a sore stomach, and perceive a threat which may or may not exist.

Generally, worries and fears that cause significant distress and have an impact on normal daily life may be an indication that

your child is experiencing anxiety. Anxiety is a common problem affecting children and young people both at home and in school, causing significant problems personally, socially, and academically yet is highly treatable.

### TIPS FOR PARENTS - of children over 11:

- Be consistent in how you handle problems and discipline.
- Be patient and be prepared to listen.
- Maintain realistic, attainable goals and expectations for your child.
- Do not communicate that perfection is expected.
- Maintain consistent but flexible routines for homework, chores, activities, etc.
- Accept that mistakes are a normal part of growing up.
- Praise and reinforce effort, even if success is less than expected.
- Teach organisation.
- Do not minimise feelings.
- Do not criticise your child for not being able to respond to rational approaches. Rationalisation may not always work.
- If the problem persists and continues to interfere with daily activities, seek help.

