INTERVENTIONS FOR THE ANXIOUS CHILD

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My name is Bethany Wallace and I am a licensed therapist at an outpatient psychiatric hospital. I currently work at Innovations NW, which is a Partial Hospitalization Program owned by Mesa Springs Hospital. My patients come during the day for 4 hours of group therapy and medication management each day with a school component added during the school year. I have been working with Mesa Springs for over a year but have experience working in the behavioral health field with children for over 2 years.
MANIFESTATIONS OF ANXIETY

Physical Symptoms
- Stomach Ache
- Headaches
- Throwing Up
- Tired
- Fidgety/Restless
- Low Energy
- Chest pain
- Complaints of feeling sick
- Difficulty Sleeping

Behavioral Symptoms
- Crying/Screaming
- Refusing to Attend School
- Hurting Self or Others
- Extremely Talkative
- Struggling to Focus
- Running from adults/people
- “Moping” or socially/physically withdrawn
- Repeat “compulsive” behaviors to rid self of anxiety (i.e. Pulling hair, twirling hair, etc.)
- Tics: Such as tapping finger tips together, nail biting, or bouncing leg
COMMUNICATION TIPS!

- Give permission to talk about worries/anxiety
- Increase awareness of how anxiety shows in your child
- Acknowledge and Encourage
- Build Knowledge
- Model coping skills
- Give Options and Choices
- Questioning
- Art – drawing out feelings!

How does your child express his/her emotions? Use this as a tool to communicate better!
PARENTING SKILLS FOR ANXIETY

- Try not to pass your fears on to your child
- Model what you want to see!
- Control your own emotions
- Hold the same expectations for all your children
- Relaxing Environment: avoid confining to small spaces, reduce noise/external stimuli

- **Distractions**: Use surroundings/setting to distract the brain! For example, letting him/her go outside without a jacket for a few minutes to disrupt train of thought, eating ice, change view of surroundings, avoiding power struggle by suggesting alternative activities versus saying “No”
HOW TO INTERVENE?

When Worries Arise

- T-shirt activity to improve communication of worries/fears
- Set up a “Worry Time” to talk about anxieties and avoid talking about anxieties in other parts of the day
- Have your child draw a “Worry Box” to imagine locking worries up until “Worry Time”
- Game Night at home! Avoid talking about behaviors/difficulties and just have fun 😊

Small ways to improve your day

- Have your kiddo listen to relaxation music at home and color/draw mandalas
- Imagining a safe place can help in stressful situations
- Anxiety surrounding sound: noise canceling head phones for extremely loud circumstances
- Of course, stress balls, bubbles, and sensory timers are helpful with some children.
- Positive self-talk! Start each day with a positive statement you can say with your kiddo.
- Relaxing bath times eases tensions if your child has had a rough day: fill the bath with bubbles and let your child enjoy!
Many children spend time on electronics as a past-time reward at home. Use this as a positive coping skill and learning tool for your child!
OTHER RESOURCES

**Websites:**
- AnxietyBC.com
- WorryWiseKids.org
- CalmClinic.com

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**Books:**

- **For Kids!**
  - “What to Do When You Worry Too Much: A Kid’s Guide to Overcoming Anxiety,” Author Dawn Huebner

- **For Parents!**
  - “Freeing your Child from Anxiety: Powerful, Practical Solutions to Overcome your Child’s Fears, Worries, and Phobias,” Author Tamar E. Chansky Ph.D.
CITATIONS

• www.anxietybc.com, 2007
THANK YOU!

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