

No Need To Worry About Your Child's Worry

Whitney Preece, LPC - www.whitneypreece.com

1) VALIDATE!!!

Always start by acknowledging your child's feelings, even if they seem "irrational." Offer a hug.

Share that worry/anxiety is a normal part of life, even you have it sometimes. Family history??

2) ADD PERSPECTIVE

Be truthful- We can't offer 100% protection, but we can/will be along side him or her.

Reality test - use facts if your child is logic based, or your own anecdotal experience. Don't over inform.

3) ASK "IS IT IN YOUR CONTROL?"

If yes, brainstorm action items for options of things that are in your control. Let them take the lead.

If they learn they're capable of solving problems and tolerating powerlessness, anxiety will decrease.

4) PREPARE FOR WHAT'S OUT OF THEIR CONTROL

Preparation doesn't keep the event from happening, but decreases anxiety about such events.

Provide age appropriate info for your child of existing plans, and involve him/her in creating additional plans.

5) TEACH COPING SKILLS, aka "WORRY BREAKS"

Anxiety feeds on itself. Once we start worrying, the brain continues until exhausted or interrupted.

Feelings are not something to get rid of, but something to go through. The POWER is in learning you can cope.

If it doesn't improve with time/skills, seek professional help.

SHARE YOUR SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: do you pray, meditate, live in the moment?

DISTRACTION TECHNIQUES: ways to interrupt anxiety, sometimes many strategies required.

"WISE MIND ACCEPTS" (DBT strategy borrowed from Marsha Linehan, The Linehan Institute)

A - Activities: Do something active - exercise, play/listen to music, hobby, chores.

C - Comparisons: Think about those with less, remind ourselves things could be worse.

C - Contribution: Get out of yourself - volunteer work, spend time listening to a friend.

E - (Opposite) Emotions: Watch a funny/sad/scary movie, to trick brain into releasing worry.

P - Pushing Away: Permission to put it on the back burner for 5 mins, an hour, a day, a wk.

T - Thoughts: Occupy the brain with thinking - Sudoku, crossword, book, homework.

S - Sensations: Distract the brain with a feeling - hot shower/ice, favorite tea, lavender oil.

