

# Anxiety 101: Helping Your Child Successfully Recognize & Manage Symptoms of Anxiety

## COPING STRATEGIES

- Deep breathing/belly breathing
  - Place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly
  - Inhale deeply through your nose for a count of four, making sure your belly is expanding and not your chest. Exhale through your mouth for a count of four.
  - Continue this breathing cycle for a few minutes. Feel the stress leave your body while your mind becomes calm.
- Grounding Exercises
  - 5 – Look for 5 things they can see
  - 4 – Feel 4 things on their body (I.e. socks on their feet, hair on their back)
  - 3 – Listen for 3 sounds
  - 2 – Smell 2 things (or favorite 2 smells)
  - 1 – Taste in their mouth or favorite taste
- Positive Self Talk
  - Positive self-talk is an inner monologue that makes you feel good about yourself and everything going on in your life. It's an optimistic voice in your head that encourages you to look at the bright side, pick yourself up when you fall and recognize when you fail.
- Guided Imagery
  - Imagine you are on the beach (or wherever your happy place is). Try to include all of the five senses!
- Worry Journal / Box
  - Worry journal: Have the child write the worries of the day followed by one positive thought. This helps break the cycle of negative thinking and contributes to breaking the cycle.
  - Worry box: Have your child decorate a box and help them write and place their worries in the box after they share it with you. You can offer to hold the box with you overnight.
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
  - While inhaling, contract one muscle group 5-10 seconds, then exhale and suddenly release the tension in that muscle group.
  - Give yourself 10 - 20 seconds to relax, and then move on to the next muscle group.
  - Helpful for children who have difficulty sleeping as well
- Thought Stopping / Talking to it
  - Thought stopping: Thoughts often spiral and snowball into larger anxieties if the child is entertaining the thoughts. Have them say "No! This isn't true!" In response to their anxious thoughts. This is to help in interrupting the anxious thought cycle.
  - Have your child understand that anxious thoughts make them feel powerless but giving them the ability to talk back to them gives them a sense of control over it.