

Parenting Highly Anxious Children

An adjunctive guide for your child's treatment with me

- Matter of fact parenting. An anxious child benefits from resonating off of your calm
- Remember avoidance feeds anxiety.
- Responding to a child's continued reassurance-seeking worsens their anxiety. Turn the 'what if....?' Questions back to them. Then help the child to keep this in perspective in terms of what might actually realistically happen.
- Your child's anxiety resides in them so that they need to develop internal sense of control. Unfortunately, a parent cannot control their child's anxiety.
- Ask yourself "am I being overly protective?" If so, let's talk about this.
- Help your child acknowledge and 'own' fears otherwise your child will not invest in getting better and their anxiety will flourish.
- Keep focus on anything other than your child's fearful behaviors and acting out fearfully and pay careful attention when your child acts bravely. 'process praise', or describe to them what you observed in their moments of bravery works very well.
- Keep family routines; do not organize family activity around their fears.
- Have the child do for themselves what they can in terms of their age. For example, helping with chores – and frame this as a positive: "you are really growing up! You are now able to do _____!"
- Show confidence that the child can face their fears and have a positive outcome.
- If your child is a pre-teen or teen, remember that although defiant behavior is quite annoying it comes with adolescence and your teen may be using anxiety unconsciously to defy you. Excessive anxiety is not a healthy behavior during this developmental stage. I will be helping your child learn assertiveness skills to appropriately express their emotions.
- Distraction is a better choice of parenting for a school age child.
- Unify your parenting approach regarding anxiety as much as possible.
- Have the other parent take on more of what the 'attached parent' has been doing. In other words, keep a distance from mom *usually mom, not always) increasing time so that the child will become more accustomed to being without that parent.