



ABC's of Identifying and Reducing Anxiety in Children
By Dr. Kristen Wynns, Wynns Family Psychology

A. Analyze: Is it Anxiety?

Difficulty controlling excessive worry that is associated with 3+ symptoms, with some symptoms being present more days than not

1. Restlessness or feeling keyed up or on edge
2. Being easily fatigued
3. Difficulty concentrating or mind going blank
4. Irritability
5. Muscle tension
6. Sleep disturbance (difficulty falling or staying asleep, unsatisfying sleep)

**Note: Only one item is required for diagnosis in children*

How can you tell if it's "clinical" anxiety versus "normal" childhood fears and worries?

B. Breathe (and other handy tools)

Mindfulness: A mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moments, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations

- Using calming smells and sounds
- Heart beat exercise
- Feather blowing
- Coloring
- Yoga

Relaxation: Utilizing relaxation techniques can slow your heart rate, lower your blood pressure, reduce the activity of stress hormones, increase blood flow to major muscles and brain, reduce muscle tension, improve concentration and mood, and lower fatigue

- Visual Imagery
- Deep breathing
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Meditation

C. Consistency

Suggested strategies for your home:

- Keep a consistent and structured routine.
- Keep sleep hygiene a priority



- Model Positive Self-Talk! Children absorb more through observational learning.
- DO NOT let your child avoid anxiety or stressful situations
- Practice, Practice, Practice.

Resources

- ❖ www.anxietybc.com/parenting: tips and tools for parents of anxiety
- ❖ *Freeing Your Child From Anxiety: Practical Strategies to Overcome Fears, Worries, and Phobias and Be Prepared for Life—from Toddlers to Teens*: Tamar E. Chansky, Ph.D.
- ❖ *What to Do When Your Worry Too Much: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Anxiety (What to Do Guides for Kids)*: Dawn Huebner
- ❖ www.innerhealthstudio.com: visual imagery, relaxation, and progressive muscle relaxation scripts

Dr. Wynns is frequently sought out as local expert on child psychology and parenting issues for radio shows, t.v. news, magazines like Carolina Parent, and t.v. shows like My Carolina Today and Daytime. She has been the relationship columnist for a national magazine, All You. Dr. Wynns is the founder of a parenting website called NoWimpyParenting.com.™ “No Wimpy Parenting” services are available to help parents struggling with behavior or discipline problems at home. Dr. Wynns likes to say she is “doubly qualified” to give parenting advice because she is not only a child psychologist, but has two young children of her own (ages 13 and 10).

Dr. Wynns is a child and adolescent psychologist who owns a child/adolescent specialty private practice in Cary, NC called Wynns Family Psychology. She has a Ph.D. and Master's in Clinical Psychology (from UNC-Greensboro). At Wynns Family Psychology, Dr. Wynns provides therapy for kids ages 3 and up, parent therapy, and social skills groups and camps. She also provides psychological and psychoeducational evaluations for ADHD, Autism, Learning Disabilities, and Gifted. Dr. Wynns specializes in high conflict divorce cases by offering co-parenting therapy, reunification therapy, therapy for children of divorce, and a full menu of custody evaluations.



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