



Spotting Anxiety In Your Child

SIGNS, COPING TOOLS, AND WHAT TO DO NEXT

LET'S FIGURE THIS OUT TOGETHER



Anxiety doesn't always look the way we expect. Some kids become extra clingy, while others push people away. Some have tummy aches that never seem to go away, while others struggle with outbursts, restlessness, or trouble focusing. No two children experience anxiety the same way, and as a parent, it can feel overwhelming trying to understand what's going on.

If you're feeling worried, frustrated, or even a little lost—you're not alone. Anxiety is something many kids face, and it can show up in surprising ways. The hardest part? Finding clear, helpful resources can be tough. It's easy to feel like support is scattered or like you have to piece everything together on your own.

Let this guide be **a grounding place** for you. A tool to help you make sense of what you're seeing in your child. A starting point as you take your **next steps**—toward understanding, toward action, and most importantly, toward hope.

Disclaimer

This guide is designed to help you check in with your child and better understand potential signs of anxiety. This is not a substitute for medical advice, nor is it a diagnostic tool. For a true evaluation and a deeper understanding of your child's needs, please seek the guidance of a trained mental health professional or your child's pediatrician.

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1 ANGER OR SUDDEN, INTENSE EMOTIONAL REACTIONS

Instead of expressing worry, anxious kids may explode with anger or frustration, especially in response to small stressors. This is because anxiety activates their fight-or-flight response.



2 TROUBLE SLEEPING

Anxiety can make it hard for kids to fall asleep, stay asleep, or feel rested. They may complain about nightmares, waking up too early, or feeling too worried to relax at bedtime.



3 AVOIDANCE

A child who feels anxious may try to avoid certain places, activities, or conversations that make them uncomfortable. This could look like refusing to go to school, skipping social events, or avoiding tasks that feel overwhelming.



4 OVERPLANNING

Kids with anxiety may try to control every detail of a situation to feel safe. They might make excessive lists, ask repeated questions, or get upset when things don't go exactly as expected.



5 LACK OF FOCUS

Anxious thoughts can make it difficult for kids to concentrate on schoolwork or activities. This is sometimes mistaken for ADHD, but the root cause is their brain being stuck in worry mode.



6 DEFINACE

Anxiety can sometimes look like misbehavior. A child might refuse to do something, argue, or act out—not because they're being difficult, but because they feel overwhelmed and don't know how to express it.



WHAT'S HAPPENING IN YOUR CHILD'S BRAIN?

When kids feel anxious, their brain and body are doing exactly what they're designed to do—**keeping them safe**. The brain has a built-in alarm system called the fight-flight-freeze response, which helps us react to danger.

- ✓ **Fight** – Getting angry, yelling, or pushing away.
- ✓ **Flight** – Running away, avoiding, or shutting down.
- ✓ **Freeze** – Feeling stuck, unable to move or respond.

This response is not always bad—it's what keeps us from touching a hot stove or running into traffic. The problem is when the brain **sounds the alarm too often**, even when there's no *real* danger—like speaking in class or trying something new. It only becomes a concern when it starts to interfere with the things your child wants or needs to do, **like making friends, participating in activities, or feeling comfortable at school**.

In the early stages of learning to manage anxiety, kids aren't always able to access the part of the brain that helps them think logically and use coping skills. When they're overwhelmed, their brain is in “alarm mode,” making it hard to problem-solve or calm down on their own.

That's where your **patience and modeling** come in. By staying calm, offering support, and practicing coping skills during non-stressful moments, you're helping your child's brain learn how to handle these big feelings over time.



WHAT'S NORMAL AND WHEN TO BE CONCERNED

It's natural for kids to feel nervous before big events, shy in new situations, or upset when things don't go as planned. Occasional worries are a normal part of growing up, and many children go through phases of fear or hesitation.

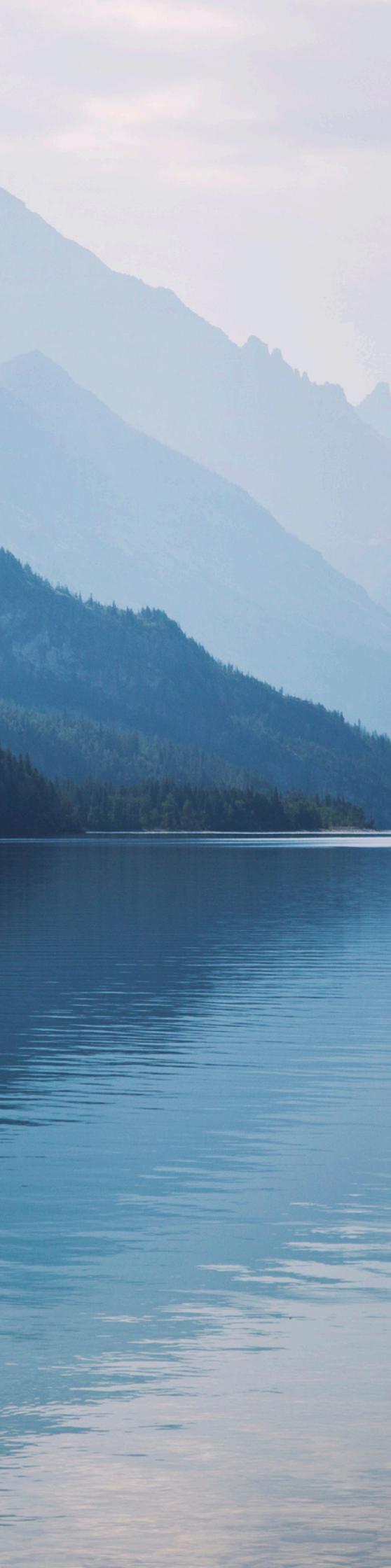
When should you take a closer look? If anxiety is showing up frequently, lasting for weeks or months, or making daily life harder—like avoiding school, struggling with friendships, or having meltdowns over small challenges—it may be time to take action. The earlier you recognize anxiety, the sooner you can help your child develop the tools to manage it.

Consider Asking For Help

If your child's anxiety is interfering with their daily life, consider **consulting a doctor or pediatrician**. They can help rule out medical concerns, offer guidance, and recommend next steps for support.

Bravery isn't about never feeling afraid—it's about feeling the fear and moving forward anyway. With the right tools and support, your child can learn to face their worries with confidence.





WHAT TO DO NEXT: FIRST STEPS TO HELP YOUR CHILD

1 Look for Support and Resources

You don't have to figure this out alone. Start by:

- ✓ Talking to your child's school counselor for guidance.
- ✓ Speaking with your pediatrician to rule out any medical concerns.
- ✓ Checking out our list of recommended books on our website for additional tools.

2 Take a Deep Breath - Anxiety is Treatable

It's completely normal to feel overwhelmed. But here's the good news: anxiety is highly treatable. With the right tools and support, many kids learn to manage their anxious feelings and build confidence. You're not alone in this, and neither is your child.

3 Start Helping Your Child Identify Their Feelings

Before kids can manage anxiety, they need to recognize what it feels like. Try:

- ✓ Gently naming feelings—"It looks like you're feeling nervous about school tomorrow. Want to talk about it?"
- ✓ Modeling awareness—"I notice my heart is beating fast because I'm feeling a little anxious about my work deadline. I'll take some deep breaths to help."
- ✓ Using tools like our free Worry Detector (included in Bravery Boxes! and available as a free printable on our website) to help kids track their emotions and recognize patterns over time.

4 Teach Simple Coping Strategies—When the Time is Right

Coping skills work best when kids are calm and regulated—not in the middle of an anxious moment. Think of it like learning how to swim: you wouldn't teach a child new strokes while they're struggling to stay afloat.

Some kids may need time and support before they can fully access these tools. If your child isn't ready to use them in the moment, that's okay. Keep practicing during calm times so they can build confidence and eventually use these skills when they need them most.

Here are a few simple, kid-friendly strategies to introduce:

- ✓ 333 Method - Name 3 things you see, 3 things you hear, and move 3 parts of your body to bring focus back to the present.
- ✓ Box Breathing - Breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, breathe out for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds.
- ✓ Tracing Fingers - Have your child trace the outline of their hand while breathing in as they go up a finger and breathing out as they go down.

💡 Tip: Make practice fun! Try these techniques when your child is calm—during bedtime, playtime, or even while driving in the car.

5 When They're Too Upset to Use Coping Skills—Try Co-Regulation First

If your child is overwhelmed or melting down, they may not be able to use coping skills yet. Instead of trying to talk them through it, focus on co-regulation—helping them calm down by staying calm yourself.

- ✓ Breathe with them - Take slow, deep breaths and invite them to follow your lead. Even if they don't, your calm energy helps.
- ✓ Offer physical comfort - A hug, holding their hand, or sitting close can provide reassurance.
- ✓ Use a calm, steady voice - Say simple things like "I'm here. You're safe. We'll get through this together."
- ✓ Reduce stimulation - If possible, move to a quieter space, dim the lights, or offer a comfort object.

💡 Remember: You are their anchor. If you stay calm, it helps their nervous system settle, too.

WHAT APPROACHES CAN HELP?

Now that we understand what's happening in the brain, how do we help kids work through these false alarms instead of feeling stuck in them?

The good news is that research has shown **kids can learn to manage anxiety** with the right tools. Two of the most effective, science-backed approaches are:

✓ **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)** – Teaches kids to notice and change unhelpful thoughts, like turning ‘I can’t do this’ into ‘I’ll try my best.’”

✓ **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)** – Teaches kids how to accept anxious feelings without letting them take control.

Even when self-directed by parents, these approaches have been shown to help kids **build confidence, develop emotional resilience, and reduce anxiety** over time.

That’s exactly why we created Bravery Boxes—to take these proven strategies and turn them into a fun, **interactive learning journey** that families can do together.

In every box, your family will get **hands-on activities**, detective-style challenges, and step-by-step tools that help both you and your child understand and work through anxious feelings—all while feeling like play.

Because when kids feel **engaged, empowered, and supported**, they’re much more likely to build the confidence they need to face challenges head-on.



BRAVERY BOXES & OUR UPCOMING PARENT-CHILD LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Helping your child with anxiety can feel overwhelming—but you don't have to do it alone. Bravery Boxes provide a **guided, play-based approach** to help families learn and practice these tools together.

- ✓ Hands-on activities and games that make learning feel like play.
- ✓ Step-by-step, goal oriented guidance so parents feel confident supporting their child.
- ✓ Detective-style challenges that turn managing anxiety into a fun family mission.

 **Launching Soon!** Our Parent & Child Learning Experience—a hands-on program with engaging activities and expert-backed education. This experience is designed to open up conversations, build skills, and help you feel confident in guiding your child through anxious thoughts.

Created by a mom **who's been there** and developed with the support of mental health experts, Bravery Boxes are designed to empower you and your child—one box at a time.

 Stay tuned for more details—exciting things are coming!



YOU'VE GOT THIS!

Remember, every small step counts. You've taken the first step by seeking tools and guidance, and you're not alone. Together, we can help your child feel more confident and brave.

Parent Reading List:

[Amazon List](#)

Books For Kids:

[Amazon List](#)

Learn About Bravery Boxes:

[Confident Kids](#)

Make Your Own Worry Detector:

[DIY Worry Detector](#)