

Anxiety Management

Guide on recognising and managing anxiety in children and parents.



Introduction

Anxiety in children and parents is a common but often overlooked issue. Recognising and effectively managing anxiety is crucial for the well-being of the entire family. This guide provides insights into identifying anxiety symptoms and offers strategies for managing them.

Recognising Anxiety in Children

1. **Behavioural Changes:** Look for signs like increased irritability, clinginess, or tantrums.
2. **Physical Symptoms:** Complaints about stomach aches, headaches, or other unexplained physical issues.
3. **Avoidance:** Avoiding activities they used to enjoy, or refusing to go to school.
4. **Sleep Disturbances:** Trouble falling asleep, nightmares, or changes in sleep patterns.
5. **Excessive Worry:** Overly worried about everyday activities or future events.



Recognising Anxiety in Parents

1. **Constant Worry:** Persistent worry about family, work, health, or finances that seems disproportionate.
2. **Irritability:** Short temper or irritability even in non-stressful situations.
3. **Sleep Issues:** Difficulty in falling or staying asleep, insomnia.
4. **Physical Symptoms:** Frequent headaches, muscle tension, fatigue.
5. **Concentration Problems:** Difficulty focusing on tasks or constant feelings of being overwhelmed.



Managing Anxiety

For Children

1. **Open Communication:** Encourage children to express their fears and worries.
2. **Routine Establishment:** Maintain a consistent daily routine.
3. **Relaxation Techniques:** Teach breathing exercises or meditation.
4. **Positive Reinforcement:** Praise their efforts to face fears.
5. **Professional Help:** Consider therapy if anxiety interferes with daily life.

For Parents

1. **Self-Care:** Prioritize your own health, including getting enough sleep and exercise.
2. **Mindfulness Practices:** Engage in mindfulness or meditation to reduce stress.
3. **Support Networks:** Share your feelings with trusted friends or family members.
4. **Professional Counseling:** Seek therapy to develop coping strategies.
5. **Modeling Behavior:** Show children how to manage anxiety through your actions.



Support Organisations

- **International Organisations:**
 - **World Health Organization (WHO):** Provides comprehensive resources on mental health, including anxiety.
 - **Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA):** Offers resources for understanding and managing anxiety.
 - **Africa Mental Health Research and Training Foundation:** Dedicated to mental health research and training in Africa, offering resources and support for anxiety.
 - **Mental Health Africa:** An organization focused on raising awareness and providing support for mental health issues, including anxiety, across Africa.
- **Online Support and Resources:**
 - [Mind](#): A UK-based mental health charity offering online resources and support for anxiety.
 - [Psychology Today](#): Provides a therapist directory to find local mental health professionals specializing in anxiety.

By recognising the signs of anxiety and adopting effective management strategies, both children and parents can significantly improve their mental well-being. For further support, reaching out to the mentioned organisations or consulting with mental health professionals is recommended.

The African Parent

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www.theafricanparent.uk

hello@theafricanparent.uk

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