

# Helping your child cope with stress

- 1** Help your child to be aware that everyone feels stress in their lives and it is normal to feel anxious in certain situations.
- 2** Be a model yourself; learn techniques that help you and model them for your child.
- 3** Teach your child about helpful stress management techniques to help cope with everyday stressors (**see box below**). Teaching your child early about managing stressors is an excellent method to prevent future anxiety. Using a stress management technique is also helpful before known stressful events, such as before a test in school. It is also helpful to do a relaxation exercise following a stressful event.
- 4** If you notice any signs of anxiety in your child, talk with your pediatrician about whether a referral to a specialist, such as a behavioral pediatrician, therapist, or clinical psychologist, would be indicated to help your child work through the issue.

## Stress-management techniques

- » Sit or lie in a comfortable position.
- » Take a few slow deep breaths. Focus on the in and out of the breath, and let it flow down toward the belly.
- » Relax the muscles of the body, from head to toe. It may help to demonstrate for your child when a muscle is tight and when it is relaxed, by using an arm muscle and your belly muscles. Making chest and belly muscles soft makes it easier to take slow deep breaths, which can in turn increase the relaxation.
- » Imagine being in your favorite place. This is a place where you feel safe and good. It is a special place where you can do just what you want to do. Imagine that you are really there by imagining what you would see, hear, or feel. Remember that good feeling.

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## Web resources

- Childhood Anxiety Network: [www.childhoodanxietynetwork.org](http://www.childhoodanxietynetwork.org)
- Net Wellness, Consumer Health Information: Stress in Childhood. University of Cincinnati, Ohio State University, and Case Western Reserve University. ADAM Health Encyclopedia: [www.netwellness.org/ency/article/002059.htm](http://www.netwellness.org/ency/article/002059.htm)
- American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP), Understanding Childhood Mental Illnesses: [www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)
- Anxiety Disorders Association of America (ADAA), Anxiety Disorders in Children and Teens: [www.adaa.org/GettingHelp/FocusOn/Children&Adolescents.asp](http://www.adaa.org/GettingHelp/FocusOn/Children&Adolescents.asp)
- Worry Wise Kids Web site, [www.worrywisekids.org](http://www.worrywisekids.org)
- Weems C: Childhood Anxiety Disorders: An Overview of Recent Guides for Professionals and Parents (Book commentary). *J Clin Child Adolesc Psychol* 2005;34:772 Available at: [www.leaonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/s15374424jccp3404\\_19?journalCode=jccp](http://www.leaonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/s15374424jccp3404_19?journalCode=jccp). Accessed June 14, 2007



## Print resources

- Chansky T: *Freeing Your Child from Anxiety: Powerful, Practical Solutions to Overcome Your Child's Fears, Worries, and Phobias*. Broadway, 2004
- Huebner D: *What to Do When You Worry Too Much: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Anxiety (What to Do Guides for Kids)*. Magination Press, 2005
- Crist J: *What to Do When You're Scared and Worried: A Guide for Kids*. Free Spirit Publishing, 2004
- DuPont-Spencer E, DuPont RL, DuPont CM: *The Anxiety Cure for Kids: A Guide for Parents*. John Wiley and Sons Inc., 2003
- Spence S, Cobham V, Wignall A, et al: *Helping Your Anxious Child: A Step-By-Step Guide for Parents*. New Harbinger Publications, 2000
- Culbert T, Kajander, R: *Be the Boss of Your Body Kit with Stress Book, Self Care for Kids*. Free Spirit Publishing, 2007

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