



Low-tech ways to help kids cope with anxiety

- 1) Having them use pretend play to “act” out their worries using toys/figures and encouraging them to take the role of the “adult” or “teacher” who helps the character who is having trouble understand how to make better choices/calm down/explain their feelings.
- 2) Encouraging them to let you dictate a list of their worries and then letting the “worry monster” eat it after a discussion. This can be a puppet with a mouth that opens, or you can use any other stuffed animal and/or store/dispose of the list another way. Rip it up, put it in the fireplace, store it in a box/jar/drawer of the child’s choosing, etc.
- 3) Having them teach a sibling, a favorite lovely or stuffed animal their preferred calm down techniques. Breathing exercises, organized movement breaks, stretches/yoga, dancing going to a quiet place – whatever works for them. Specific techniques can also be demonstrated in sessions and then practiced/employed at home (finger splay near/far vision focus game, the finger touch game from the book *A Little Spot of Anger*, heart warmer exercises).
- 4) Brainstorming an “I can handle it” list. Come up with scenarios that provoke anxiety (for example, being alone and/or separation) and listing options of actions he can take. If your child’s resistant to coming up with ideas, ideas can come from the adults - but be sure to keep them in the conversation as much as possible. You can even include silly/ridiculous options to keep it fun and hold your child’s attention and lessen the pressure.
- 5) Finding an object that your child can keep on his person or carry around easily that serves as a totem/representation of you and/or the family when you’re apart. Another version of this is the “kissing hand”.