



## When Your Child is Worried



**M**ost of the time, children and teens are **carefree and laid back**. They seldom worry about things, and if they do, it isn't long before the reason for their concern (a big test?) passes and they're on to the next activity or event. It's normal for children and teens to experience this kind of "temporary" worry.

But there may be occasions when children get hung up on something that takes their attention away from family, friends and school and causes them to feel anxious or even fearful. In these situations, it's important for them to have a set of skills that can help them cope with worrisome feelings, move past them and get on with their lives.

The following sections present language you can use to help your child or teen when he or she feels worried.

### What to Say to Children

First, identify what is making you feel worried. Then, decide whether you are in actual danger or just feeling anxious. If you are not in real danger, take a deep breath and relax your body; imagine your body becoming like a spaghetti noodle. Talk to someone you trust about what is causing your worry. Tell yourself that you can do this!

You might also try thinking about a time when you were brave or imagine yourself as a superhero. Or try to distract yourself by doing artwork, playing a card/board game, watching a favorite TV show or doing something else you enjoy.

#### Tools:

- Try to identify what is making you feel worried.
- Practice deep breathing to relax your body.

[continued >](#)

- Talk to someone.
- Think about a time when you were brave or imagine you are a superhero.
- Try doing something you enjoy.

## What to Say to Teens

First, try to identify the source of your worry. Identify whether you are safe or in a dangerous situation.

If you are in a dangerous situation, the first thing to do is seek safety immediately. If you are not in a dangerous situation but still feel anxious, follow these steps:

1. **Determine if you need to solve a problem.**  
For example, if you are worried about an upcoming test, you could make a study plan. Or, if you are worried about trying something new, you could make a plan to learn more information about what you'd like to do.
2. **If you do not need to solve a problem, or if you took steps to solve the problem and still feel worried, try one of these strategies to get through the moment:**
  - Do something you normally enjoy doing even though you feel worried (watching a funny online video, talking to a friend, going for a walk or exercising).
  - Try a self-soothing activity (download and listen to a meditation app, listen to music, take a bubble bath or shower, play with your pet, look at pleasant photos, try yoga).
  - Seek support from a trusted friend or adult.

### Tools:

- Try to identify the source of your anxiety.
- Use problem-solving (if needed).
- Engage in an enjoyable activity.
- Try a self-soothing activity.
- Talk to a trusted friend or adult.



With the right skills, a clear understanding of how to appropriately address anxiety and worry, and your encouragement, your child can develop a plan for preventing problems and effectively resolving them when they do occur.

## Additional Resources

- *Freeing Your Child from Anxiety: Powerful, Practical Solutions to Overcome Your Child's Fears, Worries, and Phobias* by Tamar Ellsas Chansky, Ph.D.
- *What to Do When You Worry Too Much* by Dawn Huebner, Ph.D.

➡ **For more information** or to make an appointment at the Boys Town Center for Behavioral Health, call **531-355-3358**.

Visit **Parenting.org** for more information from the parenting experts at Boys Town.