



Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Vol. IX, No. 9

10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

- ★ Build trusting relationships
- ★ Provide consistent care
- ★ Support children's health
- ★ Provide a safe environment
- ★ Provide positive guidance
- ★ Provide a language-rich environment
- ★ Foster curiosity and development through play
- ★ Individualize care and learning activities
- ★ Partner with parents
- ★ Pursue personal and professional growth

This Month's Hallmark of Quality Child Care

Individualize Care and Learning Activities

When Fear Turns into Anxiety

Many children are fearful in new situations. It's normal for them to be afraid of the dark, shy around new people, or nervous when arriving at day care. Anxiety becomes a problem when it causes extreme distress or interferes with everyday activities.

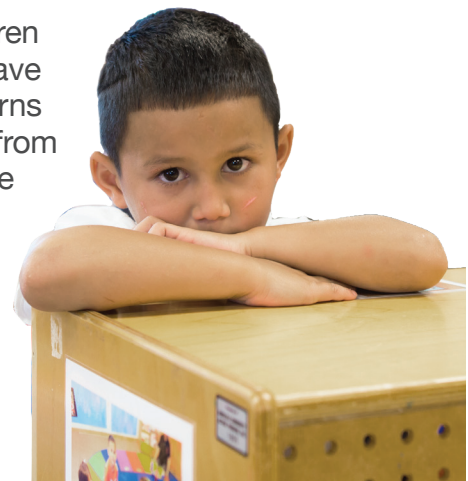
According to *Science News* (2019), Studies indicate that 10 to 20 percent of U.S. preschoolers suffer from anxiety. Furthermore, when anxiety begins in the early years, it often continues into adolescence and adulthood, increasing the risk of truancy, substance abuse, and depression. According to the *American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, we are experiencing a national emergency in child and adolescent mental health. The worsening crisis in children's mental health has made it critical to provide a consistent continuum of care across settings.

Child care providers have a unique insight into a child's emotional and behavioral patterns because they are often caring for children for most of the day. You may witness some common types of anxiety that young children experience including:

- **Separation Anxiety** – fear when separated from parent or caregiver
- **Social Anxiety** – strong fear of social situations (e.g., going to a birthday party)
- **Specific Phobias** – irrational and extreme fear of situations or things (e.g., insects, thunderstorms)

The good news is that by identifying children who exhibit struggles with anxiety, you can have conversations with families about your concerns and encourage them to seek further support from their pediatrician. Providers who recognize the struggles that these children face can be an important advocate for the child, making a difference in their lives for years to come.

This newsletter will present information that will help you identify signs of when anxiety may be a concern and strategies to support children who have persistent anxiety.



Sign of Anxiety

Experts from the UCLA Child Anxiety Resilience Education and Supports (CARES) Center lists physical, emotional and behavioral signs of anxiety that you may see:

Physical signs of anxiety

- Often complains of headaches or stomachaches
- Refuses to eat snacks or lunch at daycare
- Won't use the bathroom except at home
- Starts to shake or sweat in intimidating situations
- Constantly tenses muscles
- Has trouble falling asleep or staying asleep

Emotional signs of anxiety

- Cries a lot
- Becomes upset without any clear reason
- Is afraid of making mistakes
- Worries about things that are far in the future
- Is worried or afraid during drop-offs
- Has frequent nightmares about losing a parent or loved one

Behavioral signs of anxiety

- Asks "what if?" constantly ("What if my mommy doesn't come back?")
- Avoids joining in during activities like circle time
- Refuses to go to day care
- Avoids social situations like birthday parties
- Constantly seeks approval from parents and caregivers
- Has meltdowns or tantrums

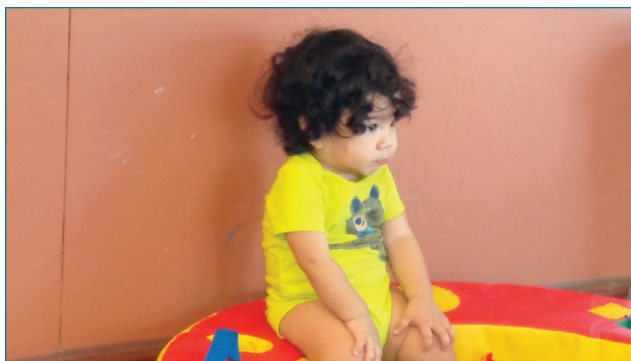


When Anxiety is a Concern

Many children experience stress and anxiety in different situations at different times in their lives. Anxiety becomes a concern when it starts to get in the way of a child's normal activities or behavior. According to *Child Mind Institute*, you can look at 3 things to determine when to seek extra support:

1. **Intensity** –What is the level of intensity of stress? You'll see this in physical, emotional, and behavioral ways.
2. **Impairment** – Does the stress interfere with daily life?
3. **Duration** – Can the child recover quickly when the source of stress goes away?

When assessing whether a child may need extra support, it is helpful to refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention milestone tracker to reference guides on developmentally appropriate behavior. For example, it is developmentally appropriate for a 9-month-old to be shy, clingy, or fearful around strangers. However, if a 4 year-old has a difficult time with separation on a daily basis, is upset throughout the day, and unable to participate in things such as meal time or story time due to distress, then anxiety may be of concern. As a provider, it is important to observe, document, and communicate with families when you have concerns.



Strategies to Support Children with Anxiety

All children, especially those who struggle with anxiety, benefit from an environment that is safe, predictable, and caring. Children feel safe when they are allowed to explore and make mistakes. Providing a predictable daily routine that children can depend on will help children feel less anxious. Your care and patience as they work through their anxiety can make all the difference. Before trying some of the strategies below, take time to breathe and meditate to ensure that you are in a calm state.

Here are 5 tips to help children manage anxiety from *Harvard Health*:

- **Personalize and externalize:** Ask the child to give anxiety a name. For example, “I can see Wally Worry being a bully and taking over you right now. Let’s tell Wally to stop being a bully.” Giving anxiety a name can help her identify her fears and learn to be the boss of it.
- **Prepare ahead of time:** Prepare for anxiety provoking situations ahead of time by talking about what to expect and encouraging families to tour new places ahead of time. For example, if you are visiting a fire station with the children, read a book about fire fighters and encourage families to visit their nearby station if convenient.
- **Model confidence:** Children will sense if caregivers are anxious. Try to be mindful of what you model through words and body language. Mindfulness techniques can help to temper overanxious reactions.



- **Allow distress:** Avoiding situations that might cause anxiety will only help to ease it temporarily, so allow children to ease into situations that they are fearful of. Try distress tolerance techniques such as flower and candle breathing (smell the flower, blow out the candle), listening to a favorite song, or distracting by trying to catch bubbles that you blow.
- **Practice exposure:** Gradual exposure helps to rewire an anxious brain. For example, if a child is anxious about attending daycare, have her visit your program with a parent for an hour. Next, have her come by herself for an hour, assuring her that she will go home shortly (e.g., after snack). Gradually increase the amount of time that she attends your program while assuring her that she will be picked up at a specified time (e.g., after nap).

Training Opportunity

Relax and Be Happy: 5 Mindfulness Tools to Reduce Anxiety Now

Watch this fun-filled recorded webinar and support yourself and the children in your care by learning new mindfulness tools that capture imaginations and help create resilient, happy children in this 1.0-hour webinar.

<https://home.edweb.net/webinar/classroommanagement20210331/>

Featured Activity

My Worry Monster

Adapted from Argo Food Service



What you need:

- Paper
- Colored pencils or crayons

**Optional – googly eyes, feather, or other collage materials*

What to Do:

1. Talk to the children about what things make them scared or worried.
2. Tell the children that this fear is caused by an invisible worry. This invisible worry monster needs a name, and since each worry is different, each worry monster will look different and have a unique name.
3. Give the children paper and materials to draw their worry monster. Write the name of the worry monster on the paper and refer to it when the child is experiencing this emotion.

Suggested Books

Discover these books and more at the Hawai'i State Public Library www.librarieshawaii.org

Doggie Gets Scared

by Leslie Patricelli

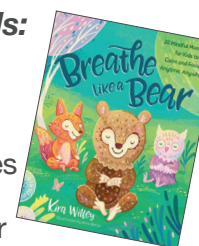
Young children are sure to love this charming book about Doggie's fears of shadows, strangers, thunder and lightning! Don't worry Doggie, Baby is here! Great book for exploring a child's fears and ways to feel better.



Mindfulness Moments for Kids: Breathe Like a Bear

by Kira Willey

This board book is filled with mindful moments and exercises for young children with easy-to-follow breathing exercise for managing their bodies, breath, and emotions.



Lots of Feelings

by Shelley Rotner

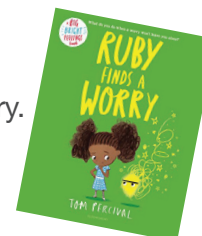
Simple text and photographs introduce basic emotions – happy, grumpy, thoughtful, and more – and how people express them.



Ruby Finds a Worry

by Tom Percival

A little girl named Ruby finds something unexpected: a Worry. Every day, the Worry grows a little bigger until eventually, the Worry is ENORMOUS and is all she can think about. This story helps teach children about emotions and anxieties.



Citations

Science News. (2019). *Anxiety in preschoolers needs its own kind of therapy*. [online] Available at: <https://www.sciencenews.org/article/when-anxiety-happens-early-preschool-treatments-can-help>.

Gupta, S. (2020) *Why it's key to identify preschoolers with anxiety and depression*. Science News. Available at: <https://www.sciencenews.org/article/why-its-key-identify-preschoolers-anxiety-and-depression> (Accessed: February 17, 2023).

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