

## Strategies for Parents

### Strategies for reducing stress and anxiety:

- Be aware of the cues and clues your body is giving you.
- Slow deep breaths- your body needs oxygen to calm down.
- Exercising is a healthy way to release tension.
- Creative and hands-on hobbies can help with self-expression and relaxation.
- Talk to a supportive engaged listener, it's important to express feelings and feel "heard".
- Positive self-talk and choices: thoughts become feelings which become actions.
- Remember: you're not the problem, anxiety is the problem (and you're combatting it).
- Fun distractions/activities can provide a change of scenery and help us switch gears.
- Make an "Action List" to help you prioritize, stay on task and fight procrastination.
- Stimulate your senses; focus on your body, here and now, in this moment.
- Practice a visualization, relaxation technique, yoga or meditation.
- Consider seeking assistance from a professional who can help you overcome triggers.
- Practice good self-care! Make a list of feel good things you can do when you feel overwhelmed and notice signs of stress.

### Tips for parenting anxious children:

- 3 P's of Positive Parenting: Presence, Patience, and Perspective.
- Model constructive coping skills; these are learned behaviours.
- Respond, don't react.
- Maintain a predictable, safe environment where kids know what to expect.
- Protect your family time! (Family meal time, less programming, more time together as a unit).
- Acknowledge their legitimate fears and struggles, don't down play it.

- Remind your child of past successes in managing challenging or anxiety provoking situations, talk about past instances where they have faced their fears.
- Label your feelings and needs and help children label their own.
- Baby steps! Break down larger tasks into bite-sized pieces, encourage independence.
- Don't make promises you can't keep.
- Reassure your children that come what may you will love and support them.
- Avoid comparing their experiences with those of non-anxious children (no "you should")
- Notice the positives, no matter how small, see them, call them out, make a big deal!
- Don't use their anxiety as an excuse for hurtful, unsafe, or aggressive behavior.
- Help reduce the stigma of anxiety and normalize their experience (anxiety related media)
- Check your own responses, we don't want to feed a child's anxiety or minimize it.
- Tone of voice, body language & your energy levels can all impact your child's response.
- Be consistent with other caregivers; kids make better progress if you work as a team.
- Limit violent and aggressive TV, movies and video games.
- Debriefing after an outburst is critical; it teaches accountability and helps kids recover.
- Remember that nobody is perfect, some children are more challenging to parent, and guilt, grudges and blaming impede our ability to help our children and ourselves.
- It's NEVER too late! At every age kids have needs that can be met through parental attention.
- Don't hesitate to access support from a mental health professional if you are struggling
- Remember: stress and anxiety are a normal and unavoidable part of the human experience, we can't protect our children from these feelings, but we can teach them how to cope constructively.

## Resources for Parents

- Start with your family doctor
- Find out if your child's school has a Social Worker or Child and Youth Worker on staff
- Find a therapist who works with your family's values (ex: therapists who specialize in LGBTQ issues, share religious values, has expertise with blended families)

## Free Services for Families in Toronto

### **The George Hull Centre**

81 The East Mall, Third Floor

Etobicoke, Ontario, M8Z 5W3

416-622-8833

[reachus@georgehullcentre.on.ca](mailto:reachus@georgehullcentre.on.ca)

[georgehullcentre.on.ca](http://georgehullcentre.on.ca)

(Parents in Etobicoke can contact directly to access services)

### **East Metro Youth Services**

1200 Markham Road, Suite 200

Scarborough, Ontario, M1H 3C3

416-438-3697

[emys@emys.on.ca](mailto:emys@emys.on.ca)

[emys.on.ca](http://emys.on.ca)

(Parents in the GTA can contact directly to access services or use 'what's up' walk-in hours)

### **Yorktown Family Services**

2010 Eglinton Ave. West, Suite 300

York, Ontario, M6E 2K3

(416) 394-2424

info@yorktownfamilyservices.com

yorktownfamilyservices.com

(Parents in York/North York can contact directly to access services)

## What's Up Walk In Clinics (All Ages)

FREE Walk-In mental health counselling for children, youth, parents and families.

6 locations around the GTA

Open 5 days a week

Check website for hours and locations

[www.whatsupwalkin.ca](http://www.whatsupwalkin.ca)

## Ontario Early Years Centre (ages 0-6)

1- 866-821-7770 to find the location that services your area

## Books

### Books for Children

- "What to Do When You Worry Too Much" by Donna Huebner (workbook for age 6 and up)
- "Scaredy Squirrel" by Melanie Watt (storybook series ages 3-8)
- "Wemberly Worried" by Kevin Henkes (storybook ages 3-8)
- "Silly Billy" by (storybook ages 3-8)
- "What to do when you dread your bed" by Dawn Huebner (for bedtime anxiety)
- "Annie's Plan" by Jeanne Kraus (for homework anxiety ages 6-11)
- "The Lion Who Lost His Roar" by Marcia Shoshana Nass (for fearfulness ages 6-10)
- "When My Worries Get Too Big" by Kari Dunn Buron (workbook for ages 5-9)
- "What to Do When Mistakes Make You Quake" by Claire A.B Freeland (workbook for perfectionism ages 6-12)

- “Charlotte And The Quiet Place” by Deborah Sosin (storybook about mindful breathing ages 3-10)
- “Milton’s Secret” by Eckhart Tolle (storybook about mindfulness and bullying ages 3-12)

### **Books for Parents and Caregivers**

- “Self-Reg: How to Help Your Child (and You) Break the Stress Cycle and Successfully Engage with Life” by Dr. Stuart Shanker
- “Freeing Your Child From Anxiety; Powerful, practical solutions to overcome your child’s fears, worries, and phobias.” by Tamar E. Chansky
- “Living Fully with Shyness and Social Anxiety: A comprehensive guide to gaining social confidence” by Erika B. Hillard
- “Helping Your Anxious Child: A step-by-step guide for parents” by Ronald Rapee
- “Your Anxious Child: How parents and teachers can relieve anxiety in children” by John S. Dacey and Lisa B. Fiore

### **Apps:**

- MINDSHIFT (free anxiety-management app for teens and adults)
- Breathe, Think, Do with Sesame Street (free meditation app for all ages)
- Breathing Bubbles (free anxiety-management app for ages 5-adult)
- Smiling Mind (free mindfulness app for ages 7-adult)
- Headspace (free mindfulness app with guided meditations for adults, teens and kids)
- Take A Chill (free stress management app for tweens and teens)
- Kids Media (Common Sense Media designed this app to help parents make informed choices about the kinds of tv, movies and video games their kids are consuming)

## Mindful Deep Breathing

A big deep breath can help you calm down and feel better.



Breathe **IN** through your **NOSE**.  
Pretend you're smelling something delicious.

Breathe **OUT** through your **MOUTH**  
Pretend you're blowing out  
birthday candles



**TRY IT!**



Breathe **IN** for

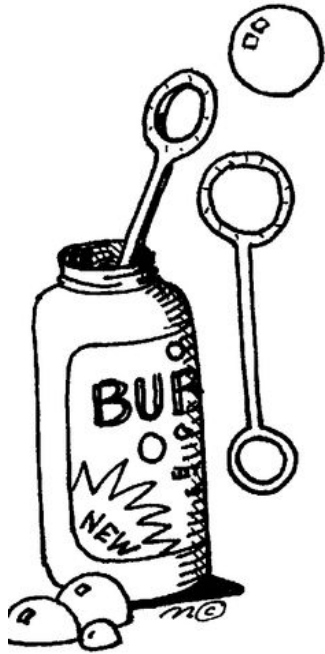
seconds -



Breathe **OUT** for

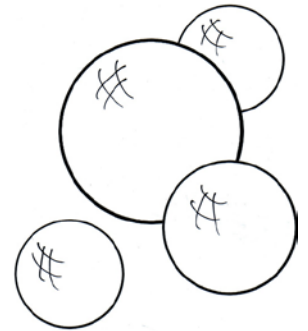
seconds.

## Let's Take A Deep Breath!



Pretend you are blowing bubbles!

Hold your imaginary bubble wand,  
take a deep breath in through your  
nose and blow out the **BIGGEST**  
bubble you can! Can you blow 6  
giant bubbles?



Pretend you are a fire-breathing dragon!

Take a big breath in through your nose  
and blow out as much imaginary fire  
as you can. Try to imagine all of the yucky  
feelings in your body blasting out of you  
with your big dragon breath. Can you  
blow out 6 big fiery breaths?



# My Calming Toolbox

When I'm feeling anxious here are some things I can try that make me feel awesome:

