



**Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).** This type of anxiety disorder results from a traumatic past experience. Symptoms include flashbacks, nightmares, fear, and avoidance of the traumatic event that caused the anxiety.

Symptoms of an anxiety disorder can come on suddenly or can build gradually and linger. Sometimes worry creates a sense of doom and foreboding that seems to come out of nowhere. Kids with anxiety problems may not even know what's causing the emotions, worries, and sensations they have. Although all kids experience anxiety in certain situations, most (even those who live through traumatic events) don't develop anxiety disorders. Signs of an anxiety disorder include:

- Excessive worry most days of the week, for weeks on end
- Trouble sleeping at night or sleepiness during the day
- Restlessness or fatigue during waking hours
- Trouble concentrating
- Irritability
- Shortness of breath
- Heart palpitations
- An inability to be still and calm
- Dry mouth
- Nausea
- Muscle tension
- Headaches
- Dizziness

These problems can affect a child's day-to-day functioning, especially when it comes to concentrating in school, sleeping, and eating. Anxious children can be highly motivated but frustrated, easily discouraged, irritable and will often be tired in the classroom, become withdrawn and participate less and less in class.

It is common for kids to avoid talking about how they feel, because they're worried that others (especially their parents) might not understand. They may fear being judged or considered weak, scared, or "babyish." And although girls are more likely to express their anxiety, boys experience these feelings, too, and sometimes find it hard to talk about. This leads many kids to feel alone or misunderstood.

Here are some things you can do to help a child struggling with anxiety:

- Be attuned to the child's feelings – acknowledge them in a supportive, nonjudgmental way.
- Talk openly about the child's symptoms and try to understand how they are affecting everyday life.
- Stay calm when a child becomes anxious.
- Recognize and praise accomplishments no matter how small.
- Avoid punishment for lack of progress or mistakes.
- Try to maintain a routine.
- Plan for transitions (extra time in the morning if getting to school is difficult).
- Communicate with other adults in the child's life so that they can best support.
- Build the child's coping techniques/relaxation methods – deep breathing, positive self-talk, time-outs.
- Be patient and positive.
- Remind the child that letting go of worry allows space for more happiness and fun.

(Sources: [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov); [www.adaa.org](http://www.adaa.org); [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov))

