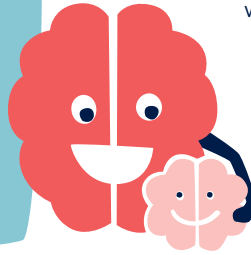


The Nature of Anxiety: A Parent's Guide

Parent Resource

This resource has been developed in collaboration with Clinical Psychologist, Dr Jodie Lowinger.



Anxiety is a completely normal and essential human response. It's part of our brain's survival system, often called the fight, flight, or freeze response, it is designed to protect us from danger. While this response helped humans avoid physical threats in the past, today's "threats" are often social or emotional, like fear of judgement by others or fear of social rejection. Anxiety becomes problematic when the body and brain react to perceived threats that aren't life-threatening, causing unnecessary stress and discomfort.

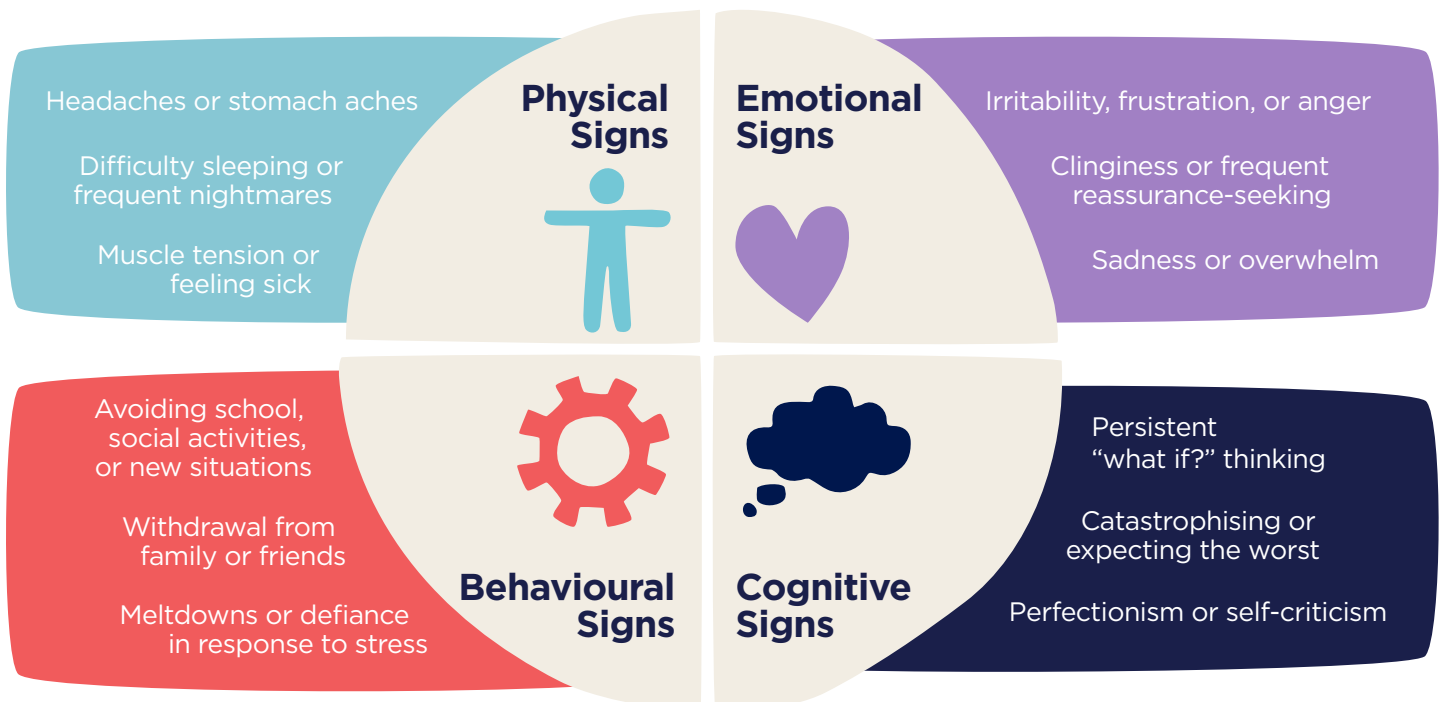
Common Anxiety Triggers for Children

It's completely normal for children to feel anxious from time to time. Anxiety is a natural response to challenges and new situations as they grow and learn. Below are some common triggers that might cause worry or stress.

- **Social situations:** Fear of judgment, rejection, or not fitting in.
- **Performance pressure:** Worries about failing tests, making mistakes, or disappointing others.
- **Health and safety concerns:** Fears about harm coming to themselves or loved ones.
- **Uncertainty:** The unpredictability of the world can fuel "what if" thinking.

How Anxiety Might Show Up in Your Child?

Anxiety can show up in a variety of ways:



Let's build our mental fitness together

gotcha4life.org ©2025 Gotcha4Life Foundation



Normalising Anxiety

Let's start by normalising anxiety. Anxiety is a completely normal part of life and part of being human. It doesn't mean there is anything "wrong" with your child. In fact, all of us, adults and children alike feel anxious at times.

It's important to avoid labelling it as a "disorder" unless a professional has actually diagnosed it. For most children, anxiety is something that can be managed with the right strategies and support.

Many kids who experience anxiety feel like they're the only ones, which can make them feel isolated, but you can reassure your child that they are not alone and others feel the same way too.

"Hey, I just want you to know that you're not the only one who feels this way."

"Lots of people including your friends, kids at school, even adults like me feel anxious sometimes."

"It's actually really normal to feel a little anxious and the good thing is, we don't have to handle it all by ourselves."

"We can work through it together, okay? I'm here for you."

How You Can Help Your Child?

Supporting your child through tough moments is one of the most powerful ways you can help them build resilience, feel understood and supported, and strengthen your connection with them.

- **Trust your instincts:** You know your child best. If something feels off, tune in.
- **Practise being curious:** Irritability or school refusal could be linked to anxiety, even if your child doesn't say they're "worried."
- **Validate emotions:** Resist the urge to go into problem solving mode, and validate how they're feeling: "I can see this is hard for you," or "It's okay to feel nervous."
- **Manage your own stress:** Children often absorb the emotional states of adults around them. Modelling calm and self-care helps them regulate their own emotions.

When to Seek Support?

When it comes to anxiety, the earlier we step in, the more we can help our children build lifelong mental fitness skills. If your child's anxiety is making life feel harder than it should, whether it's holding them back from things they love or causing ongoing distress, remember that you don't have to navigate it alone. Reaching out for support shouldn't be a last resort, instead, it can be a powerful step forward. A mental health professional can equip both you and your child with the tools to manage anxiety and strengthen their ability to handle life's challenges with confidence.

Remember anxiety is not something to 'cure' but rather something to understand and manage. By focusing on building emotional adaptability together, and promoting mental fitness at home, your child can learn to navigate life's uncertainties with greater confidence.

A special thanks to Dr Jodie Lowinger for her collaboration on these resources.

Dr Lowinger is a clinical psychologist, high-performance coach, and the founder of The Anxiety Clinic. For more information about anxiety and how to support your child, visit drjodie.com.au.

Please note: This resource has been developed in collaboration with Dr Jodie Lowinger and is intended for general information purposes only. It's not a substitute for professional advice. Gotcha4Life does not offer counselling or crisis support.

If you have concerns about your child's wellbeing, please speak with your GP or a qualified health professional. You can also explore a range of free, trusted supports and information at gotcha4life.org/help-resources. For direct support, Kids Helpline offers free, confidential counselling for young people aged 5 to 25. Call 1800 55 1800 or visit kidshelpline.com.au.

Let's build our mental fitness together

gotcha4life.org ©2025 Gotcha4Life Foundation

