



waitingwell

with **The Owl Centre Charity**

TOP 10 TIPS FOR PARENTING ANXIOUS CHILDREN

1. Don't try to eliminate anxiety; do try to help a child manage it - The best way to help kids overcome anxiety is to help them learn to tolerate it as well as they can. Over time the anxiety will diminish.

2. Don't avoid things just because they make a child anxious - Helping children avoid the things they are afraid of will make them feel better in the short term, but it reinforces the anxiety over the long run.

3. Express positive—but realistic—expectations - Don't promise a child that what she fears won't happen—that you know she won't fail the test—but do express confidence that she'll be able to manage whatever happens.

4. Respect her feelings, but don't empower them - Validating feelings doesn't mean agreeing with them. So, if a child is terrified about going to the doctor, do listen and be empathetic, but encourage her to feel that she can face her fears.

5. Don't ask leading questions - Encourage your child to talk about her feelings, but try not to ask leading questions: "Are you anxious about the big test?" Instead, ask open-ended questions: "How are you feeling about the science fair?"

6. Don't reinforce the child's fears - Avoid suggesting, with your tone of voice or body language: "Maybe this is something that you should be afraid of."

7. Be encouraging - Let your child know that you appreciate how hard she's working and remind her that the more she tolerates her anxiety, the more it will diminish.



waitingwell

with **The Owl Centre** **Charity**

8. Try to keep the anticipatory period short - When we're afraid of something, the hardest time is before we do it. So, if a child is nervous about going to a doctor's appointment, don't discuss it until you need to.

9. Think things through with the child - Sometimes it helps to talk through what would happen if a fear came true—how would she handle it? For some kids, having a plan can reduce the uncertainty in a healthy, effective way.

10. Try to model healthy ways of handling anxiety - Don't pretend that you don't experience stress and anxiety but do let kids hear or see you managing it calmly, tolerating it and feeling good about getting through it.