Going to school is part of a child's experience in getting an education. However, many students may feel a sense of anxiety and uncertainty when being in a classroom. This resource guidebook supports parents in helping their students navigate these complex emotions and aims to provide resources to best support the school environment.

In this guidebook, we aim to provide you with helpful resources, tips, and strategies that can assist you in navigating your child's time in school while addressing their emotional well-being.

From effective communication strategies to activities that can help ease anxiety and build resilience, our guidebook will empower you to be your child's support system.

It’s essential to prioritize your child's mental health to help your child enjoy learning. By accessing the resources in this guidebook and partnering with your child’s teachers, school administrators, and counselors, you can help them feel confident and empowered to succeed in their academic journey.
As a parent, you want what is best for your child.

Seeing your child suffer with anxiety can be painful for you, and parents often respond by helping their child avoid whatever it is that is causing the anxiety. It’s an understandable reaction and helps your child feel better right away, but unfortunately, it does not help your child in the long run. To thrive, children need to learn to recognize anxiety is not always helpful. You can help with this!

**Anxiety is a normal and often helpful emotion!**

Think about ways that anxiety is helpful to your child, like when anxiety about a test gets your child to stop playing and do homework or when wanting to be on time for the school bus helps your child finish breakfast and get out the door. However, too much anxiety can keep a child from the learning at school and developmentally appropriate activities that they need to grow.

**When you notice that is the case with your child’s anxiety, help them recognize that this anxiety is not helpful.**
The Importance of Validating Anxiety Without Accommodating

It’s important to validate your child’s feelings without reassuring them or accommodating their fears. " I can see you’re having a hard time. It’s ok to feel anxious and go to school. " Validation allows your child to see that they can feel anxious and do valued activities.

If you validate their feelings but also accommodate them by allowing them to avoid them, the only thing your child learns is that they cannot handle anxious feelings. The result will be a smaller life with more anxiety.

The Process Of Educating Your Child On Navigating Their Anxiety

Work with your child and encourage them to take steps toward the trigger instead of avoiding it.

Teach your child to cultivate a willingness to courageously face anxiety. Help your child to be direct with their anxious brain by taking the action steps to participate in these activities in a manner that you and they choose, not in the way that simply makes their anxious brain happy and causes them to avoid things that are important, like school.

Cultivate a family value of being brave and stepping up to challenges.

Find things you can do together in age-appropriate ways, and remember to model your willingness to try new things, be brave, and to make mistakes.
School can be an exciting time for many children, but for those struggling with anxiety, it can be an overwhelming and stressful experience.

1. Open Communication

Establishing open lines of communication with your child is essential. Encourage them to express their fears and concerns about returning to school. Actively listen without judgment and validate their emotions. By creating a safe space for them to share their thoughts, you can better understand their anxiety triggers and tailor your support accordingly.
2

Encourage Bravery in Facing Anxiety Triggers

Teach your child the importance of recognizing that while anxiety feels terrible, it is not dangerous. Help your child find opportunities to practice being brave. Try a challenging family activity like going on a roller coaster as a family like going on a roller coaster, watching lightning together with the curtains open, or playing a new board game. Model your willingness to get out of your comfort zone and be brave.

3

Work with School Staff

Collaborate with your child’s teacher and school staff to ensure they understand your child’s anxiety and can provide appropriate support. Share insights about your child’s anxiety triggers and any accommodations they may need at the start of the school year. Keep in mind that the goal will be to gradually phase out accommodations during the school year as the student learns they can handle anxiety triggers successfully. Maintain open lines of communication.
If your child had a hard time with anxiety at school in prior years, aim for this year to be better in specific ways. Help your child set realistic expectations for themselves academically, emotionally, and socially. Remind them that it’s okay to make mistakes and that learning is a process.

Anxiety can make it challenging for children to build and maintain social connections. Help them practice social skills through role-playing and provide guidance on initiating conversations and making friends.

Acknowledge and celebrate your child’s achievements, no matter how small. Positive reinforcement encourages them to continue overcoming challenges with confidence. By offering unwavering support as they practice being brave, you can empower your child to overcome their anxiety.
RESOURCES

Anxiety Training has selected the following books for adults and children, videos, podcasts, and links to organizations that can provide information and educational resources on tackling school anxiety.

Books for Parents and Teachers

- Anxious Kids, Anxious Parents by Reid Wilson and Lynn Lyons 2013, Health Communications Inc.
- Face It and Feel It: 10 Simple (But Not Easy) Ways to Live Well with Anxiety by Kimberly Morrow 2011
- Freeing Your Child from Anxiety by Tamar Chansky 2004
- Parenting Your Anxious Child with Mindfulness and Acceptance: A Powerful New Approach to Overcoming Fear, Panic, and Worry Using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy by Christopher McCurry 2009
- Triumph Over Shyness by Murray Stein and John Walker, second edition (available from ADAA)
- The Shyness & Social Anxiety Workbook by Martin Antony and Richard Swinson, 2008

Books for Children

- What To Do When Your Brain Gets Stuck–A Kids Guide to Overcoming OCD by Dawn Huebner
- Up and Down the Worry Hill by Aureen Wagner
- Wemberly Worried by Kevin Henkes
- First Day Jitters by Julie Danneberg
- Scary Night Visitors: A Story for Children with Bedtime Fears by Irene Marcus
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND INFORMATION ON SCHOOL ANXIETY

- AnxietyTraining.com
- Anxiety and Depression Association of America
- Andrew Kukes Foundation for Social Anxiety
- Active Minds (college-age students)
- Beyond OCD
- Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
- GoHackify.com for students with OCD
- GoZen.com for anxious students
- How to Become More Confident in 30 secs: Till Gross TedX Talk on YouTube
- International Obsessive–Compulsive Disorder Foundation
- National Association of School Psychologists
- National Institute of Mental Health
- Noises in your Head: Free Video Series
- Selective Mutism Group
- Selective Mutism Foundation
- Trichotillomania Learning Center
- Anxietyintheclassroom.org

Free Podcasts from ADAA

- School Refusal
- Selective Mutism
- Teen Social Anxiety
- Helping Your Child with Anxiety
HOW ANXIETY TRAINING CAN HELP YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Anxiety Training has created 3 videos to provide your school community everything we know to help you face your fears, live with uncertainty, and find value in what you are doing.

We have been teaching these skills for over 10 years and have seen the difference it makes when teachers, students, and parents all have the same skills and speak the same language regarding anxiety. We are excited to offer this series to your school community to help everyone who is struggling with anxiety during the transition back to school. We want to help teachers get back to teaching and students get back to learning!