

# Parenting Tips for Anxious Kids

## ***Expectations of your child***

It's important that you have the same expectations of your anxious child that you would of another child (to go to birthday parties, make decisions, talk to adults). However, understand that the pace will need to be slower and there is a process involved in meeting this end goal. You can help your child break down big tasks into smaller steps that your child can accomplish (first go to the party with your child and agree to stay as long as your child is interacting with others, next time stay for the first half hour). You can help role-play or act out possible ways your child could handle a difficult situation. Saying it out loud makes kids more confident and more likely to try the strategy when your child is alone.

## ***Build your child's personal strength***

It's important to praise your child for facing challenges, trying something new or brave behaviour. Some children like big loud exuberant praises, others like a quiet pat on the back. There is a lot you can do to help build your child's competence. Search to find avenues where your child can show he is good at something (music, art, sports). Also be sure your child has jobs around the house that show your child is contributing to the family.

## ***Letting your child learn to do things on his/her own***

While tempting, it is best not to take over or do it for your child. While this might help your child feel better right now, the message your child is getting is that you don't believe your child can do it. Then your child will start to think the same way about him or herself. Try not to get caught continually reassuring your child that everything will be okay. Teach your child to answer his/her own questions and provide the reassurance him/herself. You can model how you think through and respond to your child's questions.

## ***Helping your child handle his own feelings***

It is okay to let your child experience some anxiety. Your child needs to know that anxiety is not dangerous but something your child can cope with. You can let your child know all feelings are okay and it is all right to say what you feel. Anxious children sometimes have a hard time expressing strong emotions like anger or sadness because they are afraid people will be angry with them. Its okay to take time for yourself even if your child wants to be with you at all times. You are modelling for your child that everyone needs some time to themselves.

## ***Passing on your fears***

Try to keep your fears to yourself and as best you can present a positive or at least neutral description of a situation. Let them know that it is safe to explore. It is not helpful to laugh or minimize your child's fear. But humour does help one deal with the world, so show your child how to laugh at life's absurdities and mistakes.

## ***Working together as parents***

It is important to work with your spouse to have an agreed upon way of handling your child's anxiety that you both feel comfortable with. It is very important that one parent not be "too easy" because the other parent "pushes your child too much." This is very confusing for your child who does not know what to count on.

## ***Consequences***

Don't confuse anxiety with other types of inappropriate behaviour. It is very important to set both expectations and have limits and consequences for inappropriate behaviour. Parents who have reasonable expectations of their

children and clear and consistent limits and consequences for behaviour along with love and acceptance have the most competent, self confident and happy children.

Are you experiencing...?	Your diet may lack	Foods which contain these nutrients
Anxiety	Folic Acid	<b>Green Leafy Veg</b> - Spinach, lettuce, Asparagus, beets, Savoy cabbage, bok choy, broccoli, green peas, fresh parsley, brussels sprouts, avocados/ cauliflower/avocado/ <b>Fish</b> - cod, tuna, salmon, halibut, shrimp/ <b>Meat</b> - calf's liver, turkey/ <b>Nuts and Seeds</b> - peanuts, sesame seeds, hazel nuts, cashew nuts, walnuts/ <b>Beans and Pulses</b> -lentils, chick peas, black beans, kidney beans, pinto beans/ <b>Fruit</b> - oranges
	<b>Magnesium</b>	<b>Veg</b> - spinach, watercress, avocado, peppers, broccoli, brussle sprouts, green cabbage, watercress/ <b>Nuts</b> - Almonds, brazil nuts, cashews, peanuts, macadamias, pistachios, walnuts, pecan / <b>Seeds</b> - pumpkin, sunflower, poppy/ <b>Wholegrains</b> - oatmeal, wheatbran, long grain rice, buckwheat, barley, quinoa/ <b>Dairy</b> - plain yoghurt/ <b>Legumes</b> - baked beans/ <b>Fruit</b> - banana, kiwi, blackberries, strawberries, orange, raisins/ <b>Sweet</b> - chocolate
Poor Concentration & Attention	Vitamin B1	<b>Wholegrain</b> - spelt bread, oats, brown rice, barley, fresh pasta/ <b>Pulses</b> - lentils <b>Veg</b> - peppers, cabbage, broccoli, asparagus, romaine lettuce, mushrooms, spinach, watercress, green peas, aubergine, brussel sprouts/ <b>Seeds</b> - sunflower seeds/ <b>Nuts</b> - Brazil nuts, hazelnuts, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, sesame seeds/ <b>Fish/seafood</b> - Tuna, salmon, mussels/ <b>Meat</b> - Pork/ <b>Legumes</b> - Soya milk
Depression	Vitamin B3	<b>Wholegrain</b> - brown rice, rice bran, wheatgerm / <b>Veg</b> - broccoli, mushrooms, cabbage, brussel sprouts, courgette, squash/ <b>Nuts</b> - peanuts/ <b>Meat</b> - beef liver, beef kidney, pork, turkey, chicken/ <b>Fish</b> - tuna, salmon/ <b>Seeds</b> - sunflower seeds
	Vitamin B6	<b>Wholegrains</b> - brown rice, oats, bran, barley / <b>Fruit</b> - bananas, mango/ <b>Fish</b> - tuna, trout, salmon/ <b>Veg</b> - avocado, watercress, cauliflower, cabbage, peppers, squash, asparagus, bok choy, potato/ <b>Meat</b> - chicken, pork loin, turkey/ <b>Beans</b> - lima beans, soy beans/ <b>Pulses</b> - Chick Peas/ <b>Seeds</b> - sunflower
	Vitamin C	<b>Veg</b> - red pepper, red cabbage, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cauliflower, kale, celery, squash, cabbage, watercress/ <b>Fresh Fruit</b> - strawberries, oranges, tangerines, kiwi, cantaloupe, papaya, cranberries, pineapple
	Folic Acid	<b>Green Leafy Veg</b> - Spinach, lettuce, Asparagus, beets, Savoy cabbage, bok choy, broccoli, green peas, fresh parsley, brussels sprouts, avocados/ cauliflower/avocado/ <b>Fish</b> - cod, tuna, salmon, halibut, shrimp/ <b>Meat</b> - calf's liver, turkey/ <b>Nuts and Seeds</b> - peanuts, sesame seeds, hazel nuts, cashew nuts, walnuts/ <b>Beans and Pulses</b> -lentils, chick peas, black beans, kidney beans, pinto beans/ <b>Fruit</b> - oranges
	<b>Magnesium</b>	<b>Veg</b> - spinach, watercress, avocado, peppers, broccoli, brussle sprouts, green cabbage, watercress/ <b>Nuts</b> - Almonds, brazil nuts, cashews, peanuts, macadamias, pistachios, walnuts, pecan / <b>Seeds</b> - pumpkin, sunflower, poppy/ <b>Wholegrains</b> - oatmeal, wheatbran, long grain rice, buckwheat, barley, quinoa/ <b>Dairy</b> - plain yoghurt/ <b>Legumes</b> - baked beans/ <b>Fruit</b> - banana, kiwi, blackberries, strawberries, orange, raisins/ <b>Sweet</b> - chocolate
	<b>Selenium</b>	<b>Wholegrains</b> - wheat germ, brewers yeast / <b>Meat</b> - calf liver, turkey breast / <b>Fish/seafood</b> -

Are you experiencing...?	Your diet may lack	Foods which contain these nutrients
		Cod, Tuna, Halibut, Salmon, Shrimp, <b>/Vegetables</b> – mushrooms, garlic, spinach / sunflower seeds / legumes – tofu/ <b>Nuts</b> – brazil/ <b>Wholegrains</b> – barley, rye, oats, long grain brown rice/ <b>Dairy</b> – mozzarella cheese / <b>Seeds</b> – mustard, sunflower
	Zinc	<b>Seafood/fish</b> – oysters, mussels, shrimp / <b>Cereals</b> – fortified breakfast cereal/ <b>Nuts</b> – cashews, walnuts, almonds/ <b>Dairy</b> – mozzarella, Swiss, cheddar cheeses, low fat yoghurt / <b>Pulses</b> – chick peas, kidney beans, baked beans, lima beans/ <b>Legumes</b> – lentils, miso/ <b>Meat</b> – chicken (dark meat), turkey, lamb, pork, ground beef/ <b>Seeds</b> – pumpkin, sesame/ <b>Vegetables</b> – spinach, mushrooms, squash, asparagus, broccoli <b>Fruit</b> – blackberries, kiwi
	Omega 3 fatty acids	<b>Fish</b> – Salmon, sardines, mackerel, Scallops, fresh tuna, halibut, shrimp, cod, trout/ <b>Seeds</b> – Flax/ <b>Nuts</b> – Walnuts
	Tryptophan	<b>Lean meat</b> – Skinless turkey, skinless chicken, / <b>Dairy</b> – plain yoghurt, milk, eggs, cheddar, gruyere, swiss, cottage cheeses/ <b>Nuts</b> – almonds, pistachios, pecan, hazelnuts, peanuts/soy nuts/ <b>Seeds</b> – poppy, pumpkin, sesame seeds/ <b>Pulses</b> – lentils, chick peas (hummus)/ <b>Legumes</b> – kidney, lima beans, soya/ <b>Vegetables</b> – spinach, watercress, cabbage/ <b>Wholegrains</b> – porridge oats, brown rice/ <b>Fruits</b> – bananas, pineapple, plums, dates, figs, prunes
	Tyrosine	<b>Lean meat</b> – turkey, tuna, chicken liver, beef liver/ <b>Dairy</b> – Cheddar, stilton, boursault, camembert, emmenthal, gruyere, mozzarella, parmesan, swiss cheeses, sour cream/ <b>Veg</b> – avocados, green beans tofu, miso soup, soy sauce, spinach, yeast extract (marmite etc)/ <b>Fruit</b> – bananas, canned figs, plums, raisins, tomatoes, prunes
	GABA	<b>Wholegrains</b>
Poor Memory	Vitamin B5	<b>Wholegrains</b> – oatmeal, brown rice, wheatgerm, bran, brown bread/ <b>Dairy</b> – yoghurt/ <b>Fruits</b> – watermelon, blackberry, lemon, raspberry, strawberry/ <b>Veg</b> – broccoli, watercress, cauliflower, alfalfa sprouts, peas, carrot, celery, avocado, sweet potato, mushrooms/ <b>Legumes</b> – broad beans/ <b>Pulses</b> – chick peas
	Vitamin B6	<b>Wholegrains</b> – brown rice, oats, bran, barley / <b>Fruit</b> – bananas, mango/ <b>Fish</b> – tuna, trout, salmon/ <b>Veg</b> – avocado, watercress, cauliflower, cabbage, peppers, squash, asparagus, bok choy, potato/ <b>Meat</b> – chicken, pork loin, turkey/ <b>Beans</b> – lima beans, soy beans/ <b>Pulses</b> – Chick Peas/ <b>Seeds</b> – sunflower
	Vitamin B12	<b>Meat</b> – calf liver, chicken, turkey, lamb/ <b>Fish/Seafood</b> – salmon, halibut, bass, tuna, shrimp, trout, oysters, crab, clams/ <b>Dairy Products</b> – cottage cheese, low fat yoghurt, boiled or poached eggs, milk
	Omega 3 fatty acids	<b>Fish</b> – Salmon, sardines, mackerel, Scallops, fresh tuna, halibut, shrimp, cod, trout/ <b>Seeds</b> – Flax/ <b>Nuts</b> – Walnuts

Are you experiencing...?	Your diet may lack	Foods which contain these nutrients
Irritability	Vitamin B6	<b>Wholegrains</b> – brown rice, oats, bran, barley / <b>Fruit</b> – bananas, mango/ <b>Fish</b> – tuna, trout, salmon/ <b>Veg</b> – avocado, watercress, cauliflower, cabbage, peppers, squash, asparagus, bok choy, potato/ <b>Meat</b> – chicken, pork loin, turkey/ <b>Beans</b> – lima beans, soy beans/ <b>Pulses</b> – Chick Peas/ <b>Seeds</b> – sunflower
	Magnesium	<b>Veg</b> – spinach, watercress, avocado, peppers, broccoli, brussle sprouts, green cabbage, watercress/ <b>Nuts</b> – Almonds, brazil nuts, cashews, peanuts, macadamias, pistachios, walnuts, pecan / <b>Seeds</b> – pumpkin, sunflower, poppy/ <b>Wholegrains</b> – oatmeal, wheatbran, long grain rice, buckwheat, barley, quinoa/ <b>Dairy</b> – plain yoghurt/ <b>Legumes</b> – baked beans/ <b>Fruit</b> – banana, kiwi, blackberries, strawberries, orange, raisins/ <b>Sweet</b> – chocolate
	Selenium	<b>Wholegrains</b> – wheat germ, brewers yeast / <b>Meat</b> – calf liver, turkey breast / <b>Fish/seafood</b> – Cod, Tuna, Halibut, Salmon, Shrimp, / <b>Vegetables</b> – mushrooms, garlic, spinach / sunflower seeds / legumes – tofu/ <b>Nuts</b> – brazil/ <b>Wholegrains</b> – barley, rye, oats, long grain brown rice/ <b>Dairy</b> – mozzarella cheese / <b>Seeds</b> – mustard, sunflower
Stress	Vitamin B6	<b>Wholegrains</b> – brown rice, oats, bran, barley / <b>Fruit</b> – bananas, mango/ <b>Fish</b> – tuna, trout, salmon/ <b>Veg</b> – avocado, watercress, bok choy, potato/ <b>Meat</b> – chicken, pork loin, turkey/ <b>Beans</b> – lima beans, soy beans/ <b>Pulses</b> – Chick Peas/ <b>Seeds</b> – sunflower
	Vitamin B3	<b>Wholegrain</b> – brown rice, rice bran, wheatgerm / <b>Veg</b> – broccoli, mushrooms, cabbage, brussel sprouts, courgette, squash/ <b>Nuts</b> – peanuts/ <b>Meat</b> – beef liver, beef kidney, pork, turkey, chicken/ <b>Fish</b> – tuna, salmon/ <b>Seeds</b> – sunflower seeds
	Magnesium	<b>Veg</b> – spinach, watercress, avocado, peppers, broccoli, brussle sprouts, green cabbage, watercress/ <b>Nuts</b> – Almonds, brazil nuts, cashews, peanuts, macadamias, pistachios, walnuts, pecan / <b>Seeds</b> – pumpkin, sunflower, poppy/ <b>Wholegrains</b> – oatmeal, wheatbran, long grain rice, buckwheat, barley, quinoa/ <b>Dairy</b> – plain yoghurt/ <b>Legumes</b> – baked beans/ <b>Fruit</b> – banana, kiwi, blackberries, strawberries, orange, raisins/ <b>Sweet</b> – chocolate
Confusion	Vitamin B12	<b>Meat</b> – calf liver, chicken, turkey, lamb/ <b>Fish/Seafood</b> – salmon, halibut, bass, tuna, shrimp, trout, oysters, crab, clams/ <b>Dairy Products</b> – cottage cheese, low fat yoghurt, boiled or poached eggs, milk
	Zinc	<b>Seafood/fish</b> – oysters, mussels, shrimp / <b>Cereals</b> – fortified breakfast cereal/ <b>Nuts</b> – cashews, walnuts, almonds/ <b>Dairy</b> – mozzarella, Swiss, cheddar cheeses, low fat yoghurt / <b>Pulses</b> – chick peas, kidney beans, baked beans, lima beans/ <b>Legumes</b> – lentils, miso/ <b>Meat</b> – chicken (dark meat), turkey, lamb, pork, ground beef/ <b>Seeds</b> – pumpkin, sesame/ <b>Vegetables</b> – spinach, mushrooms, squash, asparagus, broccoli <b>Fruit</b> – blackberries, kiwi
Insomnia	Magnesium	<b>Veg</b> – spinach, watercress, avocado, peppers, broccoli, brussle sprouts, green cabbage, watercress/ <b>Nuts</b> – Almonds, brazil nuts, cashews, peanuts, macadamias, pistachios,



Are you experiencing...?	Your diet may lack	Foods which contain these nutrients
<b>Blank Mind</b>	<b>Zinc</b>	walnuts, pecan / <b>Seeds</b> – pumpkin, sunflower, poppy/ <b>Wholegrains</b> – oatmeal, wheatbran, long grain rice, buckwheat, barley, quinoa/ <b>Dairy</b> – plain yoghurt/ <b>Legumes</b> – baked beans/ <b>Fruit</b> – banana, kiwi, blackberries, strawberries, orange, raisins/ <b>Sweet</b> – chocolate
<b>Loss of Appetite</b>	<b>Zinc</b>	<b>Seafood/fish</b> – oysters, mussels, shrimp / <b>Cereals</b> – fortified breakfast cereal/ <b>Nuts</b> – cashews, walnuts, almonds/ <b>Dairy</b> – mozzarella, Swiss, cheddar cheeses, low fat yoghurt – chicken (dark meat), turkey, lamb, pork, ground beef/ <b>Seeds</b> – lentils, miso/ <b>Meat</b> sesame/ <b>Vegetables</b> – spinach, mushrooms, squash, asparagus, broccoli <b>Fruit</b> – blackberries, kiwi
<b>Lack of Motivation</b>	<b>Zinc</b>	<b>Seafood/fish</b> – oysters, mussels, shrimp / <b>Cereals</b> – fortified breakfast cereal/ <b>Nuts</b> – cashews, walnuts, almonds/ <b>Dairy</b> – mozzarella, Swiss, cheddar cheeses, low fat yoghurt – chicken (dark meat), turkey, lamb, pork, ground beef/ <b>Seeds</b> – lentils, miso/ <b>Meat</b> sesame/ <b>Vegetables</b> – spinach, mushrooms, squash, asparagus, broccoli <b>Fruit</b> – blackberries, kiwi
	<b>Tyrosine</b>	<b>Seafood/fish</b> – oysters, mussels, shrimp / <b>Cereals</b> – fortified breakfast cereal/ <b>Nuts</b> – cashews, walnuts, almonds/ <b>Dairy</b> – mozzarella, Swiss, cheddar cheeses, low fat yoghurt – chicken (dark meat), turkey, lamb, pork, ground beef/ <b>Seeds</b> – lentils, miso/ <b>Meat</b> sesame/ <b>Vegetables</b> – spinach, mushrooms, squash, asparagus, broccoli <b>Fruit</b> – blackberries, kiwi <b>Lean meat</b> – turkey, tuna, chicken liver, beef liver/ <b>Dairy</b> – Cheddar, stilton, boursault, camembert, emmenthal, gruyere, mozzarella, parmesan, swiss cheeses, sour cream/ <b>Veg</b> – avocados, green beans tofu, miso soup, soy sauce, spinach, yeast extract (marmite etc)/ <b>Fruit</b> – bananas, canned figs, plums, raisins, tomatoes, prunes

**Disclaimer**

This information is intended as a guide only. Some foods may cause allergic reactions. If you have any dietary concerns or feel you may be anxious or depressed or experiencing any other mental health problem, you should consult your GP or medical advisor.

## The Container

*This technique is useful for clients who have difficulty handling distress between sessions. If using EMDR, this technique will slow down processing, but offers safety between sessions.*



I want you to bring some sort of secure container to your mind's eye, perhaps in this room, or in another secure place. This container will be strong enough to hold all this disturbing stuff – the memories, images, thoughts, physical sensations, sounds, smells, emotions.



What would this container have to be like in order to securely hold your distress? (e.g. a safe, office drawer, shipping container, crate,) Can you describe it to me? What is it? What colour is it? How big is it? What does it look like? What is it made of? What makes it safe and secure?

Now imagine taking the distressing images and putting them inside or sending them to the container, then shut the door.

Now take the distressing thoughts..... (then go through sounds, physical sensations, smells, emotions, thoughts).

Anything else that needs to go in there?

Now shut the door securely. How do we make the door more secure? OK, can you do that now? Is it secure now? Is there anything else you need to do to make it more secure?



How does this feel now?

Shall we leave this container in the room here, or is there a different secure place where we can leave this container?

During the week (or until next time), if anything disturbing comes up, just imagine sending it here (there) and putting it all in this container.

*Alternatively:*

### **Close the Book**

Imagine putting everything on the pages of a book. Now close the book and put it away...



### **Burn a DVD (especially for distressing video images)**

Imagine burning those distressing memories or images onto a blank DVD. OK, have you done that? Now imagine putting the DVD in a case, in a secure place...



## Script for Teaching Safe/Calm Place to the Child

*“OK, so I want to do something that’s called Safe/Calm Place. We can use Safe/Calm Place at the end of sessions or between sessions. I want you to learn how to use Safe/Calm Place, so we’re going to practice it.”*

Step 1: Picture (Image): *“Can you think about a real place, or imaginary place that makes you feel safe/calm/relaxed or happy? What place makes you feel this way the most? Do you have a picture of it?”* (If appropriate, the therapist allows the child to draw a picture of the image.)

Step 2: Emotions and sensations. *“Think about that safe/comfortable/relaxed place. What feeling do you have?”* (Therapist pauses; if the child does not respond, therapist provides examples of feelings to educate child.) *“Do you feel relaxed, comfortable, safe, happy, excited? Where do you feel that \_\_\_ feeling in your body?”* (Therapist pauses, and if the child appears confused, therapist provides examples.) *“Well, some kids feel it in their heads, some people feel it in their tummy, some feel it in their heart. Where do you feel it? Can you touch it?”*

Step 3: Enhancement: The therapist then says, *“Think about that \_\_\_ picture, and that \_\_\_ feeling, and where you feel it in your body, and let’s turn on \_\_\_ [BLS] for a few seconds.”* Stop BLS and say, *“Tell me what happened now?”* (If the child feels better, the therapist should do several more sets of BLS. If the child’s positive emotions do not intensify, the therapist can try alternative BLS until the child reports improvement.)

Step 4: Cue word(s): *“If we could pick one word that would help to remind me how you feel right now, what word would that be? (Pause for response.) Ok, so when I say \_\_\_, what do you notice?”* (Add a set of BLS.)

Step 5: Self-cuing: *“Now I want you to say the word \_\_\_ and when you say it notice what you’re feeling.”*

Step 6: Cuing with disturbance: *“Now let’s practice with your word. I want you to think about one little tiny thing that bothers you just a little bit and notice where you feel that in your body.”* (No BLS used at this point.)

Step 7: Self-cuing with disturbance: The therapist then asks the client to bring up a disturbing thought once again and to practice the Safe/Calm Place exercise, this time without the therapist’s assistance, to its relaxing conclusion.

Step 8: Homework: Encourage the client to practice Safe/Calm Place Exercise and the word for cuing the safe/calm place.