

Anxiety and Stress Playbook For Children



To The Parents:

I have written this “playbook” for the purpose of helping young children deal with their anxieties and their fears. Very young children can and do experience anxiety much like adults do, the big difference is that they do not have the experience to understand why they feel the way that they do nor do they have the coping skills. At this time, in our societal history, there are the normal things to worry about and there are some things outside of us, like COVID for example, that have an impact on all of us emotionally. Life can be complex and we have to deal with these complexities and so do our children. I have written this “playbook” with the idea of helping children to understand how they feel, why they feel as they do and how to cope with how they feel, which is very important. It is always important that parents be able to talk with their children so with that in mind, this ‘playbook” will also help the parent better understand how their child feels, and be able to talk with their child which will help give the child a sense of understanding and feeling of control over their anxiety.

Jon Deeks

What does anxiety feel like?

Sometimes anxiety can feel like butterflies in your stomach.



Sometimes anxiety can feel like fear.



Sometimes anxiety can feel like thoughts that will not leave your brain.



Sometimes anxiety can feel like one big gigantic worry all the time.

WORRY WORRY WORRY WORRY
WORRY

What does anxiety feel like to you? _____

Draw what anxiety feels like to you.

What is Anxiety???

Anxiety is a feeling or an emotion of nervousness, or worry or fear. Some of the time anxiety does not make us feel very good.

Did you know that there is some good Anxiety?

- 1. Anxiety can be a good motivator, it can help us get things done.**
- 2. Anxiety helps to keep us alert about the things that we need to do, even some safety things.**
- 3. Everyone has some Anxiety.**

When is Anxiety not good?

Anxiety is not good when it is soooooooooo much that it gets in the way of our sleep, hurts our body and troubles our thoughts.

When do you feel the most anxiety?

With what people? _____

In what place? _____

What is happening or what is the situation? _____

Describe what your anxiety feels like. _____

Draw a picture of your anxiety.

Exercises

Breathe into your belly



Blow on a pinwheel



Calm Down Coping Skills

Drink water



Go for a run



What is in your head (thoughts)?

Draw



Here are some of the ways you can calm down nervous, anxious thoughts:

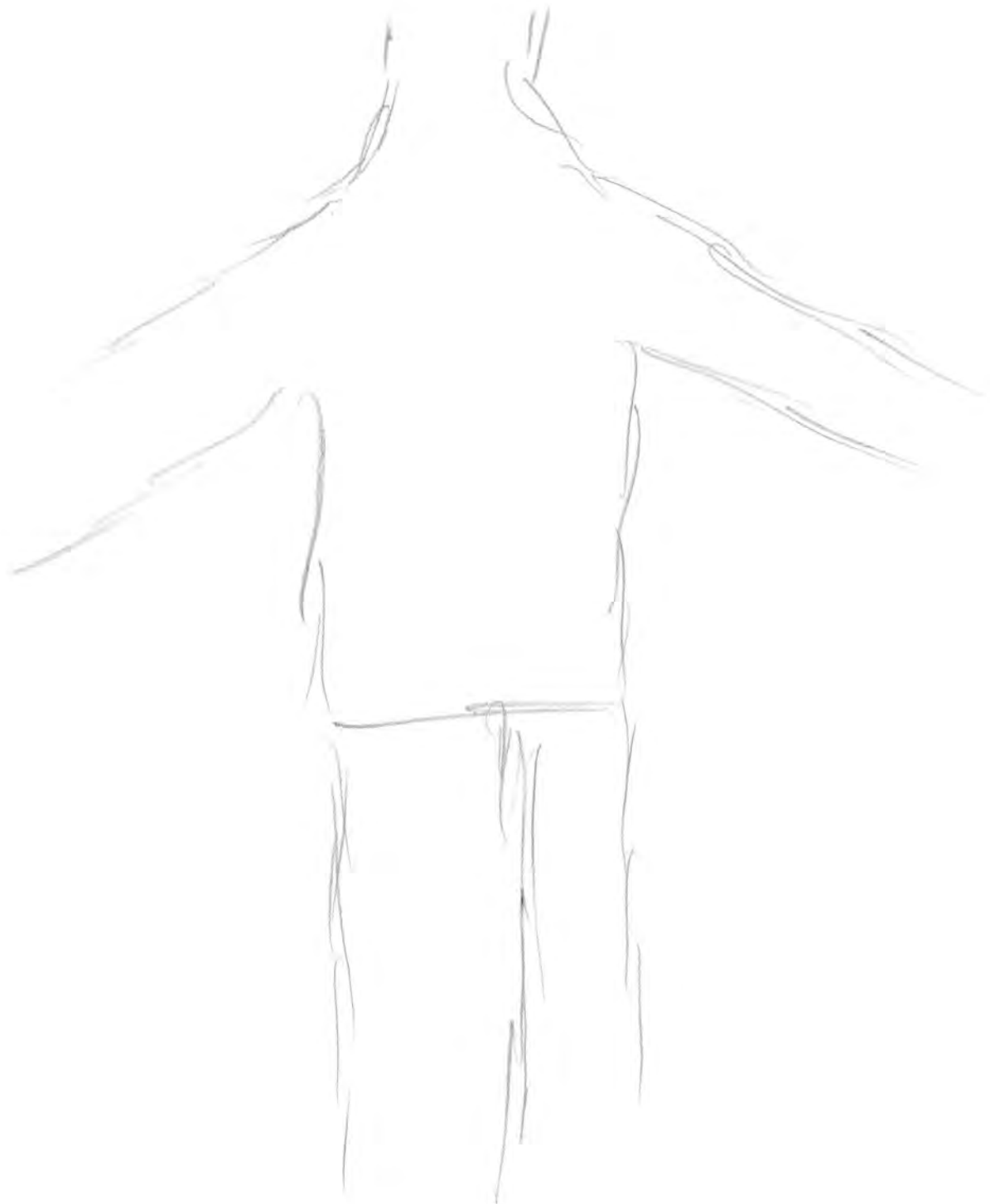
1. Tell your self over and over that everything will be okay.
2. Talk to someone you trust about how you feel.
3. Get good rest, eat food and exercise.
4. Tell your self that things are never as bad as your thoughts are telling you.
5. Use distraction, play and get out of your head. Think about some other more positive or nice things.



Give a bear hug



What are you feeling in your stomach? Draw what you are feeling.



Things you can do to relax your body:

1. Take a nap.
2. Take deep breaths, close your eyes, count to 10 and breath in and breath out.
3. Meditation, close your eyes, breath, think of something nice and just be still.
4. Talk to someone that you trust.
5. Do a sport or a physical activity to get all of the stress out.



Close your eyes and

Imagine . . .

That you are as light as a leaf or as a feather floating in a gentle breeze.

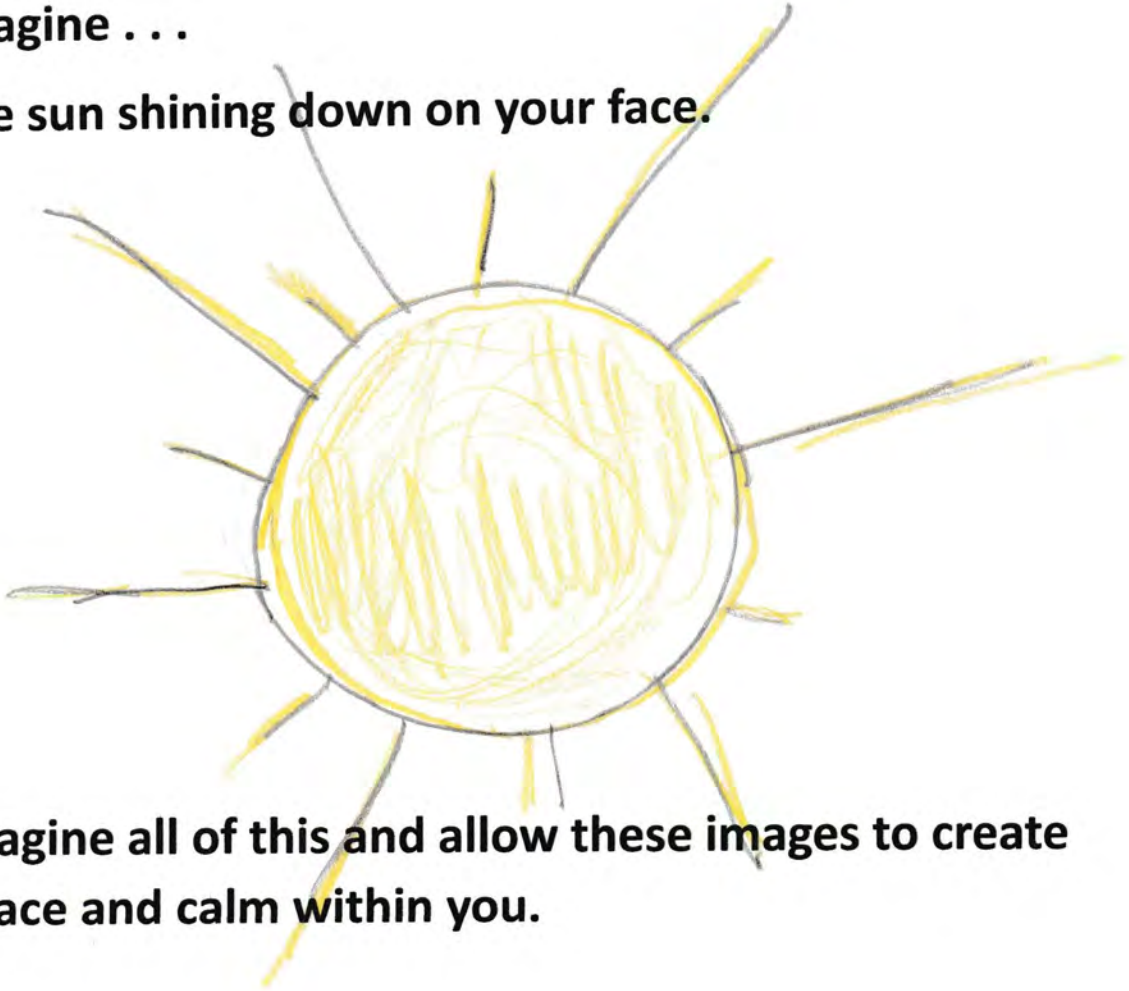


Imagine, that you are lying in a soft bed of grass with wild flowers all around you.



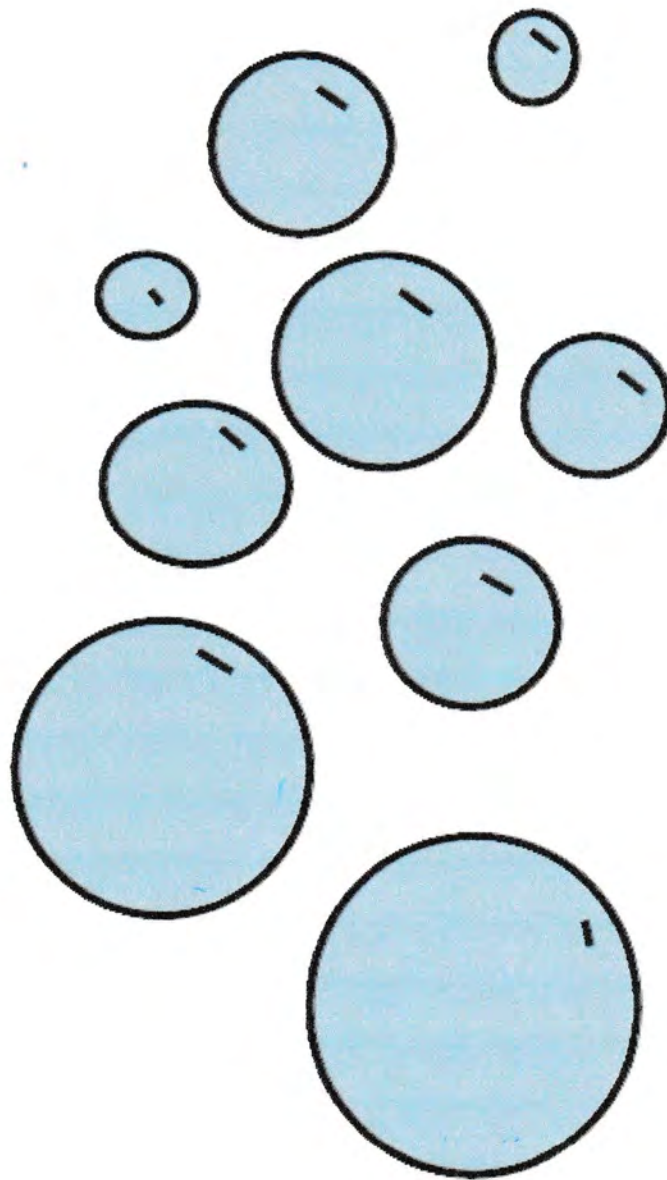
Imagine . . .

The sun shining down on your face.



**Imagine all of this and allow these images to create
peace and calm within you.**

Write a fear in each bubble & watch them float away.



If you did not have any anxiety, how would you be, how would your life be?

Write _____

Or Draw

If you had super powers, what super powers would you have? Draw your self as a Super Hero defeating the villain, Anxiety.



Take a vacation (playcation) from your worries.

Where would you go? _____

Draw a place that you could go to get away from all of your worries.



Think of all of the things that you can say to yourself to help yourself calm down and to feel better, for example "Everything will be okay."

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.



Circle all of your strengths, the things you are good at:

Smart

Confident

Caring

Good Friend

Peaceful

Curious

Listener

Good at Sports

Follows rules

Helpful

Problem solver

Kind

Empathetic

Hard working

Playful

Artistic

Strong

Good manners

Explorer

Good at Math

Reader

Dreamer

Active

Speaks well

Write other strengths that you have:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Your strengths can become tools to help you with your anxiety, for example if you are good at solving problems you may be able to come up with some ways of helping yourself calm down. If you are creative you might use your creativity to help you calm down.





Write a poem or a song that will help you to become calm, you might even whistle. Read your poem or sing your song when you are feeling anxious.



Things I have control of:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Things I do not have control of:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Things I am afraid of:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Things I am not afraid of:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Other _____

How can you use the things you are in control of to help you with the things that you are afraid of?

Write down what you are worried about in the future, then write down what is now.

What if _____

Change to what is now _____

What if _____

Change to what is now _____

What if _____

Change to what is now _____

Problem Solving

This is my problem _____

This is how it makes me feel _____

This is how I solved my problem _____

This is my problem _____

This is how it makes me feel _____

This is how I solved my problem _____

Make A List of All The Things That Make You Feel Safe

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

Ways to Help Yourself Calm Down

Meditation Exercise –

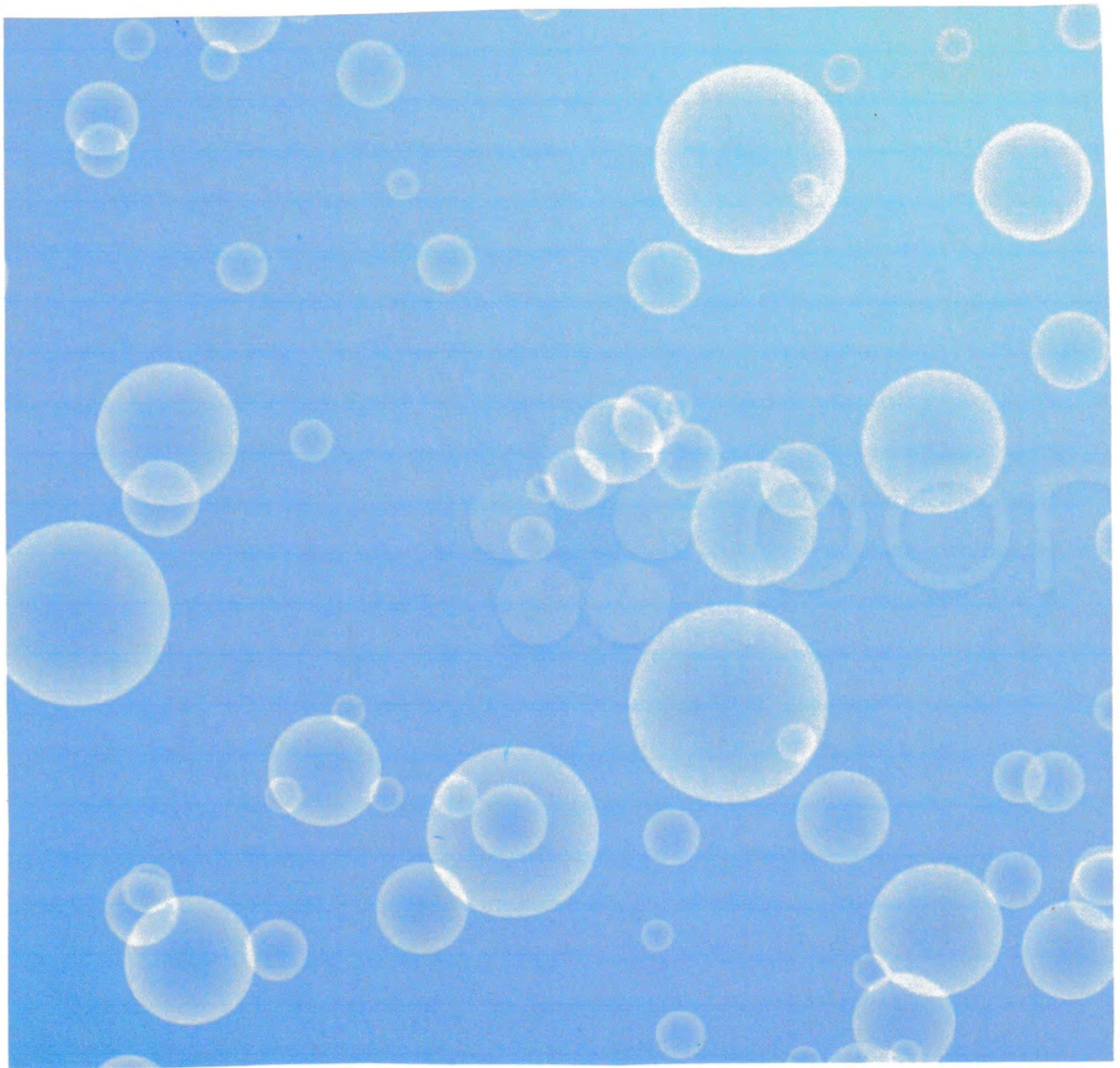
Step 1 -Take in a deep breath and hold it to the count of 5.

Step 2- Breath out to the count of 5.

Step 3 – Visualize a place or a person that makes you feel safe and comfortable.

Step 4 – Repeat this exercise until you feel calm.

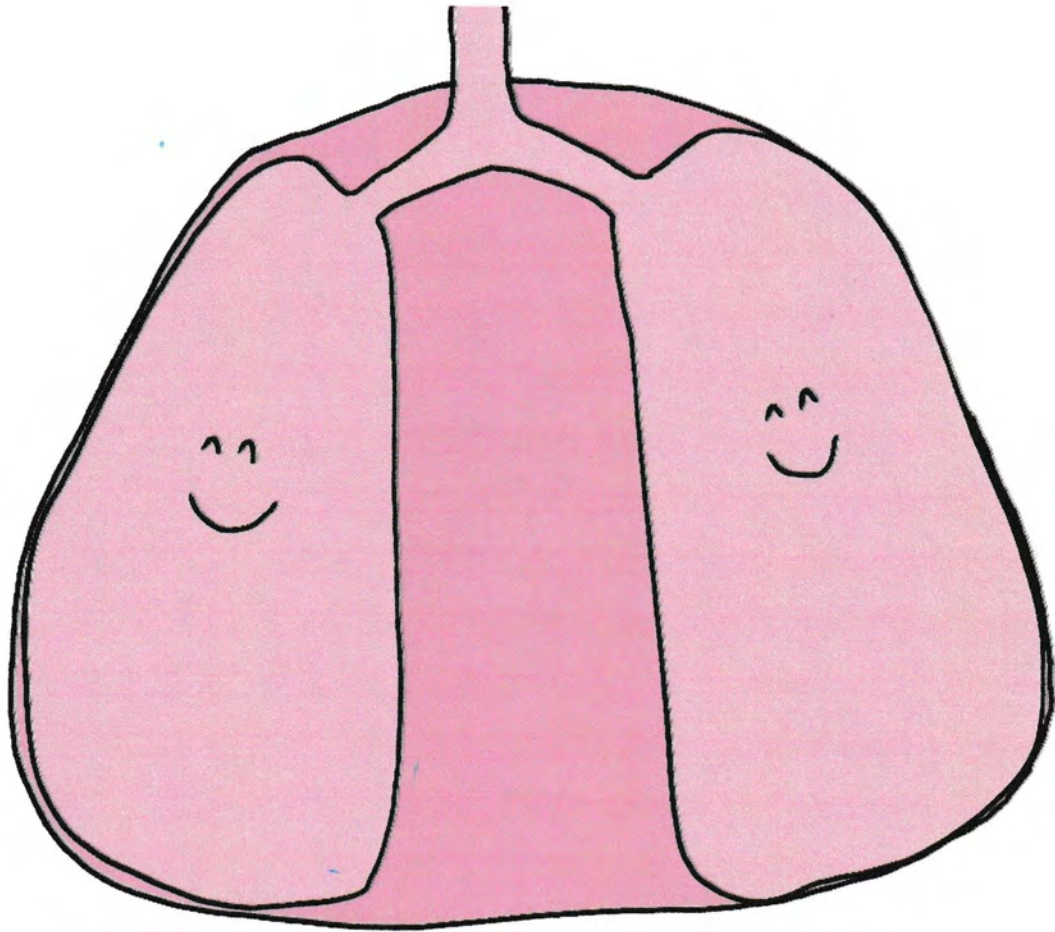
Write a worry in each bubble and watch them float away.



Let your senses help to calm you

1. What sounds help to make you calm?
2. What can you picture or look at that makes you calm?
3. What can you taste or eat that makes you calm?
4. What can you touch or feel that makes you calm?
5. What smells make you calm?

**See your lungs like large balloons, when you need to calm down,
slowly breathe in and fill those balloons with air.**



- Positive self-talk, example, "Everything is going to be O.K.", "There is nothing to worry about" "I always do the best I can do and that is good enough."
- For five minutes, take deep breaths and let all of the worry drift away.
- Talk to someone who seems very calming to you.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Exercise; ride your bike, play a sport.
- Put cool water on your face, drink cool water, take a shower.
- Hum, sing or whistle.
- Bake something.
- Draw or create something.
- Do something to distract yourself from your worries.
- Yoga.
- Lie down with your favorite stuffed animal, toy or blanket.
- Watch something on T.V. or a movie that makes you laugh.

- Close your eyes and meditate, think of your favorite place or a peaceful place.
- Tell yourself over and over again that you are a strong and good person.
- Plant some flowers or do some gardening.
- Play with your pet or go to a Pet Store.
- Write in your journal all of your feelings.
- Make a list of all of the things that are good in your life and look at the list every day.
- Blow bubbles.
- Laugh a lot by yourself, with family and with friends.

How Parents Can Help their Children Deal with Their Anxiety

- If your child says that they are nervous or fearful, whatever the feeling, acknowledge their feelings that is, do not tell them that they should not feel as they do or that there is no reason to feel as they do. Let them know that you are listening to them, that you understand how they feel and give comfort. Say things like, "I understand you are worried."
- Having structure in your home is good for a number of reasons but for the anxious child, knowing what to expect and when to expect it, is very important in terms of their being able to deal with their feelings.
- If your child is struggling to identify their feelings, you can help by helping them put a label on their feelings. You can do this using artist methods (drawing pictures) or reading to them and asking them how they think the main characters in the book might feel. Then asking your child, have they ever felt that way.
- Notice out loud when you think your child might be experiencing fear or anxiety and then asking if they would like to talk about it.
- Talk to your child about your own childhood feelings; when you were anxious or fearful and how you dealt with those feelings.
- Role model healthy ways to manage anxiety.

- Talk to your child's teacher in order to know if the child exhibits the same behavior in school. It is also important to rule out any bullying experiences. Enlist your child's teacher's help with their anxiety if they are having problems in the classroom or with their peers.
- Help your child to become a better problem solver by role playing problem scenarios. Let your child know that there is always more than one solution to every problem. No problem is hopeless or unsolvable. Help your child to feel safe and trust in themselves.
- Give your child responsibilities, encouraging them that they can accomplish these things and praising them when they do. Show them how to do things but do not do everything for them. Also try not to put them in situations of pressure or pressure them. For example, if a child is working very hard, a C grade may be the best that they can do.
- Limit your child's stress; let them know that a mistake is not the end of the world. Remember the concept of "perfect" is a construct, it is not real and it is not achievable. In sports try to encourage the "having fun" part and not so much the "winning" part. If you give your child negative feedback, first tell them what they have done well, then what can be improved.

- Discourage procrastination; this creates tremendous anxiety for the anxious child. Help them with time management or the fear that they have about beginning a project.
- Model patience!!!
- Provide opportunities for your child to succeed, give them successful experiences, whatever their interest; art drama sports, science, etc.
- Encourage your child's coping skills; deep breathing, an activity that helps your child to relax, writing in a journal, listening to music, exercise. Give your child a place to go where they may calm down and then once calm, encourage them to talk about their feelings.