WHAT IS ANXIETY?
PART 2

FEBRUARY 2025 | ***ISSUE #2***

WHAT IS COPING?

According to the Children's Hospital of Colorado, Coping commonly refers to an individual's effort to regulate emotions, cognitions, physiology, behavior and situations in reaction to stressful events or challenging circumstances. In other words, coping is anything that one does in an attempt to manage stress. During stressful situations, coping skills can help to diffuse or "turn down the volume" of intense emotion, allowing for increased control over an individual's response to the situation.

COPING SKILLS SERVE A VARIETY OF PURPOSES:

- Self-soothing: engages the body's natural calming system
- Distraction: redirects to more pleasurable activities to decrease intensity of emotion
- Opposite action: activities that generate an emotion or experience counter to the distressing one
- Emotional awareness: activities that promote emotional exploration and increase clarity
- Mindfulness: focuses on being grounded in the present

DID YOU KNOW...

"Like many other mental health conditions, anxiety has an environmental as well as a genetic component. Studies show that kids whose parents struggle with anxiety are two to seven times more likely to develop an anxiety disorder themselves. But they do better when their parents' symptoms are under control." (NYYLangone.org)

Examples of Healthy Coping Mechanisms	Examples of Unhealthy Coping Mechanisms
Help your child learn to manage fears. When your child is calm, start a conversation about things they can do to manage fears and worries when they happen. For example, let them know that they can: • **Practice deep breathing and muscle relaxation.** • **Use positive self-talk (for example, "I can try this" instead of "I can't do this").** • **Think of a safe place, such as their bedroom or favorite place outdoors.** • **Gradually facing fears. Consider gradually exposing your child to feared objects or activities.** • **Praise and reward brave behavior: the goal is to cope, not avoid.** **(Examples from healthychildren.org)**	**Unfortunately, some individuals develop unhealthy methods to deal with stress and difficult emotional experiences. Misguided attempts to manage stress may result in:** • **Self-harm behavior** • **Substance abuse** • **Unhealthy eating** • **Social withdrawal** • **Aggression** • **Maladaptive behaviors** **While these coping mechanisms may provide momentary relief, they do not promote long-term health. Learning how to teach coping skills to a child can create life-long habits for better health.** **(Examples from Children's Hospital of Colorado)**

WEST ISLIP UFSD

Health & Wellness Alliance: Mental Health Subcommittee |

WHAT IS ANXIETY?
PART 2

FEBRUARY 2025 | ***ISSUE #2***

WHAT IS PARENTAL/CAREGIVER ANXIETY?

One of the biggest challenges of parenthood is deciding when to let your child take risks and when to be protective. Watching a kid climb a tree or ride a skateboard can be nerve-racking. How do you keep him from breaking his neck without undermining his confidence and independence? "Kids pick up on parents' fears," notes Rebecca Berry, PhD, a psychologist at NYU Langone's Child Study Center. "So when you have the urge to yell, 'Come down from there,' take a few deep breaths. Then ask yourself, 'Is this really something I need to worry about?' In many cases, it isn't."

SUPPORTING PARENTAL ANXIETY

1. Proactive Problem Solving: The first coping strategy is proactive problem-solving. For example, if you are concerned about your toddler bumping your head on the coffee table, installing bumpers or other protective devices around the table's rim can ensure that won't happen. Thinking through and developing task-oriented coping strategies are more likely to reduce your anxiety and contribute to overall psychological well-being.
2. Learning About Child Development: A key way to reduce anxiety is understanding your concerns' root causes. For instance, a greater belief in your parenting capabilities can reduce your parental anxiety. The best way to feel confident and ease your anxiety over not being "the perfect parent" is to learn about child development.
3. Practicing Mindfulness: A growing body of evidence shows that mindfulness-based meditation and self-care practices can substantially reduce your anxiety symptoms without harmful or adverse effects. Becoming aware of, working through, and then letting go of anxious thoughts can help relieve anxiety.
4. Remember Self-Care: As a busy parent, it is not uncommon to forget about the importance of taking care of yourself. However, it is crucial to your mental and physical health and that of your child's to include time to take care of yourself in your daily routine. There are many types of self-care, some of which require very little time. Some examples of self-care practices include mindfulness meditation (as mentioned above), yoga, reading a book, trying a new hobby, or writing in a journal. Another type of self-care is exercise. Engaging in physical activity can boost your mood and energy levels while reducing your anxiety.
5. Try a Social Support Group: Engaging with a group of like-minded individuals who share the same concerns and challenges can make a world of difference. Confide in your partner regarding stressful issues or seek out a peer support group of other parents in your community. Social support can help reduce your anxiety by allowing you to focus on problem-solving skills, planning, and other tools you can use to reduce your worries.
6. Seek Professional Guidance: Do you feel overwhelmed by anxiety and can't seem to get it under control? There are several signs that your anxiety may require professional help. For example, it impedes your daily functioning, leads you to consider self-harm, or is causing depression.

(https://www.lukincenter.com/6-tips-for-coping-with-parental-anxiety/)