

## Middle School Guidance Officer Report

### 4 Ways Parents Can Help Their Children with Anxiety, According to a Clinical Psychologist.



Catherine is a busy working mum of two pre-teenage children who both suffer with moderate cases of anxiety and depression. While trying to help her kids navigate the complexities of their feelings, she has asked herself in darker moments whether or not she is responsible for their issues.

"I have had my own journey with anxiety and depression and so the mother-guilt plays in the back of my mind often and I wonder, 'did I cause this?' My son suffers with anxiety whereas my daughter struggles with low mood and depression, so they have quite different issues and needs."

Catherine believes that her son's anxiety began when he was just a toddler after he became separated from her in a shopping centre.

"He was always a thoughtful and sensitive child and I remember how traumatised he seemed that day when he thought he had lost me. It was only a matter of seconds and yet since that moment he has always had a thing about getting lost or trapped.

"On a recent bush walk he became extremely agitated and panicked to the point where we had to stop and calm him down as he was verbally repeating to himself that he 'couldn't keep going.' It was very distressing for the whole family."

Psychologist and mum-of-three, Giuliette Moran, of Empowering Parents, says that while seeking professional support is advised as early as possible, there are some first-steps you can make to help your child/children.

"When a child appears to be struggling with a difficult feeling, it is important to acknowledge it and support them to identify more appropriate ways to act in order to manage and regulate their emotions."

Most parents use their common sense when it comes to encouraging and guiding their children, but one of the things we have found from our research is that parental encouragement must be consistent and given often.

Aside from the powerful role that parents play in helping their child to overcome their mental health issues, it is important to give children skills to help them manage their anxiety. One technique we use is called 'detective thinking' where we ask the child to analyse the anxious thought to work out if that particular thought is realistic or fair.



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Another option is participating in 'The Cool Kids Anxiety Program' officially launched in the early 2000s and the program has helped close to 2,000 children and their families in Australia and many more around the world. The demand for professional help for children with anxiety issues is high, but according to Professor Rapee, there are a number of ways parents can decipher if the behaviour in their children is normal, or the beginning of an anxiety issue.

"Our research shows that after completing the Cool Kids program 60 per cent of children are completely anxiety free immediately and 75 per cent completely anxiety free six months later.

The good news is that according to Professor Rapee, the majority of children do move on from anxiety, even those who have parents with mental health issues.

– Laura Jackel

Read More: <https://www.mamamia.com.au/anxiety-in-children/>

Cool Kids Anxiety Program: <https://www.mq.edu.au/about/campus-services-and-facilities/hospital-and-clinics/centre-for-emotional-health-clinic/programs-for-children-and-teenagers>

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