

Parental/Caregiver Involvement

Helping Your Child Manage Anxiety

- **Reward approach:** Reward your child's efforts. Be careful not to react with disappointment or punishment if the results aren't perfect. Make sure that your rewards are meaningful. If they are important to your child, they will help to motivate your child.
- **Teach coping skills:** Help your child develop healthy independence and confidence. Allow him/her to try new things, go to new places, and to make mistakes! Allow him/her to struggle on his/her own – this way of learning will last longer and confidence will grow faster.
- **Encourage facing up to difficult challenges:** Anxious children will tend to avoid certain situations. If you allow that avoidance to interfere with their daily lives, this could actually reinforce the anxiety related to the situation. Some avoidance behaviors have become a pattern. It will take time to encourage your child to deal with, rather than avoid these situations. Your support and guidance will help your child begin to meet these challenges.
- **Model coping and problem-solving in difficult situations.**
- **Set-up rules and consequences** for behavior ahead of time so that there is no arguing about them. Remember: pick and choose important areas for structure, and the punishment/reward should fit the behavior.
- **BE CONSISTENT** with providing consequences! Further, all caretakers should be consistent with each other in setting rules and disciplining.
- **Validate the anxiety and don't dismiss it:** Let your child know that you understand that she/he is feeling significant distress and that you will be there to help whenever needed (but that you are there to help them problem-solve and cope, not avoid).
- **Reinforce** practicing relaxation exercises and provide your child with a quiet place.

