

# How to help your child to....

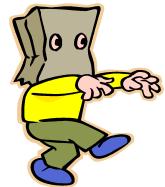


## Overcome Fears and Worries

# STRATEGIES TO HELP CHILDREN AT HOME

It is normal for all children to experience fears at various stages through their development. As young children have difficulty expressing their feelings in words they will often present with sore tummies or headaches and also tantrums.

*If your child is presenting with physical symptoms have these checked by your G.P. in the first instance to make sure this is not a medical issue.*



Some common childhood fears are:

- Nightmares
- Parental separation
- Dark
- Monsters
- Animals
- Loud noises

#### **What Parents & Carers can do to help**

Don't let your child avoid a feared situation such as dogs, swimming, sleeping in their own bed as this will only reinforce the unhelpful behaviour.

Be patient and reassuring. Don't scold or punish your child, instead be confident that they can cope with these situations.

Praise your child's brave behaviour. Anytime they face their fear, be specific about how proud you are of them.

Sticker Chart. Reward charts can be useful to motivate your child and give them encouragement to face their fear



Ignore tantrums. Too much attention to anxious responses can keep them going so be careful to get the balance right between being supportive and not reacting too much to the fear. If a physical cause has been ruled out, don't give too much attention to sore heads and tummies.

For children who become anxious when they have to leave their parents, make sure you have a predictable routine for when you have to leave and for when you will return to reduce their anxiety. Always return when you **say you will!**

Model non-fearful behaviour. If you scream and jump every time you see a spider then your children will often do the same. Show them how to stay calm and deal with situations that may be frightening. Even if you are nervous, try and stay calm!

Make small steps towards increasing your child's confidence around their fear. If they fear dogs, start by reading books about dogs, then go to the park and watch some dogs play. Build up these little steps until they feel confident to pet a dog. Praise all these brave behaviours!



Set up a reward programme/star chart to motivate your child to face their feared situation.

Make your child feel safe & loved during the day



Teach your children to recognise when they are feeling anxious and what happens to their body, how their muscles become stiff and their tummies get tight. Then you can teach them to use relaxation exercises at these times.

Practice deep breathing and relaxation exercises to help your child stay calm:

Use a straw. Take a really deep breath in and you have to blow all the air out through the straw. Don't let any escape out the sides of your mouth!

Pretend there is a big balloon in your tummy. Breathe in so that you fill the whole balloon up in one go. Now let the air out really, slowly so that the balloon doesn't fly away!

Take your bubbles. Blow out really fast and try to make as many small bubbles as you can. Now take a really big, deep breath in and blow out but this time you have to try and make one huge bubble. You will have to blow out really slowly and very steady.

Think of a happy place or a happy time that you can close your eyes and go to when you feel anxious.

