

# FAMILY RESOURCE

C O N N E C T I O N

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## Helping Children Handle Worry

Children do not have to pay bills, cook dinners, or manage carpools. But, just like adults, they have their share of daily demands and things that do not go smoothly. If frustrations and disappointments pile up, children, too, can get worried.

It is natural for all children to worry at times, and because of personality and temperament differences, some may worry more than others. Luckily, parents can help children manage worry and tackle everyday problems with ease. Children who can manage develop a sense of confidence and optimism that will help them master life's challenges, big and small.

### What Do Children Worry About?

What children worry about is often related to the age and stage they are in. Young children may worry about whether or not a certain caregiver or friend will be at their school that day. They may even worry about taking naps or what is for lunch. Older children and preteens typically worry about things like their changing bodies, fitting in with friends, grades and tests and that goal they missed at the soccer game, or whether they will make the team. They may worry about social troubles like cliques, peer pressure, or whether they will be bullied, teased, or left out.

Because they are beginning to feel more a part of the larger world around them, preteens may also worry about world events or issues they hear about on the news or at school. Things like terrorism, war, pollution, global warming, endangered animals, and natural disasters can become a source of worry.

**“Worrying is like rocking in a rocking chair, it’s something to do, but it won’t get you anywhere.”**



(continued)

### Mission

To open “New Horizons” of self-esteem and potential for the little people entrusted to our care, their families, and our employees by providing and continuously improving the best child development on the planet!



## *Helping Children Conquer Worry*

To help your child manage what's worrying them:

Find out what is on their minds. Be available and take an interest in what is happening at their center or school, on the team, and with your child's friends. Take casual opportunities to ask how it is going. As you listen to stories of the day's events, be sure to ask about what your child thinks and feels about what happened. If your child is too young to communicate these thoughts, you may want to ask your child's teacher or the center director.

If your child can communicate and if your child seems to be worried about something, ask about it. Encourage your child to put what is bothering them into words. Ask for key details and listen attentively. Sometimes just sharing the story with you can help lighten their load.

Show you care and understand. Being interested in your child's concerns shows they are important to you, too, and helps your child feel supported and understood. Reassuring comments can help, but usually only after you have heard your child out. Tell them that you understand their feelings and the problem.

***Be sure to hear about the upbeat stuff, too. Give plenty of airtime to the good things that happen and let your child tell you what they think and feel about successes, achievements, and positive experiences.***



Guide your child to solutions. You can help reduce worries by helping your child learn to deal constructively with challenging situations. When your child tells you about a problem, offer to help come up with a solution together. If your son is worried about an upcoming event, for example, offering to help him prepare for it can help lessen his concern about it.

In most situations, resist the urge to jump in and fix a problem for your child — instead, think it through and come up with possible solutions together. Problem-solve with your child, rather than for them. By taking an active role, your child will learn how to tackle a problem independently.

Keep things in perspective. Children sometimes worry about things that have already happened. That is where parents can offer some big-picture perspective. Maybe your daughter got a really bad haircut that sent her home in tears. Let her know you understand how upset she feels, then remind her that her hair will grow and help her come up with a cool new way to style it in the meantime. If your son is worried about whether he will get a certain position on the soccer team that he really wants, remind him that all the positions are important and that there may be other chances to have that position another season. Acknowledge how important this is to him and let him know that, regardless of the outcome, you are proud that he is playing soccer.

Without minimizing a child's feelings, point out that many problems are temporary and solvable, and that there will be better days and other opportunities to try again. Teaching children to keep problems in perspective can lessen their worry and help build strength, resilience, and the optimism to try again. Remind your child that whatever happens, things will be OK.

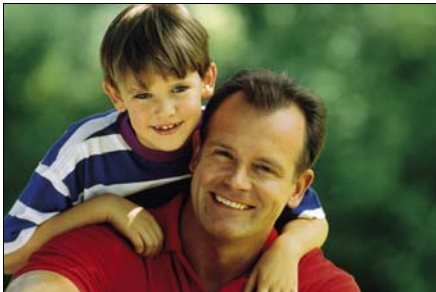
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**Make a difference.** Sometimes children worry about big stuff, like terrorism, war, or global warming, issues that they hear about at school or on the news. Parents can help by discussing these issues, offering accurate information, and correcting any misconceptions their child might have. Try to reassure your child by talking about what adults are doing to tackle the problem to keep them safe.

Be aware that your own reaction to global events affects your child, too. If you express anger and stress about a world event that is beyond your control, your child will likely react that way too. But if you express your concern by taking a proactive approach to make a positive difference, your child will feel more optimistic and empowered to do the same. So look for things you can do with your child to help all of you feel like you are making a positive difference.

You may not be able to go stop a war, for example, but your family can contribute to an organization that works for peace or helps children in war-torn countries. Consider performing a community service to give your child the experience of volunteering.



**Offer reassurance and comfort.** Sometimes when children are worried, what they need most is a parent's reassurance and comfort. It might come in the form of a hug, some heartfelt words, or time spent together. It helps children to know that, whatever happens, parents will be there with love and support.

Sometimes children need parents to show them how to let go of worry rather than dwell on it. Know when it is time to move on, and help your child shift gears. Lead the way by introducing a topic that is more upbeat or an activity that will create a lighter mood.

**Be a good role model.** **The most powerful lessons we teach our children are the ones we demonstrate. Your response to your own worries can go a long way toward teaching your kids how to deal with everyday challenges.**

If you are rattled or angry when dealing with a to-do list that is too long, your child will learn that as the appropriate response to stress.

Instead, look on the bright side and voice optimistic thoughts about your own situations at least as frequently as you talk about what worries you. Set a good example with your reactions to problems and setbacks. Responding with optimism and confidence will teach your child that problems are temporary and tomorrow is another day. Bouncing back with a can-do attitude will help your child do the same. ♥

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