

Why Am I Worried
All the Time Mom?

Treating Anxious
Children with
Naturopathic Medicine

Amy
Rothenberg ND
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Naturopathic medicine and anxiety

- The ND profession has decades of experience treating anxiety, including children who are anxious
- Anxiety is understood in the context of the whole child and within the family dynamic
- Treatment approaches emphasize lifestyle approaches and gentle natural medicines
- Often the apple does not fall far from the tree!

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How do you know your child is anxious:

- They tell you!
- Finds it difficult to focus
- Not sleeping well or having bad dreams
- Appetite changes
- Easy anger or irritability
- Emotional outbursts
- Being worried about things large and/or small
- Having negative, pessimistic thoughts
- Feels fidgety or restless, or using the toilet often
- Lots of crying and/or being clingy
- Physical body complaints like tummy aches, skin problems, headaches not explained by other causes




Photo by [unreadable] on [unreadable]

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How common is anxiety in children?

- About 7 percent of children in America are diagnosed with anxiety
- But that does not include all the other children that are worried, scared or anxious but have not been to a doctor about it
- Statistics show that 6 in 10 children between 3-17 years with anxiety received treatment (1)
- Anxiety is more common as kids get older and in communities living under the poverty line
- Effort to integrate mental and behavioral health assessment and services to pediatric setting, to insure children receive needed services (2)
- NDs always interested in working with the whole person— so it would be a routine part of an office visit, regardless of complaint to inquire about the mental health of the child.

1. Ghandour RM, Sherman LJ, Viatkevich CJ, Ali MM, Lynch SE, Bitsko RH, Blumberg SJ. Prevalence and treatment of depression, anxiety, and conduct problems in U.S. children. *The Journal of Pediatrics*. 2018. Published online before print October 12, 2018 [https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pediatrics.2018.09.011].

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How anxious is your child?

- Recognizing and naming a constellation of symptoms is helpful.
- Naturopathic approaches can be used with any anxious child. If the situation is severe, if there is also depression and/or self-harm, or the risk of self-harm, a team approach with a child psychologist and/or psychiatrist is indicated.
- Do not avoid diagnostic labels, can help to bring in helpful resources and services

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Conversations to have

- Modeling language to describe a range of feelings
 - Age appropriate
 - Articulate some of the more nuanced words
 - Making time and space for conversations
 - Creating that "judgment-free" zone
 - One resource: *How to Talk so Your Kids Listen & Listen so Your Kids Talk*. Mazlich & Farber



xavier-moulton/photographie-MRWtSKmBk-unsplash.jpg

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Create a peaceful environment

- Examining your own level of anxiety and ways it might show
- Creating less mess, less clutter
- Create a predictable daily schedule
- Assess the main stressors in the family
 - Money
 - Siblings
 - Caretaking relatives
 - Screen time discord
 - Unclear expectations
- Avoid discussions of adult stressors in front of children if possible

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**Activities:
basic ideas**




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- If your child is especially anxious ask yourself:
 - When is the last time they ate?
 - When is the last time they slept?
 - And when is the last time you gave them 10 minutes of UNDIVIDED attention?
- Sometimes if you can address these matters, you can curtail feelings of anxiety!
- Remember hugs and snuggle time!
- The role of laughter and humor, being silly together helps!
- Funny books and movies, age appropriate!
- Bring in other loving adults
- Distract with a compliment/ distract with a call for help in the moment for unrelated need

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Activities- physical exercise

- The essential role of physical exercise in the prevention and treatment of anxiety (1)
- Keys include:
 - Finding activities your child enjoys
 - Doing things together as a family
 - Modeling going to get your own exercise
 - Keep introducing new things, bring snacks and water! Watch overheating in summer!
- Juggling
- Running
- Pogo stick
- Dancing
- Bicycling
- Team/ individual s
- Rollerblading
- Mini-tramps
- Yoga for kids




Photo by <https://www.pexels.com/photo/young-woman-juggling/>

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**Activities:
life skills**

- Recall the calming effect for some people, including kids, of routine household chores and home fix-it projects
- Also teaches self-care and self-agency and the unique power of teamwork
 - Dish washing
 - Folding laundry
 - Sweeping
 - Dusting
 - Organizing a closet or drawer
 - Fixing things!
 - Role of pets/caring for pets





Photo credit Photo by CDC on Unsplash

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Outdoor Activities:

- Studies show positive health effects of spending time outdoors(1)
- Insures some time away from screens!
- The sunshine activates vitamin D
- Many opportunities for learning
- Games to enjoy outside
 - I spy!
 - Treasure hunts
 - Learning to use field guides
 - Hide & go seek.



<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6104990/>
Photo by Sam Zera on Unsplash

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**Activities:
creative/calming
pursuits**

- Writing/journaling
- Drawing or Making things
- Cooking/baking
- Making or listening to music
- Making or creating videos/ taking photographs
- computer programming/using apps or programs

Anything where the mind is occupied and the mood is relaxed, getting "in the zone."

Modeling these kinds of things yourself is important, bringing kids along while you do your own similar activities can help





Photo robert-collins-IP_F5BdMn1o-unsplash.jpg

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Empowering Kids




- Self-agency
 - Watch criticism and tone of voice
 - Resist constant correcting
- Encourage kids to take (healthy) risks
 - Learning something new
 - Reaching out to others
- Introduce the idea of helping others & developing a posture of gratitude
 - Family community service? Helping neighbors
 - Gratitude in words and deeds
 - Writing thank you notes

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Teaching Mindfulness Skills to Kids

- Meditation for kids
- Breathing exercises
 - Square breathing
 - Counting breaths
 - Alternate nostril breathing
- Affirmations—share several
 - Be creative, write with your child
- If in your belief systems/family tradition, pray
- One terrific resource for little ones:
ALPHABREATHS by Willard & Reichtschaffen



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Food the best medicine

- Bring kids in on food prep from
 - Thinking of what to eat/ menu planning
 - Food shopping
 - Food prep
 - Clean up
- How your family eats matters
 - Setting your intention
 - With whom?
 - Where?
 - How fast?
 - What else you're doing while you eat
 - Games at the dinner table to encourage conversations: High/ Low/ Cheer, Two Truths and a Lie, Rose, Bud, Thorn




Photo by National Cancer Institute on Unsplash

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The role of diet/nutrition/the microbiome

- Removing allergens
 - How to know what to remove if needed?
- Decreasing processed foods/excess dyes and preservatives
- Decreasing refined sugar
- Many otherwise healthy foods are also good to help reduce anxiety. Foods high in magnesium, zinc, and antioxidants are all associated with lowered anxiety. (1)
- The miraculous microbiome
 - Role in anxiety (2)
 - Gut/brain connection




1. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/natural-strategies-to-ease-anxiety-20160419641>
2. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25988200/>

Photo: desyy-dimcheva-dFU3svrFQ-unsplash.jpg

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The role of natural medicine nutritional supplements and botanicals

- Kid-safe botanicals for anxiety and sleep issues. Consider diffusers.
 - Lavender essential oil (1).
 - Chamomile, tea s good ! (2)
- Nutritional Supplements
 - Theanine, an amino acid found in green tea and some mushrooms, helps calm the mind without sedation. Kids gummies available. (3)
 - Omega 3 oils also shown to lower overall anxiety among other benefits. (4)



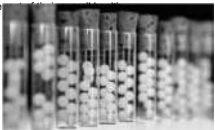
- (1) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4507727/>
- (2) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2411110/>
- (3) <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31793301/>
- (4) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4101260/>

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Homeopathic Remedies for Anxiety


- Best effect when remedy chosen for the whole person
 - Remedies are individualized to the patient, seek professional care for homeopathic treatment (1)
- Remedies take into consideration
 - How the child experiences the anxiety
 - What makes it better or worse
 - How the anxiety is contextualized within the
- Common remedies:
 - Calcarea carbonica
 - Silica
 - Phosphorus



<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/8997804/>

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Acupressure for Anxiety in Kids



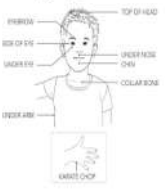
- Gentle, effective
- Free and no side effects
- Easy to do and easy to teach a child to do themselves
- Two easy to find points:
 - Pericardium 6 about two inches up from the wrist crease
 - YinTang between the eyebrows

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26002571/>

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Tapping (Emotional Freedom Technique)

Tapping Points




- Simple to teach
- Acknowledges feelings like anxiety, sadness and anger
- Easy to teach
- Feels good
- No cost, no side-effects

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6381429/>

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Counseling & Therapy for Kids


- Encourage families they don't need to go it alone
- Recommend professional help for natural medicine approaches with your licensed naturopathic doctor
- Seek psychological help with experts in that field, consider cognitive behavioral therapy, play therapy, art therapy, etc. Often therapies work best in the family therapy setting
- Natural medicine approaches work well alongside other kinds of approaches



• Photo <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2019/12/combat-anxiety>

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The role of social media



- For our older kids and teens there is a strong correlation with social media use and anxiety and depression (1)
- Encourage families to use a contract around phone use and work creatively to reduce access to social media

<https://www.nahc.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/1796/>
Photo by [Tim Mossholder](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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Anxious Kids often become Anxious Adults

- Giving kids the tools they need to raise their threshold for feeling stress
- Tools to help dissipate the stress they have
- Tools that encourage emotional resilience, self-acceptance and a quiet, peaceful mind

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Resources

- Find an ND: <https://naturemad.org/find-an-nd/>
- NY Times list of 9 books to calm the anxious little one. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/18/books/childrens-books-anxiety.html>
- HeadSpace for Kids: <https://www.headspace.com/meditation/kids>
- Insight Timer for Kids: <https://insighttimer.com/meditation-topics/children>
- Smiling Mind resource, Australia's mindfulness resources for families: <https://www.smilingmind.com.au>
- Sample Cell Phone Contract for Teens: <https://www.verywellfamily.com/a-sample-cell-phone-contract-for-parents-and-tweens-3288540>
- Great tips from Child Mind Institute: <https://childmind.org/article/tips-calming-anxious-kids/> Many NDs are now offering telemedicine services so it's easier than ever to find an ND to work with you and your child!

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Keep in Touch!

- Amy Rothenberg ND amy@nesh.com
- Practice site: www.nhcmcd.com
- New England School of Homeopathy: www.NESH.com
- Twitter: @dramyrothenberg
- Instagram [dramybethrothenberg](https://www.instagram.com/dramybethrothenberg)
- Find my writing on [Medium](#), [Elephant Journal](#) & [the Huff Po](#)
