

## Common Red flags

Demonstrating excessive distress out of proportion to the situation:

- Easily distressed, or agitated when in a stressful situation
- Repetitive reassurance questions, "what if" concerns, inconsolable, won't respond to logical arguments
- Headaches, stomachaches, regularly too sick to go to school
- Anticipatory anxiety, worrying hours, days, weeks ahead
- Disruptions of sleep with difficulty falling asleep, frequent nightmares, difficulty sleeping alone
- Perfectionism, self-critical, very high standards that make nothing good enough
- Overly-responsible, people pleasing, excessive concern that others are upset with him or her, unnecessary apologizing
- Demonstrating excessive avoidance, refuses to participate in expected activities, refusal to attend school
- Disruption of child or family functioning, difficulty with going to school, friend's houses, religious activities, family gatherings, errands, vacations
- Excessive time spent consoling child about distress with ordinary situations, excessive time coaxing child to do normal activities- homework, hygiene, meals

## Helpful Resources

[www.worrywisekids.org](http://www.worrywisekids.org)

The Childrens Center for OCD and Anxiety.

[www.adaa.org](http://www.adaa.org)

Anxiety Disorders Association of America

[www.childanxiety.net](http://www.childanxiety.net)

The Child Anxiety Network

[www.panicanxietydisorder.org](http://www.panicanxietydisorder.org)

Panic Anxiety Disorder Association

[www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov)

National Institute of Health

### **Books**

Helping Your Anxious Child : A Step-by-Step Guide for Parents.  
Rapee (2000)

Your Anxious Child: How Parents and Teachers Can Relieve Anxiety in Children  
John Dacey (2000)

Freeing Your Child from Anxiety: Powerful, Practical Solutions to Overcome Your Child's Fears, Worries and Phobias.  
Tamar Chansky, Ph.D.  
( 2004)

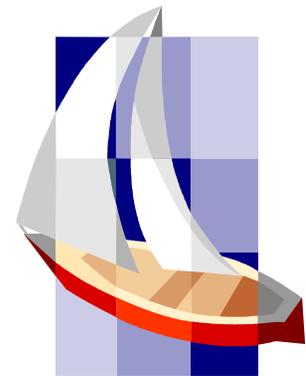
The Worried Child  
Paul Foxman, PH.D. (2004)

Conquering Panic and Anxiety Disorders,  
J Glatzer (2003)

## South River School

### Childhood Anxiety:

### Recognizing Anxiety in Children and Helping them Heal

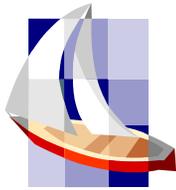


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## Childhood Anxiety



### **All children experience anxiety.**

Anxiety in children is expected and normal at specific times in development. For example, from approximately age 8 months through the preschool years, healthy youngsters may show intense distress (anxiety) at times of separation from their parents or other persons with whom they are close. Young children may have short-lived fears, (such as fear of the dark, storms, animals, or strangers). Anxious children are often overly tense or uptight. Some may seek a lot of reassurance, and their worries may interfere with activities. Parents should not discount a child's fears. Because anxious children may also be quiet, compliant and eager to please, their difficulties may be missed. Parents should be alert to the signs of severe anxiety so they can intervene early to prevent complications. There are different types of anxiety in children.

### **Symptoms of separation anxiety include:**

- constant thoughts and intense fears about the safety of parents and caretakers
- refusing to go to school
- frequent stomachaches and other physical complaints
- extreme worries about sleeping away from home
- being overly clingy
- panic or tantrums at times of separation from parents
- trouble sleeping or nightmares

### **Symptoms of phobia include:**

- extreme fear about a specific thing or situation (ex. dogs, insects, or needles)
- the fears cause significant distress and interfere with usual activities

### **Symptoms of social anxiety include:**

- fears of meeting or talking to people
- avoidance of social situations
- few friends outside the family

### **Other symptoms of anxious children include:**

- many worries about things before they happen
- constant worries or concerns about family, school, friends, or activities
- repetitive, unwanted thoughts (obsessions) or actions (compulsions)
- fears of embarrassment or making mistakes
- low self esteem and lack of self-confidence

### **When You Should be Concerned**

Anxiety is considered a disorder not based on *what* a child is worrying about, but rather how that worry is impacting a child's functioning. The content may be "normal" but help is needed when a child is experiencing too much worry or suffering immensely over what may appear to be insignificant situations, when worry and avoidance become a child's automatic response in many situations, when they feel constantly keyed up, or when coaxing or reassurance are ineffective in moving them through. For these children anxiety is not protecting them, but rather preventing them from fully participating in typical activities of daily life-school, friendships, academic performance.