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Dealing with ANXIETY

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Issue 7

Many children experience anxiety in one form or another. We as caregivers would like to shield our children from the experience of being anxious but by helping our children work through the anxiety, they can learn important life skills that will forever help guide them.

Routine and consistency

- Many children with FASD do not fully understand the concept of time. We can help create a more concrete understanding through consistent routines. Routines help create a predictable environment, which can help with anxiety.
- Use calendars, lists, and other visuals as reminders of the routine. Remember that memory can be inconsistent—even if your child remembers the routine most days, they may still need the cues sometimes.
- Show a change in routine on the calendar and talk about it to help prepare for the change.

Self-Care

Learn more about anxiety and coping strategies and ideas for the whole family:

<https://www.anxietybc.com/>

Identify feelings

- Many children with FASD have a hard time explaining how they're feeling. Use visuals to help children understand different emotions and recognize these emotions in the moment, e.g. "It looks like you're feeling frustrated. Do you want to take a break and come back to this?"
- Many schools use programs to teach children about emotions, such as *The Zones of Regulation* or the *Alert Program*. Ask your child's teacher if they are using one of these programs and if they can share resources so you can use these at home as well.

Calming

- Consider a sensory approach to calming in order to help your child’s sensory system feel “just right”:
 - Fidget items allow them to move their body. This can be a small toy, colouring, doodling, Lego, or many other options;
 - Have your child do physical exercises to relieve their anxiety. Encourage them to shoot basketballs, go for a walk, or run to calm down their body. If they cannot be mobile, get them to stretch on the spot, skip rope, or run on the spot;
 - Having a favourite smell available when your child begins to feel anxious can help them calm down in moments when they need to self-regulate (e.g. essential oil, other scented item);
 - Consider how the environment may be overwhelming to their sensory system. Have them take a break in a calm, quiet place.
- Make a plan for times when your child feels overwhelmed. Make the plan together when you are both feeling calm.
 - Make the plan concrete (e.g. go to the comfy chair in your room) and use visuals to give specific options (e.g. play Lego or listen to your iPod). You may also want to use a visual timer to give a “10-minute break.”
 - Remember: This is not a *time out* but a break.

Just for fun!

Why did the chicken cross the playground?

To get to the other slide!

Why do bees have sticky hair?

Because they use honeycombs!

What do you call a pig that knows karate?

A pork chop!

Calming words

You play an important part in helping your child feel safe and calm! Here are some phrases you can try:

“You are safe and loved.”

Being told you are safe and loved can affirm to a child that they are okay and will be okay. It can calm down a child’s nervous system. When saying this to a child, it needs to be repeated.

“Can I hold you?”

Hold your child’s hand or hug them. You can help your child relax and feel safe through physical contact.

More Ideas:

<https://edmontonfetalalcoholnetwork.org/2016/12/22/49-phrases-to-calm-an-anxious-child/>