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A model for supporting children with anxiety

➤ **Taking stock of our own model of thinking and actions**

- Awareness of generational transfer
- Rigid expectations Vs Expression of preferences
- Unwillingness to tolerate frustration Vs Willingness to bear and manage discomfort
- Self evaluation and generalization Vs a problem-focussed approach whilst retaining self-esteem
- Enabling behaviours
- Acknowledgement of the child's efforts to maintain his current level of functioning.
- Stop fighting it, work with it.

➤ **Listening skills**

- Acceptance of the child's feelings
- Acknowledgement of the child's current needs
- Understanding and acceptance, but not excessive sympathy.

Do not:

- Make the problem yours, provide solutions or over-accommodate
- Never make fun of a child's separation distress
- Do not scold child for its anxiety
- Judge
- Minimize the problem
- Change the normal practices and routines
- Do not bribe child to mask the distress.

➤ **Structure**

- A specific guideline
- A clearly defined and limited support process that continues despite heightened discomfort

➤ **Aids & resources**

- Rituals (bedtime and morning)
- Provide rituals within a set structure.

➤ **Preparation & anticipation**

- Positive experiences with caregivers, short times at first.
- Remind the child of previous brave things he or she has done. Talk about how a fictional character might handle it.
- Don't let them dwell on fears or imagination of what might happen.
- Minimize fears by limiting scary TV shows
- If it is an older child, consider introducing him or her to some of the children who are to be in the class and arranging play dates in advance.
- Preparing the child - reading books about going to preschool, pretending about going on voyages or quests.
- Upcoming events – dealing with feelings & process
- Referral to previous coping
- Highlighting of skills and outcome
- Setting achievable goals
- Develop sense of strategy
- Rehearse

➤ **Following through**

➤ **Affirming the child's capacity**

- Let the child know that he is able to come up with a plan or with possible alternatives.
- Do not provide ready solutions or intervene unless completely unavoidable.

- By removing the child from the situation one would reinforce a feeling of hopelessness and incompetence.
- Help the child assess and implement options.
- Be supportive throughout this process.

➤ **Encouraging emotional fitness**

- Be willing to let your child experience frustration / grief / anger.
- Teach him to get comfortable with discomfort
- It can take weeks before the child is comfortable in dealing with a previously threatening situation
- Help the child assess and implement and adjust options

➤ **Reframing the child's thinking**

- Rigid expectations vs preferences
- Low frustration tolerance vs acceptance and management of discomfort
- Self-evaluation & generalization vs problem-focussed living