

## 14 ways to calm an anxious child (and adult)

1. "Can you draw it?"

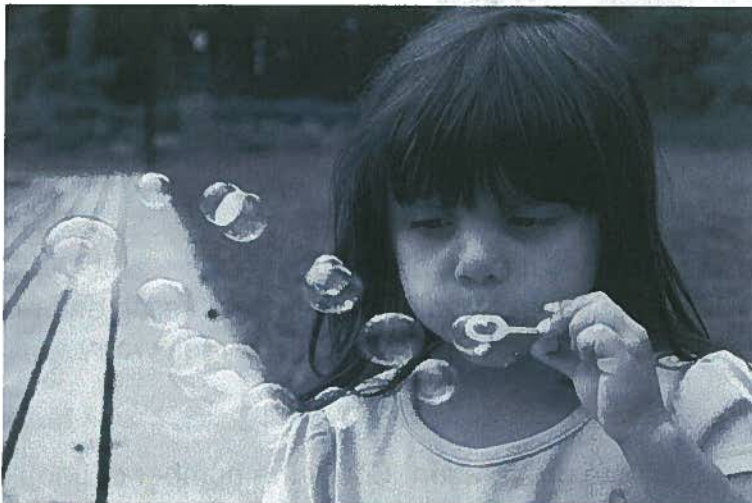
Drawing, painting, or doodling about anxiety provides an outlet for feelings when there may be no words.

2. "I Love you. You are safe."

Being told you will be kept safe by a person you love is a powerful affirmation. Anxiety can make children feel as though their mind and body is in danger.

3. "Let's pretend we're blowing up a giant balloon."

Pretend to blow up a balloon, make funny faces and noises in the process. Taking deep breaths and blowing them out sends oxygen to the brain and works to reverse the stress process. Small containers of bubbles can work as well.



4. "Close your eyes, picture this."

Visualization is a powerful relaxation tool. Guide the child in picturing a safe, happy place where they feel comfortable.

5. "Tell me the worst thing that could possibly happen?"

Once you have imagined the worst possible outcome, talk about how likely this is to happen. Next imagine the best possible outcome and finally ask which outcome is most likely.

6. "Let's Squeeze this."

When children can direct their anxious energy to a stress ball, they feel emotional relief. Buy a ball, keep a handful of Play Doh/Silly Putty, or make your own by filling a balloon with rice.

7. "Let's watch your thoughts pass by."

Pretend your thoughts are like a plane moving across the sky. It looks really big overhead, but it becomes smaller and smaller as it moves away (with time).



8. "If how you feel was a monster, what would it look like?"

Giving anxiety a characterization means you take a confusing feeling and make it concrete. Once kids have a worry character, they can talk to their worry.

9. "Let's count \_\_\_\_\_"

This technique requires no advance preparation. Count the number of people wearing a certain color, the number of people in a room, etc. This requires observation and can take the focus off of the anxiety

10. "Take a sniff of this."

Certain fragrances, such as lavender, sage sandalwood, or jasmine are calming.

11. "Let's go for a walk."

Exercise relieves anxiety as it burns up excess energy, encourages deep breathing and relaxes muscles. If a walk isn't an option considering marching in place, stretching, and other actions such as "pretend you are reaching for something on a high shelf."

12. “Remember when you worried about \_\_\_\_\_?”

Reminding children of past challenges that they successfully overcame reminds them of their strength.



13. “Make a list of everyone who loves you.”

Anxiety can feel very isolating, helping children think of all the people who love them serves as a distraction (like counting) but more importantly it reminds them that they are not alone.

14. What is the first piece you need to worry about?

Anxiety can make things feel overwhelming. A good strategy for conquering any overwhelming task is to break it into more manageable pieces. Sometimes, this will help us realize that the whole experience isn't overwhelming, just a few elements.

