



PARENT INFORMATION SESSION HANDOUT

Enhancing Emotional Resiliency & Social Skills Development in Young Children

Fun FRIENDS in British Columbia is sponsored by:
Ministry of Children and Family Development,
in cooperation with School Districts, Independent Schools,
First Nations School Association and the Ministry of Education

FRIENDS Email: mcf.cymhfriends@gov.bc.ca
FRIENDS Website: www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/mental_health/friends.htm



FRIENDS for Life...building skills for life

Normal and Common Childhood Fears

0 - 5 Months	Loss of support, loud noises
7 - 12 Months	Fear of strangers, fear of sudden, unexpected and looming objects
1 Years	Separation from parent, toilet, injury, strangers
2 Years	Many fears, including loud noises, animals, dark rooms, separation, large objects, change in environment
3 - 4 Years	Masks, the dark, animals, separation, noises
5 Years	"Bad" people, bodily harm, animals, dark, separation
6 Years	Supernatural beings, bodily injuries, thunder and lightning, dark, sleeping or staying alone
7 – 8 Years	Supernatural beings, dark, fears based on media events, staying alone, injury
9 - 12 Years	Test and exams, school performance, bodily injury, physical appearance, thunder and lightning, death, the dark (low percentage)
Adolescents	School, home, safety, political issues, personal relationships, personal appearance, natural phenomena, future, animals.

Fear and Anxiety

Anxiety is...

- A **normal, adaptive** emotion that helps us survive
- A fear response **out of proportion** to real threat
- Future oriented; usually involves **anticipation** of uncertain or catastrophic events ("What if" thinking)

Anxiety is a problem when it...

- Prevents one from enjoying normal life experiences
- Interferes with the child's and family's life
- Causes significant distress
- Of significant duration

Too much anxiety = an overactive (or overly sensitive) alarm system

Some common signs of anxiety in young children:



Avoidance (e.g. not going to school, birthday parties, swim class)

Crying

Clinging

Stomach aches and head aches

Difficulty in resting and going to sleep

Excessive reassurance seeking (e.g. repeatedly asking, “Are you SURE that...”)

Excessive worry (usually about things that *could* happen in the future, e.g. What if...)

Extreme shyness

Perfectionism/rigidity

Bedwetting

Distractibility/Irritability

Parents can help children learn to confront a scary situation by:

- ❖ Teaching, modelling, and practicing
- ❖ Role playing scenarios
- ❖ Using puppets to practice the situation
- ❖ Drawing themselves facing the situation with bravery
- ❖ Reading or creating stories about confronting the scary situation

Fun FRIENDS Skills

FUN 😊 (Families Uniting to Nurture)

Feelings (Talk about your feelings and care about other people's feelings)

Relax (Do 'milkshake' breathing. Have some quiet time)

I can try! (Try your best)

Encourage (Be a good friend; Make Step Plans to the 'Brave Happy Home')

Nurture (Do fun activities with teachers, family and friends)

Dare to be Brave (Practise the skills every day with family and friends)

Stay Happy!

Helpful Tips for Parents - Child Anxiety

(adapted from www.AnxietyBC.com)

Reduce Stress! Excessive stress and tension in your home (for example, arguing, fighting, too many lessons/activities, etc.) can have a negative effect on your child. Look at ways to reduce stress. For instance, plan some fun time each day (even if it is only five minutes) to read a story, go for a walk, watch a favorite TV program together, or listen to music.

Make a Routine! Establish a routine by setting specific times for meals, homework, quiet time, and bedtime. Help your child establish a bedtime routine, which may include a bath and reading a story, or just time to chat.

Work Together! If parents are not consistent, it can be very confusing for your child. Try to agree on ways of handling your child's anxiety (for example, both agree to limit giving reassurance or both follow through on setting limits, such as not having your child sleep in your room), and be consistent in terms of rewards.

Give Consequences! Although your child may have problems with anxiety, that does not give him or her the green light for inappropriate behavior. It is important that you set expectations and limits for your child, and follow through on consequences for inappropriate behavior (such as losing television privileges for not completing chores). Children are happier when they know the rules and what happens when they break them!

Be Supportive! Recognize that it is difficult for children to face their fears. It is important not to laugh at your child or minimize his or her fears (for example, "don't be silly" or "you're being stupid"). Rather, let your child know that it is normal to have fears (we're all afraid of something), and that it is possible to "boss back" your fears. When your child is upset, make sure to listen to him or her, to send your child the message that it's okay to talk about feelings.

Encourage Independence! Although it is tempting to want to do things for your child, especially when he or she tends to be nervous and fearful, it is better to let kids do things for themselves! How else will they learn the skills and abilities to cope with life? Encourage your child to try things on his or her own, take some risks, and do things for him or herself.

Avoid Giving Excessive Reassurance! It can be hard not to give your child reassurance, especially when he or she is scared or anxious; however, giving constant reassurance prevents your child from learning how to cope on his or her own. Teach your child to answer his or her own questions. Model how you think through problems or challenges, which helps your child learn to do it him- or herself.

Build Self-Confidence! It is important to praise your child for his or her accomplishments and for facing fears! Involve your child in activities that help him or her feel proud. Find activities that reinforce that he or she is good at something (sports, music, or art) and helps instill a sense of belonging and pride (such as cadets, scouts or girl guides, school helper).

Realistic Expectations! It is important to have expectations for your child and help him or her meet those expectations; however, understand that an anxious child will have some trouble doing things, and may need to go at a slower pace. Help your child break down goals into smaller steps that he or she can accomplish.

Reactions! Although it is important to be understanding and caring, do not overreact or let anxiety trick you into thinking that something is too hard or impossible for your child (for example, thinking it's too hard for your child to sleep alone). Keep things in perspective. Yes, it might be challenging, but it can be done!

Dealing with Your Reactions! It can be very difficult dealing with an anxious child. Make sure you manage your own reactions. Do some things for yourself (call a babysitter, run a hot bath, read a book when the kids go to bed, talk to a friend about how you're feeling, go for a walk, or whatever helps you keep a positive perspective).

Take Risks! Anxious children need to try new things and take some risks, in order to build confidence and develop the necessary skills for dealing with the world. Encourage your child to try some experiments, such as making a phone call, talking to an unfamiliar classmate, or asking a question to a store clerk.

Avoid Avoidance! Anxious children tend to want to avoid things that cause them anxiety. Although avoiding things temporarily reduces distress, it also allows fears to grow and makes things more difficult in the future. Avoid letting your child avoid things. Instead, encourage him or her to try things and take small steps towards facing fears!

CHILDREN'S BOOKS & FUN FRIENDS

APPRECIATION OF DIFFERENCES:

Giraffes Can't Dance, Giles Andrede, Orchard Books © 1999

(a cricket inspires Gerald the Giraffe to believe in himself and dance to his own music that he loves)

It's OK to Be Different, Todd Parr, Little, Brown and Co., © 2001

(delivers the messages of acceptance, understanding, and confidence in a humorous, child-friendly format)

Whoever You Are, Mem Fox, © 1997

(a wonderful story that helps children recognize and celebrate the differences and similarities that unite us all)

ANXIETY AND WORRIES:

Franklin Rides A Bike, Paulette Bourgeois, Scholastic Inc., © 1997

(normalizes fear of the learning something new and realizing that there are other things you are good at)

Franklin In The Dark, Paulette Bourgeois, Kids Can Press, © 1986

(normalizes fear of the dark and provides ways to deal with it)

Supposing...., Frances Thomas and Ross Collins, © 1998

(a little monster's fears about all the things that might go wrong are laid to rest with the help of his mother)

The Invisible String, Patrice Karst, DeVorse and Company, © 2000

(beautiful story about how people who love each other are always connected by a special string made of love)

The Kissing Hand, Audrey Penn, Tanglewood Press, © 2006

(reassurance for young children who fear going to school and being separated from their parent)

There's A Big, Beautiful World Out There, Nancy Carlson, Puffin Books, © 2002

(helps children see the good things they miss if they don't venture out because they are afraid)

What If It Never Stops Raining? Nancy Carlson, Puffin Books, ©1992

(Tim worries about everything but learns that things work out and are never as bad as he thinks they will be)

When Lizzy Was Afraid of Trying New Things, Inger Maier, Magination Press, ©2004

(Lizzy, the sheep is shy and afraid of failing or making mistakes but learns to have fun!)

FEELINGS:

How Full Is Your Bucket? For Kids, Tom Rath and Mary Reckmeyer, Gallop Press, © 2009

(children learn that what they say and do can affect how they and others feel by filling or emptying their bucket)

My Many Colored Days, Dr. Seuss, Random House Inc., © 1996

(a rhyming book where colors are assigned to moods to help children express how they feel)

The Feel Good Book, Todd Parr, Little Brown Books for Young Readers, © 2002

(inspires children to celebrate all the little things in life that make them feel good and happy)

The Way I Feel, Janan Cain, Scholastic Inc., © 2000

(a rhyming book of beautifully illustrated feelings)

FAMILIES:

Love You Forever, Robert Munsch, Firefly Books, © 1995
(a story about a mother's enduring love and support for her son and his support for her when she grows old)

The Family Book, Todd Parr
(celebrates the different types of families that exist, both non-traditional and traditional)

The Ultimate Guide to Grandmas & Grandpas, Sally Lloyd-Jones, Harper Collins, © 2008
(teaching children how to interact with and treat their elders)

Why I Love My Daddy, Daniel Howarth, Harper Collins Children's Books, © 2006
(from a child's perspective- all the wonderful things about daddy depicting animal fathers and children)

Why I Love My Mummy, Daniel Howarth, Harper Collins Children's Books, © 2006
(from a child's perspective- all the wonderful things about mummy depicting animal mothers and children)

FRIENDSHIPS:

Friends, Kathryn Cave, Hodder Children's Books, © 2005
(a story about friendship and helping each other through good times and bad)

It's Hard Being Five, Jamie Lee Curtis, Harper Collins Publishers, © 2004
(Learning to control your temper and get along)

Scaredy Squirrel Makes A FRIEND, Melanie Watt, Kids Can Press Ltd., © 2007
(a humorous story about a worrywart squirrel who overcomes his fear and makes a friend)

Sharing, How Kindness Grows, Fran Shaw, PhD, Reader's Digest Children's Books, © 2006
(a board book about making friends and helping others feel happier by sharing and being kind)

RELAXATION:

A Boy and a Bear: The Children's Relaxation Book, Lori Lite, © 1996
(helps children learn how to use deep, abdominal breathing and calm themselves)

Peaceful Piggy Meditation, Kerry Lee MacLean, Albert Whitman Publishers, © 2006
(children learn to find a peaceful place and become mindful and calm through breathing and being still)

Who Am I? : Yoga for Children of All Ages, Jane Lee Weisner, Michelle Anderson Publishing, © 2007
(teaches children yoga poses as well as concentration, relaxation and confidence to be themselves)

SELF-ESTEEM/POSITIVE ATTITUDE:

I Like Me! Nancy Carlson, Puffin Books, © 1990
(a wonderful book for young children about a pig with high self-esteem and a positive perspective)

I'm Gonna Like Me, Letting Off a Little Self-Esteem, Jamie Lee Curtis, Joanna Cotler Books, © 2002
(a rhyming book that shows children that the key to feeling good is liking themselves because of who they are)

Ish, Peter H. Reynolds, Candlewick Press, © 2004
(Ramon learns to look at his art differently and appreciate his creations even though they are not exact replicas)

The Dot, Peter H. Reynolds, Candlewick Press, © 2003
(a clever teacher inspires Vashti to draw, enabling her to feel proud of her accomplishments and inspire others)

PARENTING BOOKS - CHILDHOOD ANXIETY AND WORRIES

Aron, Elaine N., Ph.D., **The Highly Sensitive Child, Helping Our Children Thrive When the World Overwhelms Them**, Broadway Books, © 2002

Chansky, Tamar, Ph.D, **Freeing Your Child From Anxiety, Powerful, Practical Solutions to Overcome Your Child's Fears, Worries, and Phobias**, Broadway Books; © 2004.

Eisen, Andrew R., Ph.D. & Linda B. Engler, PH.D, **Helping Your Child Overcome Separation Anxiety or School Refusal, A Step-By-Step Guide for Parents**, New Harbinger Publications, Inc.; 2006.

Foxman, Paul, Ph.D., **The Worried Child, Recognizing Anxiety in Children and Helping Them Heal**, Hunter House Publishers, 2004

Last, Cynthia G., Ph.D., **Help for Worried Kids, How Your Child Can Conquer Anxiety and Fear**, Guilford Press, © 2006.

Manassis, Katharina, M.D., **Keys to Parenting Your Anxious Child**, Barron's Educational Services Inc. © 1996.

Markway, Barbara G., Ph.D. and Gregory P. Markway, Ph.D., **Nurturing the Shy Child**, Thomas Dunne Books, © 2005

Pinto Wagner, Ph.D., **Worried No More, Help and Hope for Anxious Children** 2nd edition, Lighthouse Press, ©2005

Rapee, Ronald M., Ph.D., Susan H. Spence, Ph.D., Vanessa Cobham, Ph.D., and Ann Wignall, M. Psych., **Helping Your Anxious Child, A Step-by-Step Guide for Parents**, New Harbinger Publications Inc., © 2008

WEBSITES FOR PARENTS

FRIENDS for Life

Information on the FRIENDS program in BC http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/mental_health/friends.htm

FORCE Society for Kid's Mental Health

FRIENDS parent on-line workshops, support/education/advocacy for parents www.forcesociety.com

Anxiety BC- Parenting Pathways Program

Anxiety BC provides parents with information on strategies for helping their children cope with anxiety and worries. There are helpful videos with experts in childhood anxieties, and resources for parents to read or print. www.anxietybc.com/parent

Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL)

Information sheets for families with young children are available. www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel

Dr. Michael Cheng – Child, Teen, & Family Psychiatrist, Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario

Dr. Cheng has provided handouts written mainly for parents and caregivers of children and youth with mental health difficulties. Topics include: anxiety, school refusal, depression, OCD, bullying, etc.. www.drcheng.ca

FRIENDS International – Pathways Health & Research Centre

Information on the author of FRIENDS, FRIENDS research, and FRIENDS worldwide. www.friendsinfo.net

KidsHealth.org

This website provides parents with information on a range of childhood issues including social and emotional behavior, growth and development and positive parenting. <http://kidshealth.org/parent>