

7 Tips for Caregivers on Supporting Children with Learning Disabilities and Anxiety at Home

Tip #1

Listen to your child or youth's worries before jumping into problem-solving or giving advice. Normalize his or her experience (e.g., "everyone worries from time to time"); maybe even share a personal story.

Tip #2

Take your child or youth's concerns seriously while at the same time expressing confidence in his or her strengths. Remind your child or youth of times they have been resilient, the coping skills they used, and praise their accomplishments and successes (even the small ones).

Tip #3

Use empathy and stay calm in the storm. Listen to your child's worries without minimizing or trying to invalidate the concerns. Reflect and label what you think might be the feeling and validate the feeling.

Tip #4

Be open to listening to your child or youth ("ask and hear" instead of "talk and tell"). At times we forget how to listen with children. We lecture, give advice, or tell our own stories ("talk and tell") as opposed to just asking, hearing what they have to say, and validating how they feel.

Tip #5

Don't try to reason through what may sound like an unreasonable worry and resist asking too many why questions. Your child or youth might not know why they are feeling a certain way or how to explain it.

Tip #6

Figure out strengths – when does your child feel better, what helps, who helps, when is it best to talk.

Tip #7

Engage in self-care and recognize your child or youth's anxiety may pose challenges to the whole family.

If you feel your child or youth's feelings of anxiety extend beyond the norm and are seriously interfering with their ability to do the tasks of everyday life, consult your family doctor or seek support from a trained mental health professional.