

## Question: My child is anxious, what can I do to help?

### Answer:

The following three steps can assist you to help your child with anxiety:

- Encourage them to talk about their anxiety – Share the things that as a child you were anxious about and ask them what their biggest worry is. By modelling your own calm acceptance of anxiety you will be assisting them to remain calm about theirs.
- Teach your child about anxiety and its purpose – Educate yourself about anxiety and its adaptive role in helping humans survive (flight-fight-freeze). Explain the physical changes in the human body when danger is perceived (sweaty hands, blood to extremities, rapid heartbeat, shallow breathing etc.). By explaining these you are helping to normalise anxiety as well as assisting your child to identify and understand the way their own body reacts when anxious.
- Help your child to recognise their anxiety and to develop ways to manage it. Ask your child to sketch their body and mark on it where their anxiety occurs, and is most felt. Teach them ways to work with their anxiety. For example a young child might learn to say: “That’s just ‘Mr Worry’ telling me not to do that. I don’t want to miss out so ‘Mr Worry’ you can just be quiet”. Or a teenager might liken their worrying thoughts to a radio with the volume turned up high, and learn to manage it by turning the volume down. Acquire the Mindshift app <http://www.anxietybc.com/mobile-app> suitable for iPhones and iPads, which is designed to help teens and young adults, identify their anxiety, and also offers ways to assist them to cope.

## Keen for more help?

**Headspace** – <http://headspace.org.au/> visit the website for help, support and information about young people and mental health

**Reach Out** – <http://au.reachout.com/> a website designed to help improve the understanding of issues relating to mental health and wellbeing

- **Youth Beyondblue** – phone 1300 224 636 (24 hour information and referral about depression and anxiety)
- Parentline Tip Sheet: Social Anxiety – **<http://www.parentline.com.au/parenting-information/tip-sheets/social-anxiety.php>**
- MindShift **<http://www.anxietybc.com/mobile-app>** an app for iPhones and iPads to assist young people manage their anxiety