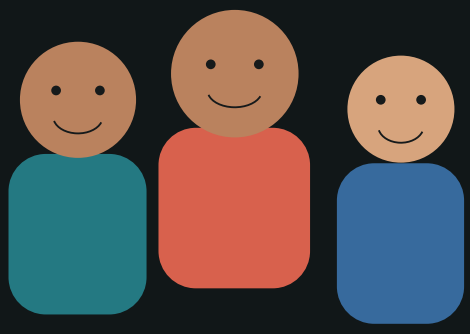
HAPPINESS TRIGGERS • PRACTICAL WORKBOOKS

HELPING AN ANXIOUS CHILD

Practical support, reassuring conversations, and small brave steps for families.

CAREGIVERS + CHILDREN AGES 5-12

DRAW • PRACTICE • REFLECT • REPEAT



Notice worry. Make space for courage.

14 PRINTABLE PAGES | EVIDENCE-INFORMED PRACTICES

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START HERE

A little practice goes a long way

Some worry is part of growing up. This workbook helps families respond without shame or pressure.

NOTICE

Pay attention to feelings, physical sensations and patterns.

VALIDATE

Let the child know you believe they are uncomfortable.

PRACTICE

Help them try small, chosen steps with support.

SUPPORT

Invite pediatric or mental health guidance when needed.

HOW TO USE THESE PAGES

- [ ] Practice during calm moments, not in the peak of panic.
- [ ] Do not require breathing or eyes-closed activities if they feel uncomfortable.
- [ ] Offer choices; children can draw or point instead of speaking.
- [ ] Watch whether worries interfere with school, sleep, relationships or daily life.

SAFETY AND SCOPE

This guide is not anxiety treatment or a way to diagnose a disorder. Persistent, severe, or interfering anxiety deserves pediatric or mental health evaluation. Never force a child into a feared situation to prove bravery.

DRAW YOUR CLUES

How does worry show up in my body?

Worry can appear as thoughts, stomach feelings, tight shoulders or a wish to escape. These signals are real, even when there is no immediate danger.

My body tells me worry is nearby when:

A thought that sometimes pops up:

What helps me feel supported:

A trusted person I can tell:

TRY IT THIS WEEK

Adults: listen, reflect and avoid labeling the child as "an anxious kid."

PERSONAL CALM MENU

My grounding choices

There is no single exercise for every child. Let the child choose what feels okay.

CIRCLE TWO OPTIONS YOU WANT TO TRY

Look around

Name five colors or shapes nearby.

Feel the ground

Notice feet touching the floor.

Move gently

Stretch hands or walk with an adult.

Make something

Draw worry as a funny creature.

Connect

Sit near a trusted person.

Slow exhale

Only if comfortable, gently exhale a little longer.

MY TWO FAVORITES

Try an option during a relaxed day so it is familiar when worry shows up.

PARENT LANGUAGE

Validate without feeding the worry

Support begins with being understood, then finding a next step.

01 **Name and accept**

Try: "I can see your stomach feels jumpy. That sounds unpleasant."

02 **Get curious**

Ask: "What is worry telling you could happen?" Listen without instantly promising certainty.

03 **Offer a small choice**

Try: "Would you rather talk it through, take a short break, or make a plan?"

MAKE IT YOURS

Which validating phrase would sound like you, and your child can hear without feeling judged?



THOUGHT SORTING

Worry, facts and what I can do

A worry is a thought, not a prediction. Sometimes it points to a real issue that can be addressed.

WORRY SAYS: "What if..."

WHAT I KNOW RIGHT NOW:

A SMALL HELPFUL ACTION:

WHO CAN HELP ME:

TRY IT THIS WEEK

Do not argue with every worry. Help the child tolerate some uncertainty and choose one practical step.

BUILD COURAGE

The tiny-steps confidence ladder

A child may benefit from gradual, supported steps. For severe or persistent fears, make a plan with a qualified clinician.

01 **Pick a small goal**

Examples: ask a teacher one question, stand near a new group, or practice a bedtime routine.

02 **Start with the easiest rung**

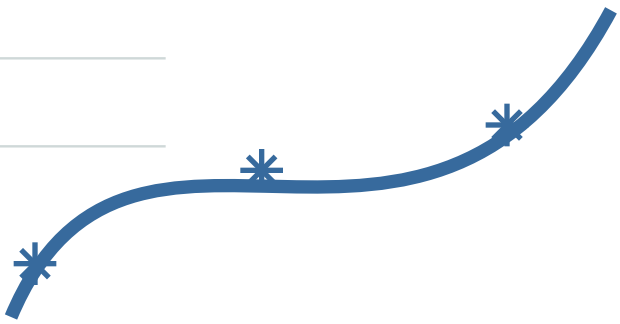
Choose a step the child agrees is manageable and rehearse it with support.

03 **Celebrate the attempt**

Notice effort, learning and support, not only whether the child felt calm.

MAKE IT YOURS

Write one tiny first rung that feels safe and realistic for this week.



PARENT COACHING

Words that encourage courage

Reassurance is most useful when paired with support and action.

CHILD: “I AM SCARED TO TRY.”

REPLACE: "There is nothing to be scared of."

TRY: "This feels scary. What would make the first step smaller?"

CHILD: “WHAT IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG?”

REPLACE: "Nothing bad will happen."

TRY: "We cannot know everything. Let us plan for what we can control."

CHILD: “I NEED YOU HERE.”

REPLACE: "You are too old for this."

TRY: "I am here to help you practice. What would support look like today?"

YOUR OWN WORDS

Choose one phrase you can use gently and consistently.

Make a scheduled worry notebook

Some families benefit from setting aside a brief time to write worries with a caregiver, rather than wrestling with them all evening.

The worry I want to park for later:

When we will revisit it (briefly):

Something kind I can do before bed:

TRY IT THIS WEEK

If worry brings up safety issues or real problems, respond promptly. This activity is not meant to postpone important help.

SCHOOL MORNINGS

Prepare for an anxious school day

Plan with your child and school team where useful.

CIRCLE TWO OPTIONS YOU WANT TO TRY

A morning cue

Same simple routine each day.

A connection card

A short note from a trusted person.

A teacher check-in

Identify one safe adult at school.

A helpful phrase

"I can take one small step."

After-school decompression

Food, rest, movement or quiet.

Celebrate effort

Ask what felt a little easier.

MY TWO FAVORITES

If fear repeatedly prevents school attendance, coordinate with school staff and the child's healthcare provider.

SUPPORT MAP

Build a circle of trusted helpers

Every child deserves real people they can turn to when worries feel too big.

AT HOME I CAN TALK TO:

AT SCHOOL I CAN TALK TO:

IN MY COMMUNITY I CAN TALK TO:

WHEN I NEED HELP RIGHT AWAY:

TRY IT THIS WEEK

A trusted adult takes concerns seriously, especially when a child mentions being hurt, unsafe, or wanting to die.

Practice courage when nobody is anxious

Confidence grows more easily when the skill is not tested in the heat of a hard moment.

01 **Play a what-if game**

Invent an imaginary character who feels nervous before doing something new. Brainstorm kind options.

02 **Name the effort**

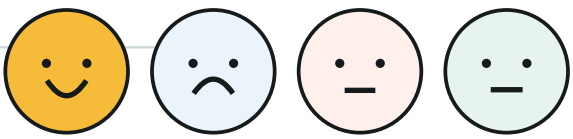
Celebrate the character for asking for help, breaking a task down, or trying again.

03 **Let the child lead**

Ask which idea they would like to try in a real low-stakes situation this week.

MAKE IT YOURS

Draw your brave character and give them one encouraging phrase.



SMALL STEP TRACKER

Seven days of courage and support

Track effort and helpful supports; do not make this a scorecard on being fearless.

Day	Small step	Help I used	What I learned
DAY 1			
DAY 2			
DAY 3			
DAY 4			
DAY 5			
DAY 6			
DAY 7			

AT THE END, NOTICE:

Which support seemed to help? What might we gently try again?

KEEP GROWING

Courage can be gentle

The aim is not to erase all worry; it is to strengthen connection, skills, and the ability to get help.

YOUR NEXT SEVEN DAYS

Choose one manageable family practice to repeat this week. If anxiety is intense, worsening or interfering with life, talk with your child's pediatrician or a licensed clinician.

REFLECT AND REPEAT

The brave step we want to repeat:

The support we will ask for if needed:

LEARN MORE / PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

CDC: Anxiety in Children

NCCIH: Mind-Body Practices for Youth

Educational only; not diagnosis, psychotherapy, or crisis care. If someone is unsafe, seek local emergency help. In the US, call or text 988 for crisis support.