

ANXIETY RELIEF TECHNIQUES

1. Blowing Bubbles

Children can learn deep breathing skills by using bubbles. Deep breathing is an excellent way to manage anxiety. It helps to activate the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS) which is the system of the body in charge of the activities that a person performs when they are in a resting state. In contrast, the sympathetic nervous system is the system of the body that is responsible for when the body functions in a more reactive, automatic way (such as in the fight or flight response).

To do this activity: Demonstrate and have children use bubbles while focusing on how they breathe to create a big bubble. Also, emphasize how this impacts their body and how it can train the body to feel more relaxed and to help them not to be so worried or nervous. Kids can practice their deep breathing skills even when they don't have the bubbles on hand.

2. Worry Can

To help kids identify and discuss their worries, they can write down their worries and place them inside a can (with a lid). This helps kids to identify and express their worries instead of keeping them bottled up inside which can lead to even more difficulties. This activity can be modified to fit for the child's particular situation and personality.

To do this activity: Provide the child with a can or jar with a lid, paper, colouring and writing utensils. Have the child make a label for the can titled "Scary Things", "Fears", "Worries", or whatever seems appropriate for their experience. Next, have the child write down their worries on slips of paper and put them in the can. Another version is to have a child journal about their worries. Journaling has been found to help ease anxiety and reduce stress. The child can then discuss the worries with the adult.

3. Calm-Down Box

Everyone has things that make them feel more at ease. This is true for children as well as adults. Helping children to become more aware of their own functioning including what triggers them to become anxious (or feel any sort of emotion), what helps them to relax, and to have the knowledge and belief that they can master control over their inner experience can greatly help them in managing their emotions and overcome their challenges.

To do this activity: Use a box and help the child come up with objects to put in the box. The objects should be things that help them to relax and calm down. Some examples of things that can be included are the following:

- stress balls
- wonder tubes (tubes with glitter and confetti)
- lavender scented play-dough (or any kind of play-dough; lavender can be a soothing scent)
- bubbles
- essential oils to help with anxiety
- calming music (a CD or something to symbolize listening to music)
- paper, pencil, crayons, markers
- a book (especially one about stress-relief or anxiety)