



## Children and Therapy

- Anxiety is a normal part of growth and change. The trick for parents is to learn when to challenge and when to console. If a child can tolerate some anxiety as they learn a new skill, enter a new environment or grow in a relationship, it is worth it to push a little, while offering support.
- Anxiety becomes a “disorder” when it interferes with meeting the challenges of development (learning, communication, connection, participation in life, building relationships or completing tasks) and is a barrier to functioning at home, in school or the community.
- Most mental health “disorders” that affect children under 12 have a component that links to anxiety, and this symptom is often the most noticeable in a child’s behavior.
- Anxiety comes in many forms, and each can present different problems and needs when it comes to treatment.
- Social anxiety, Social Communication Disorder and/or Autism often presents challenges early on in the development of language or social skills. Early assessment and intervention can help parents and children manage learning and school challenges more successfully. Social skill development, behavioral coping and coaching can help to outline realistic expectations and know when to let a child re-group and relax.
- Generalized Anxiety, Obsessive/Compulsive Disorder and Panic Disorder are all about being overwhelmed by a steady state of fear sometimes without a recognizable trigger. Therapy (including individual and family) or psychological assessment can be helpful to assist if there is a stressor or trauma that a child is trying to cope with.
- Attention Deficit and/or Hyperactivity Disorder may sometimes be diagnosed when a child is actually expressing anxiety about home, school or a response to trauma. In the reverse, a child who has ADHD or ADD is often anxious due to their difficulty with organization, timing and screening out all the sensations around them to focus. School support, testing, and sometimes medication can be helpful for children who have these symptoms.

### RESOURCES

[Up and Down the Worry Hill](#), a children’s book about obsessive compulsive disorder, by Aureen Pinto Wagner

[Autismspeaks.org](http://Autismspeaks.org)

[Driven to Distraction: Recognizing and Coping with Attention Deficit Disorder](#) by Edward M. Hallowell

