

Anxiety In Our Children Webinar Summary – September 21

Last term, Dr Justin Coulson gave an online parenting seminar on 'Anxiety In Our Children.' I rapidly took notes as he helped define anxiety, its prevalence and some 'Dos' when it comes to parenting our children.

So I thought that I would share what I came away with, in case you were unable to make it.

- Anxiety is the apprehension, worry or nervousness of what is in the future. It is associated with not knowing what is coming next and it is normal that we all have bouts of anxiety.
- There is no cure for Anxiety. It is a feeling that comes and goes and it can hang around in one form or another.
- Anxiety Disorder is when the everyday 'normal' episodes of anxiety begin to impact on daily living and the symptoms are present for a long period of time. It is when what they are worrying about becomes disproportionate to the event and they refuse to function.
- Currently Anxiety Disorder is the most frequent disorder in Australia, in young people affecting around 15% of adolescents. The ratio of girls to boys who experience Anxiety Disorder is 3:1.

Identifying Anxiety: What does it look like in our younger children under 10 years old?

- School Refusal
- What ifs? Catastrophising
- Can't sleep
- Anger/Irritability
- Can't walk/ Sore limbs.
- Jittery/ Bouncy
- Sore tummy
- Feeling sick
- Clingy
- Tears

Identifying Anxiety: What does it look like in our younger children over 10 years old?

- School Refusal
- What ifs?
- Sleep Issues – won't get out of bed.
- Anger and agitation
- Physical symptoms
- Withdrawal
- Stinking thinking

- Panic attacks
- Poor school results
- Sensitivity to criticism.

What can you say and do when your child feels anxious?

Our children look to us for Support, Predictability and Safety. They are looking to us for give them a level of cognitive closure – “I just want to know what is happening next...”

They need to feel secure with us.

Anxiety is about the future so bring them back to the NOW. Some suggestions for how to do this:

- Name it and tame it. “You are feeling....” This gives our children permission to feel.
- Teach them that thoughts are just thoughts – not facts.
- Connect with others
- Be active
- Spend time in nature
- Remind them that their mind is a storyteller.
- Use Mindfulness to bring them back to the now. (One Mindfulness activity Dr Coulson suggested was to use 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Name **5** things you can see right now, Name **4** things you can feel/touch right now, Name **3** things you can hear right now, Name **2** things you can smell right now, Name **1** thing you can taste right now).

I learnt a lot through this session with Dr Coulson so I hope these notes are helpful as you continue on your parenting journey.

Bron Steele