

Classroom Management for Anxiety

- Encourage regular contact with the guidance counselor for:
 - Relaxation and support
 - Handling conflicts with peers
 - Organization
 - Assertiveness skills (speaking up, asking questions, body language)
 - Use of role play
- Avoid public reprimands
- Identify learned helplessness behavior
 - Don't put the child on the spot to test them
 - Don't give them an overly hard question to start
 - Set them up with an easy question
 - Gently encourage them to try something on their own after giving them help with the first one or two.
- Avoid reward systems that make the child "standout" in class. Reinforce self-satisfaction and pride in a job well done as the primary motivator. If rewards are used, surprise reinforcement may work best, including special certificates, privileges, or small material items like candy.
- Work out a special code or signal to remind the child to attend.
- Try not to let the child cry for a lengthy period of time in the classroom, as this can lead to social stigmatization and increased embarrassment and anxiety for the child. Work out a plan, involving a signal, which allows the child to leave the classroom and collect themselves for a brief period of time. Upon returning, give the child a specific, easy task to help re-acclimate to the classroom.
- Allow the child to have personal orientation and meet his new teachers one on one before school or a new class begins.
- Have a daily feedback system between home and school.
- "Chase the affect." Be attuned to changes in mood and affect. Pull the child off to the side and gently question them. Remember that their motivation is very tenuous and easily affected by perceived failure.
- Don't rush to label passive, "spacey" behavior as "passive-resistance." Often, children with anxiety mildly dissociate, or "zone out," in situations that they perceive to be overwhelming. Touch, encouragement, redirection, and prescribing "no fail" tasks can all help to refocus the child to their environment.
- Don't rush to the rescue. Let the child first know they are understood by validating their emotional state. Then challenge irrational beliefs or misperceptions. That is, could there be another explanation? Could you think about this another way?