

ELEMENTARY

ANXIETY

CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Your elementary school child is in a big transition: They're learning to engage with their peers more, forming friend groups, and having and understanding more thoughtful conversations. With this transition, however, may spark some anxiety as they're learning to navigate this new, social world.

**But anxiety in this age group
may be difficult to spot.**

These kids often suffer in silence for fear of scrutiny, only to end the day in a major meltdown when they get home or maybe for another child it may look like disengagement in family activities. Sometimes kids keep to themselves, all the while battling internally some pretty heavy stuff.

We know that you know your child best. Pay attention to changes in their behaviour and keep the lines of communication open.



WHAT TO SAY

Encourage them to talk about their anxiety openly.

- *“Anxiety isn’t wrong. Don’t feel bad about feeling this way.”*
- *“How about we take time to pray together about this. God wants us to give Him our worries and fears.”*
- *“I’ve struggled with these kinds of feelings too. You’re not alone. And I’m sorry that you feel this way.”*
- *“Thank you for sharing this with me. I hope you know you can always talk to me.”*
- *“Let’s take and walk and keep talking. Do you want to go outside?” (Exercise has long been used as a method to decrease symptoms of anxiety, and using that time to have a genuine conversation with your elementary school-aged students may be helpful in learning the source of their anxiety.)*
- *“Something that helps me is taking really deep breaths. Let’s try taking deep breaths together.” (A good practice is inhaling for four seconds, holding that breath for two seconds, and exhaling for four seconds. This practice will help slow down their heart rate and decrease the feelings of anxiety.)*
- *“When I’ve felt anxiety in the past, something that helps me is . . .” (Take some time to share your personal experience with anxiety and what you did to help ease some of its symptoms. By doing this, you’re affirming to your students it’s totally normal to feel anxious and that there are ways to manage anxiety.)*

WHAT NOT TO SAY

Don’t minimize what they’re feeling. They need to feel they have safe spaces to run to.

- *“[The thing they’re feeling anxious about] isn’t a bit deal. You just need to calm down.”*
- *“Don’t be afraid of [the thing they’re anxious about.]”*
- *“You have be braver and stronger.”*

Fear is normal, but when those fears become all-consuming it may be time to call in some outside help. If you need help connecting with some professional help, please don’t hesitate to reach out to your church.