

TIPS FOR MANAGING ANXIETY AND DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR IN CHILDREN

DAUPHIN COUNTY MH/A/DP
JANUARY 2019 RESOURCE SHARING

Last month we learned about the link between anxiety and disruptive behaviors and how anxiety can often show itself in “nontypical” ways. “Angry outbursts” or other behaviors we would label as “disruptive” are often caused by underlying anxiety. This month we focus on what adults can do to help children deal with anxiety and disruptive behavior.

- 1. Remember that all behavior is a form of communication. Consider what your child is trying to tell you.*
- 2. Understand what triggered the outburst. What happened that upset your child or made him or her act this way?*
- 3. Challenging behavior can be reduced with support, not punishment. By acknowledging his or her needs and feelings, your child will feel less of a need to use challenging behavior to communicate.*
- 4. Give attention to the behavior you like - not the behavior you don't.*
- 5. Redirect. Instead of telling your child what not to do, instead offer a positive behavior to replace the misbehavior.*
- 6. Help your child label or name the emotions she is experiencing.*
- 7. Give your child some calming strategies to try. Breathing exercises or techniques for distracting themselves are two ideas. Having a favorite object to focus on during stressful times can also be helpful.*
- 8. Remain calm yourself and be consistent and realistic with your expectations. Sometimes we expect too much of our children. Children notice how we react to everything.*
- 9. Educate others about the above.*
- 10. If concerning behaviors persist, talk to your pediatrician and consider obtaining a thorough behavioral /diagnostic assessment.*

Check out the websites below for more tools and tips.

<http://www.pbs.org/parents/talking with kids>

<https://childmind.org/article/how-anxiety-leads-to-disruptive-behavior>