



# How to Avoid Common Anxiety Traps With Your Teen

## 1 Manage, Don't Eliminate

- Avoidance reinforces long-term anxiety

## 3 Open-Ended Questions

- **Ex.** “How are you feeling about the test?” rather than “Are you worried about the test.”
- Empower your teen to reflect rather than leading them to a ‘yes’ or ‘no’

## 5 Shorten Anticipation

- Fear makes anticipation overwhelming
- Foster time for preparation without promoting overthinking

## 7 Model Healthy Practices

- Don't pretend that you are invincible
- Let children see or hear you manage stress through coping mechanisms

## 2 Avoid Catastrophizing

- Minimize “all-or-nothing” mentality
- Overgeneralization can minimize the positive and negative outcomes

## 4 Convey Confidence

- Verbal and nonverbal cues can guide children's own reactions to anxiety
- Avoid suggesting fear or discomfort

## 6 Create An Action Plan

- Some children benefit from talking through outcomes if fears come true
- Focus on low likelihood of adversity

## 8 Recognize and Validate

- Anxiety is useful in some situations since it helps us avoid danger/harm
- Show empathy by validating feelings rather than fixing them

**Stop** the Stigma.  
**Start** the Conversation.





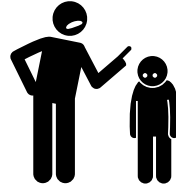
# How to Avoid Common Anxiety Traps With Your Teen



## Don't Avoid Things That Induce Fear

**Ex.** If your teen is afraid of making phone calls, work up to calls by ordering food or another short call. Manage. Don't eliminate.

## Shame Is Not Productive



**Ex.** When your child expresses symptoms of anxiety, don't dismiss them. Instead validate and empower. "I can see you're nervous, and I know you can handle this."



## Let Your Child Reflect and Learn

**Ex.** Ask "How do you feel about your math/science/english test?" instead of "Are you anxious about the test?"

## Words of Encouragement



**Ex.** Help your teen build confidence by sharing positive messages about their efforts in school or extracurricular activities



## Be Prepared

**Ex.** Talk through actionable steps for dealing with friendship conflicts within your child's social life away from home

## Overthinking Can Worsen Anxiety



**Ex.** Focus on the steps to take not the faraway deadline. Shorten the anticipatory time.



## Running Late? Don't panic

**Ex.** Whenever you face an unexpected time crunch, model calm behavior and avoid expressing anger or frustration

## Find the Positives and Areas of Growth



**Ex.** If your child faces a challenge at school, encourage them to look at areas of growth and positive takeaways from their experience