

From ADAA, an organization that supports people dealing with information on dealing with stress and anxiety, with information for both families and professionals.

Children tend to rely on their imaginations when they lack adequate information. Adults' decisions to withhold information are usually more stressful for children than telling the truth in age-appropriate ways.

Adults can instead make themselves available for children to ask questions and talk about their concerns. They might, for example, provide opportunities for kids to access books, websites, and other activities on COVID-19 that present information in child-friendly ways.

In addition, adults should limit children's exposure to media coverage, social media, and adult conversations about the pandemic, as these channels may be less age-appropriate. Ongoing access to news and social media about the pandemic and constant conversation about threats to public safety can cause unnecessary stress for children.

Activities

1. Mind Jars

Typical Mind Jars include glitter and liquid in a jar. When shaken or overturned, the glitter swirls around—not dissimilar from crazy or uncontrollable thoughts. When angry, anxious or upset, a child can be taught to sit and watch the glitter settle.

For this activity, you'll need:

*Small Jars or Plastic Water Bottles *Glitter Glue (buy online at Michaels or make your own by mixing 2 parts white glue and 1 part glitter) *Food Coloring or watercolor *Hot Water * Glitter and/or sequins (optional)

Mix about 1 tablespoon of glitter glue with 1 cup of warm water. Use a bit more if your jars are larger. If you'd like, add food coloring and extra glitter to make it even more colorful and sparkly. Fill the bottle the rest of the way with warm (or even hot water). The warmer the water, the better the glitter will dissolve without clumps. Don't forget to hot glue the tops on the bottles to prevent spills.

2. Happy Brain, Worry Brain Activity Coloring or Writing Activity (scroll down for template)

There are a variety of ways to do this activity, including templates. To make it personalized, use a flashlight to project each child's profile on to a large piece of paper. Trace it twice, so that it looks like the silhouettes are facing each other in mirror image. Label one side "Happy Brain" and the other side "Worry Brain." Have kids write, collage or draw things that fit into each category. This activity allows kids to identify their worries, and notice how much time they spend thinking about them. It's also a great way to help individuals develop coping skills by identifying what makes them happy.

3. Worry Cans

Worry Cans can help children identify and discuss their worries by providing a safe place to write and store anxious thoughts. Receptacles with lids are best—think oatmeal containers or other types of jars. You can cover the outside with construction paper and have kids personalize their Worry Jars. Label the jar. Kids can then write or draw what concerns them, and drop the slips of paper into the jar. Children may want to talk with an adult about the thoughts in the can, or they may simply choose to use the Worry Can as a dumping ground for thoughts they would rather get out of their heads.

4. Blow Bubbles (Scroll down for bubble liquid recipe and wand directions)

To help children learn deep breathing techniques and experience the benefits, use bubbles! Deep breathing can be universally helpful for reducing anxiety. In her article, *3 Deep Breathing Exercises to Reduce Anxiety*, Author Therese J. Borchard says, “The practice of deep breathing stimulates our parasympathetic nervous system (PNS), responsible for activities that occur when our body is at rest. It functions in an opposite manner to the sympathetic nervous system, which stimulates activities associated with the fight-or-flight response.”

Demonstrate first and then have children use bubbles while focusing on how they breathe to create a big bubble. Remember to highlight how doing so impacts their body, and how it can train the body to feel relaxed (rather than worried or nervous.) Encourage children to practice their deep breathing skills – even when they don’t have the bubbles on hand!

Try counting to see how slowly you can blow the bubble and how slowly you can take in your breath to blow another one.

5. Paint for Relaxation

Creating artwork can be both relaxing, and therapeutic. Invite children to paint/draw designs or pictures of things that makes them happy or calm. Children who are engrossed in an art project may be more open to sharing their innermost feelings and struggles. By allowing conversation to flow in a low-pressure atmosphere, those in therapy jobs can foster a non-judgmental environment where students can feel comfortable talking as they express themselves through art.

6. Start a Journal

For some, keeping a journal can be very therapeutic. Reflecting on events through writing can help an individual view their feelings and anxieties in an objective way. Even young children can engage in this form of self-exploration—whether through words or pictures. There’s no right or wrong way to journal. And kids shouldn’t feel like they need to write every day. What’s important is that children trust and understand that their journal is a safe place to reveal anything – including their deepest secrets, fears or desires. And yes, this means no parent peeking!

7. Gratitude Box

What you’ll need: *an empty tissue box *paper *decorating items (e.g. stickers, white labels, colorful markers, patterned duct tape)

Have the children affix a label saying “Gratitude Box,” “Why I’m Grateful” or similar label. Decorate the label with colored markers and/or place and decorate other plain white labels on the box. Stickers and patterned duct tape (there are even variations at craft stores with penguins!) are a nice touch that will help each child personalize his or her box.

Cut small pieces of paper to keep nearby. Write what you're grateful for on the small paper and drop it into the box. The whole family can contribute. When the box is full, tape the bits of paper on a poster.

Bubble Solution.

- 6 cups water (distilled is best but tap water is fine)
- 1/2 cup [blue Dawn dish detergent](#) I used "ultra concentrated", but Dawn original is even better.
- 1/2 cup [corn starch](#) (corn flour in the UK)
- 1 tbsp [baking powder](#) (not baking soda)
- 1 tbsp [Glycerine](#) (or [personal lubricant](#))

Dissolve cornstarch in the water, stirring really well. Stir in the rest of the ingredients, being very careful **not** to create a lot of froth. Allow your bubble mixture to sit for *at least* an hour before using, stirring occasionally when you see the cornstarch settling to the bottom. Use largest (11x15) glass dish you have. It allows wands to get completely submerged when loading them up with the bubble mix. Use two drinking straws, and a length of yarn that was 6 to 8 times longer than the length of one straw. Thread the yarn through the straws, tie a knot, and you're good to go!

Scroll down for for Happy/Worry Brain template.

