

## TIPS FOR PARENTS

Dear Parents,

**We appreciate your efforts in helping your children overcome their Anxiety.**

Anxiety symptoms are very common in children and adolescents. Here are some simple tips to assist you in helping your children.

Encourage your child to **talk about anxiety**. Help them understand that it is ok to feel anxious, everybody does. Let them discuss about what makes them anxious.

**Stay calm**; help them solve their problems by helping them **generate their own solutions**.

Focus on your child's **positive attributes** and the good aspects of any situation.

Encourage your child to **face his/her fears**; avoidance of anxiety-provoking situations maintains anxiety.

Children learn behaviours by watching their parents. If you face your fears, your child will learn and do the same.

If your child faces his or her fears, **appreciate** and reinforce it with a hug or a small gift. When you appreciate child's efforts he/she will be motivated to do it more often.

**Practice relaxation exercises with your child** on a daily basis. Regular physical activities, sports, yoga or simple breathing exercise can be helpful. It also helps to do it at a fixed time to create a healthy habit. They can also be encouraged to take part in extracurricular activities of their interest that are enjoyable.

Most parents often feel it is necessary for children to succeed in school, sports and other activities. It is important to encourage children to work hard and to appreciate their efforts. It is equally important to accept children's mistakes and to tell that **it is okay to be imperfect**.

Disciplining should be gentle and not critical as most children with anxiety are sensitive to criticism.

Anxiety can be a chronic struggle and the source of a child's anxiety changes over time. With **repeated practice of anxiety management techniques**, children will learn the skills to lower their anxiety level and to cope with stressful situations.

It is important to take professional help whenever symptoms are significant. Children with anxiety may also have depression and self harm ideas. It is important not to ignore symptoms.

Cognitive behavior therapy or a combination of therapy with medications may be advised based on the severity of symptoms.

6 month follow up study done in south India<sup>1</sup> had shown good improvement in children within a few weeks of starting treatment. It is therefore important not to let children suffer but to assist him/her by seeking professional help.

**1** Reference: This information leaflet and workbook was developed as part of DM thesis on "Short term outcome of Anxiety Disorders in children and adolescents" by Dr. Preeti Kandasamy, under the guidance of Dr Satish C Girimaji, Dr Shekhar P Seshadri, Dr Shoba Srinath, Dr John V Sagar, NIMHANS Bangalore.