

## **Anxiety and Fear in Children**

Fear can keep us safe in dangerous situations. When we are afraid of something, we naturally try to avoid it. Some childhood fears are completely normal (e.g. dogs, tests, the dark, etc.), and most children outgrow them over time. However, severe and persistent fears can become problematic if they interfere with school, social or family relationships.

### **Possible Signs of Fear and Anxiety Issues**

- Racing heart
- Frequent stomach aches or “butterflies”
- Trembling muscles
- Frequent headaches or nausea
- Sweaty hands
- Increased restlessness /fidgeting
- Trouble concentrating
- Persistent worry or reassurance seeking

In an attempt to deal with their anxiety and fears, your child may avoid doing things that are stressful or out of their “comfort zone” (e.g., homework, sports, school, family/social events, etc.), which can create additional problems.

### **Tips for Parents**

- The most effective way to help your child overcome anxiety is to help them gradually face their fears, but this is often easier said than done.
- When helping your child face their fear, start small and take “baby steps” to help them build their confidence as they gradually complete more and more difficult tasks (e.g., watching dogs in the park together, then petting small dogs, then interacting with larger dogs).
- If simple encouragement and support isn't enough to help them face their fear, they may benefit from working with a psychologist who specializes in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy. (CBT).

For more information, helpful resources, and access to professional help, visit our website:

**[www.mindfullivingcentre.ca](http://www.mindfullivingcentre.ca)**

