



# HOW TO HELP KIDS MANAGE WORRIES



Our tamariki mightn't have to pay bills, cook dinners or organise carpools but just like us they face daily demands and worries, and what seems trivial to us can be important to them. So what can we do to help?

## BE A FIRST-RATE LISTENER

Think about when you were a child or young adult. Did anyone make you feel truly listened to? If so, what did they do? Copy this! Be available and interested. Ask your tamariki how different things are going.



## SHOW YOU CARE

If your child does share a worry, avoid intensely questioning them. Just listen attentively, be interested and show you care. They'll be more relaxed when the focus isn't completely on them so try talking to them while you're doing the dishes or in the car.



## VALIDATE THEIR FEELINGS

Voice the feelings you pick up (e.g. "That sounds like it's worrying / bugging you."). Thank them for chatting with you. Remind them that worrying is normal and can even be helpful – motivating us to study, focus, be alert and even run faster.

## EVENT-BASED WORRIES

If something worrying is coming up – i.e. a test or their first day at a new school – encourage them to think of something similar they overcame i.e. their first day of school. Talk about their strengths and how these can help. If your child is 11 or older, we recommend our Sparklers at Home [Discover your Strengths](#).

## TEACH PERSPECTIVE AND HUMOUR

Without minimising their worry, remind them that problems are mostly temporary and many don't even eventuate. Where appropriate, humour can lighten the mood and foster resilience.

## GUIDE KIDS TO SOLUTIONS

If your child tells you about a problem, offer to brainstorm solutions together, resisting the urge to jump in and fix the issue. Encourage them to pick the best solution, this way, you're teaching them how to problem-solve.

## OFFER PHYSICAL REASSURANCE

If your child is frequently worried or anxious, look for ways to let them know their world is safe. Going back to basics and providing physical reassurance through love, hugs, back-rubs, hand holding or keeping them close.



## EXTERNALISE WORRIES

For an easy means to talk about worries, we recommend books such as [Maia and the Worry Bug](#). Maia stomps on her worries and throws them out the door. Externalising worries is fantastic for tamariki aged 4-8 years, while Rising Tide has great strategies for children aged 8-13.

Books are also a great way to talk about and make worrying less scary. Our favourite books live at [allright.org.nz/sparklers/kids](http://allright.org.nz/sparklers/kids)

## SHOW THE WAY

The most powerful lessons we teach are the ones we demonstrate.

Your response to worries, stress, and frustrations can go a long way toward teaching your tamariki how to deal with everyday challenges.

If you're rattled or angry when dealing with a to-do list, your children will learn that this is how we respond to stress.

## PLAY TOGETHER

Spend time playing with your child each day. Even if it's just 10 minutes. Give them some undivided attention - bounce on the trampoline, build the Lego tower. Let them see you having fun and enjoying being with them.

## BUILD SELF ESTEEM

If your child worries often, give praise when they:

- Walk into a new place. E.g. "thanks for coming to the supermarket with me, I loved having your company."
- Manage a new situation: "I liked the way you walked into your class today. You looked really confident and it made me proud."
- Try something new: "I love that you gave that a go, and kept at it."
- Make a decision: "Great decision. Well done."
- Converse with you: "I love talking with you."

Instead, look on the bright side and voice optimistic thoughts as often as you talk about what bothers you.

**By showing your children you can bounce back, you'll help them learn to respond to small problems with optimism, confidence and perseverance.**

We'd like to thank Clare Tatterson, Developmental Psychologist, Dr Harith Swadi, Psychiatrist and Dr Dean Sutherland, Communications Specialist.

For more ways to support kids manage their worries head to [sparklers.org.nz/parenting](http://sparklers.org.nz/parenting)