**Tips for Comforting a Fearful or Nervous Child**

**Source-** [www.pathways.org](http://www.pathways.org)

No parent wants to see their child upset, but sometimes it’s hard to know how to react when your child is nervous or afraid. Do you hug them? Do you let them cry it out? There’s so much conflicting advice out there!

Next time you’re faced with reacting to your nervous or fearful child, try these tried and true tips.

**Do Be There**

For many children, your presence will help calm them. Hug them or hold them on your lap. Even holding their hand can help give them a sense of security and comfort.

**Don’t Be Too Involved**

By telling your child exactly what to do or even what to say in stressful and challenging situations, they are not able to solve problems on their own or learn ways to cope by themselves. This doesn’t mean they’ll never need help, but you should let them try to problem solve first before offering a helpful hand.

**Do Get Moving**

Physical activity can be calming during times of high stress. Running, doing cartwheels, or playing a game involving gross motor movements can help distract them from their worry or fear. Learn 4 ways kids benefit from exercise that have nothing to do with fitness.

**Don’t Avoid Activities**

When children constantly avoid situations that make them afraid or uncomfortable, their fears never go away. Try easing them into activities that make them nervous. You don’t want to expect too much at once because it can take them a while to conquer a fear. For example, if your child has a difficult time playing with other children at school, set up a playdate at home so they can focus on feeling comfortable around one child before being surrounded by all of their peers on the playground. By slowly helping them adapt, you can ease their fear and prepare them to cope on their own when they’re older.

**Do Talk It Out**

Having the opportunity to express what you’re feeling is important, especially for children. Give them some one-on-one time and listen without judging or discounting their anxiety. The best time to talk it out is when they are feeling calm because they are able to listen to you more easily.

**Don’t Overly Reassure**

Telling your child that “everything will be okay,” might actually confirm to your child that there is something to fear. While it’s hard to resist the instinct to reassure your child that everything will be okay, it might be best in the long run.

**Do Allow For Expression, Even If They Can’t Explain Their Worries**

If your child has trouble talking about why they are nervous, there are other ways to start the conversation. Ask them to draw a picture or act out what they are afraid of with a doll, puppet, or stuffed animal.

**Don’t Get Impatient**

Not knowing how to help can be hard and frustrating for parents, but don’t let those emotions show. Your child can sense how you’re feeling. Revealing your emotions could make your child feel like they’ve upset you, increase their nervousness, and make communicating more difficult. Try to set an example of how to react calmly to help your child feel calmer, as well.

**Do Empathize**

Even if what they are afraid of seems silly to you, it’s important to show your child that you understand. Although they may not truly have anything to be fearful of, the emotions they are feeling are very real.

**Don’t Wait Until They Are 100% Anxiety Free to Reward Their Behavior**

Encourage and praise small accomplishments. Being brave while facing things they are afraid of or are feeling nervous about is something to celebrate!