

# Connecting with Calm



**Holding Space, Building Strength:**  
A parent's guide to supporting emotional balance



# Introduction

Parenting a child who experiences anxiety can be overwhelming. You may find yourself searching for the right words to say, the right actions to take, or the right tools to ease their worry, and yours. The truth is, there is no perfect script, but there are compassionate, evidence-based strategies that can support your child in regulating their emotions and building resilience over time.

This booklet is designed as a gentle guide for parents and caregivers who want to better support their anxious child. Rather than focusing solely on managing behaviour, it emphasises connection, co-regulation, and practical tools that engage the whole child—body, mind, and heart.

**The content is organised into six core areas of emotional regulation:**

- ✓ **THE BODY** – Creating a calm internal state through awareness and physical care.
- ✓ **THE MIND** – Building awareness of anxious thoughts and gently reshaping them.
- ✓ **BREATH** – Using breath to connect body and mind to calm the nervous system.
- ✓ **MOVEMENT** – Channelling energy & emotions through physical activity and gentle motion.
- ✓ **CREATE** – Encouraging self-expression & emotional processing through play, art, & imagination.
- ✓ **CONNECT** – Strengthening the parent-child bond and creating emotional safety.

Each section offers simple, accessible strategies you can try at home, tools that don't require perfection, only presence.

This is not a "fix-it" manual. It's a resource for slowing down, tuning in, and growing together. With patience, practice, and compassion, you can help your child move from anxiety to confidence, from dysregulation to calm.



# THE BODY

## Creating a calm internal state through awareness and physical care

### Progressive Muscle Relaxation:

Have your child tense and then release different muscle groups to reduce physical tension.

### Body Scans

Guide them through noticing parts of the body from head to toe—what's tight, what's soft, what feels heavy or light.

### Stretching or Yoga

Child-friendly poses like "cat-cow" or "child's pose" can relieve physical tension and increase body awareness.

### Sleep and Nutrition

Establish consistent sleep routines and healthy snacks to stabilise mood and energy levels.

### Sensory Tools

Fidget toys, warm compresses, or cosy blankets help children feel grounded in their body.

### Body Check-Ins

Ask "Where in your body do you feel the worry?" to build mind-body awareness.



# THE MIND

## Building awareness of anxious thoughts and gently reshaping them

### Name the Worry

Give anxiety a name (e.g., “Worry Worm” or “Mean Voice”) to help externalise it and reduce its power.

### Thought Detective

Help your child spot unhelpful thoughts—“Is that really true? What evidence do you have to support this thought? What else might be true?”

### Growth Mindset Language

Use phrases like, “You don’t have to know it yet,” or “Feelings are temporary and won’t last forever.”

### Meditation & Visualisation

Calms the mind by shifting the focus away from anxious thoughts to the present moment.

### Games & Puzzles

Jigsaws, sudoku, crosswords, board games, encourages mindfulness, allowing the mind to shift away from worries.

### Journaling

Helps process intense emotions or thoughts & improves emotional regulation.



# THE BREATH

Using breath to connect body and mind to calm the nervous system.

## Calming Breathing Techniques

Box breathing, belly breathing, or using playful imagery like blowing out birthday candles, smelling a flower, dragon breathing.

## Use Breath as a Reset Tool

Before school, during dysregulation, or after upsets, use breath to anchor and soothe.

## Practice Together

Make breath practice a family ritual so it feels safe and familiar—not clinical or reactive. They will naturally mirror your rhythm.

## Visual Breath Tools

Try apps, a windmill, or bubble-blowing for fun visual breath regulation.

## Create a Routine

Practice calming breaths before school, bedtime, or transitions to proactively build resilience.



# MOVEMENT

Channelling energy & emotions through physical activity and gentle motion.

## Rhythmic Movement

Activities like swinging, bouncing on a trampoline, dancing or walking can regulate the nervous system.

## Big Muscle Movement

Climbing, jumping, dancing, or rough-and-tumble play diffuses built-up energy.

## Animal Walks or Playful Exercise

Bear crawls, crab walks, or dancing can turn excess energy into emotional release.

## Time in Nature

Gentle walks or play in natural settings lowers cortisol and increases emotional resilience.

## Create a Movement Toolkit

Include options like a yoga mat, balance board, skipping rope, or weighted / stress ball for self-directed regulation.





# CREATE

Encouraging self-expression & emotional processing through play, art, & imagination.

## Draw or Paint Feelings

Let them put their anxiety on paper. "What does your worry look like today?"

## Build or Sculpt

Use clay, LEGOs, or building blocks to express control and creativity.

## Storytelling or Journaling

Invent characters that face and overcome fears, metaphors can help process real-life worries safely.

## Music or Rhythm

Drumming, humming, or listening to calming music can be a non-verbal outlet for tension.

## Create Safety Objects

Help your child make a "calm-down kit" with items that soothe them (a drawing, small toy, photo, or scent).

## Craft Calming Activities

Painting rocks, writing affirmations, or creating mandalas can be meditative and empowering.



# CONNECT

**Strengthening the parent-child bond  
and creating emotional safety.**

## **Name & Normalise Feelings**

Say, "It's okay to feel nervous. Lots of people feel that way sometimes." Validate before problem-solving.

## **Special Time**

10–15 minutes daily of uninterrupted child-led play with your child builds safety and self-worth.

## **Teach Social Scripts**

Role-play how to ask for help, take a break, or respond to challenges, this reduces unknowns or uncertainties.

## **Model Vulnerability**

Share age-appropriate stories of your own anxious moments and how you handled them in a helpful and healthy way.

## **Involve Community**

Gently build your child's support circle. Consider teachers, peers, support groups, youth clubs or calm-focused classes like kids' yoga or mindfulness groups.





# Closing Note

Caring for a child with anxiety takes tenderness, patience, and often a deep well of emotional energy. There will be moments of progress, and moments that feel uncertain, but every effort you make to connect, calm, and guide your child matters deeply.

As you support your child in regulating their emotions, remember that your own well-being matters too.

Emotional regulation is not only something we teach, it's something we model. By caring for yourself, taking breaks when needed, and acknowledging your own feelings with kindness, you're not only recharging, you're showing your child what self-regulation and self-compassion look like.

You don't need to have all the answers. You just need to keep showing up with presence and love. Small steps, one breath, one connection, one moment at a time, can lead to lasting growth.

You're doing meaningful work. Be gentle with your child, and be just as gentle with yourself.

