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To: Glenda des David
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Help your son get the worry bug under control



Many boys worry about seemingly little things that they have no control over. Whether it's worrying about the house catching on fire, monsters or spiders lurking under their beds, or even worrying that their parents will go work in the morning and won't return home, can seem irrational to all-knowing adults but make perfect sense to them.

If you are a type A worrier yourself then you probably fully comprehend your child's anxieties and worries. You know that being told not to overthink things or to stop worrying just won't cut it. If you are the *'It'll be right. Don't overthink it'* type then you may be scratching your head wondering what all the fuss is about. There's no doubt that worriers need careful, sensitive handling by families and teachers alike. Your concern and understanding is one thing but they also need some practical tools and ideas to help them cope now, and build strength so they can minimise the impact of worries in the future.

Here's a collection of great ideas that may help you transition a young worrier to being a social and learning warrior, or at least get the worry bug under

control.

Take worries seriously: Get over it won't cut it.

Give the worry a name: Somehow giving a worry a name makes it feel less scary and more manageable. My favourite picture storybook for toddlers 'There's a Hippopotamus on our Roof' by Hazel Edwards personifies fear of the dark as a friendly hippo. Much more friendly and easier to boss around if you're a child.

Put your worries in a jar: Wouldn't it be great to put all your worries into a safe and throw away the key? As an adult you may do this when you take time out to watch your favourite TV show, or lose yourself wandering for hours online. Children need something a little more practical. They can write their worries on some paper and lock them away in a jar by the side of the bed at the end of the day. It's good to know that their worries can't get out because they are locked up tight.

Limit talking time: It's good if boys can talk about what's on their mind but talking needs to be contained to prevent their worries from dominating their lives. Set aside ten minutes a day to talk about their worries and then put worry time aside until tomorrow.

Normalise rather than lionise their anxiety: Anxious kids are very sensitive to their parents' concerns and worries. One way we actually build their concerns is by continually reassuring them that things will be fine. One reassurance should be sufficient most of the time followed by "*I've already talked to you about that.*" Continually going over old ground can allow worries to linger longer than necessary.

Worry about the things worth worrying about: Worrying is energy-sapping and can take up too much of anyone's time. As your son gets older it help him to distinguish between what's worth worrying about and what's not. Helping him prioritise his worries helps him feel like he's in control.

Give him the tools to relax: My wife relaxes in front of the TV, which is sufficient for her to take her mind off her worries. Some people need a bigger set of tools including mindfulness and exercise to help us neutralise our worries

It's not that worriers can't function well. They generally over-function as they come to grips with their anxieties. Not only can worry-wart boys be hard for parents to live with, but they can become difficult partners and friends as adults. This makes childhood the perfect time for parents, not so much to nip worries in the bud but to give natural born worriers some tools and strategies to make life more tolerable now and, importantly, in the future.

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