

**ANXIETY**

Anxiety is common among children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder and it is important to understand some of the factors or reasons that may contribute to children developing anxiety.

These may be:

* The child may have difficulty expressing themself
* The child may find it difficult to cope with **change** or **new situations**
* They may have a high need for predictability
* The child may have difficulty understanding social expectations or rules
* They may fear situations because they feel that they may not be understood
* Some children have difficulty with processing sensory information
* They may fear some sources of sensory stimulation

*(adapted from ACT-NOW Fact Sheet 45)*

**How to effectively deal with a child’s anxiety:**

*Prior to an anxiety provoking event: (please notes that some strategies may be more effective than others dependent on your child’s cognitive ability)*

* Brainstorm with your child events or situations that make them upset
* Talk to them about things they can do when they get upset (e.g. breathing, counting, squeezing hands together, watching a DVD, holding onto a blanket)
* Make and read regularly a Calming down book
* Leave the book in a position where your child can access it
* Practice breathing and relaxation techniques (i.e. tense your muscles for 5 seconds, and relax)
* Prepare for events or situations that may lead to your child experiencing anxiety
* If you know that you will be engaging in an activity or going somewhere that may cause your child to get upset, read the Calming Book to them in the morning (or prior to the event)
* Carry the Calming Book to these events or situations
* Model the calming strategies

**Stepping Stones Behavioural Consultants**

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