

**WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for December 6, 2021**  
**Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.**

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, & Healthy Relationships we'll talk about how to help a child who worries, and as always, look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension.

All kids are afraid of something. Fear is one of our core human emotions. Fear helps us to survive by keeping us from danger. Worry and anxiety are related to fear, but they are not the same things.

Hilary Jacobs Hendel is a licensed clinical social worker who created a tool called the "Change Triangle." The three corners of the triangle are defense, inhibitory emotions, and core emotions. The idea behind it is that when we recognize and deal with our core emotions (fear, anger, sadness, joy, etc.), then we are our best version of ourselves. Sometimes an individual may react to the experience of a core emotion with anxiety, shame, or guilt. These emotions block the core emotions. In response to these inhibitory emotions, a person may produce a defense action like sarcasm or procrastination or working too much or addition.

According to psychologists at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, what children fear often depends on their age and level of development. Common fears by age include:

- Babies (age 0-2) typically fear strangers, unfamiliar settings, and loud noises.
- Toddlers (age 2-4) may express fears related to the dark, thunder, shadows, being separated from parents, changes to routine, or fears related to potty training.
- Children (age 5-7) have developed more active imaginations. They often are scared of bad dreams, disappointing parents/teachers, and getting sick or hurt, or monsters in their closets.
- Older children (age 7+) begin to worry about things beyond their immediate circle. This could include a natural disaster, a mass shooting, loss of a loved one, or things like spiders or snakes.

Acknowledging their fear and validating their feelings is important. They feel the way they do, even if it does not make logical sense to us as parents or grandparents. That feeling needs to be addressed to get past the fear.

Worry is one form of anxiety. According to mental health resources from the University of Washington, children can sometimes have distressing levels of worrying, and it doesn't mean they have an anxiety disorder. One place to start is whether the worry is about a problem that can be solved. If it can, then this is your opportunity to teach techniques for problem solving. Together identify the problem and brainstorm possible solutions. Then help them select one, or maybe two, solutions to try. Kids who perceive they have some control and have a plan worry less.

The situations that can be a little more difficult and frustrating for parents are those worries about unlikely, hypothetical, or uncontrollable events. The best place to start is to have a conversation about worry. Remember in the Change Triangle that it will be human habit to turn to a defense action, which may be an unhealthy habit, to avoid anxiety. The goals of the conversation are to better understand the worry thinking, to provide exposure to the worry content so it becomes less scary, and to help shift the core types of anxiety thoughts ("The bad outcome is likely" and "I could not handle the bad outcome if it happened").

Christian parents can also turn to scripture to reinforce God's truth about the role of thoughts and emotions. Some helpful verses include 2 Corinthians 10:5 about thoughts, Roman 12:2 about our minds, and Philippians 4:8 about meditation.

As a parent, we can model healthy responses to our own emotions. It is a life-long learning process. The more honest we are with ourselves about our own struggles will, hopefully, make us more patient and compassionate as we help our children with theirs.

Many 2022 OSU Extension programming dates have been set for several nutrition, food safety, and food preservation programs. And remember that free individual financial coaching is available. We will work together to create a financial plan that sets you on the path to financial stability. You can find more details about all these programs on our website [coshocton.osu.edu](http://coshocton.osu.edu).

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help educate and improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at [coshocton.osu.edu](http://coshocton.osu.edu). Make it a healthy day!