

ANXIETY IN THE CLASSROOM

How to Talk to Parents & Families

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AnxietyInTheClassroom.org

If you notice that a student is exhibiting symptoms of anxiety or OCD, it is important to talk to their parents. Phone calls to a student's home to discuss their academic, social, or emotional difficulties may be stressful and anxiety-provoking for both families and school personnel.

Difficult conversations like these are more effective if there is a positive and trusting relationship already in place.

OVERVIEW



- 1 Tips for how schools can build positive relationships with their families **before** there is a problem.
- 2 Tips for how school personnel can effectively communicate with parents **once a problem has been identified.**

HOW TO TALK TO PARENTS/ FAMILIES



Tips for how schools can build positive relationships with their families **before** there is a problem

- Teachers may send home a survey at the beginning of the year that invites parents to share important information about their child.
 - The survey might ask about a student's likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses, interests, and skills, or about their family structure.
 - Surveys open the lines of communication between teachers and parents, and demonstrate the teacher's curiosity and willingness to learn about their students.

HOW TO TALK TO PARENTS/ FAMILIES

Tips for how schools can build positive relationships with their families **before** there is a problem

Teachers may send home an introductory email or letter.

- Describing their teaching philosophy, homework policy, and expectations for students and invite parent responses.



HOW TO TALK TO PARENTS/ FAMILIES

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HOW TO TALK TO PARENTS/ FAMILIES



Tips for how schools can build positive relationships with their families **before** there is a problem

- During the beginning of the year meetings, such as parent/teacher conferences or curriculum night, teachers may welcome parents into the learning process and ask them to share their hopes for the school year.
 - *What do they want their child to learn or get better at during the school year? How might they like to be involved in the classroom? What do they want the teacher to know about their child? Teachers may highlight the importance of ongoing parent/teacher communication and invite parents to connect directly with them on a regular basis, especially if there are concerns.*

HOW TO TALK TO PARENTS/ FAMILIES



Tips for how schools can build positive relationships with their families **before** there is a problem

- Teachers may keep parents updated about what is happening in the classroom
 - Create a social media account using an app like Seesaw, where teachers post pictures and videos highlighting the learning process and invite parents to post comments or questions.



HOW TO TALK TO PARENTS/ FAMILIES



Tips for how school personnel can effectively communicate once a problem has been identified.

- Schedule a meeting to discuss concerns instead of trying to address the issues “in passing”, in email, or in an unplanned phone call at the end of a long day.
- Present the student’s strengths and successes, and not just their difficulties, to show parents that all parts of their child are known.
 - For example, *“Sarah is an excellent reader and is always kind to her classmates.”*

HOW TO TALK TO PARENTS/ FAMILIES



Tips for how school personnel can effectively communicate once a problem has been identified.

- Present concerns clearly, calmly, and non-judgmentally. Be sure to have your own emotions managed before attempting to discuss the problem with families.
- Provide specifics about what is happening and how it is impacting the student's functioning at school.
 - For example, *"She seems to be struggling. She asks to go to the nurse 3-5 times a week, has been avoiding her friend group, and isn't handing her homework in anymore, which is hurting her grades."*

HOW TO TALK TO PARENTS/ FAMILIES



Tips for how school personnel can effectively communicate **once a problem has been identified.**

- **Be prepared to answer questions** about how long the problems have persisted, if the problems occur in other classes, what interventions have been used and what their effectiveness has been, and thoughts on how to proceed.
- **Collect information from parents about the history of the problem and what interventions may have been helpful in the past.** If the problem is a new one, include parents in problem solving what might be going on.

HOW TO TALK TO PARENTS/ FAMILIES



Tips for how school personnel can effectively communicate once a problem has been identified.

- Reassure parents that anxiety in children is common and that their child's difficulties will improve with teamwork, outside consultation (if necessary), and good planning.
- If parents are reluctant to address the issue, then invite them into the classroom to observe their child

HOW TO TALK TO PARENTS/ FAMILIES



Tips for how school personnel can effectively communicate once a problem has been identified.

- School personnel should seek out consultation from their peers or administrators if they anticipate the meeting may be difficult or if the situation is complicated. This ensures that all bases are covered and that the general approach to the problem has been carefully considered.

THANK YOU.

QUESTIONS ?

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