

## MANAGING ANXIETY BEFORE IT BECOMES A PROBLEM

The president of Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) recently highlighted the enormity of the anxiety problem that children are facing. A survey of primary schools across Australia conducted by the APPA showed that 80% of school leaders regard anxiety as a significant issue for children.

Research shows that childhood anxiety left unmanaged will almost certainly re-emerge, highlighting the importance of early detection and management of anxiety. Parents, as first responders, play an important role by minimising the impact of stressful moments before they lead to full-blown anxiety. Here's how they can help.

### Recognise anxiety triggers

Recognising the events that trigger anxiety is the first step in helping a child to manage their stress. Rapid or unpredictable change, new social situations, unfamiliar events, and difficult experiences are the most common anxiety stressors for kids.

### Know how it shows

Stress and anxiety show in many ways however most children display anxiety behaviours that are unique to them. Typically, anxiety shows through physical signs such as chest pains, nausea, and headaches. Anxiety can be observed through behavioural clues such as avoidance of activities, aggression, concentration difficulties and constant fiddling and movement. Worrying, overthinking and catastrophising are also common in children who experience anxiety. Knowing how anxiety shows in your child will alert you to respond appropriately with support and understanding.

### Give kids tools to manage their states

Once anxiety is experienced it never truly disappears. It's always there in the background. Anxiety needs managing so kids can get on with their lives rather than become overwhelmed by stress and worry. Providing children with tools to manage their thinking, emotional and physical states prevents anxiety from becoming