

Possibilities

in Education and Training

Winter 2023



Strength, Determination and Love Bring a Family Back Together

By Michelle Johnston, *Program Coordinator*, UI Center for Disabilities and Development

On May 23, 2021, Sreekar Gude was a healthy and active 12-year-old, having a day like any other day. He had lunch with his family at home, before they all headed to the Racoon River as they often did. Sreekar was excited because he loved to swim, and as usual, he packed everything he would need for swimming and after. But that day turned into a day like no other for him and his family. After a brief time in the river, Sreekar got out of the water and told his family he wasn't feeling well. He had a headache, and had to lay down for a few minutes before the family decided to leave. In the car, he became ill, and then, unresponsive.

Sreekar was transported to two different hospitals, before being airlifted the next day to the University of Iowa Hospital and Clinics in Iowa City. Providers at UI Health Care performed a variety of tests, and an emergency procedure used to relieve swelling in the brain due to a stroke. Sreekar had experienced a brain bleed, but they could not find the cause. He lost the ability to do everything, and even had to relearn how to blink. While at UIHC Sreekar's Uncle and family came from Michigan to stay with Sreekar's 14-year-old brother.



Sreekar sledding
when he was
11 years old

On July 13, Sreekar was released and transferred to ChildServe where he participated in different therapies, multiple times a week. His family mobilized, relying on their strong family bonds, to face the challenge together. Sreekar's mother stayed at ChildServe with him the entire three months he was there. His father would visit several times daily, bringing his wife meals every day, two meals each weekday, and three meals a day on the weekends. Sai family members and friends also brought her meals on weekdays. Sreekar's brother played

an integral part in getting the family's house packed up because they needed to move during this time. On October 14, 2021, Sreekar left the Transitional Care Unit at ChildServe for home.

During this entire process, Jo Schumacher, a transition specialist from the Money Follows the Person (MFP) grant program, and Sarah Boss, a community-based case manager with Iowa Total Care who worked with Sreekar at ChildServe, provided him and his family lots of much-needed help. As the family learned to navigate a complex, hard to understand, system of supports and services, both Jo and Sarah connected the family to the resources they needed to care for Sreekar at their home. They also gave the family moral support, and brought great cheer when they visited.

A determined kid, Sreekar has worked hard and made huge progress since that day in May of 2021. When he was relearning to sit up, he would practice and practice, five hundred times a day, and it paid off. His family found creative ways to help him. His father knew Sreekar liked the Rubix Cube, and he used that to help him with vertical eye movement. His mother massaged his hands and feet to help "reconnect" them to his brain.

At home now, Sreekar is able to walk with help, but he also uses a wheelchair. He enjoys activities such as doing jigsaw puzzles, playing magnetic fish games, and playing with magnetic blocks and kinetic sand. He also enjoys doing yoga exercises,



Now 14, Sreekar experienced a brain bleed, when he was 12.

He lost the ability to do everything, and even had to relearn how to blink.

and sometimes, taking naps on his yoga mats. Although Sreekar is not attending school now, he received great support from special education teachers, principal,

school nurse and staff from the Waukee Community School District, as well as from Heartland AEA staff and therapists.

Sarah, who worked with Sreekar at Childserve, provided SCL (supported community living) services twice a week. Now, an Easterseals SCL staff member visits their home once week to work with Sreekar. Eddie reads to him, and watches him work on puzzles and other activities. They play board games and he helps him do his exercises. The family has benefitted from Easterseals crisis management therapy and their respite program, which provides temporary care for children and adults with disabilities, including regularly scheduled respite weekends at Easterseals Iowa Camp Sunnyside twice a month. And now, Sreekar is getting his therapy services from On With Life.

Strength, determination, and love brought this family back together. Along with lots of support—and hot meals—from family and friends, and the expertise—and good cheer—of dedicated professionals.

Coping with Anxiety

Mitch DeFauw, *Disability Resource Librarian*

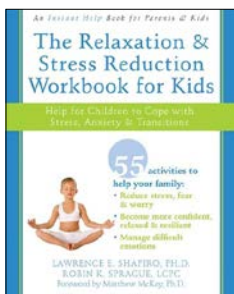
Individuals with anxiety disorder, particularly children, can experience stress throughout the year. But the stress of changing routines, and upcoming summer holidays, can be especially challenging. The Disability Resource Library (DRL) suggests the books listed below to help children learn to manage those feelings of anxiety. Each book is available for checkout from the DRL.

For more information about these books, the DRL, and a link to the library's online catalog, please visit: <http://uichildrens.org/cdd/drl>.

If you have any questions, please contact Mitch DeFauw at mitchell-defauw@uiowa.edu.

The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook for Kids: Help for Children to Cope with Stress, Anxiety, and Transitions

by Lawrence E. Shapiro PhD, Robin K. Sprague, and Matthew McKay PhD



Children pay close attention to their parents' moods. When parents feel upset, their kids may become anxious,

and when parents wind down, children also get the chance to relax. When you feel overwhelmed and stressed, it can be hard to help your child feel balanced. The Relaxation & Stress Reduction Workbook for Kids, written by two child therapists, offers more than fifty activities you can do together as a family to help you and your child replace stressful and anxious feelings with feelings of optimism, confidence, and joy.

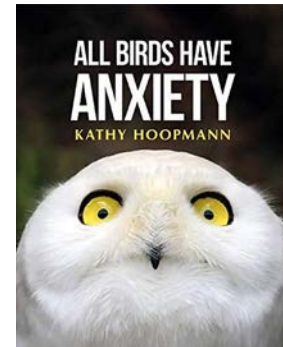
Anxiety Relief for Kids: On-the-Spot Strategies to Help Your Child Overcome Worry, Panic & Avoidance

by Bridget Flynn Walker

Anxiety Relief for Kids provides quick solutions based in evidence-based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and exposure therapy—two of the most effective treatments for anxiety disorders. You'll find a background and explanation of the different types of anxiety disorders, in case you aren't sure whether or not your child has one. You'll also learn to identify your child's avoidant and safety behaviors—the strategies your child uses to cope with their anxiety, such as repeatedly checking their homework or asking the same questions repeatedly—as well as anxiety triggers that set your child off.

All Birds Have Anxiety

by Kathy Hoopmann (picture book)

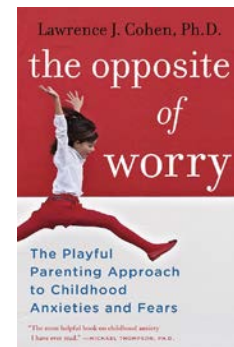


Life as a bird can be stressful! From worrying about airplanes, windows, and getting

enough worms to eat, it is clear that birds can be anxious beings. Through a light-touch, quizzical depiction of bird behavior, *All Birds Have Anxiety* uses colorful images and astute explanations to explore with gentle humor what it means to live with anxiety day-to-day, and how to begin to deal with it.

The Opposite of Worry: The Playful Parenting Approach to Childhood Anxieties and Fears

by Lawrence J. Cohen

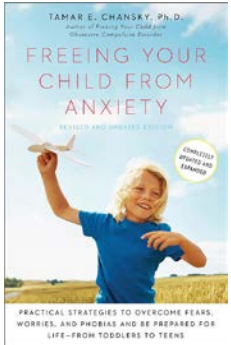


Whether it's the monster in the closet or the fear that arises from new social situations, school, or sports, anxiety can be especially

challenging and maddening for children. And since anxiety has a mind of its own, logic and reassurance often fail, leaving parents increasingly frustrated about how to help. Now Lawrence J. Cohen, Ph.D., the author of *Playful Parenting*, provides a special set of tools to handle childhood anxiety.

Freeing Your Child from Anxiety

by Tamar Chansky PhD

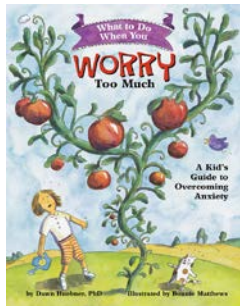


Freeing Your Child from Anxiety contains easy, fun, and effective tools for teaching children to outsmart their worries and take charge

of their fears. This revised and updated edition also teaches how to prepare children to withstand the pressure in our competitive test-driven culture. Learn the tips, techniques, and exercises kids need to implement the book's advice right away, including "How to Talk to Your Child" sections and "Do It Today" activities at the end of each chapter.

What to Do When You Worry Too Much: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Anxiety (What-to-Do Guides for Kids Series)

by Dawn Huebner



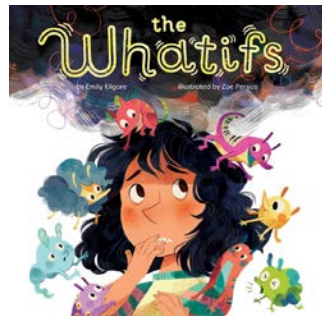
Lively metaphors and humorous illustrations make the concepts and strategies easy to understand,

while clear how-to steps and prompts to draw and write help children to master new skills related to reducing anxiety. This interactive self-help book is the complete resource for educating, motivating, and empowering kids to overcoming their overgrown worries.

Overcoming Anxiety in Children & Teens

by Jed Baker

Practical and evidence-based treatments for anxiety are described in an extremely user-friendly format. Parents and clinicians alike will be able to help both typical and autistic children overcome debilitating anxiety. Simple to use fear ladders, "think like a scientist" cue cards, meditation guides, physical exercises, and cognitive behavioral strategies are shown to help children gradually confront their fears. If you need simple, ready to use strategies that work, this is the book for you.



The Whatifs

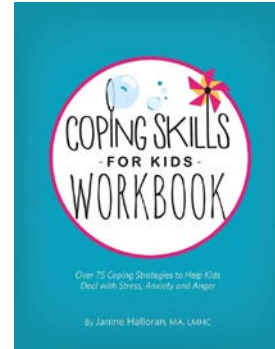
by Emily Kilgore (picture book)

Cora is constantly worrying about everything. Because of this, the Whatifs love her. They sneak up to her and give her all kinds of doubts: big or small, silly or frightening, likely or impossible. As she prepares for an upcoming piano recital, the Whatifs cling on tighter and drag her down, making her anxious about messing up during the concert. Will she be able to change her worry-filled thoughts into hopeful ones?

Coping Skills for Kids

Workbook: Over 75 Coping Strategies to Help Kids Deal with Stress, Anxiety and Anger

by Janine Halloran



Dealing with stress, anxiety and anger are important skills to learn, but not all kids learn those

strategies naturally. The Coping Skills for Kids Workbook can help teach children to calm down, balance their energy and emotions, and process challenging feelings. Author Janine Halloran, LMHC, shares over 75 innovative, fun and engaging activities developed from her experience in schools, outpatient mental health clinics and as a mother.

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“You’re off to great places!
Today is your day!
Your mountain is waiting,
So get on your way!”

— Dr. Seuss

How to get in touch with *Possibilities*:

EMAIL: michelle-johnston@uiowa.edu

FAX: 319-384-6241 **PHONE:** 319-356-1434

MAIL:

University of Iowa Health Care
Center for Disabilities and Development
100 Hawkins Dr., Rm. S277
Iowa City IA 52242-1011

Disability Resource Library

PHONE: 800-272-7713

EMAIL: disability-library@uiowa.edu

WEBSITE: uichildrens.org/cdd/drl/

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