

## Parenting – Dealing with Fear in Children

Is fear normal for children?

Fears are normal in children and even teenagers and adults. We deal with them all the time. Fear brings about stress and a natural fight or flight response. Fear hardly warrants a professional intervention unless they are irrational, prolonged and unnatural. It is only after a series of learnt behaviours that we react to fear in a conditioned manner.

At The Therapy Room, a team of psychologists, led by Geraldine Tan, the principal psychologist, conducts therapeutic interventions and has numerous experiences working with children. Should you have any inquiries or concerns, please feel free to click [here](#) to contact us and find out more.

How can parents help to handle fear in their children?

Handling fear is a major phrase in parenting as it helps the child cope with his own trepidation in later years. It is important to note for parents to be more open with the ideas of letting their children do different things and explore different situations on their own. By not allowing them to do so and saying that they are unable to handle it may play a part in unconsciously fueling a child's irrational fear.

Sometimes, we all tend to subtly avoid any situations that can possibly invoke fear or stress. Rather than confront it, we tend to avoid it totally. This is normal as a human. However, it is encouraged for parents to communicate with their children and find out the reasons behind why they have certain fears. For instance, if a child is afraid of the dark, instead of putting night lights all over the child as an "excuse" for the child to avoid facing the situation, help the child by finding out the reasons of his fear and to cope with his or her aversion.

Using an excuse to avoid an unfavourable situation is often a tough habit to break in the later formative years and limits the child's ability to manage similar situations.

What are some tips on how to manage your child's fears and apply them to a range of different situations?

There are a few things parents can do. The first thing parents can do is to understand that children's fears are often due to developmental tasks and are generally common and transient. As a result, parents are strongly encouraged to be aware of normal development, although the intensity and duration of fear may differ for each individual. For example, infants and toddlers may display fear when separated from their caregivers and in the presence of strangers. If we are not aware of this, we may indulge the child, promoting clinginess. Fear of the dark is also common among preschoolers and having a source of comfort may help them to cope with the fear.

Another thing parents can do is to teach the child about fear and how to overcome it. Catering to their child's age, parents can use reading materials, colouring books, and hands-on exercise to teach the child about fear and help them identify as well as label feelings, thoughts and behaviours.

Parents can also create a fear hierarchy. A fear hierarchy is where parents can have their children write for them on a paper about the multiple fears they have – from not very fearful to extremely fearful. This will prime the parents on how much the child can manage if they are planning to gradually expose their children to their fears.