



PRESCHOOL ANXIETY

CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR PARENTS

IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE A PRESCHOOLER BEING ANXIOUS, but sometimes this can happen in uncertain situations, a crowded or loud environment, or when they are separated from a parent. What seems small to us, as adults, can be very big to a preschooler. It's even harder to know when a preschooler is anxious because they may not have the words to verbally express what they're feeling and thinking. That's why it's important to be aware of physical cues that may be telling you they are experiencing anxiety such as stomach aches, sudden change in behavior, excessive crying and extreme frustration.

EMBRACE THEIR PHYSICAL NEEDS.

Knowing how to talk with your child during these times can help them learn how to express and process their anxiety in healthy ways. Here are a few ideas of what to say and what not to say.

WHAT TO SAY

- "I am here. You are safe." (*reassure*)
- "May I give you a hug?" (*co-regulate*)
- "Use your words to tell me about your worry or what you're afraid of. Can you draw me a picture of it?" (*acknowledge*)
- "Tell me about a time that made you feel really happy inside." (*imagery*)
- "God wants us to talk to Him when we're worried and afraid. Tell Him how you feel, because He loves you and wants to help."
- "Thank you for telling me how you feel. I will always try to help you as much as I can."

WHAT NOT TO SAY

- "It's time to be a big boy/girl."
- "You'll be fine, so just stop worrying."
- "Stop being silly."
- "There's nothing to be worried/scared about."
- "That will never happen."
- Nothing.

MAKE SURE TO INVOLVE PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS, AS NEEDED, AS WELL AS YOUR MINISTRY LEADER.