



## Anxious kids, anxious parents

How do you manage a child who gets stomachaches every school morning? Or one who refuses to go to after-school activities? Or who is trapped in the bathroom with frequent hand washing?

One in every 5 kids suffers from a diagnosable anxiety disorder. Experts Reid Wilson, professor of psychiatry at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine, and Lynn Lyons, a social worker and psychotherapist, say anxiety disorders are the number one reason why parents bring a child to a mental health professional.

“When kids grow and step into new experiences, they should have questions and uncertainties. Worry becomes a problem when a child is consistently avoiding activities or experiences that are a normal part of development,” according to these experts.

How do you know if your child may have anxiety? Wilson and Lyons, authors of *Anxious Kids, Anxious Parents: 7 Ways to Stop the Worry Cycle and Raise Courageous & Independent Children*, say to look for the following behaviors and see a mental health professional with your concerns (worry, they say, may run in families):

- They cling to you.
- They refuse to try new activities.
- They continually ask you for reassurance of their “what if” questions.
- They feel sick and complain of aches, pains, and nausea.
- They avoid school or cry or throw tantrums if you force them to go.
- They act shy and don’t talk in class or around others.
- They worry about future or past events (“I will look stupid reading this book report” or “Did I make my best friend mad?” or “Something bad is going to happen to my family”).

Children can learn to manage their uncertainty, but sometimes it takes a professional to help.