

Vermont Family Network's Puppets in Education Anxiety Program: Home Edition

Puppeteer Sarah thought that many of you could use some of the tips and tools from our (usually) live puppet show about Anxiety that we perform in elementary schools. So, we shortened it a little and her wonderful husband and son agreed to learn to puppeteer and film it with her in their living room—just so we could share it with you. Enjoy!

Key Program Points:

- Worry is normal, everyone experiences it
- Our bodies have built-in alarm systems that tell us when there is a problem. Our brains tell our bodies to react and get our heart pumping and make our breathing fast. Our alarm system is useful.
- Sometimes our alarm system goes off too often or when it is not necessary. That's what happens when worry becomes a problem and starts to get in the way of what we need to or want to do.
- When Worry becomes a problem, there are lots of ways we can help to make it smaller, manageable, and not get in the way. It will never go away completely because it is a normal part of life.
- Worry tries to boss us around, but we can boss worry back and be empowered!
- There are many tools we can use when Worry feels big. It is good to have many tools, because some work better for some people, others for other people. Some tools work better on some days, and different tools work better on other days. The tools we will talk about are: Stand Up to Worry, Busy Mind, Calm Breath, Talk to a Grown-up, and Move My Body. You may come up with ideas of tools that work for you!

Get the conversation started!

Try some of these conversation starters with your kids after watching the video:

1. Worry is normal, everyone experiences it, but sometimes it can get in the way of things we want or need to do. Talk about a time when worry got in the way for you and you successfully navigated it (both adults and kids).
2. The puppets personified Natalie's worry as a big Octopus so she could talk to it. Does your Worry look like something? What shape is it? What color? Can you draw it?
3. The puppets talked about tools to use when Worry feels big. Try each of them together:
 - Stand Up to Worry (practice telling Worry that you can handle it!)
 - Busy Mind (can you think of a song or game to play when Worry gets big?)
 - Calm Breath (practice taking deep belly breaths)

- Talk to a Grown-Up (who are the grown-ups throughout your day who you can talk to when Worry is big? Make a list!)
 - Move My Body (Do you like to dance? Run? Stretch? Talk to the grown-ups you identified above about how you might need to use this tool if Worry is big and make a plan.)
 - What are some other ideas you have for your toolbox?
4. Remember, practicing these techniques when Worry is not huge will help them come more easily when you need them. Some strategies work better for some people, or at different times. Keep trying!
 5. Remember, we all have Worry. It will be with us because it is useful, but we can make it smaller and more manageable.

Resources:

<https://www.vermontfamilynetwork.org/what-we-do/resources/topics/mental-health/>

<https://childmind.org/topics/concerns/anxiety/>

<https://adaa.org/>

<https://anxietycanada.com/>