

Orientation to SPACE

About "Unilateral Steps"

Sometimes, your child may not want to take steps toward managing their anxiety, and that's okay. Anxiety can be very loud and persuasive. One part of this program involves you making certain changes even if your child isn't on board yet. You're not doing this to upset them, you're doing it to support their long-term growth and independence.

Even if your child resists, it's important to remember that you're doing this because you care and want to help them. As we continue in the program, we'll talk about how to handle your child's reactions in a calm, supportive way.

Understanding Anxiety

Anxiety is a *normal and healthy emotion* – it helps us stay safe and alert in real danger. But in anxiety disorders, that "alarm system" goes off too often or in situations that aren't actually dangerous.

For children with anxiety, their minds and bodies react strongly – even when there's no real threat. They may feel worried, panicked, or stuck in "what if" thinking. They try to escape or avoid these feelings, and over time, this becomes a pattern that gets in the way of their daily life.

Anxiety can show up in different ways for different kids:

- **Body:** headaches, stomachaches, tense muscles
- **Thoughts:** constant worrying or fears
- **Behaviors:** avoiding places or people, seeking lots of reassurance
- **Emotions:** irritability, sadness, fear

We'll explore how anxiety shows up for your child and how all these pieces work together.

Personal Boundaries

As children grow up, they're supposed to become more independent. But anxiety can get in the way. Your child may rely more on you than expected for their age – needing help with things they could do themselves or feeling scared when you're apart. We'll talk about how anxiety may be affecting the *boundaries* between you and your child, and how to gently shift things so they can grow into a more confident, independent person.

Home Practice

Identify one thing you'd like to see your child handle better. Observes aspects of their anxiety system in these situations.