

Supportive Statements and Charting Rescues

Supportive Statements

Supportive statements help your child feel understood and encouraged to cope with anxiety. They combine two key ideas:

1. Acceptance of how your child feels
2. Confidence in their ability to handle discomfort

This balance is what we call *support*

- If you help your child avoid anxiety, that's rescuing.
- If you push them to be brave without recognizing their fear, that's demanding.
- Support means saying, "I see you're scared, and I believe you can handle this."

You are not agreeing with their fear or leaving them to face their fears alone. You are showing them *you understand how they feel* and that *you believe in their ability to face the fear*.

Your child learns how to see themselves through your words and actions. When they hear that they're capable, even when anxious, they'll start to believe it. That belief is a powerful tool in reducing anxiety over time.

We'll continue practicing supportive language throughout the program, so try to notice when you use non-supportive statements and think about how you might rephrase them in a more supportive way.

Rescues

When your child feels anxious, it's natural to want to help by making things easier for them. This is called *rescuing*. Almost all parents do this at least sometimes because it feels better to reduce their child's distress right away.

However, while rescues can help in the moment, it can make anxiety worse over time. When we always step in to help avoid uncomfortable situations, children learn to rely on those rescues instead of learning they can handle anxiety on their own. This can lead to more anxiety and more requests for help in the future.

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Supportive Statements and Charting Rescues

Rescues, cont.

Helping your child avoid real danger is protection—like holding their hand while crossing a busy street when they're young. But helping them avoid things they can actually do, like holding their hand when they're old enough to cross alone, is a rescue.

Rescue Charting

Now that you know what rescues are and can recognize some you may be making, the next step is to track these behaviors using a rescue chart.

This chart helps you write down all the ways you, other caregivers, or siblings adjust their behavior because of your child's anxiety. The goal is to get a clear picture of which rescues happen and when.

How to Use the Chart

- We'll start by filling out the chart for one part of your day, like the morning.
- Describe any changes in your behavior (or sibling behavior) that happen because of your child's anxiety.
- Note if these rescues happen regularly.

Not sure if it's a rescue? Ask yourself:

- Do I do this with all my children?
- Do I want to stop doing this?
- Would I still do this if my child wasn't anxious?
- What would happen if I didn't do this one day?

If you answer "no" or "I don't want to do this," it's likely a rescue.

Home Practice

- Keep a log of the statements you notice yourself making to your child when they're anxious and label them as either supportive, rescuing, or demanding. Consider how to reframe non-supportive statements.
- Chart rescues each day using the chart over the next week.