

# Parenting The Anxious Child (Let Them Know They're Loved & Not Alone)

BY ROBIN LYNN

"Mommy, I don't feel like myself today" are the words I sleepily awoke to this morning.

His bedhead and worried eyes staring at me. I can barely remember what day it is or what's on the to-do list. He heaves worried breaths, chest rising and falling rapidly in that tiny 8-year-old body as he's busy entertaining all of life's unknowables.

I've lost track of all the ways I've prayed for God to help me. How many times have I begged for pearls of wisdom? How often have I summoned the courage to continue on?

***Days like today I feel tired and helpless.***

Before I place my feet on the floor, we're in the heartbeat of an anxiety attack. Before coffee and logic and ability to process, I'm inching my way however slowly, to the parts of my brain that can digest his concerns. If I'm being completely honest, I'm depleted and downright exhausted. I'm scrambling my metaphysical tool belt for coping mechanisms I'm not sure exist right now, and I haven't even brushed my teeth yet.

The episodes of worry, fear, and anxiety in his poor little head are all-consuming. No matter how many times or ways we manage the fear or help establish confidence, no matter the countless effort to let him know he's worthy of feeling calm

and safe, no matter the strands of love we bead together to display the beautiful things in his life...here he is, swimming in a sea of endless doubt.

I choke back an involuntary sob. I can feel his devastation. I know the weight of ancient heartache pressing on his chest. He craves understanding, acceptance, and relief. All of which he absolutely deserves, yet those messages cannot be received in these anxious spaces.

He stands in front of me, exposed, vulnerable, and alone.

And here I am again, praying to God to find the words,  
any words at all  
to make the pain fade away.

Parenting a child with anxiety takes the wind from my very lungs. I wish he could feel the enormity of his worthiness, to remember he is loving and kind. It's especially difficult (for me) not to take it so personally. I know these feelings are his; in all its darkness, it's also the very thing that makes him the courageous little human he is.

***But right this minute, I wish he could see how much joy he brings to us all.***

None of that matters here and now, and for some reason, all I can think about is every "Full House" episode, and how Danny Tanner dad talks could turn a disaster into a rainbow with some violin string music and an empathetic grin.

Parenting isn't like that though...it's not cheesy instrumentals and wrapping up a life lesson in 30-minute segments.

Every day is a battle for his soul,  
For his truth.

Every morning I remind him of his goodness,

Every night he reminds himself he is afraid.

Every day we use phrases and words to empower and inspire him. Yet he remains caught in a battle for his freedom from the monsters in his mind.

As I run my hands through my hair I examine my own anxieties. The more it hurts, the more I wonder just how to make it through another day. I wonder if I'm doing all the wrong things, I wonder deeply about my effectiveness as a mom.

Occasionally, I pray for a minute to remind myself of my own good intentions. His baby blues blinking into me, waiting for healing, and I'm here fumbling through a thousand thoughts. I pull into this reality and summon the mommy healer within me...

"Francis sweetie, take a deep breath. Where do you feel this hurt in your body?"

"My heart."

I lean over from my bed and place my hand on his heart.

"Breathe deep. Do you feel that? Do you feel your heartbeat? What's important is this heart beats so much love and cares so much for others. I know you're hurting right now, but I'm right here with you. I love you, I love this heart so much. It's absolutely perfect the way it is."

***He cracks a tiny smile, " I love your heart, too, Mommy," he whispers and shuffles slowly to the bathroom to get ready.***

I lay my head back on my pillow and squeeze away the tears, and succumb to the dull pain in my head. Days like today, there's no way around it, it's just so hard to parent a child with anxiety.

I'm honestly not sure hour to hour, minute to minute if we're

getting it right. But I guess, no parent can know that. But what I do know is, I'll spend every day trying, giving him my everything, just so he knows he's so loved and he's not alone.

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The doors to the world of the wild Self  
are few but precious. If you have a deep  
scar, that is a door, if you have an old, old  
story, that is a door. If you love the sky  
and the water so much you almost  
cannot bear it, that is a door. If you yearn  
for a deeper life, a full life, a sane life,  
that is a door.

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