



Ideas for helping to build your child's confidence

There are lots of reasons why some children develop anxiety, including things they are born with, like their genes and temperament, as well as things that happen in their lives. As parents, you can play a key role in helping your child learn to overcome this anxiety, and become more confident and independent in the future. Clinical Psychologists at Reading University, like Cathy Creswell, Lucy Willetts and Monika Parkinson, have done a lot of research to find out the kinds of things that parents can do to support their anxious children, using cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT). Here are some of the things they have learnt.

Key principles for building independence in your child:

1. *Be confident in your child* – and let them know you are confident!
2. *Show your child how to be independent.*
3. *Allow and encourage them to be independent rather than jumping in and doing things for them.*
4. *Be tolerant of and respect their struggle, rather than criticising them.*
5. *Slowly build up what your child can do.*
6. *Give your child choices, rather than choosing for them.*

If your child gets anxious:

Don't keep reassuring them. It's better to help them learn how to manage their own worry.

Don't collude with them avoiding the thing they're worried about. It's better to support them in gradually facing their fear, and learning to solve problems.

Do promote "brave" behaviour, where your child "has a go" at doing something:

- ❖ Pay attention to it
- ❖ Give clear and specific praise for it
- ❖ Reward it
- ❖ Model brave behaviour to your child
- ❖ Allow and encourage independence



A good book to read for advice is Creswell, C. and Willetts, L (2010). *Overcoming you child's fears and worries: A guide for parents using cognitive behavioural techniques*. London: Constable and Robinson Ltd.