



Activities for Anxious Kids

Paint relaxation stones - I'm fortunate enough to live near the ocean, so I spent a few minutes this summer picking up small smooth stones kids could use as a calming fidget. Using acrylic paints, they painted designs or a picture of something they find calming on a stone of their choosing. After they dried, I sprayed them with a clear gloss to protect the paint job. The kids really love them; some took them home while others have been using them appropriately in the classroom for weeks. Just give the classroom teachers a heads-up before you hand them out!

Create a Worry Warrior (<http://www.crayola.com/for-educators/lesson-plans/lesson-plan/worry-warriors--courage-connections.aspx>) - Kids make a creature or contraption that will gobble up their worries. From Crayola.



Make Mind Jars - This idea is all over Pinterest. I have large ones of these in my office made from Smart Water bottles, but kids can make smaller ones to keep.

The idea is that when a kid is anxious, s/he flips the bottle upside down & back like a snow globe. As the glitter settles, the child watches it and practices deep breathing. To make the bottles, you need plastic jars or water bottles, glitter glue or hair gel (to make the liquid more dense), food coloring, and glitter. Some people use small beads or other little objects as well, but I find that those dive-bomb straight to the bottom rather than float. Fill the bottle halfway with warm water so the glitter doesn't clump. Add glitter and food coloring. In a separate bottle, I mixed maybe 5-6 T. of hair gel with some warm water and shook it up to "melt" it before adding it to my mind jar. Hot-glue the cap onto the bottle.



Imagine Yourself as a Superhero - The superpowers that kids wish they had can tell us a lot. Have them **choose their favorite superpowers**

(<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B6CDXq4e3q-PdEU3ekpnNDI5NUU/edit?usp=sharing>), then **draw themselves and write a newspaper story**

(<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B6CDXq4e3q-PaEo3NEtwQjdaVlk/edit?usp=sharing>) about their debut.

Make a Video - With your iPad or tablet, there are so many options here. They can record:

- a relaxation video or audio file of a guided relaxation exercise
- a video with helpful tips for other anxious kids
- practice sessions of them facing a fear so they can watch themselves and get feedback
- interviews with each other (especially if they have a fear of speaking "publicly")

Of course, just be sure to have parent permission before filming.

Guided Relaxation - For years I've been doing classroom relaxation lessons with a book called *Earthlight: Meditations for Children* (<http://www.amazon.com/Earthlight->

[Maureen-Garth/dp/0732258286/ref=sr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1382185445&sr=1-3&keywords=maureen+garth](https://www.amazon.com/dp/0732258286/ref=sr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1382185445&sr=1-3&keywords=maureen+garth)) by Maureen Garth. Some of it is pretty sappy, and it's not super well-written, but the stories are a great starting place. After we've done some of them for several weeks, I have the kids brainstorm other story elements or ideas, which I can then incorporate into a new custom-made story using the same format. In the classroom, I play this instrumental CD (http://www.amazon.com/Feather-Breath-God-Erin-Jacobsen/dp/B00000IAJZ/ref=sr_1_2?s=music&ie=UTF8&qid=1382185830&sr=1-2&keywords=feather+on+the+breath+of+god) and see who wants their backs rubbed while they're using their imagination. THEY LOVE THIS and I'm remembered for it for years!

Make a Collage - I love collaging, can you tell? Have them make a collage with things or places they find calming. Travel magazines would be perfect for this.

Draw a Comic Strip - Who doesn't love a comic strip? And remembering something that made us laugh is good for reducing anxiety. Have kids draw a comic strip about a funny moment in their lives. Again, there are a lot of ways to change this up. Here's a **blank comic page** (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B6CDXq4e3q-PQ3I4cENnYjE3WG8/edit?usp=sharing>) I made.



Happy Brain, Worry Brain - Sorry, I can't remember exactly where I got this. Use a flashlight to project each kid's profile onto large paper, and trace it twice (ours didn't come out exactly mirror-image, because we were all laughing too much). Have kids collage things that make them happy in the "Happy Brain," and things they worry about in the "Worry Brain." This kid's big worries are school and the fact that he doesn't really have any close friends. Kids can of course write words or draw pictures for things they can't find a magazine cut-out for.

Make Stress Fidgets -

\$1 pool noodle + 1 serrated knife + 2 minutes = 52 stress fidgets for the upcoming school year. That's a time and financial investment even I could afford! Great idea from Danielle at School Counselor Blog (<http://www.schcounselor.com/>).

OR

Use a funnel to fill round balloons with corn starch, flour, or sand. Fold the neck of the balloon over, and put inside of another balloon that you've snipped the neck off of. Repeat with a third balloon. Just double-check with your school nurse that there are no latex allergies in your building.



Draw yourself as a Superhero or Warrior - help kids channel their personal power by imagining themselves with worry-busting strengths. The superpowers that kids wish they had can tell us a lot about where they feel powerless. Have them **choose their favorite superpowers** (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B6CDXq4e3q-PdEU3ekpnNDI5NUU/edit?usp=sharing>), then **draw themselves and write a newspaper story** (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B6CDXq4e3q-PaEo3NEtwQjdaVlk/edit?usp=sharing>) about their debut.



WORRY NINJA
POWER CARDS

Put "Worry Ninja" power cards

(<http://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Worry-Ninja-Power-Cards-1104635>) on a keychain a student can keep in his desk so he has instant access to positive thoughts and empowering strategies to use when that anxiety starts to rise. Check my TpT store (<http://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Store/School-Counseling-Files>) soon---I'm working on a whole Worry Ninja curriculum with 8 weeks of lessons. So psyched!

[Learn a song about belly breathing](#) (from Sesame Street) -



Instant Comfort/Coping Boxes

(<http://emerlyeararts.blogspot.com/2014/04/instant-comfort-todays-art-therapy.html>) - I saw this on Pinterest from Vermont artist Cynthia Emerlye. If you want more details about how I've been using them, check my blog post [here](http://www.schoolcounselingfiles.com/blog/tiny-coping-boxes) (<http://www.schoolcounselingfiles.com/blog/tiny-coping-boxes>).

[Make a List \(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gqWgJeUm_Vg&feature=youtu.be\)](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gqWgJeUm_Vg&feature=youtu.be) - When talking about a situation that produces anxiety (like for one of my kids, an upcoming interview with a guardian ad litem), divide a paper in two and label one side "What I Know" and the other "What I Don't Know." Help him fill in things in each column. The list can be revisited in future weeks, and items moved from the "Don't Know" to the "Know" column, which helps give a sense of progress. This is from therapist Pam Dyson.

[Change can be Beautiful](http://www.frankie.com.au/blogs/craft/frankie-exclusive-diy-colourful-kaleidoscope) - Okay, this is a pretty labor-intensive craft project, but so worth it! Change is stressful, but it can be beautiful too. Help kids **make a kaleidoscope** (<http://www.frankie.com.au/blogs/craft/frankie-exclusive-diy-colourful-kaleidoscope>) to help them remember that.

[Color My Life](#) - Give kids a blank piece of paper and a selection of colored pencils or crayons. On one side of the paper, make a "key" where they pick one color to represent the different feelings they've had in their lifetimes (you can either give them a set list of a few basic feelings, or let them make their own list). The other side of the paper represents their life. Since we have feelings all the time, he is to fill up the entire paper, creating an abstract design using the colors he has chosen. He needs to use all the colors from the key in whatever proportion he has felt them in his life. If he chooses yellow for happy and feels like he's been mostly happy in his life, then the majority of the finished design should be yellow. To make this a little less abstract, you can give them the outline of a body and have them fill their body instead of the whole paper.

What My Customers Have to Say

You are kind, smart, and consitorit.

Kaitlyn T., Grade 1

When I leave this school I'm going to get you fired. Then I'll tell the principal at my new school to hire you.

Ryan D., Grade 2