

# ANXIETY BUSTERS for 20 ANXIOUS PARENTING MOMENTS and Why They'll WORK for You and your Child

	Anxious Moment	Anxiety Buster	Why It Works
1	You ask your child a question and they answer, "I don't know."	Follow up with the question: "You don't know, or you'd rather not say? Just curious, but I'm good either with either answer."	You're taking all the pressure off your child and learning if they feel okay being open with you. If they'd rather not say, tuck that info into a mental file and follow up later.
2	Your child brings a phone to the dinner table when the family rule is not to do so.	Make everyone get their phones and for this meal, no one can talk. Only texting allowed, even for "pass the salt" phrases and "please" and "thank you."	Everyone will get tired of texting for every little thing that's easier to just say out loud. Tried & true!*
3	Your child doesn't come to dinner when asked.	Option 1 for a younger child: close the kitchen after supper and deal with their hangriness for the rest of the evening.	If there's nothing to eat except dinner until breakfast the next day, they probably won't skip it twice.
4	Your tween/teen doesn't come to dinner when asked.	Option 2 for a tween/teen: Leave their place set. Warm up the food when they do appear. Sit quietly with them at the table while they eat; let them initiate conversation.	This tells your teen that you care more about them than their little "rebellion." You're love them and are there for them, and chances are that message will bring benefits when they really do need you to be there and listen someday.
5	Your child won't go to church.	If they're old enough to stay at home, go without them.	At this stage, you can follow up later with a conversation like "What was going on this morning?" "I'm curious as to your reason for not going with us to church?" "What does going to church mean

			to you?" "Why do you think we find it important as a family?" Plus, you get to go to church without a frustrated child!
		If they're younger, you can ask them to just do the next thing. "Okay, how about you just put your shoes on. Great job! Let's put our coats on, too! Still don't want to go? Okay, but how about you walk me out to the car?" Go step-by-step, inviting them to "help you" and to participate with you each step of the way.	If your child is extremely anxious about going, it's important to know why. If breaking it down into steps works, it may simply mean they were overwhelmed at the thought of getting ready and leaving home. If it didn't work, you may need to ask some more discovery questions, "Do you have fun at church? How are you (physically) feeling?" etc.
6	Your child isn't doing or turning in homework.	Hire a tutor your child likes. (Yes, this option costs money which may increase your anxiety, but on the balance, it WILL reduce stress!)	This lets you stay in a parenting role without also becoming the homework police. It also will give your child another perspective on their academic skills; with the right tutor, this will be a positive experience for your child & you!
7	Your child is playing games often on their phone/device.	Ask your child to help you set up an account and play with them. Be really bold and don't set a time limit (let them get bored!)	You get the inside look at what they're doing online, plus, you're letting them be the expert while you learn from them. This builds trust and relationship.
8	Your child is on a questionable social media platform.	Option 1: Like with the gaming, ask them to help you set up an account and then follow them and ask them to follow you.	You've literally connected with them at their level; there's now more transparency. You can also stop assuming and see what's actually happening online.

		Option 2: Ask questions: who are they talking to? How do they find online friends? Where do they live (find out how much info they've exchanged.) What do they talk about?	This works IF you're not interrogating, but genuinely curious. Your child wants you to love and accept them. Build trust through getting to know about their online social life.
9	Your child is dating someone online.	1. Have your child arrange a couple of meetings. You'll want to meet the boy or girlfriend PLUS have a meeting with their family online.	This takes away the mystery, stigma, and shame while also staying vigilant and very, very cautious as a parent. It also forces your child to stop hiding.
		2. Run a background check on the boyfriend/girlfriend AND their family members. (No need to tell you child about this!)	Information is power, and if you run a check and it comes back clean, you can breathe a little easier while staying vigilant.
		3. Ask regularly how things are going in the relationship--is your child happy? frustrated?	The more you listen, the more you learn, and if it's as innocent as they want you to believe (or not), you'll soon find out.
10	You find out your child has been taking inappropriate pictures of themselves.	Option 1 for younger children: remember kids use their phone cameras like mirrors, so first ask if that's what they were doing. Then ask if they've posted or sent the pics and get all pics and posts deleted ASAP. Tell your child they're leaving an imprint online that is more permanent than a tattoo.	You're not shaming them for the naivete but also not allowing them to think a camera is a mirror. It's also not thinking the worst of your child while you get to the heart of their actions.

		Option 2 for older/mature children: Get pics deleted from everywhere as quickly as possible. Discuss this ISN'T a mirror but more like a tattoo and could affect future school and job opportunities, Most importantly, their body is too valuable to share freely online.	They're usually not thinking long-term. Giving them the longer view can dissuade them from future bad choices.
11	Your child is listening to music with explicit lyrics.	Repeat quietly to yourself: "this is a phase, this is a phase, this is a phase."	This IS a phase! Of course, you can discuss their music with them, but do so in a curious, interested manner so you don't shut down the conversation before it begins.
12	Your child is watching explicit videos online.	Without any announcement, reset the parameters on your shared apps. No need to tell them, they'll soon figure it out. If they question why they can't access their show, then discuss it and why you've restricted their viewing choices.	If they don't want to talk about what is no longer available, you've still made it unavailable. If you get the opportunity to talk, tell your child why you make your viewing choices and see if they think your reasoning makes sense.
13	You're uncomfortable with your child's friend/s.	Invite the questionable friends over as a group or one-on-one. Feed them and get to know them as you cook and serve them without intruding directly on your child's space.	You can get to know the friend/s for yourself. They may not share faith beliefs, but are they respectful? Kind? Do they care about school, etc.? Take out the mystery and the judgment and be wise as you discuss your child's friends with them later.
14	You're uncomfortable with your child dating.	First, ask your child to tell you what "dating" is.	You might be surprised to learn dating just means they like each other. That was the definition of "dating someone" when one of my daughters was in 7th grade!

		Next, ask your child why they're dating this person.	Again, the answer may surprise you. My oldest daughter told me she wants to date someone to see if they're compatible long-term (marriage). It's not about being prematurely intimate or even falling in love but rather a mechanism to get to know one another. With this definition, dating is a reasonable activity.
15	Your child admits they've been self-harming.	First, hug them tightly! Say, "I love you." Let them let go first.	You're giving your child and yourself what you most need: love and assurance.
		Next, ask what happened before they started hurting themselves. Say, "I love you."	This removes who they are from what they've done and is usually much easier to answer than "why are you doing this?"
		Third, get professional counseling. Say, "I love you."	You don't need to and most likely can't solve the deeper depression or issues at play. Get support for you and your child.
16	Your child admits they don't want to live.	First, hold them until they let go. Say, "I love you."	This works because you're showing that you need and treasure your child.

		Immediately next, go to an ER. Say, "I love you."	You are taking your child seriously, and only professional evaluations by a doctor and psychiatrist can determine the true risk your child faces.
		Then, follow the doctors' orders from ER visit. Also, find a therapist. Say, "I love you."	Christian counseling works to unravel unhealthy thoughts and develop healthy coping skills for anyone and everyone in a family.
		Also, do something FUN and spend weekly time 1:1 with your child. Say, "I love you."	This gives them and you something to look forward to. They pick the activity, the restaurant, etc. Keep the relationship real and growing between you.
17	You catch your child in a lie.	Pause. Don't react or respond. Breathe in and out.	You won't say something you later regret. You won't put your child on the spot so they feel they need to lie again. You prayerfully follow up either after your pause or later with a productive discussion with your child both about: a) the lie and b) their motive to lie.
18	Your child asks you if they can [insert crazy request here.]	Tell them, "Nice try!"	These two words are MAGIC! You don't take their crazy request seriously but also don't make them feel foolish. You'll be amazed how often this works!***
19	Your child is hurting because of their neurodivergence, physical limitations, differences, etc.	Respond with: "You're not the problem. The problem is the problem and I'm right here with you to help find the solution."	Our differences make us insecure, and our struggles can be exhausting. This response separates issues from identity for your child while assuring them you're fighting by their side!

20	Your child wears inappropriate clothing.	Option 1: Ask where they found their outfit/who's their inspiration?	You're learning more about why they chose the outfit. Stay curious, not condemning.
		Option 2: Put on something equally inappropriate and watch your child's response.	This opens the door for dialogue, but warning, I've had it also backfire on me because they thought my very cropped sweater was cute!
		Option 3: Put away keys and make it an at home day.	If they really want to go somewhere, they'll need to find an "out of the house" outfit option.
		Option 4: Let them wear it without comment.	You can later follow up on any dress code they maybe got at school. You can (with curiosity again) find out how others reacted to their outfit and how that made your child feel, etc. This will open the door for more discussion and understanding.

\*Credit to Mark Gregston at Parenting Today's Teen. Mark and his ministry are a tremendous resource for those of us with teens, especially teens in crisis.

\*\*Credit to Cynthia Tobias on this suggestion for dealing with a strong-willed person. She has excellent books and talks on how to persuade and communicate with the strong-willed child.

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