

3 Non-Medicating Ways to Reduce Anxiety in Our Children

It's no secret that anxiety has been on an upward climb in the U.S. in recent years. According to [Psychology Today](#), this is particularly true of young people, for "five to eight times as many high school and college students meet the criteria for diagnosis of major depression and/or anxiety disorder as was true half a century or more ago."

But while many might suggest thrusting a pill toward a child who suffers anxiety, medical doctor Leonard Sax [suggests](#) there are several non-medication measures parents can try first. These include:

1. No Bedroom Electronics

"In the typical American household today, when kids go home, they go to their bedrooms and aren't seen again except perhaps for meals. That's crazy. A family can't be a family if the kids spend more time alone in their bedrooms than with their family members. Insist that your daughter, or son, do whatever they're doing online in a public space: in the kitchen or the living room. There should be nothing in the bedroom except a bed: no TV, no PlayStation, no screens. That's [the official recommendation of the American Academy of Pediatrics](#)."

2. Make Family Mealtime a Priority

"In a 2013 Canadian [survey of kids across a range of backgrounds](#), those who had more meals with parents were much less likely to have been feeling sad, anxious or lonely. They were more likely to help others and more likely to report

being satisfied with their own lives. But be mindful of what you say at the table. Discussions of poor grades or disappointing test scores are out of bounds. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict? Of course. The origin of the universe and the meaning of life? Certainly. But the personal shortcomings of your child are, as a rule, not appropriate supertime conversation in a loving family."

3. Engage in Conversation, not Isolation

"No headsets and no earbuds in the car. When your child is in the car with you, you should be listening to her and she should be listening to you – not to Justin Bieber or Miley Cyrus or Akon or Eminem. Teach the art of face-to-face conversation. Or play a word game. Or have the whole family sing a song. Or make up a limerick, as my family and I did last night. It sounds corny, but it helps."

Dr. Sax's recommendations seem common sense, but the fact that he needs to spell them out suggests that many Americans have forgotten them. Would we see happier, more functional American families if parents made a more conscious effort to slow down, eliminate distractions, and spend quality time with their children?

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