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## What an Anxious Child Needs to Hear

***Regional Manager for Wagga and Communities, Geoff McLean shares some words that can help ground children when they are experiencing anxious feelings.***

We've hit the halfway mark of term two. Whether your child has just started Kinder or has begun their final year of Primary School, I think we can all agree 2020 won't be easily forgotten. Even without bushfires and pandemics, social isolation and zoom meetings, there already exists in the life of a little person a lot to have big feelings about. However as much as fear is contagious, so is the calming influence of a stable and trusted adult.

When you don't know who's going to be at class today, you're nervous about the first online session for the day, you heard mum and dad talking about money last night, you weren't included in the last google hangout, and mum's just asked you to hurry up and put your shoes on, what we see is an explosion; what they experience is an unmet need. That's our invitation to lend them our calm, not to join in the chaos.

Feelings of anxiety can look like many different things from the outside. It might be an 'outburst'. It could be forgetfulness. It might be a reluctance to try new things. However it may be displayed for your child, you are the expert in your child's life; as long as you are paying attention you will know when something isn't quite right.

Next time you notice an unusual behavior or your child expresses worry, try saying these words:

- I am here
- It is ok to feel like this
- How does your body feel right now?
- You can tell me
- Shall we come up with a plan together

Listen to the response and see the effect connecting in this way can have. After all, this is what an anxious child needs to hear.

***Geoff McLean***