

Hello Monte Vista Parents,

A lot of children these days are feeling reticent to attend their classes; this could be because of starting something new or because they no longer are accustomed to having their best friend in one of their classes. So how do we have our bright kids navigate a new situation at school while holding the tension of anxiety that students will invariably face?

In order to arrive at that answer, we need to first understand the cause of anxiety. It's also important to first be aware of what anxiety looks like for children. Anxiety arises when we underestimate our ability to cope with a new event. In children, anxiety can often manifest as avoidance, crying outbursts, and frustration. In order to solve this, parents or caregivers often times, understandably attempt to take away their child's anxiety but over the long term that only perpetuates a cycle that anxiety is something to be fixed rather than something that your child can learn to live with on a daily basis – albeit on a manageable level.

So how do we have our kids put their best paw forward while dealing with very real anxious feelings? One way of having your child manage their anxiety is to model a non anxious presence to your child and also normalizing anxiety as a normal part of life. Other ways to help your child is to come up with a fear hierarchy from 0-10, where your child and you together can work through anxiety provoking situations that would hopefully temper your child's anxiety.

Lastly, one creative way students can also face their anxiety is to also name their anxiety, characterize it, and then together come up with strategies on what to do when “anxiety” is around and when it isn't around in order to come up with proactive solutions that can have your child develop a sense of agency over their anxiety.

Kindly,
Shant Bardakjian, LMFT