

# UNDERSTANDING ANXIETY IN CHILDREN

## **Normal Developmental Fears and Anxiety:**

It is also important to note that in the early developmental periods children are significantly affected and influenced by their parents' reactions to situations.

### **0 – 6 months**

- Loud noises
- Quick changes of position, things approaching rapidly

### **1 – 5 Years**

- Strangers
- Storms, ghosts, loud noises
- Animals, insects, monsters
- Dark
- Bodily injury
- Separation from caregivers

### **13 – 18 Years**

- Tests and exams
- School performance
- Body image, appearance
- Peer scrutiny and rejection
- Social embarrassment
- Sexuality
- Future

### **7 – 12 months**

- Strangers, unfamiliar objects or situations
- Separation from caregiver

### **6 – 12 Years**

- Bodily injury, disease
- Death
- Ghosts, supernatural beings
- Staying alone, rejection
- Criticism, punishment, failure

## **Tips to Support Children and Adolescents:**

- Be willing to name the anxiety, talk about it and acknowledge your frustration.
- Be real. Trying to ignore or suppress the struggle just tends to feed it.
- Learn and manage your own anxiety. Take time to observe your own reactions and the impact of anxiety on your family.
- Learn to recognize the layers of anxiety for your child or loved one. Often the angry conflict or the rude or oppositional behavior is a mask on top of anxiety.
- Cultivate and model curiosity – “I wonder what ...” Imagination and tolerance of some mystery and questioning is a healthy life skill.
- Become a team leader for handling anxiety differently.
- Choose battles wisely: think about which strategies and what timing matches your own level of rest, time, patience, hunger, etc. This can change day to day.