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# parenting CHRISTIAN kids



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Children's Ministry  
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## Guard Children's Minds and Hearts

### POWERSOURCE

#### ASK GOD:

1. To help you and your children effectively manage life's stresses and challenges.
2. To help your kids avoid trying to strive for perfection.
3. To strengthen your trust in God, who's in control of everything.

Anxiety and depression—two mental-health conditions that often overlap—are on the rise among America's children and preteens, experts say. Anxiety, one of the earliest-developing behavioral disorders, can interfere with children's ability to think, interact, and function at home and school.

Contributing factors include fears about personal safety, terrorism, social media, bullying, isolation, perfectionism, parental pressures, and more. In today's stressed-out world, how can you raise resilient, fearless kids who trust Jesus?

Here are some practical tips:

**Monitor your own stress.** Take time to relax and find social support.

**Model coping skills.** When problems arise, keep calm and set a positive, faith-filled example for your kids.

**Help children identify their feelings.** Just naming emotions can lead to relief.

**Nurture a capacity to trust.** Respect children's feelings and provide an environment that encourages honesty.

**Control exposure to fearful stimuli.** Be aware of—and limit—media use that can be frightening or confusing (news programs included).

**Identify underlying reasons for fear.** Help children get Bible-based facts about who they are—and who God is.

**Know when to seek help.** When stress turns to panic, consult a professional.

## Help Kids Become Unshakable

When the whole world seems to be shaking, children—and adults—can feel shaken, says “VeggieTales” creator Phil Vischer. Yet the Bible says God is a steadfast rock and fortress (Psalm 62:6), and “we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable” (Hebrews 12:28). Vischer asks, “Have we really made the unshakable One real” to children? “While the world stumbles,” he says, “we can stand unmoved. What more inspiring a sight is there for an anxious child in a shaky world than that of the grown-ups in his or her life standing unshaken? The only way our kids will see the kingdom of God is if they see it in us. And the only way they’ll see it in us is if it’s more real to us than the Tweet-drenched, anxiety-ridden chaos we swim in every day. We have received a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Why would we want to spend our lives anywhere else?”



### TEACHABLE MOMENTS

#### Balancing Act

Align the edges of a book exactly along a table edge. Ask: **What are some of your responsibilities and stresses? What makes you worry?** Say: **Each responsibility and worry puts us a bit closer to being over the edge.**

Place a second book atop the first so it hangs one inch beyond the edge of the first—and over the table edge. List responsibilities and worries as you keep placing three more books in the same manner.

Ask: **How could I place each of these books without any of them falling? What would happen if I moved the bottom one?** Move it and watch the books fall.

Read aloud Matthew 6:33-34. Say: **A priority is something that’s more important than another thing.** Ask: **What could happen if we don’t keep our priorities in order? How can focusing on Jesus and putting him first help us deal with worries?**

Close in prayer, asking for Jesus’ help to always seek him first.

**No Lion!** Talk to children about their fears. Then read about Daniel and the lions’ den in a children’s Bible. Share how Daniel prays to God when he is afraid, and God protects Daniel from the lions. To the tune of “If You’re Happy and You Know It,” sing “If you’re scared and you know it, pray for help....”

**Built to Last** Use blocks to make the tallest tower possible. Talk about why your creation always falls down and why our efforts to be perfect always fail. Discuss ways that Jesus is our sturdy foundation and how we can stand tall in him.

**Lift Your Hearts** With permanent marker, draw a heart on a hard-boiled egg. Pour ½ cup salt into a paper cup with “Jesus” written on the side. Fill a clear jar half full of water. Hold up the egg and say: “Sometimes our hearts feel heavy with worries. What worries do you have?” Drop the egg into the water and say: “Worries make our hearts sink inside us. But Jesus takes away those worries.” Pour the salt into the jar and stir the water. Read aloud Matthew 11:28-30. When the egg rises and floats, say: “When we give our worries to Jesus, our hearts become lighter.”

**Under Pressure** Give each family member an inflated balloon. Slowly step on the balloons as everyone calls out stresses and pressures. When all balloons have popped, read aloud Philippians 4:6 and share ways that Jesus helps us deal with our worries.

**Puzzled** Work on a jigsaw puzzle together and talk about the challenges of putting all the pieces of a puzzle—and life—together. Read Luke 1:37 and discuss how Jesus helps us solve even the toughest problems.

**Give It to God** Have family members list (or draw) all their current or recent worries. Ask: “Which of these worries can you solve on your own?” Read aloud 1 Peter 5:7. Say: “Most things we worry about are out of our control, so it makes sense to give them to Jesus.” Give each family member a lump of clay to use to form a person shape. Say: “For every worry on your list, press down on your person’s head a bit.” After the clay people are flat, say: “Don’t let that happen to you! Give your worries to Jesus.” Close in prayer, taking turns giving your worries to Jesus.

“I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.”

—John 14:27

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## MEDIA MADNESS



### MOVIE

**Title:** *Captain Underpants: The First Epic Movie*

**Genre:** Animation, Action, Comedy

**Rating:** PG

**Cast:** Jordan Peele, Kevin Hart, Ed Helms, Kristen Schaal

**Synopsis:** George and Harold, two creative tricksters, hypnotize their principal, making him think he's a gung-ho yet not-so-bright superhero. This film is based on Dav Pilkey's popular book series, which is geared toward children ages 7 to 10.

**Our Take:** Children will find plenty of laughs in this movie, even if they aren't yet fans of the books. As the title implies, though, the humor is often potty-related and crude. Talk with children about the differences between innocent and mean, hurtful humor.



### TV

**Title:** *Webs & Tiaras*

**Network:** YouTube

**Synopsis:** This popular channel directed at children features adults dressed as superheroes, princesses, and villains. Without dialogue, the episodes tell stories about how the villains are out to "kill" the good guys (and gals) in various ways. Children have become one of the biggest drivers of YouTube viewing.

**Our Take:** Despite the slapstick violence, these videos are considered appropriate for preteens. Unfortunately, because of the nature of YouTube, many inappropriate and sexually charged videos appear as "related" suggestions afterward. Turn off the autoplay feature, and closely monitor which superhero videos your preteens are actually watching.

## Games, Sites & Apps

### Hoot Owl Hoot!

In this award-winning, earth-friendly board game, players work together to help owls fly back to their nest. If they're successful, everyone wins. Children learn simple strategy and social skills. No reading is required. The game is for ages 4+ and can be played by two to four people.

### AutoDraw.com

This new free artificial-intelligence tool from Google is like an arts-and-crafts version of autocorrect. Just start drawing, and the tool will "guess" the image. It also offers various versions of that particular image to use, if desired. Editing tools allow young artists to unleash and develop their creativity.

### Build With Grandpa

The latest app in the popular "Grandpa and Grandma" series offers mini-games about construction and design that appeal to young builders. Players learn about safety while "operating" trucks and machinery. The brief, often-repetitive activities are geared for ages 3 and up.



## CULTURE & TRENDS

**Co-Parenting on the Rise** More divorced couples in the U.S. are sharing joint custody of children. Experts say co-parenting leads to more meaningful relationships with both parents as well as with grandparents. States are starting to pass laws making joint custody the default ruling in family court.

**Archery Meets Martial Arts** A hot new sports trend for kids combines bows and arrows with various fighting techniques and outdoor survival skills. Experts who train kids in "martial archery" say it's a good choice for athletes who don't prefer team sports. (*martialarchery.com*)

## QUICK STATS

**How Grand!** New Census Bureau data reveals that grandparents make up a larger proportion of the U.S. population than ever before. In 2014, grandparents accounted for 37% of adults ages 30 and up. (*nytimes.com*)

**Silent Suffering** An estimated 80% of kids with a diagnosable anxiety disorder aren't getting treatment. (*Child Mind Institute*)

**Are You Game?** Calling it a "good opportunity to socialize," 75% of parents say they play video games with their children. (*theesa.com*)