# How to Support Reducing Anxiety in Children

When children are anxious, they might become controlling or demanding. This isn't about controlling you or others, but about controlling the environment to restore safety and predictability.

## What to do ...

Be predictable and clear with boundaries and have confidence in protecting those boundaries.

KAREN YOUNG | WWW.HEYSIGMUND.COM

Few things will stoke anxiety more in an anxious child than unpredictability. One of the ways they might relieve their anxiety is through control. (We can all fall into controlling behaviour when we're anxious.)

This isn't done to be insensitive or 'bossy', even though it might come out that way. It's done because of their great and very understandable need for predictability and safety.

Anxious kids don't need to control everything in order to feel safe but they do need someone to take the lead and you're perfect for the job. They need to understand that they can trust you to keep them safe.

To show them, be predictable and clear with boundaries and have confidence in protecting those boundaries. Predictability will increase their sense of safety and will help to minimise the likelihood of an anxious response.

Without limits kids have nothing to guide their behaviour. The options become vast and overwhelming. They need to feel like you've got them that you've set a safety zone and that within that, they're fine.

Of course they'll push up against the edges and sometimes they'll move well outside them – that's all part of growing up and stretching their wings but even then, the boundaries will offer some sort of necessary guidance.

In time, children without limits will become controlling and demanding – and that just doesn't end well for anyone.
When they are pushing against your boundaries, let those boundaries be gentle, but firm. Invite their opinions and give space for them to disagree:

'I want to understand [why this doesn't feel right for you] [what you need] [how this can work for both of is].'

But let the final decision be yours with statements of validation:
'I know this is annoying for you.'

Plus confidence:
'This is what's happening and I know [you can do this] [this is how it has to be].❤️

**[Karen Young - Hey Sigmund](#)**