

5 WAYS TO TURN YOUR TEENAGER'S ANXIETY INTO CONFIDENCE



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HEY, AMAZING MUM!

I'm Rhonda Parry, a professional transformational coach and qualified mindfulness practitioner. I help working mums who are stressed out, burnt out and shut out, who are parenting angry, withdrawn or anxious teenagers. Teenagers who refuse to participate in the family, refuse to share what's going on, refuse to talk, listen or even be at home.

I do this through my Mindful Mum strategy delivered through my Clarity Coaching Project, online training programmes and 1 on 1 coaching, so you can completely transform the atmosphere of your home and your relationship with your kids.

This '5 Ways to Build Confidence in your Anxious Teenager' toolkit is where I'm sharing a few simple tools from my 6 part Mindful Mum strategy that really WORK, and have resulted in mums being able to connect with their withdrawn child, so their child calms down and opens up, and has confidence to thrive.

Without it you'll continue to be shut out, disrespected, frustrated and downright sad. Living by the seeds of guilt and shame that somehow you've failed your kids. Or living in the hope that 'someday' you and your teenagers will be happier.

With it, you'll have the confidence to stop trying to change your kids, you'll have life changing conversations with your kids, and have a connection that is strong enough to weather the teenage storms.

I don't want you to be left wondering what you could have, should have, would have done to build a healthy relationship with your kids "if only..." Please don't wait for 'someday'! Enjoy these tools, and like everything in life, make them a practice not a perfect!

Blessings, love and light to you

Rhonda x



Introduction

When a house is full of raging hormones, teenage brains are 'under development' and there are umpteen pressures on our kids, the likelihood of raising confident and resilient kids feels pretty unlikely at times, right?

There are as many reminders of how our kids are falling short, how they aren't comparing to others, or where they aren't good enough for something, as there are hours in the day! And all of this means your teenager is frozen to the spot, procrastinating, and lacking the confidence to give things a go.

It's no wonder they feel anxious.

But it can be different.

This resource is going to help ensure your kids feel the sense of confidence, independence, and resilience that comes from you believing in them. Trusting them. Because you are role modeling how to be an imperfect human, have confidence, have the courage to try new things, and learn from your mistakes.





The truth is: your children become a reflection of you.

This means role modeling is a much more powerful learning mechanism than anything your kids hear or read. It really DOES matter how strong, confident and 'imperfect' you are in front of your kids.

Every. Single. Day.

First two little tidbits about the teenage brain, which you may find helpful. I know I did!

- The teenage 'rational' brain goes offline when they're stressed – they literally cannot listen to you, cannot learn, and can't calm down. Your teenager's access to anything resembling logic has gone offline and they revert to their survival brain, to protect themselves. Their brain is just doing its job, to keep your teenager safe when they feel threatened. Whether threatened by a 'saber tooth tiger' or a maths exam or you saying 'no' to them. Logic? Gone!
- The teenage 'rational' brain undergoes major development for a three-year period during their teenage years, making it unreliable for 90% of the time in that three-year window. They revert to the emotional brain. So when you cry, exasperated "what you were thinking?!" you can safely say they weren't thinking. Your teenager was feeling!

And for good measure: a tidbit about all human brains:

Our brain's job is to keep us safe. It's geared towards survival. This means that anything that is deemed to be new, scary, uncertain or unfamiliar, is considered a threat. And our brain does what it can to minimize the threat – which you guessed it, keeps us locked inside our comfort zone.

Yet all the gold in life – all of our proudest moments – have been when we've had the confidence and courage to step outside the comfort zone and into our growth zone.

You need to do this too. To role model to your kids that it's ok to take risks and it's ok to make mistakes. After all, if you don't talk about the mistakes you've made – or are making – all your kids will learn is that it's not ok to make mistakes.



Because here's the BEST news of all – before we even get started on the 5 tips!

We all learn more from our mistakes than we do when life is going smoothly. Failures, Mistakes. Broken promises. Accidents. This is the space in which we learn and grow.

You love and feed your kids and want the best for them. You're doing your best right? If only their lack of motivation and action, and all that fear, wouldn't get in the way of *your* good intentions!

Because on top of love and good intentions to connect with your child, you need mindfulness. By mindfulness I mean:

Awareness of how you're showing up and the link between your emotional state and theirs!

Mindful communication skills you can access when your child is communicating with you.

Acceptance, Compassion and Non-Judgement for your child. Not wishing for them to be any different to who they are.

If you're being authentic, showing compassion and acceptance, AND if you're deliberately role modeling mistakes with your child using the tips I'm about to share, you'll be creating an environment perfectly suited to bringing the confident and thriving version of your child out of their room and into the 'arena' of doing and learning!

Here are 5 ways to use mindfulness to get your insecure or anxious child to build confidence and resilience - which don't require you to change your child!

Because we can't control or change our children. Not ever. But mindfulness and these tips go to show that we do have the power to change our own views, thoughts, and feelings about our parenting challenges.

You *can* do this!

1. Listen Generously and be Curious
2. Adopt a Strengths Focus
3. Role Model Imperfection
4. Be Honest and Apologise
5. Give Them Space to Make Mistakes!



1. Listen Generously and Be Curious

Let's be honest, when our child is talking to us, something has gone wrong. They've procrastinated on some study, they've got wound up in a web of lies, or they're anxious about going on a school trip. Add to this, hormones, their brains under development, and social pressure and it's not surprising sometimes that they're unhappy and anxious!?

Yet life happens – and just like us – your teenager is not perfect! They make mistakes! They can be afraid to do new things for fear of being judged.

When they do, they don't want our advice or our criticism, they just want to feel heard and understood. Supported. Which means we need to listen, generously.

So how do we do listen generously? It starts with being present - and attentive listening. Being curious. Not distracted.

Yes, it takes practice!

Practice generous listening whenever you sense a heightened emotional reaction or some resistance in your teenager.

Could be any minute now right!?

Research has shown that tweens and teens are more likely to open up and feel better about themselves when they've been listened to attentively.

If we don't listen generously, we 'listen distracted'. Regardless of the outcome of the conversation, what your child will normally remember is the sense of not being heard and understood. 😞

TOOL:

Be curious, pay attention, ask questions, reflect back on what you think you're hearing them say.



2. Focus on Strengths!

The greatest strength your child has is to be themselves. No one else can do it as well as them. They are beautifully unique, and uniquely beautiful, born of a combination of two people, who themselves are unique. It's fascinating when you think about it!

Yet the fear of believing that the real version of 'me isn't good enough, can be enough to keep your child frozen, lacking the confidence to try.

Kids can become so accustomed to hearing about the strengths and virtues of everyone else. While the conversations they have with you, their teachers or others influential adults, may be more focused on what they're not doing well, on their weaknesses, and their flaws. Remember we're wired to pick up on the negative which doesn't help us!

Sadly, too many of us still look at our children from a weak or limited perspective – when comparing to others in their peer group. Social media has a lot to do with this. The lens through which we view our own kids can highlight where they aren't good enough, or all the flaws to be corrected.

When a child doesn't feel they measure up, that they're not good enough, it can manifest itself in one of three ways – or even a lethal combination.

Comparing using external factors, standards, and judgment to determine whether they're good enough. Which means striving to be better/faster/prettier and drives further exhaustion. It's a cycle of relentless disconnection.

Putting others down and focussing attention on the flaws of others to get ahead. Hello to anger, mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, self-loathing, impatience, and disconnect, the opposite of unconditional love.

Feeling paralyzed and not trying anything at all. Being frozen to the spot, afraid to try for fear of being judged as 'not good enough'. It's easier not to do anything at all.



And if they believe they're not worthy, the law of attraction (our brain's obsession to seek evidence in our world to confirm our thoughts and beliefs) means that this belief will be confirmed.

So this tip is about observing our kids in a holistic way that incorporates strengths, not just weaknesses, so we have a more balanced view of them. This will change the lens through which you view them and will in turn change how to talk and engage with them.

Taking this even further, you can deliberately refer to the strengths your child has in conversations. There are always opportunities to look for the strengths of characters in our kid's show.

Examples of strengths include:

- being able to cope well in adversity (e.g. knowing its temporary)
- generosity (e.g. generous with time or money or being a great listener)
- perseverance and commitment (e.g. to a school project or building something)
- memory (e.g. remembering jobs to do, birthdays, addresses)
- being passionate about something (e.g. a book or a famous person)
- empathy and caring for others (e.g. being thoughtful towards someone who is hurt)
- activities that provide energy and enthusiasm (e.g. writing or painting)
- creative (e.g. always having new ideas in the kitchen, or in art)
- character traits such as compassion, optimism, and thoughtfulness

TOOL:

Take a photo of your child and on the back write down all the wonderful strengths and character they have.

Never compare, your child is unique

Reduce exposure to social media

Focus on what your child is doing well at and enjoys



3. Role Model Imperfection

I invite you to cast your mind back to when your kids were young. Clumsily taking first steps and falling over, creating a colorful mess you proudly displayed as art and singing at the top of their voice out of tune to the school play. What feelings do these memories bring back for you?

No doubt, feelings of love, warmth, and pride...

Yet we often don't embrace the imperfection and mess of our teenage children (or ourselves!) as easily.

There is a price to pay for relentlessly pursuing the appearance of 'perfection'. Perfectionism is exhausting and dangerous.

It's often seen in people who ruminate frequently: "I wish I had. I wish I could, I wish I didn't..."

The message your kids hear when they watch you strive for perfectionism is that "if you have to do it perfectly, then I have to be perfect too. That's what will make my parents love me"

Of course, this isn't the message you're intending to send!

The great news is that there are ways to close this chasm between your intentions and the impact on your kids – if you practice ditching perfectionism.

Showing your imperfections, that you're human just like everyone else gives our kids breathing room, permission if you like, to be imperfect too.

It can go a very long way to reduce the anxiety our teenagers may feel when they 'don't scrub up' to external standards, benchmarks and grades.

Imperfections exist in art, cooking, work, or life in general. When we embrace the unique and unusual and unexpected of the imperfect, this opens us up to calmness and a sense of peace.



And more importantly, modeling imperfection helps your child:

- to have courage to be themselves, the compassion to accept and love themselves.
- feel connected with everyone else – because none of us is perfect.
- have a strong belief in the benefit of trying again. If something doesn't work 'perfectly' the first time, they aren't afraid to try again; which in turn: builds greater resilience as they learn and grow from their own mistakes.

The idea of being a role model may make you feel like you're in the 'perfection hot seat' that if you don't act like a Supermum at all times, you're doing something wrong and your kids will 'turn out all wrong'. You're failing them.

But hopefully, the idea of needing to be perfect to have perfect kids has been turned upside down because failures, attempts, and mistakes are the way in which we humans, of all ages, learn. So much can be learned, communicated, and shared when we embrace and model imperfection. Stumbling, falling, and being 'human' is a GREAT thing.

Let's be clear. Letting down the 'perfect façade' or the robotic image, or the Superwoman image is not about intentional slacking. Nor is it about lowering standards. It is about modeling the real 'give and take' of a human who juggles. This is what opens up the space for your teenagers to grow and learn.

The key message is this: kids primarily learn by what you do, and only then by what you say.

So you don't have to try to change them!

No lectures or lessons or family meetings are required!

You just need to get comfortable dealing with your own imperfections: role modeling!

Suffice to say it takes effort and humility to be a vulnerable role model. It's important you recognize that – it takes effort. It's hard work to let down the barriers.

So give yourself some space and time to practice, starting small.



I'm not saying we don't work at things to make them 'right' for us. Because sometimes we care very deeply about what it is we're doing and we want it to be great! To be driven to do well, and enjoy the details of doing something really well, is a wonderful feeling – it gives us a sense of purpose.

But for kids to be able to learn from your bad days, you need to let them see those days! We have to let them see us make mistakes and take risks ourselves. That's the key to giving them space – letting go of your need to be a 'perfect mum'.

TOOL:

Be prepared to suck at something new.

Learn something together (which you know you might not be good at!)

Wear no makeup, or show some other way of not worrying about a 'perfect' appearance all the time.





4. Be Honest and Apologise

Role modeling imperfection means doing things intentionally to send a message:

"I'm ok with who I am, I'm good enough. You're good enough too, just the way you are. We don't need to be perfect, what is 'perfect' anyway?"

One of our imperfections is that we all make mistakes.

Everyone does.

Daily.

If we want our kids to have confidence to thrive, we need to show that making mistakes is a natural part of being a human being. Like role modeling imperfection, we need to talk about our mistakes. Honestly.

If you make a mistake, or break something, or forget something, admit it.

If you make a promise and forget to keep it, admit it.

If you're running late because you were distracted by a phone call, admit it.

Let your child see you owning up to your mistakes.

The alternative is to have your child thinking that mistakes are bad, not acceptable and that "there's something wrong with me because I make mistakes all the time, and no one else does".

This attitude will not give them the confidence to be independent or thrive.

And may even lead to deceit and mistrust, especially if they know you made a mistake and you haven't owned up to it.



This was most recently pointed out by my 17-year-old.

I had accepted an Airbnb booking for the whole house in a week when the girls were going to be at home. Big mistake – obviously! It is a particular week when rates are about 3 x normal because of an international trade show not far from our home.

I tried to explain to my daughter that I had made a mistake and allowed a booking to transfer from 2020 to 2021 without checking whether they, the girls, were going to be at home first. True.

But as my daughter said, *“Mum, be honest, even if the booking wasn't transferring, you'd have still taken a booking for that week whether we were supposed to be at home or not”*.

I looked at her. She was right. I would always have taken a booking in that week. The money is too good. But it took my daughter to point out that the reschedule due to COVID 19 was an excuse for what I was clearly going to do anyway.

I admitted this and apologized.

TOOL:

Apologize when you make mistakes that impact them.
Admit when you're wrong. Talk about mistakes you've made.





5. Give Them Space to Make Mistakes

So far we've talked about how you need to show up – like the perfectly imperfect human being who makes mistakes. Just like everyone else. And apologize and admit when you get things wrong.

Now, we're going to venture into the territory of letting them make mistakes. Like, deliberately!

1. Let Them Make Their Own Decisions

Show them that you believe in them and let them make their own decisions. Even set up situations where your child can be independent – where they don't NEED you – and resist the temptation to get involved.

Whether the decisions are good, bad, or great, let them MAKE them. Allowing them to do this means building the courage to make decisions and try things, so they trust themselves and build independence.

It's literally 'exposure theory' in practice – the more they are exposed to making decisions, the more they are practiced, and the more they learn it's ok and the consequences are manageable.

It could be as simple as them wanting to buy something for their Dad for Father's Day.

It could be making a plan for the summer holidays.

It could be filling in a form for university.

It could be choosing their path after leaving high school. Yes, it could be hard to let go, but if you make this decision for them, it's not theirs. Their heart won't be in it, they won't own it.

Unless they ask for your input, allow them to follow through with their decision, to be independent of you.



2. Let Them Own the Consequences

When things go wrong – and they will – let them own their mistakes and learn from their OWN mistakes. Remember, your kids learn more from their own experiences and mistakes and failures.

Whatever you do or don't do:

- Resist the urge to hover around trying to correct things behind them.
- Resist the urge to rescue them from the consequences of their decisions. Unless it involves their safety or survival.
- Resist the urge to blame, make excuses, deny, or say “I told you so”.
- Resist the urge to get angry. They've just made a mistake.

If they've forgotten their lunch – let them go hungry.

If they've forgotten their sports shoes, let them sit on the sidelines during practice. This is how they learn to remember!

If you get involved at all, use the opportunity – when the time is right – to reframe the mistake or failure as an opportunity to learn. Talk about the silver linings you've enjoyed after facing adversity or failure, and what you did differently next time. Ask them what they've learned from their experience.

When kids are 'exposed' like this, even anxious kids, they start to build their own resilience and courage. Resilience is a muscle – the more 'stuff' that we face, the more resilience muscles we build, to help with next time. (This is 'exposure therapy without the price tag of a psychologist!!)

Only you'll know the scale of your child's insecurities or anxiety – start at the right level.

You may wish to start with allowing your child to make a decision about the dinner. Or to do the grocery shopping by themselves. Whatever level is right for where your child is at, start there. And progressively move up a level as their resilience muscles strengthen.



You need to have practiced the first steps first:

- *Listen to them, give them your attention*
- *Let them know what strengths and characters you love in them*
- *Role model being an imperfect human being*
- *Own your own mistakes*

Now you're ready for giving space to your child to make their own mistakes.

Now they can make mistakes feeling safe in the knowledge that you make mistakes, you own your mistakes.

And that THERE IS NO RISK to your love and connection with them if they make mistakes too!

TOOL:

Let them make their own decisions. And make mistakes.
Set up situations for them to be independent. And make mistakes.
Resist the urges.
And when they make mistakes, don't rescue them.
Unless it's a health and safety issue!



FREE 45 MIN CLARITY COACHING CALL!

WELL DONE, MY FRIEND!

The truth is, *IT IS HARD being a mum*. Especially when our kids shut down, or their anxiety starts to infest and impact the rest of the house and family.

That's why I'm sharing all this with you. Because I want YOU to be able to create that safe, stable relationship which empowers your teenager to open up, connect and thrive!

Without it taking 15 years! Or filling your shelves with self help books.... Like I did! 😊

The great news is that right now you're in possession of a toolkit that can get you massive results when practiced correctly and consistently.

But unless you understand how to practice and be consistent in your own teenage-environment, it'll only ever remain an(other?) underutilised tool gathering dust in your toolbox.

It's like having keys to a gorgeous car but not knowing how to drive it. Or being too scared to!

So, if you'd like to really get a handle on how to use these tips to get transformation and become the Mindful Mum... I'd love to show you how, through an in-depth, advanced mindfulness based training.

Inside the Clarity Coaching Project I deep dive with you, into exactly how to create a sense of calm, confidence and connection – in you, your kids and your home.





I provide you with training and 1 on 1 coaching so you have everything you need to know, everything you need to do, and an understanding of 'how' to do it. I even provide the mindfulness guides, worksheets, resources and tools (all backed by science and research) to 'practice, not perfect'.

Becoming a mindful mum is SO MUCH easier when you have this level of personalised coaching support and accountability.

You are looked after and encouraged the whole way!

If you'd like to have a complimentary coaching call with me to learn more about the programme and if it's a good fit for you, email me at rhonda@ourmindsmatter.co.nz and I'll send you a link straight to my calendar.

I can't wait to meet you and help you even more, so jump into my calendar and I'll see you soon!

Blessings, love and light to you

Rhonda x

