

# Addressing Parental Accommodation When Treating Anxiety in Children: A Comprehensive Guide for Clinicians

Parental accommodation is a common response to childhood anxiety. It occurs when parents unintentionally reinforce their child's anxious behaviors by providing them with excessive support and protection.



## Addressing Parental Accommodation When Treating Anxiety In Children (ABCT Clinical Practice Series)

by Eli R. Lebowitz

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While parental accommodation can be well-intentioned, it can actually maintain and worsen a child's anxiety in the long run. This is because it prevents the child from learning how to cope with their anxiety on their own and sends the message that their anxiety is something to be feared and avoided.

Clinicians who are treating children with anxiety need to be aware of the role that parental accommodation can play in maintaining the disorder. They need to be able to assess for parental accommodation and develop strategies to help parents reduce their accommodating behaviors.

### **Assessing for Parental Accommodation**

There are a number of ways to assess for parental accommodation. One way is to use the Parental Accommodation Scale for Childhood Anxiety (PAS-CA). This scale is a brief, self-report measure that assesses the frequency of 12 different accommodating behaviors.

Another way to assess for parental accommodation is to observe the parent-child interaction. Clinicians should pay attention to how the parent responds to the child's anxious behaviors. Do they provide excessive reassurance or support? Do they avoid situations that the child is anxious about? Do they allow the child to avoid responsibilities?

### **Strategies to Reduce Parental Accommodation**

Once parental accommodation has been identified, clinicians can begin to develop strategies to help parents reduce their accommodating behaviors. These strategies may include:

- **Psychoeducation.** Clinicians should educate parents about the role that parental accommodation can play in maintaining anxiety. They should explain that accommodating behaviors can prevent the child from learning how to cope with their anxiety on their own and can send the message that their anxiety is something to be feared and avoided.

- **Goal setting.** Clinicians can help parents set goals for reducing their accommodating behaviors. These goals should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.
- **Behavioral interventions.** Clinicians can teach parents behavioral interventions that they can use to help their child cope with anxiety. These interventions may include exposure and response prevention, cognitive behavioral therapy, and mindfulness.
- **Family therapy.** Family therapy can be helpful in addressing parental accommodation. It can provide a safe and supportive environment for parents to learn about anxiety and how to help their child cope with it. Family therapy can also help to improve communication and problem-solving within the family.

Parental accommodation is a common response to childhood anxiety. It can be well-intentioned, but it can actually maintain and worsen a child's anxiety in the long run. Clinicians who are treating children with anxiety need to be aware of the role that parental accommodation can play and need to be able to assess for it and develop strategies to help parents reduce their accommodating behaviors.

By working with parents to reduce parental accommodation, clinicians can help children with anxiety learn how to cope with their symptoms and live full and meaningful lives.

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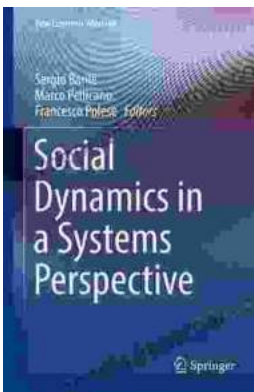
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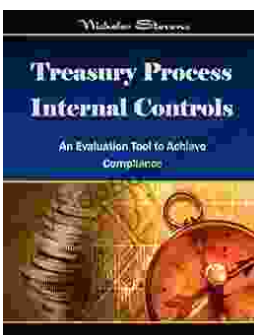


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