

UNDERSTANDING WHAT CAUSES MATH ANXIETY



CAUSES

Did you know that math anxiety can start as early as elementary school? Many children begin to feel nervous or stressed about math, and it's now because they aren't capable. In fact, math anxiety often has more to do with how kids feel about math than what they actually know. Here are some common causes to help you better understand and support your child:



WHAT CAN FAMILIES DO?

Use positive math talk: Say "let's figure it out together!"

Praise effort and problem-solving, not just right answers

Play games that involve math thinking
Cook, shop, and count together to show math in real life

Ask questions like: What do you notice? What do you wonder?"



REMEMBER

Adult attitudes matter! When adults say things like, "I was never good at math," children often believe it applies to them too. Kids look to the adults around them for cues, positive or negative!

FEELING OVERWHELMED

When kids are anxious, it's harder for them to think clearly or remember what to do. Math often requires focus and multi-step thinking, which is tough when your brain is full of worry.

Rushing through problems or trying to always be "right" can make math feel high-stakes. Many kids start to fear making mistakes and stop taking healthy risks in learning



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BUILD A POSITIVE MINDSET

Talk positively about math.
Normalize mistakes - talk about how mistakes help us and make your brain grow to shift mistakes from perfection to learning.

MAKE MATH PLAYFUL

Play math-based board games - Games like Uno, Yahtzee, or Monopoly help with number sense in low-pressure ways

Use everyday math - involve kids in cooking (measuring), shopping (comparing prices), or building (measuring lengths).



SET A LOW-STRESS MATH ROUTINE

Create short practice sessions - 10 to 15 minutes daily is often more helpful than long, stressful chunks

Practice at their level - focus on building success with skills they can mostly do. Confidence grows from mastery.

Incorporate "math talk" into your day - ask questions like "How many more do we need?" or "What's half of that?"

FOCUS ON EMOTIONS AND MINDSET

Practice calming strategies - deep breathing, stretching or quiet time before math can reduce anxiety

Use reflection prompts - after math, ask: "What part felt tricky? What helped you keep going?"

Create a success journal - Help your child write down one math win each week to track growth

