Supporting Students With School Anxiety
What It Can Look Like



Stomach aches or headaches



Frequent reassurance seeking



Tearfulness or shutdown



Trouble separating at drop-off



Avoiding participation



Perfectionism and fear of mistakes



Irritability after school



Asking to go home or to the nurse



Moving very slowly or freezing



Hiding distress behind "I'm fine"

Strategies for Supporting Trauma-Impacted Students



Build connection before demands



Use predictable routines



Create safe calm spaces



Notice triggers and warning signs



Use gentle non-threatening language



Offer regulated breaks



Avoid shame and public correction



Give choices when possible



Collaborate with families and teams



Celebrate brave participation

Supporting Students With School Anxiety Before the School Day Begins



Preview the day ahead



Keep mornings predictable



Prepare transition objects



Use visual reminders



Offer a calm arrival routine



Reduce time pressure



Identify a safe adult



Plan for hard drop-offs



Start with a small success



Celebrate showing up

Supporting Students With School Anxiety
When a Student Says "I Can't"



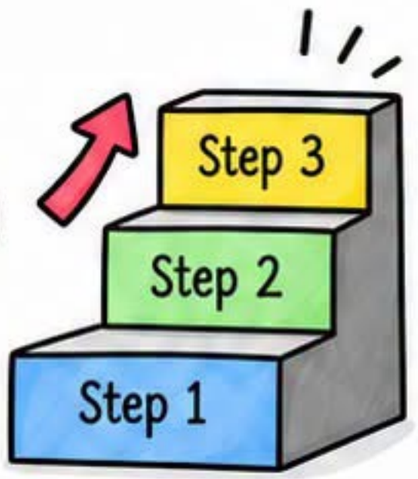
Pause and stay calm



Validate before problem-solving



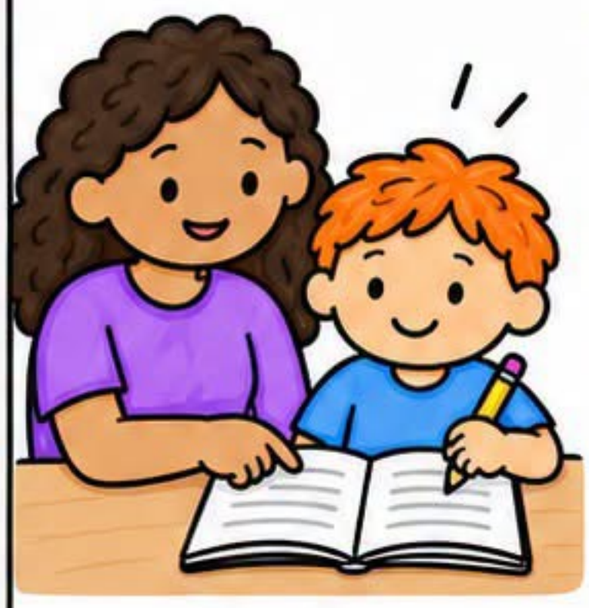
Find the real barrier



Reduce the first step



Offer choices, not pressure



Try it together first



Use visuals or examples



Offer a break if needed



Praise brave effort



Revisit later if needed

Supporting Students With School Anxiety
Language That Helps



Start with validation



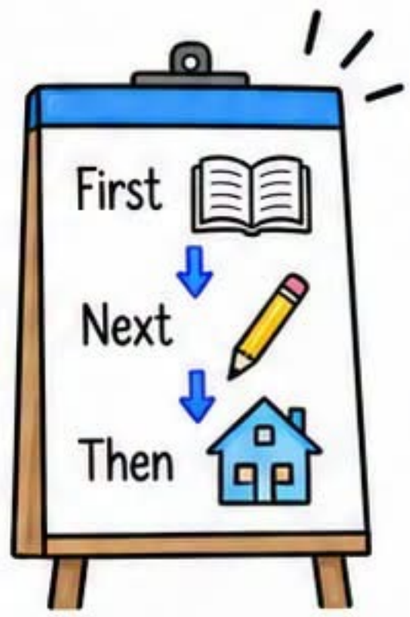
Use calm, brief words



Offer one step at a time



Ask “What would help?”



Preview what comes next



Replace pressure with invitation



Normalize hard feelings



Offer choices when possible



Focus on safety first



End with reassurance

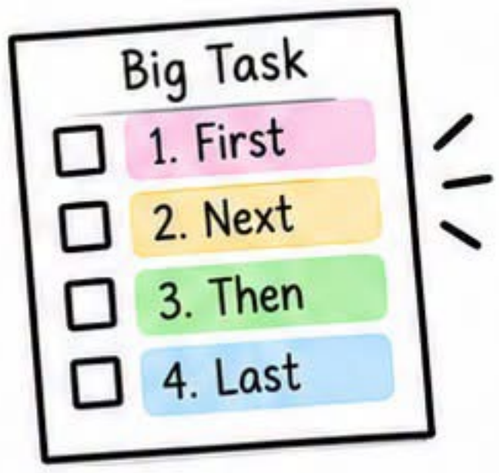
Supporting Students With School Anxiety
Reducing Classroom Pressure



Reduce public attention



Offer extra processing time



Break work into smaller parts



Allow alternative participation



Use private check-ins



Preview changes early



Lower performance pressure



Offer low-demand breaks



Keep expectations visible



Focus on progress, not perfection

by BERMED | iepfocus.com

Supporting Students With School Anxiety

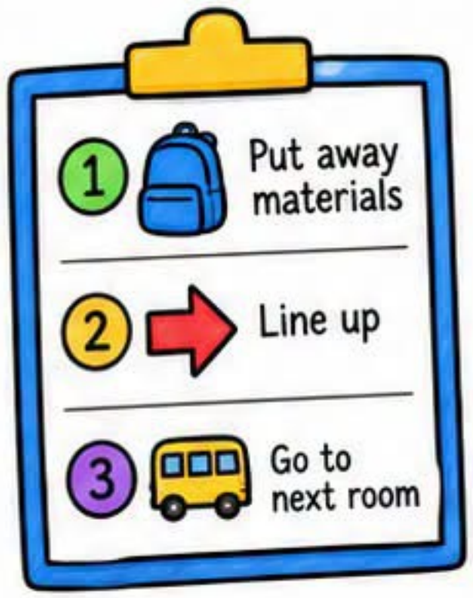
Supporting Difficult Transitions



Preview what comes next



Use countdowns



Break transitions into steps



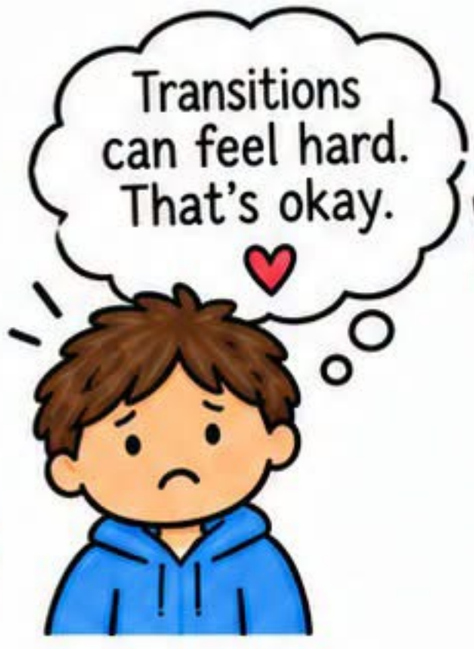
Offer a transition object



Give extra processing time



Start with connection



Normalize that transitions feel hard



Keep routines flexible



Allow movement before transitions



Welcome the student back gently

Supporting Students With School Anxiety
Helpful IEP Accommodations



Access to a safe adult



Break card or break plan



Flexible arrival time



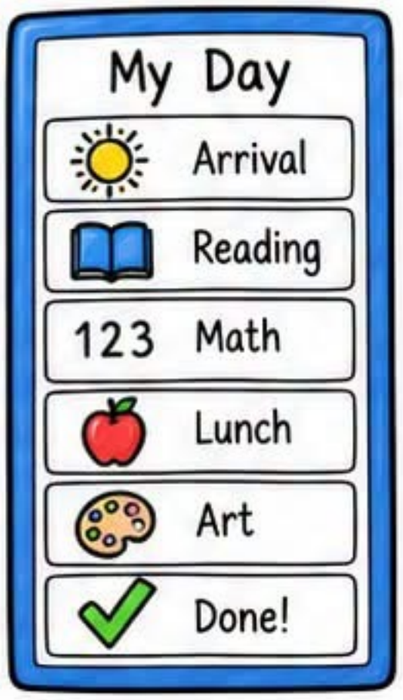
Extended time



Reduced workload



Alternative ways to respond



Visual schedules and previews



Calm testing location



Check-ins before hard tasks



Support during transitions

Supporting Students With School Anxiety When Avoidance Increases



Look for patterns



Notice hidden stressors



Reduce demands early



Protect the relationship



Lower shame and blame



Avoid power struggles



Build a gradual return plan



Use low-pressure goals



Track what helps



Keep hope and flexibility

Supporting Students With School Anxiety

Building a Safe Return Plan



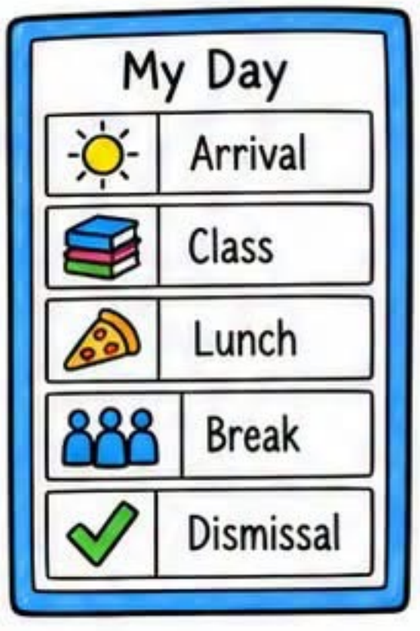
Start small



Identify a safe person



Plan a calm arrival



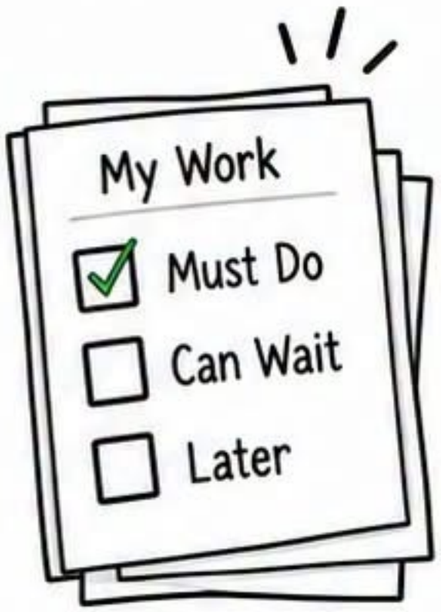
Use a visual schedule



Build in break options



Choose reachable goals



Reduce workload at first



Celebrate attendance first



Review what helped



Adjust the plan as needed