



PARENT GUIDE • FEAR & BODY ALARM

Anxiety & Panic Behavior Blueprint™

Respond to the alarm. Investigate what the nervous system is protecting against.

DO NOT DEBATE FEAR DURING ALARM. BUILD SAFETY, THEN
UNDERSTANDING.

Know the difference

Anxiety can build through worry, anticipation, avoidance, tension, reassurance seeking, and physical symptoms. Panic is a sudden surge of intense fear and body alarm that may feel life-threatening. Neither is simply attention-seeking, overreacting, or refusing to try.

ANXIETY

Often builds before or around a feared situation through worry, tension, stomachaches, sleep changes, avoidance, or rigid control.

PANIC

A sudden wave of fear with racing heart, shaking, dizziness, breathlessness, nausea, unreality, or fear of losing control or dying.

MELTDOWN OR SHUTDOWN

Capacity is exceeded. Language, reasoning, flexibility, and familiar skills may drop. Shift to safety and recovery.

POSSIBLE MEDICAL PROBLEM

New or severe chest pain, fainting, blue lips, significant breathing trouble, allergic symptoms, injury, poisoning, or unusual neurological signs need urgent assessment.

Step 1: find the driver

UNCERTAINTY & CHANGE

Not knowing what happens, when it ends, or what is expected can keep the nervous system scanning.

SENSORY OR BODY SIGNALS

Noise, crowds, light, pain, hunger, fatigue, medication effects, caffeine, illness, or unfamiliar sensations may trigger alarm.

SEPARATION OR SOCIAL FEAR

Leaving a safe person, being watched, judged, rejected, embarrassed, or misunderstood may feel unsafe.

PERFORMANCE & PERFECTIONISM

Fear of mistakes, failure, correction, disappointing others, or unmet expectations can drive distress.

TRAUMA OR LEARNED ALARM

A person, place, sound, sensation, demand, or reminder may activate protection after a frightening experience.

ENVIRONMENT OR REAL DANGER

Bullying, unsafe adults, discrimination, conflict, overwhelming demands, or inaccessible settings must be investigated.

People, places, demands, sensations, or times linked to distress:

Step 2: map the 0-60 Journey™

	More questions, watchfulness, tension, fidgeting, checking, or a new need for predictability
	Reassurance seeking, stomachache, headache, irritability, sleep change, avoidance, or holding close
	Tears, freezing, repetitive speech, rapid breathing, escape requests, or difficulty thinking flexibly
	Panic rising: shaking, dizziness, chest tightness, nausea, numbness, racing heart, or fear of losing control
	Cannot use usual coping skills; may bolt, shut down, become aggressive, or enter meltdown
	Immediate safety concern, severe medical symptoms, self-harm risk, or full loss of capacity

10-20 signals:

30-40 signals:

50-60 signals:

Steps 3-6: Notice-Protect-Anchor-Recover Plan™

03 • NOTICE

Recognize the early signal without interrogation.

Say: "I notice your body is telling us something feels unsafe."

04 • PROTECT

Check for actual danger or medical concerns.
Reduce people, noise, demands, rushing, and unnecessary talking.

05 • ANCHOR

Stay steady. Offer one practiced support.

Say: "You are with me. We can take one step at a time."

06 • RECOVER

Restore water, food, movement, quiet, connection, and rest before reflection or problem-solving.

Do not force: Eye contact, talking, deep breathing, grounding, touch, or exposure. Offer a familiar choice and stop any strategy that increases distress.

Step 7: teach what helps

NAME THE SIGNAL

Use a body map, color, number, picture, gesture, writing, or AAC to show worry, pain, dizziness, tightness, or “something feels wrong.”

ASK FOR HELP EARLY

Teach “stay with me,” “quiet place,” “less talking,” “show me the plan,” or “I need a break.”

ORIENT TO THE PRESENT

Gently notice a safe person, stable surface, familiar object, or what is happening now without forcing eye contact.

USE A BODY ANCHOR

Try pressure, movement, cool water, humming, paced exhale, or another practiced strategy. Stop if it feels worse.

TAKE ONE SUPPORTED STEP

Break the feared task into a small achievable action with choice, support, and a clear way to pause.

RECOVER & COMMUNICATE

After distress, identify what helped, what increased fear, and what adults should do next time.

The first signal and help request we will teach:

The body anchor chosen by the child:

Step 8: prevention plan

INVESTIGATE THE ENVIRONMENT

Ask what happens at home, school, online, in the community, and with specific people. Address real safety problems.

MAKE PLANS VISIBLE

Preview what happens, what may change, who helps, where breaks are, and how the child can communicate.

SUPPORT THE BODY

Track sleep, pain, nutrition, hydration, illness, medication changes, sensory load, caffeine, and recovery.

PRACTICE WHEN CALM

Choose supports with the child. Never force a breathing or grounding exercise that increases distress.

USE GRADUAL STEPS

Build tolerance through small, supported experiences—not surprise exposure, shame, flooding, or withdrawal of safety.

COORDINATE CARE

Write the plan and share it with caregivers, school staff, and qualified professionals when needed.

Trigger, early signal, and environmental change:

Help request, anchor, and first supported step:

Safety and professional support

URGENT MEDICAL HELP

Seek emergency assessment for severe breathing difficulty, fainting, blue lips, new severe chest pain, serious injury, poisoning, allergic symptoms, or unusual neurological signs.

IMMEDIATE SAFETY HELP

Act now for self-harm, suicidal thoughts or plans, threats, abuse, exploitation, inability to stay safe, or immediate danger.

ROUTINE PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

Consult qualified medical or mental-health professionals when anxiety or panic is new, frequent, worsening, or interfering with sleep, eating, school, relationships, or daily life.

SCHOOL SUPPORT

Consider an evaluation, IEP/504 meeting, counseling, safe-person plan, breaks, sensory support, predictable transitions, and a written response plan.

Important: Anxiety symptoms can overlap with medical conditions. Do not assume every physical symptom is “just anxiety,” especially when it is new, severe, unusual, or medically concerning.

Safety note: This educational guide does not diagnose or treat anxiety or panic and does not replace medical, mental-health, or emergency care.

Need an individualized plan? Schedule at calendly.com/optimizemylife/newclientintake or email mary@supportiveminds.us.

Copyright and trademark notice

© 2026 Mary Stanley / Supportive Minds. All rights reserved. Supportive Minds™, Anxiety & Panic Behavior Blueprint™, Notice-Protect-Anchor-Recover Plan™, The 0-60 Journey™, and The C.O.R.E. Path™ are proprietary framework names used by Supportive Minds. This guide may be downloaded and printed for the purchaser's or recipient's personal use. It may not be copied, republished, resold, distributed, adapted, or used in training materials without prior written permission.