

MEDIA RELEASE

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Helping kids cope

Anxiety is one of the most commonly experienced psychological problems in primary-school aged children.

Children can build resilience to anxiety a number of ways, including support from their parents.

But is a mother's support better than a father's support, depending on the gender of the child?

Dr Mandy Matthewson, in the UTAS School of Psychology, has previously investigated how the support of mums and dads relates to anxiety in boys and girls.

Her research found that high levels of paternal support influenced resilience to anxiety in both sons and daughters.

She also found support for a cross-gendered relationship between parent-child communication and children's anxiety- this suggests effective maternal communication helps resilience to anxiety in sons and support from fathers helps daughters cope.

"This relationship also appears to be mediated by parents' own levels of anxiety," Dr Matthewson said.

Dr Matthewson's latest research project *Exploring Parental Influence on Childhood Anxiety and Self-Efficacy* will build on previous research and further investigate mothers' and fathers' levels of communication, involvement and self-efficacy (coping strategies) and the effect this has on their children's experiences of self-efficacy and anxiety.

"Through questionnaires and interviews, we hope to more clearly define the way that mothers and fathers can differentially influence their children's self-efficacy and resilience to anxiety."

"The project will examine, among other things, whether there are differences in the way mothers and fathers are involved with and communicate with their sons and daughters," Dr Matthewson said.

“We will also look at whether parents’ own coping strategies influence their children’s anxiety and self-efficacy in different ways, depending on the gender of the child in relation to the parent.”

Participants: Biological mothers and fathers who live with their children aged between eight to 12 are being sought for this study. Participants (parents and children) will be asked to fill in questionnaires.

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