

Health: Anxiety and Peace

What if circle time were about peace?

Jenny was aware that some students in her kindergarten class were anxious. There had been a lot of bad news in the media that they were aware of, even though they didn't fully understand it. She wanted to use circle time to help with their anxieties. She had heard of South American worry dolls, and thought that the softness of the dolls might bring comfort; but she wanted something that would help children tell their worries to God, if they wanted to.

"I wanted to draw on the doll idea for inspiration, but I wanted to relate it to giving our worries to God. We sat in a circle on the floor on cushions I had gathered from around school. I wanted it to be a cozy circle time. We talked about the different actions we take with worries and who we would talk to. I wanted to assure the children that they could talk to God as well as adults or friends. We talked about sharing worries with God, his care for us, and the peace he can give. I spoke about hope for the future and how God's love is stronger than hatred and all the bad things in life.

"Then I showed them a soft fleece bag with a soft, child-safe, toy dove in it. I explained that the dove was a symbol for God the Holy Spirit and for peace. We passed the dove around, and I showed the little bag it lived in. I explained that we could make a quiet corner where children could hold the dove and say a prayer, and put their invisible worries into the bag to symbolize giving worries to God.

"We made a quiet corner with just a chair and some fabric, and I displayed the dove and its bag with a verse from the Bible: 'God cares for you, so give him all your worries' ([1 Peter 5:7](#)). The quiet corner was available throughout the week for those who wanted to use it."

What's going on here?

Jenny saw her circle time as a way of responding to her students' anxiety in a way that reflected faith in God and reassured them that they were valued and loved and could be at peace.

She engaged students through discussion and sharing, and expanded their learning experience to include touch in a prayerful response to anxiety.

She reshaped her practice by changing the layout of the room for circle time, by using cushions together with the circle and soft, child-safe toy to provide an encouraging atmosphere, and by providing a prayer corner.

What does this have to do with faith, hope, and love?

Hope is a deep knowledge that evil does not have the last word, because Christ was victorious over sin on the cross. This demonstrates that love is stronger than hatred and that life is stronger than death. Faith in God's love and goodness can put our worries in context and allow us to know something of God's peace. Jesus points to God's care of the birds and the flowers; how much more will he care about people?

What difference does this makes?

This way of arranging a circle time gave children a strategy for dealing with worry. Jenny gave them a ritual, acknowledging that spirituality engages the body as well as the mind, emotions, and spirit.

Where could we go from here?

Jenny could look for a range of appropriate practices that might help with anxiety and other issues and place them within a Christian framework.

Digging deeper

Both anxiety and hope are future related, in different ways. The anxious person has the present ruined by fears for the future; Christian hope for the future, when all will be well, changes how today is lived and puts anxieties in a larger context.

And all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well. Julian of Norwich

We can easily manage if we will only take, each day, the burden appointed to it. But the load will be too heavy for us if we carry yesterday's burden over again today, and then add the burden of the morrow before we are required to bear it. John Newton

Christian hope lets faith in God and his future change the way we live now. The Bible teaches that one day the world will be made new, and will be a place of justice and joy, love and peace. There will be nothing to make us anxious ([Revelations 21:4](#)).

Like pain, anxiety is a warning system that helps us survive. It is not necessarily in itself a lack of trust in God. Some level of anxiety can keep us safe and stop us from engaging in dangerous behaviors.

It is what we do with the anxiety that matters. The Bible urges prayer, dependence on a loving God ([Philippians 4:6](#)), and living one day at a time ([Matthew 6:34](#)). The Bible never claims that God shields people from all suffering; instead, it urges people to pass their worry over to the one who rules the world ([1 Peter 5:7](#)). Anxiety is redeemed in the Bible: it can turn people toward God and toward others ([1 Peter 4:19](#)).

Biblical peace is about wholeness and things being right in our relationships, in our bodies and minds, and in our world. It is positive peace, not just a lack of conflict. That experience of the peace of God is a foretaste of his peace to come ([John 14:27](#)). Having peace and hope does not mean that life will be easy.



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