



SPACE PROGRAM

Supporting **P**arents with
Anxious **C**hildhood **E**motions

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What is SPACE?

- SPACE stands for Supportive Parenting for Anxious Childhood Emotions and is a parent-based treatment program for children and adolescents with anxiety, OCD, and related problems.
- SPACE was developed by Dr. Eli Lebowitz at the Yale University Child Study Centre and has been tested and found to be efficacious in randomized controlled clinical trials.
- It has been found as effective as CBT in recent trials. The difference is it does not require the young person to be present for the treatment. The treatment is entirely with parents.
- It is like giving the parent the medicine to give to their child as they are the ones who are living with them the most



What is SPACE for? Who is the patient?



- SPACE aims to treat children and adolescents with anxiety disorders and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Although children do not have to attend SPACE sessions - they are the patients!
- When SPACE treatment is successful children feel less anxious and function better following treatment.

Some of the main anxiety problems treated with SPACE include:

- Separation anxiety
- Social anxiety
- Generalized anxiety
- Fears and phobias
- Panic disorder and Agoraphobia
- Selective mutism
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder



Core Principles of SPACESPACE

focuses on empowering parents to:
Respond more supportively to their child's
anxiety.

To support parents/carers to reduce
accommodations, the well-meaning
Behaviors that help children avoid distress
but unintentionally reinforce anxiety (e.g.,
avoiding social events, giving excessive
reassurance).



How It Works

- **Parents/carers/staff are the participants**, not the child but they can attend.
- Treatment typically lasts **around 12 sessions** but can be tailored.
- Delivered **in individual or group formats**, in-person or via online.
- Parents learn to use **supportive statements** that combine;
Acceptance/validation (*"I know this is hard for you"*) with **Confidence** (*"I believe you can handle it"*).
- **Use of systemic externalization** to separate the problem from the person or the family



Why SPACE is Unique?

It's especially helpful when children resist therapy or struggle to engage.

It's evidence-based, with clinical trials showing effectiveness equal to traditional CBT.

It helps parents break the cycle of accommodation, fostering independence and resilience in their children.



Connecting SPACE and NVR in Residential Care

SPACE	NVR	Shared Principles
Focuses on reducing parental accommodation	Focuses on resisting harmful or controlling behaviors non-violently	Both empower adults to respond calmly, effectively and consistently
Uses supportive statements to build trust and confidence	Uses non-retaliatory resistance to maintain boundaries	Both promote parental presence and emotional regulation
Helps parents support without rescuing	Helps parents resist without escalating	Both reduce reactivity and increase relational safety
Effective for anxiety, OCD, and avoidance	Effective for aggression, defiance, and control	Both support healing through connection, not control

SPACE and **NVR** both shift the adult role from **fixer or enforcer** to **calm, connected support**, supporting children to grow through safe boundaries and emotional resilience.





Breakout Exercise: How could SPACE
Program be helpful?