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The little mole's big worry:
I feel unsafe
when I'm not home

Illustrations:
Jelena Brezovec



SOCIAL ANXIETY
caused by learned
mistrust in the world
+
tips for adults

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**Social anxiety
caused by learned
mistrust in the world**

Until recently, anxiety was mostly mentioned in the context of difficulties in adults. However, experts who work with children have noticed a significant increase in anxiety symptoms among children. Children at younger and younger ages are increasingly troubled by the subjective feeling that something bad will happen in the future and that they will not be able to cope with that situation.

An anxious child is overwhelmed by feelings of deep worry, tension, restlessness, discomfort, confusion, and insecurity. They are hyper-focused on potential sources of threat and have an urge to avoid them, to do everything possible to protect themselves. Child has difficulties relaxing and playing, remembering and learning, falling asleep, wants to isolate, complains of stomach aches, headaches, and other psychosomatic symptoms, refuses activities and socializing that they previously enjoyed, develops phobias or panic attacks, and needs help of an adult to learn to cope with these unpleasant states.

Depending on the cause, we recognize several types of anxiety. In this picture book we meet a little mole who suffers from **social anxiety due to a learned mistrust in the world**.

In the mole family there is an ongoing belief that the world is a dangerous place, and this belief was passed down for generations, along with feelings of insecurity and distrust. Little mole was overprotected from contact with the outside world and the challenges that life brings, so she learned social anxiety by modelling. Because she didn't have the opportunity to be curious and explore, little mole was deprived of all positive and developmentally important experiences. She didn't have the opportunity to develop resilience and the capacity to face the various challenges that life brings.

As we will see in this story, to reduce a child's anxiety, it is **necessary to provide support to the parents**, and the entire family system. At the end of the picture book, adults can find tips and guidelines that can help them to help their anxious child.

And don't forget, your soothing voice, attention, and the closeness you establish with the child you're reading to can greatly help reduce anxiety, restore a sense of security, and your little one's overall health.

Enjoy these moments together. ♥

”

Hello! I am a mole, and I live in a house deep under the ground with my sister and my parents. I really like to play, but I don't like to leave my home. I'm afraid that something bad will happen to me outside.

But my neighbour, the badger, says that there are many interesting places outside where I can explore, play and make new friends. I'm curious to find out if this is true, but I'm still scared.

Now get comfy and listen to my story...



On the large meadow there were many flowers, bushes, and small mounds of earth that looked like some unusual hills in the grass. Those were molehills, and under them lived a family of moles– mum, dad, and two little mole sisters.

In this family, everyone loved to cuddle, pet each other, snuggle together in their safe home deep, deep under the ground.

What they didn't do very often was explore something new – new places, new friends or new food. They somehow preferred what was familiar and safe.



They left their safe home only when they had to. Sometimes they had to dig new tunnels in the ground or go out to get food, but most of the day and night they were snuggled together in their hole.

The two mole sisters played together all day long, danced and told each other stories. Sometimes they'd remember a story that their grandmother told them many times. It was a story about a scary wolf. And about how he had done something terrible. And about how it is still unknown where and how that wolf had ended up and if he would ever appear again.

Little moles didn't really remember the story very well, but they did remember their grandma's serious, worried and slightly cold face every time she was telling the story. That's why they asked their mum and dad questions:

- Mum, why did grandma say that wolf was bad?
- Dad, where does that scary wolf live now?

But mum and dad didn't like to remember that story.

- It doesn't matter... Don't worry. There's no wolf. - they would answer quickly and start talking about something else.





Although they didn't like to talk about it, mum and dad knew exactly what event grandma was talking about. It all happened a long time ago, before the mole sisters were even born.

Grandma went out one evening to look for food. Suddenly, a big wolf came up behind her, pushed her with his big snout, and grandma got hurt. And she was very scared. However, she somehow managed to escape from him. She healed the wounds on her body, but the wounds she received on her heart because of that event never healed.

So she told this story over and over again to the mole mum and dad, and then to her granddaughters to teach them to beware of the big wolf.



That wolf never came again. Still, mum and dad continued to warn their little moles that they had to be very, very careful.

– Don't go too far. Don't touch that. Don't do that. What if... – little moles often listened to such warnings. If they ever did something new, they would notice mum was nervous and dad was tense, so they preferred to do only what was safe and familiar.

