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Dr. Amber May, Psychiatrist, The Bloomberg Institute:

In order to manage an anxiety disorder the best first step is to partner with our child and acknowledge that they need the help. So, sitting your child down, having a dialogue about how their symptoms have progressed to the point that bringing a professional in to be part of their success team seems to be the next best step. Another area that you can do as a parent in conjunction with reaching out to a professional is emphasizing their sleep hygiene. So making sure they're getting to bed and waking up at the same hour, sufficient amount of hours and not having screens in the bed or bedroom ideally. And then emphasizing healthy nutrition and trying to minimize things that may contribute to anxiety or exacerbate them such as caffeine, especially in the later hours of the day.

The next step would be to reach out to your pediatrician because they know your child for a significant amount of time, and they can help rule out if there's a medical or substance induced etiology that may be masquerading or contributing to anxiety. Primary anxiety disorders are truly only diagnosed after ruling out that there isn't a physiologic effect due to either a medical condition, a substance, or a medication on board. So at that point, your pediatrician can help link you then with a therapist who would be helpful for things like CBT, cognitive behavioral therapy, which is a gold standard approach. And that would be useful in the case of mild to moderate symptoms. Now, if symptoms are so severe that they fall more within the moderate to extreme range, then it would be helpful to also engage a child psychiatrist like myself in a treatment team. And so a child psychiatrist, like your pediatrician is goes through the medical school residency and fellowship process and has that background in how the body's physiology and pathophysiology work and so can consider if needed medication intervention. In addition to talk therapy.