

## Anxiety and Adolescents

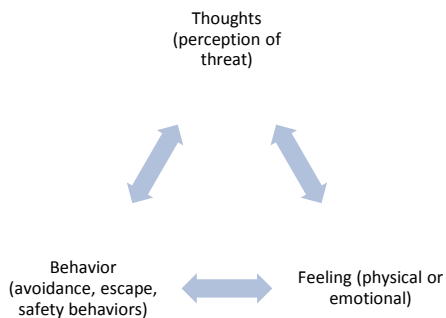
### Anxiety is:

- Natural/Normal
- Necessary
- Harmless
- It can help us and keep us safe; it doesn't mean we have to like it.
- Body responds physiologically, cognitively, and behaviorally.

### Symptoms/signs:

- Physical – headache, stomach ache, mind racing, sweating, jittery, lightheaded, difficulty sleeping
- Cognitive – expecting bad things to happen (I'll fail my test), and expecting terrible consequences if bad things happen (I'll fail my class then I won't get into college and then I'll never get a job and it will be the end of the world)
- Behavioral – avoidance, escape, safety behaviors (i.e. sitting near door)

### Three Component Model of Anxiety:



### Anxiety disorders – anxiety becomes a problem when...

- When anxiety reaction occurs in the absence of a threat or out of proportion to the actual threat
- Frequent and persistent
- Leads to maladaptive/avoidance/safety behaviors
- Negatively impacts life in a significant way (relationships, choices in life, school performance, etc.)

### Treatment:

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Medications
- Combo of the two
  - CBT and meds are more effective than meds alone
- Exposure therapy

### General coping skills:

- Counting – numbers, ceiling/floor tiles, lights
- Feet on the ground
- Progressive muscle relaxation/tense and release <https://youth.anxietycanada.com/how-do-it-0>
- Body scan [https://youth.anxietycanada.com/sites/default/files/Body\\_Scan.pdf](https://youth.anxietycanada.com/sites/default/files/Body_Scan.pdf)
- Mental vacation/visualization <https://youth.anxietycanada.com/visualizations>

- Grounding tool
  - 5 things you can see
  - 4 things you can feel or touch
  - 3 things you can hear
  - 2 things you can smell
  - 1 thing you can taste

### **Deep breathing:**

- Why?
  - Benefits – muscles relax, oxygen delivery improves, blood pressure lowers
  - Endorphins are released
- Examples:
  - In for 2, out for 3
  - Square breathing
  - Blowing colors
  - Sync your breathing with this <https://www.duffthepsych.com/stopanxiety/>
  - Calm breathing <https://youth.anxietycanada.com/how-do-it>
  - Mindful breathing [https://youth.anxietycanada.com/sites/default/files/Mindful\\_Breathing.pdf](https://youth.anxietycanada.com/sites/default/files/Mindful_Breathing.pdf)
- BreatheSync, Breathr apps (see more apps below)

### **Challenge your thinking:**

- Catch the anxious thoughts
- Pause
- Differentiate between thoughts and feelings
- Remember that thoughts are not always true
- Thoughts can change how you feel
- Strategies for challenging thinking:
  - Best friend exercise
  - Will this matter in a year?
  - Is this a thought or a fact?
  - What is the evidence for this thought?

### **Decreasing vulnerability to anxiety and stress, stay mentally strong:**

- Get enough sleep
- Eat regularly and stay hydrated
- Be physically active – movement
- No drugs/alcohol
- Take care of yourself when you are sick
- Connect with family and friends in person
- Find a hobby or activity that you enjoy
- Limit social media time and keep phones out of room at night

### **Anxiety at school – what can it look like?**

<https://childmind.org/article/classroom-anxiety-in-children/>

- Won't go to class if late
- Won't ask teacher for help
- Avoiding crowded hallways, certain classes, speaking in front of class
- Inattention and restlessness (sometimes mistaken for ADHD)

- Frequent trips to school nurse
- Attendance problems/school refusal
- Disruptive behavior
- Not turning in homework because it's never good enough

**Accommodations for anxiety/tips for schools:**

- Students with anxiety disorders may be eligible for a 504 Plan
- Common accommodations include: preferential seating, allowing recorded/1:1 presentations instead of in front of whole class, copy of class notes, extra time on tests, separate room for testing, pass to see the counselor/take a break, breaking down assignments
- School-based accommodations without treatment or plan to reengage may not be helpful for the student and increase anxiety over time
- Highly suggest time limits for accommodations
- Important for school staff and parents to remain united and consistent
- Watch out for “special exceptions” and “just this one time”
- Remember that students with anxiety won't always ask for help
- Help students take small steps and continue with distressing tasks (ex: help practice for presentation)
- Encourage students to practice their coping skills
- Encourage use of accommodations
- Think positive, lead by example

**Parenting anxious teens:**

<https://childmind.org/article/what-to-do-and-not-do-when-children-are-anxious/>

- Goal isn't to eliminate anxiety but to help the teen manage it
- Don't avoid things just because they make the teen anxious
- Express positive, but also realistic, expectations
- Respect and acknowledge feelings, but don't amplify them
- Don't ask leading questions – “are you anxious about your test today?”
- Don't reinforce the fears – watch tone of voice and body language
- Encourage toleration of the anxiety – it will decrease over time (exposure)
- Think things through with the child – help process it
- Model health ways of coping with anxiety

**How can parents help with school refusal:**

- Be aware at beginning of school year, coming back after sick days/vacation, even weekends – prime time for school refusal
- Make life at home very boring and uncomfortable (no cell phone, computers, video games, TV, iPad, etc.)
- Limit after school friends and participation in activities if not attending school
- Communicate with school counselors
- Get outside therapist for teen and/or work with a parent coach

**What to do if you think your teen has a problem with anxiety:**

- Talk to your teen about it, be direct – “I notice that lately...”
- Check in with school counselor and teachers
- Follow up with primary care provider to rule out any physical explanations for anxiety/distress/depression

- Find a therapist for your teen
  - Teen health counselor can be a start, can also provide resources

**Resources:**

**Books:**

- *Helping Your Anxious Child* by Ronald Rapee, Ann Wignall, Susan Spence, Heidi Lyneham, Vanessa Cobham
- *Getting Your Child to Say “Yes” to School* by Christopher Kearney
- *Parenting Your Anxious Child with Mindfulness and Acceptance* by Stephanie McCurry

**Websites:**

- AnxietyCanada (formerly AnxietyBC) [www.anxietycanada.com](http://www.anxietycanada.com)
- Child Mind Institute [www.childmind.org](http://www.childmind.org)
- Worry Wise Kids [www.worrywisekids.org](http://www.worrywisekids.org)
- Seattle Children’s Behavioral Health (resources etc.) [www.seattlechildrens.org/clinics/psychiatry-and-behavioral-medicine/](http://www.seattlechildrens.org/clinics/psychiatry-and-behavioral-medicine/)
- Words to describe feelings [https://www.cnvc.org/sites/default/files/feelings\\_inventory\\_0.pdf](https://www.cnvc.org/sites/default/files/feelings_inventory_0.pdf)
- Press pause <http://www.halfopus.com/presspause/>
- Anxiety Canada <https://www.anxietycanada.com/>
- 2018 Children’s Mental Health Report – Child Mind Institute <https://childmind.org/our-impact/childrens-mental-health-report/2018report/>
  - Full report
  - Report summary
  - Teen supplement

**Apps:**

- BreatheSync
- Breathr
- Calm
- Colorfy
- Happify
- Head Space (\$)
- Insight Timer
- MindShift ([www.anxietybc.com](http://www.anxietybc.com))
- Mood Notes
- MY3
- One-Moment Meditation
- SAM (self-help anxiety management)
- Smiling Mind
- Stop, Breathe & Think
- Virtual Hope Box
- 7 Cups ([www.7cups.com](http://www.7cups.com))

**How to contact Jennifer Cruze/request an appointment:**

- Appointment request forms in the counseling office as well as outside my office door
- Stop by my office – conference room in the library, room 202B
- Ask school counselor for a referral
- Email [jennifercruze@nsd.org](mailto:jennifercruze@nsd.org)