Mental Health: Anxiety & Depression & More

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Anxiety

- What Makes You Anxious?

Signs of Anxiety and Depression

Think about your children...

- What are some of the signs of anxiety you see in their appearance and behavior?

- What are some of the signs of depression you see in the appearance and behavior?
**Warning Signs:**

**Anxiety and Depression**

**Anxiety**
- Excessive:
  - Worry (anticipatory)
  - Avoidance
  - Attention to threat
  - Fast and sustained physiological arousal
  - Psychosomatic complaints
  - Shyness
  - Social withdrawal
  - Perfectionism
  - Difficulty in resting and going to sleep

**Depression**
- Excessive:
  - Sadness
  - Flat affect
  - Irritability
  - Loss of pleasure
  - Hopelessness and helplessness
  - Negative memory biases
  - Social withdrawal
  - Poor concentration
  - Early morning insomnia
  - Appetite changes

*Presentation varies across individuals, lifespan, and culture*

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**ADHD**
- Hyperactivity
- Distractibility
- Impulsivity
- Irritability
- Strong Emotional responses
- Sleep Problems
- Social Challenges

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**Oppositional Defiant Disorder**
- Repeated temper tantrums
- Excessive arguing with adults
- Refusal to comply with requests and rules
- Attempts to annoy or upset others and/or easily upset by others
- Blames others for his/her mistakes
- Frequent outbursts of anger and resentment
- Spiteful and seeks revenge
- Frequent swearing and obscene language
- Says mean things when upset
Normal Developmental Fears

**Age Appropriate & Usually Transitory**

- **Infancy** – strangers, loud noises
- **Early childhood** – separation, monsters, the dark, being kidnapped, getting lost
- **Middle childhood** – real-world dangers, new challenges, death
- **Adolescence** – social status, performance, physical appearance, embarrassment, global fears

What is Normal Anxiety?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation or Trigger</th>
<th>Anxiety</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>first date</td>
<td>Apprehension</td>
<td>Transient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preparing for exam</td>
<td>Nervousness</td>
<td>Doesn't significantly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>performing at a concert</td>
<td>Tension</td>
<td>interfere with a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>giving a speech</td>
<td>Edginess</td>
<td>person’s well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moving from home</td>
<td>Nausea</td>
<td>Doesn’t prevent a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>climbing a tall</td>
<td>Sweating</td>
<td>person from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ladder</td>
<td>Trembling</td>
<td>achieving their goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is Clinical Anxiety?

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<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>first date</td>
<td>Apprehension</td>
<td>Persistent, excessive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preparing for exam</td>
<td>Nervousness</td>
<td>Inappropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>performing at a concert</td>
<td>Tension</td>
<td>Causes impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>giving a speech</td>
<td>Edginess</td>
<td>High Intensity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moving from home</td>
<td>Nausea</td>
<td>Leads to dysfunctional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>climbing a tall</td>
<td>Sweating</td>
<td>coping - withdrawal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ladder</td>
<td>Trembling</td>
<td>avoidance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why Kids Worry

- It can serve a useful function
  - Helps us slow down when it’s smart to take our time
  - Helps us back away from events when it’s smart to avoid them
  - Helps us run away or fight when the danger is real
- Genes
- Modeling from parents
- The stresses of the world
- Their imaginations
- Being rigid—requiring predictability and perfection

Adaptive Signaling

DANGER!!!!

Brain Registers Danger

Initiation of physiologic cascade increased: heart rate, alertness, perception, tension

Sensory Perception + Internal Signals

Brain Registers Danger

Prepared to FIGHT or FLEE!

Anxiety Signaling

No Danger

Brain Registers Danger

Initiation of physiologic cascade increased: heart rate, alertness, perception, tension

Sensory Perception + Internal Signals

ANXIETY
This is Your Brain on Anxiety


Inverted U-Shaped Relationship Between Arousal and Performance

The Impact of Anxiety

- **Interferes with normal functioning** (e.g., social isolation, underachievement, depression).
- **Is highly co-morbid** with other disorders
- **Often precedes depression** - associated with greater impairment
- **Is chronic** – without intervention likely to lead to significant problems into adulthood.
Jacob the Worrywart

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4RSdV9R8wXQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4RSdV9R8wXQ)
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DnuRZH0fMdk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DnuRZH0fMdk)

Anxiety at School

- **Somatic Complaints**
  - Headaches
  - Stomach aches
  - Trips to the nurse
  - Requests to go home

- **School Avoidance**
  - High Absenteeism
  - Skipping school/tests

- **Easily Overwhelmed**
  - Cries easily
  - Clingy
  - Easily frustrated
  - Anger Outbursts
  - Irritability

- **Reassurance Seeking**
  - Am I doing it OK/right?
  - Perfectionism

- **Hyperactivity**
  - Fidgeting
  - Nervous Habits
  - Hyper arousal

- **Perseveration**
  - Difficulty switching tasks
  - Oppositional Inflexibility

Universal Supports

- CDA and Guidance Counsellor Support
- Social-Emotional Learning Programs.
  - (e.g., Friends, Deal with it, Roots of Empathy, MINDUP etc.)
- Stepping Stones to Mental Health
- Go-To Educator Mental Health Training
- Student Learn-It Lunches on Wellness Topics
- Presentations in CALM, Community initiatives, comprehensive school health, partners in schools
- PL for staff
- MandT
- Wellness Events
- Parent Workshops
Targeted Supports

- Programs Orchestrated by Guidance Counselors and CDAs.
  - Friends, Zones of Regulation, Mind Up
- Links to Local AHS Mental Health.
- Group Treatment with AHS Employees and Contractors.
- Intern Students providing intervention
- Gender Diversity
- FNMI Groups and PL
- Heartmath
- Girls Circle, Boy's Council

Specialized Supports

- RCSD Mental Health Staff.
- In-School Counselling from External Partners.
- Enhanced Mental Health Supports.
- Referral Forms for Emergency Departments.
  (e.g., NSSI)
- Links to Community Resources
- Contract Counselling
- Group Therapy in Schools with Guidance Counsellors
- Psychology, FSL

Supporting Students with Anxiety

- Discuss concerns with other teachers and staff as soon as possible
- Let the student know that you are concerned about how they are feeling and how their feelings are getting in the way of their success
- Reassurance is not helpful -- it encourages avoidance
- Do not support avoidance behaviors. Encourage self-management (breathing; thought stopping; graded exposure).
- Help develop a self-management plan involving key teachers
First Step to Support is Detection

• Social Anxiety: Does the student:
  • Get very anxious in one or more social situations that involve strangers or groups – such as classrooms or lunch rooms? Avoid, miss, hang back?
  • Avoid speaking up in class or are there specific situations that are avoided – the locker room in gym class for example. Recent onset school refusal?
  • Get easily embarrassed in a social situation or think that other people are judging him/her or paying particular attention to him/her. Speaking out in class.
  • Ever have a panic attack in social situations or places where many people congregate?

Test Anxiety

• Normal response to the expected and usual stress of an examination
• Most people experience some degree of examination anxiety – adaptive
• A few people may experience excessive anxiety – maladaptive
• Those with maladaptive anxiety may often have pre-existing mental health problems
• Can exam anxiety be helped by accommodations or can some accommodations contribute to continuation of exam anxiety?

Dealing with Test Anxiety

• Do not pathologize normal as abnormal
• Prepare students from the beginning of the year – praise hard work not being “smart”. Expose to testing situations
• Usual stress response interventions (exercise, healthy eating, breathing, mindfulness, muscle relaxation, no drugs, etc.)
• Effective study: sufficient; avoid binge and all-nighters; review; make notes; voice learning; key review points
• Get a good nights sleep – review keys in AM
• Preparation: location; details; no gossip
• Psychological: realistic perceptions
• Failure can be adaptive – some people need to have this experience to work harder
• Reframe anxiety as excitement: “I’m excited for this to be over”
Build Relationships

• Check in with the student
• Catch them doing things well
• Tell them you care about their success
• Notice things about them and comment on them
• Body Language

• Do these things more often with students with mental health concerns

Social-Emotional Learning

• Giving students social-emotional skills can limit the impact of mental illness, and reduce the impairment caused by mental health issues
• Friends
• Mind Up

Anxiety’s Demands!

• Certainty:
  – “I have to know what’s going to happen next…and I want to control it!”

• Comfort:
  – “I want to feel safe and comfortable…or else I want out!”

Wilson & Lyons, 2013
Shift Perspective

- Expect to worry
- Talk to your worry (Externalize it)
- Be unsure and uncomfortable on purpose
  - Learn to be comfortable being uncomfortable
- Breathe!
- Know what you want and go for it
  - Anxiety wants to prevent you from this
- Link to Previous Success

Children of Anxious Parents...

- Perceive ambiguous situations as more threatening
- Engage in all-or-nothing thinking
- (perfectionistic)
- Have lower estimates of competency to cope with such situations
- Experts at assuming the negative will occur

Wilson & Lyons, 2013

Sorry Parents...

- Children of parents who are also anxious are up to 7Xs more likely to develop anxiety
- Genetic play a influence
- So does the environment...
- Family may not “create it” but can inadvertently “sustain it”
- AVOID THE FAMILY (or school) DANCE!
- What no one tells you…the work is with the ADULTS…©

Wilson & Lyons, 2013
Cognitive Patterns

- Global: never, always, no one, everyone
  - What ifs? And Yeah but(s)…
- Catastrophic: worst case scenario
- Permanent: things won’t change
- Kids running schema of the world is important…help change their internal NARRATIVE…CHOOSE YOUR WORDS!

Wilson & Lyons, 2013

Critical Cognitive Skills

Teach children to:
- tolerate (and normalize) discomfort
- externalize/react differently to thoughts
- learn by doing, failing, & succeeding
- handle the uncertainty of life
- be more flexible (malleability!)
- problem solve (vs. ruminate)

Wilson & Lyons, 2013

Beware of Pitfalls

- Too much focus on eliminating symptoms
- Interventions that focus on content over process,
  - This maintains or increases anxiety over time!
Focus on Process

Avoid…
• Focus on & talk about how to fix SPECIFIC problem
• Reassure about that SPECIFIC problem
• Give data, stats, rational information
• Go over plans & specifics repeatedly

DO MORE OF…
• Focus on HOW worry operates & what it’s up to
• Cue “worry-managing” strategies
• Be general: “That sounds like worry to me…”
• Prompt independent, internal reassurance & problem solving

Mindfulness & Metacognition

Challenging Unhelpful Thinking

• Teach children to ask these questions to critically examine their own thoughts
  – What evidence do you have for this?
  – What would a friend say?
  – What would you say to a friend?
  – Is this a helpful thought?
Practice Helpful Thinking

- I can do this
- I’ve done this before
- This my body over-reacting
- People will help me
- I’ll feel great when I’m done
- This feeling will pass soon

Helpful Thinking

- I’m willing to feel uncomfortable
- I’m willing to feel unsure & to not know what will happen
- I’m willing to grab onto my courage & do it
- I’m uncomfortable but I will be fine
- Anxiety is annoying but this will pass
- I’ve felt this before and I managed it then
- NOT TODAY ANXIETY…GO LAY DOWN!
  — Externalize it for kids

Avoid...

- Reassuring, rescuing & overprotecting
- Providing certainty
- Identifying child as “worrier” …genetics!
- Allowing “bad” behavior (yelling, swearing, tantrums, hitting) because it’s part of anxiety
- Modeling with your own anxious behavior
- Pushing too hard, becoming angry & reactive
Avoid, Avoiding!

• We must seek to build skills not….
  – Adjusting family routines or schedules
  – School accommodations with no “weaning” plan
  – Creating “escapes” that are warm, safe, & cozy…and support avoidance
  – Diminishing anxiety by creating certainty (giving child schedules & warnings of change throughout the day)

School Plans/IPP's...

• Is this plan accommodating the anxiety?
• Does this plan address the teaching of skills that reduce anxiety?
• How will the child learn about and understand the plan?
• Is there a weaning-off component to the plan?
• What role will visits to the school counsellor have?
• Does the plan specifically address physical symptoms?

Worry Hill: Teach Kids To Get Over the Hill
REMEMBER…

• Parents and Teachers: shift from overprotecting to promoting competency = decrease in childhood anxiety
  – Build the narrative and connect to past successes!
• Don’t remove hurdle, teach them to jump or climb over it!
  – WORRY HILL

* Wilson & Lyons, 2013, Anxious Kids, Anxious Parents: 7 Ways to Stop the Worry Cycle and Raise Courageous and Independent Children

Resources

- www.anxietybc.com
- www.youth.anxietybc.com 
- www.teenmentalhealth.org
Books

- **Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day** by Judith Viorst (a humorous story about how everyone has a bad day sometime)
- **Anxious Kids, Anxious Parents: 7 ways to stop the worry cycle and raise courageous and independent children** by Reid Wilson and Lynn Lyons (2013)
- **Grumpy Bird** by Jeremy Tankard (bird wakes up grumpy but is able to shake his bad mood with the help of wannabe and his friends)
- **How Are You Feeling? Foods with Moods** by Saxton Freymann (cleverly provides images and vocabulary for a wide range of feelings depicted by real fruit and vegetables)
- **My Many Colored Days** by Dr. Seuss (a rhyming book where colors are assigned to moods to help children express how they feel)
- **Sad** by Sarah Medina (normalizes and helps children recognize sad feelings in themselves and others)
- **Tell Me Something Happy Before I Go To Sleep** by Joyce Dunbar and Debi Gliori (Willa's big brother helps her to get to sleep by pointing out happy things that await her in the morning)
- **The Feel Good Book** by Todd Parr (inspires children to celebrate all the little things in life that make them feel good and happy)
- **What Are You So Grumpy About?** by Tom Lichtenheld (a very funny book for children in a bad mood and in need of cheering up)
- **The Red Beast** by Al-Ghani (an accessible and fun way to talk about anger)
- **Zach Gets Frustrated** by William Mulcahy (teaches students about frustration and what to do about it)

**Learning How to Relax your Body**

- Students can come up with their own ways they relax (talk to a friend, stretch, share a joke, go for a walk, play outside)
- **Relaxation Exercises:**
  - **A Boy and a Bear: The Children's Relaxation Book** by Lori Lite (helps children learn how to use deep, abdominal breathing and calm themselves)
  - **Peaceful Piggy Meditation** by Kerry Lee MacLean (children learn to find a peaceful place and become more mindful and calm through breathing and being still)
  - **Flower Breath**: Imagine smelling a beautiful flower; breathe in through the nose and out the mouth, releasing any tension. Stop and smell the roses, daffodils, daisies or any other flower they like.
  - **Bear Breath**: Inhale through the nose, pause; exhale out the nose, pause. Breathe in to a count of 3 or 4, pause for a count of 1 or 2; breath out for a count of 3 or 4, pause for a count of 1 or 2. Repeat a few times

**Scripts and Audio**

- **Indigo Dreams** by Lori Lite (CD)
- Inner Health Studio (scripts and audio)
  [www.innerhealthstudio.com/](http://www.innerhealthstudio.com/)
Designing for Executive Functioning

- Problem Solve with the Student
- Model by Thinking Out Loud
- Make a Plan with The Student
- Break Tasks into Steps
- Model Appropriate Coping
- Scaffold Instruction

Thanks!