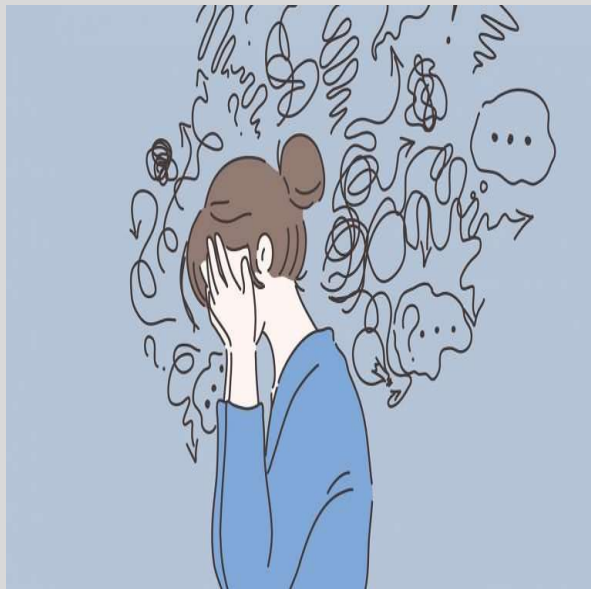




The Anxious Age: Helping Your Teen Cope with Anxiety

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Symptoms of anxiety affect each of us throughout our lifetimes.

For most, the symptoms are manageable and cause only minimal disruptions to our daily functioning.

For others, symptoms can become unmanageable and debilitating.



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*I am being eaten alive
by my thoughts,
by my mind,
no I'm not fine
can't you see that's all a lie
my smile isn't real
it only hides what I truly feel*

-Tara (age 16)

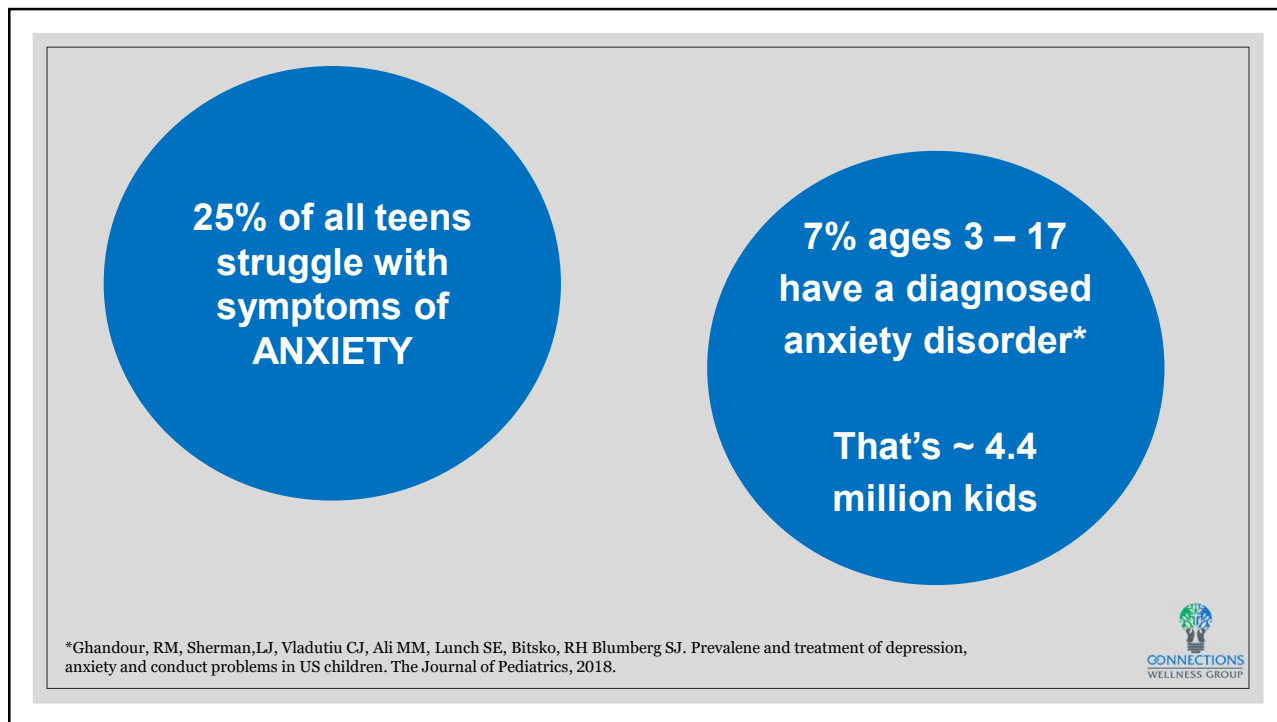


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***More
common
than we
believe***

Anxiety disorders represent one of the most common forms of mental health disorders among children and adolescents, but they are often undetected therefore untreated.

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Anxiety in Childhood & Adolescence

- Anxiety is a normal part of childhood. Most children go through phases of anxiety.
- Remember when your kids were toddlers and they resisted going to strangers or being away from you for any period of time?
- Separation anxiety is a typical (and expected) part of the developmental process in children.
- These phases are generally temporary.

CONNECTIONS WELLNESS GROUP

The slide features a title 'Anxiety in Childhood & Adolescence' in a bold, italicized font. Below the title is a bulleted list of four points. At the bottom right, there is a logo for 'CONNECTIONS WELLNESS GROUP' featuring a stylized tree.

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Risk Factors for Anxiety

- **Gender – Females greater likelihood**
 - At age 6, twice as likely to have experienced anxiety disorder than boys
- **Temperament – Poor emotional regulation**
 - Negative emotional responses more frequent & intense
- **Parents – Anxiety disorders in parents increase risk in kids**
 - Parent symptoms can impact relationship with child
- **Life Experience/Adversities/Trauma**
 - Parental loss, abuse or neglect, victim of bullying



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Anxiety in Adolescence Worry or Relax?

Typical

Apprehension about the first day of school

Checking over schoolwork to verify answers

Periodic complaints of headache or stomachache

Atypical

Refusal to attend school due to fears or being overwhelmed

Constantly checking & rechecking work to ensure completion

Persistent complaints of headaches, stomach pain, fatigue with no physical cause.



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Anxiety presents itself in many different ways...



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Signs & Symptoms of Anxiety

- Inattention, poor focus
- Excessive Shyness
- Constantly seeking reassurance or clingy behavior
- Unusually fearful of germs or becoming ill
- Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep
- Repetitive behaviors (hand washing, counting, patterns)
- Fidgety or restless (chewing fingernails, tugging hair)
- Difficulty making friends or participating in group activities



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What Anxiety Feels Like - YouTube Video
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCgm1xQa06c&t=4s>

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The Developed Cycle of Anxiety

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graph TD; A[Anxiety Trigger] --> B[Increased Intensity "Retrigger"]; A --> C[Avoid "Scared Moment"]; B --> D[Unresolved Trigger "Rebuilds"]; C --> E[Temporary Relief "Escaped"]; D <--> E; D --> A; E --> A;
```

Anxiety naturally drives us to avoid things that scare us.

When a “scary” thing is avoided there is an immediate but brief but short-lived sense of relief.

That is the false understanding that its over, our alarm system has been temporarily turned off. “There is still smoke in the room”

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What we observe & rationalize

Observation	Rationalization & Expressions
Uncontrollable worry, irrational perceptions of problem, difficulty seeking positive outcomes	Attention Seeking
*Excessive Nervousness, *Restlessness, easily startled "Keyed up"	Inability to sit still
*Poor Concentration, short burst focusing	ADHA/ADD, Distracted
Increased heart rate, Sweating, trembling	Need to calm down, "why are you so nervous"
*Sleep disturbances, tiredness, * Easily Fatigued, *Irritability	"You need to put your device away or off", "Always cranky in a bad mood"
Upset stomach, IBS, Nausea, Frequency to restrooms (Uresis & Comprises)	Tummy Ache "need to eat something"
*Muscle tension, muscular pain, cramping or ligaments	Growing pains, Cramps
Avoidance of fear	Isolation, introverted, limited social interaction



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What are teens so anxious about?

Grief	Death	Divorce	Relocation	Family Separation	Abuses	Attacks/Predatory
School	High amounts of Homework	Performance anxiety	Sports performance	Exams/ Testing	Employment outside the home	Post HS plans
Bullying / 2x exposure	Social Pressures	Peer Pressures	Substances exposure	Limited Support	Media Exposure	External influence
Identity Pressure	Gender dysphoria	PTSD	Pornography	Eating/Food intake	Body Image	Too much Family
Domestic Violence	Blended Families	Work	Money	Health	Lack of Support	Lack of / or too much Autonomy

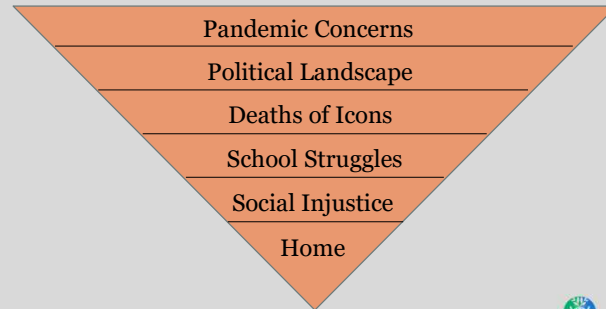
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Anxiety, Depression, & Current Issues

Things to Remember

- Underdeveloped prefrontal cortex
 - Last portion of the brain to fully develop, around age 25
 - Most associated with impulse control/decision-making
- Understand the influenceability of today's youth
 - More easily influenced due to increased access to "influencers"
 - More likely to side with something they hear than do research themselves on given topic/idea/belief
- COVID-19
 - This pandemic has completely uprooted any sense of "normalcy" in kids' lives

Current Issues



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Ask yourself – How different is my child than his/her normal, usual self? How long have the symptoms lasted? How severe are they?

Continuous or persistent symptoms of worry, lethargy or irritability can be greater cause for concern.



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Tips to help an anxious child

Don't try to eliminate anxiety: do try to help a child manage it

the best way to help kids overcome anxiety is to help them learn to tolerate it as well as they can. Over time the anxiety will diminish

Don't avoid things just because they make the child anxious

helping children avoid the things they are afraid of will make them feel better in the short term, but it reinforces the anxiety over the long run

Tips to help an anxious child

Express positive but realistic expectations

don't promise a child that her fear will not happen – that you know she won't fail a test – but do express confidence that she will be able to manage whatever happens

Respect his feelings, but don't empower them

validating feelings doesn't mean agreeing with them. So if a child is terrified about going to the doctor for example, do listen and be empathetic but encourage him to feel he can face his fears

Tips to help an anxious child

Avoid asking leading questions

encourage the child to talk about their feelings, but try not to ask leading questions, “Are you anxious about the big test?” Instead, ask open ended questions, “How are you feeling about the science fair?”

Be encouraging

let your child know that you appreciate how hard she’s working, and remind her that the more she tolerates her anxiety, the more it will diminish



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Tips to help an anxious child

Avoid reinforcing the child’s fears

avoid suggesting, with your tone of voice or body language, “maybe this is something you should be afraid or worried about”

Try to keep the anticipatory period short

when we are afraid of something, the hardest time is before we do it. So if a child is nervous about going to a doctor’s appointment, don’t discuss it until you need to



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Tips to help an anxious child

Think things through with the child

sometimes it helps to talk through what would happen if a fear came true – how would he handle it? For some kids, having a plan can reduce the uncertainty in a healthy way, effective way.

Try to model healthy ways of handling anxiety

don't pretend that you don't experience stress and anxiety, but do let kids hear or see you managing it calmly, tolerating it, and feeling good about getting through it



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Tips to help an anxious child

Seek professional help

Mental Health professionals - consulting with a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT), Psychologist or Psychiatrist who have experience working with youth struggling with anxiety is an excellent first step

Talk therapy

individual therapy, group therapy, family therapy) in combination with medication are all solid options for effectively treating symptoms of anxiety



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It is such a beautiful thing to finally see your self-worth, to know that you have qualities no one else possesses. It doesn't even matter if no one else likes them, I like them. And you need to like yourself, because if you question your worth, I've learned others will too.

-Tara



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Questions?

Thank you for attending!

Reach out with any questions:
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