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Waterloo

Anxiety: A K-12 Perspective



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Separation anxiety: worry about being separated from caregivers

Selective mutism: specific worry about speaking, but only in situations that make them feel anxious; may blush, look down, or withdraw

Social anxiety: intense fear of social interactions in which judged or scrutinized by others (

Generalized anxiety: worry about a wide variety of everyday things, often about school performance (Can struggle with perfectionism)



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Obsessive-compulsive disorder: Mind filled with unwanted and stressful thoughts; compulsive rituals like counting or washing hands

Specific phobias: Excessive and irrational fear of particular things; e.g. storms, animals, etc.

Panic Disorder: Abrupt surge of intense fear or discomfort often characterized by rapid heart beat, shaking, sweating, loss of control, and shortness of breath

PTSD: Jumpiness, muscle tension, being overly aware of one's surroundings (hypervigilance), nightmares and other sleep problems, flashbacks



Normal Worry vs. Anxiety Disorder

Child Therapist's List of Top Worries by Age



AGE 2 - 4 YEARS OLD

- Fear of the potty
- Fear of the dark
- Fear of shadows
- Fear of sleeping alone
- Fear of weather
- Fear of loud noises



AGE 8 - 11 YEARS OLD

- Fear of bad guys & ghosts
- Fear of being home alone
- Fear of dying
- Fear of sickness
- Fear of school failure
- Fear of throwing up at school
- Fear of peer rejection



AGE 5 - 7 YEARS OLD

- Fear of the dark
- Fear of fire
- Fear of bad guys
- Fear of taking tests
- Fear of peer rejection
- Fear of doctors & shots
- Fear of bugs & animals



Warning Signs 3-12 years old

FIGURE 2.1

What Flight, Fight, or Freeze Looks Like in the Classroom

Flight	Fight	Freeze
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Withdrawing• Fleeing the classroom• Skipping class• Daydreaming• Seeming to sleep• Avoiding others• Hiding or wandering• Becoming disengaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acting out• Behaving aggressively• Acting silly• Exhibiting defiance• Being hyperactive• Arguing• Screaming/yelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exhibiting numbness• Refusing to answer• Refusing to get needs met• Giving a blank look• Feeling unable to move or act



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Warning Signs 13-18

Emotional: pervasive worry, feeling “keyed up”, irritability, “on edge”, difficulty concentrating, restlessness, unexplained outbursts, afraid of making mistakes

Physical: frequent headaches (including migraines), gastrointestinal problems, unexplained aches and pains, excessive fatigue, changes in appetite, constantly tense muscles

Social: avoiding interactions with friends, avoiding extracurriculars, spending increased time alone



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Panic Attacks

- Rapid heartbeat
- Sweating and trembling
- Dizziness
- Upset stomach
- Numbness or tingling in arms and legs
- Difficulty breathing
- Chest pain
- Feeling like they're dying
- Feeling like they're "going crazy"
- Derealization.



RECOMMENDATIONS



Assist vs. Enable

****Goal: help students overcome anxiety,
not avoid triggers****

**Assist student in managing anxiety, not
eliminating it.**



Basic Building Blocks

- SLEEP
 - 6-13yo 9-12 hours
 - 13-18yo 8-10 hours
- Regular healthy meals
- Exercise
- Daily Routine





Recommendations for Parents

3-12

Step #1: Stay grounded. Stay in the present moment, breathe steadily, focus your attention on what's beneath the behavior/symptom (Child not giving me a hard time, my child is having a hard time)

Step #2: Get down on their level. Nothing signals the brains threat alarms than something big and tall looming over you. Remember in this heightened state, everything appears larger so by getting down to their eye level, you immediately take that threat away.

Step #3: Regulate-Focus on soothing. Since your child is in the lower parts of their brain trying to reason with them won't work. At this stage you're all about making them feel calm, safe and loved.

Step #4: Relate. As they calm down use short sentences. You can validate their feelings with your words and tone of voice while also providing them with a hug or even taking their hand. Use short sentences such as "I know you feel upset right now, this is very hard". Your focus here is connecting with your child.

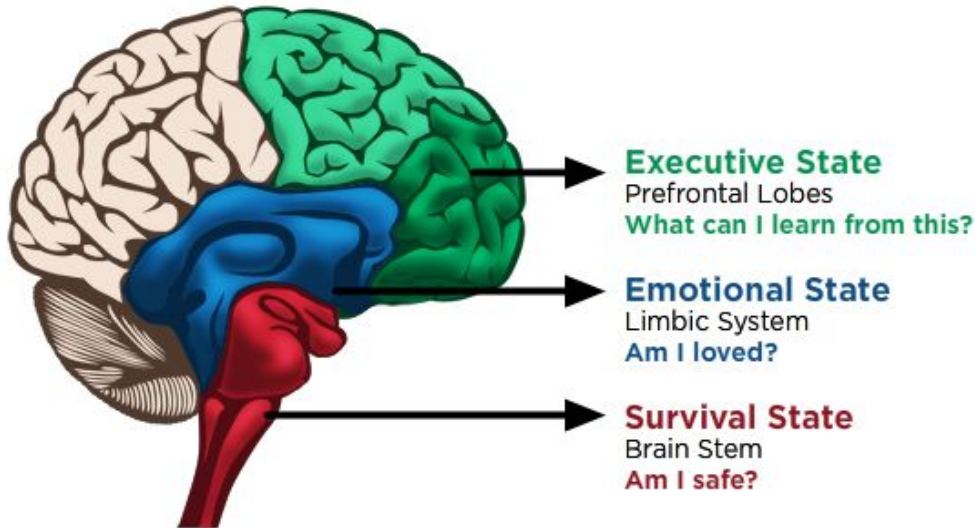
Step #5: Reason. Once your child is calm, now is the time to talk about alternatives to their behaviors while still reinforcing appropriate limits. You can reassure them that you love and care about them but the behavior they are exhibiting is not ok.



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Regulate, Relate, Reason

Dr. Bruce Perry





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“Worried Feelings are not Forever”

-“I’m here to listen”

-“Worries are just thoughts, just feelings. We can get through this together.”

-“You are bigger than your worries. How big does this worry feel?”

-“You’re safe. Let’s talk.”

-“What can I do to help?”

-“Talk to your worry. What do you want to tell it?”

-“I feel worried too sometimes. I am here for you.”

-“This feeling won’t last forever. I’ll stay with you while we work through it.”

-“Let’s walk. Moving can help make worries smaller.”

-“I think you’re brave for facing your fears/worries.”



1. Respect and validate your child’s feelings! Anxiety is a real emotion and not pleasant.
2. Teach your child deep, slow, belly breathing. This is an easy and very portable skill for self-soothing and calming.
3. Listen to your child and ask “Tell me what you are thinking?” This will help to reveal scary thoughts and scenes that build up in your child’s mind.
4. Rather than swooping to reassure, ask your child “How likely is (that thing you’re afraid of) to happen?” You’ll be teaching him to challenge his anxious thinking.
5. Prompt your child with “Tell me some things you can do to handle this situation” and help her to brainstorm, rather than just giving her solutions. She’ll feel empowered.
6. Give up the idea of “mental health days” “skip days” “sleep with mom nights” or other ways of avoiding feared situations. This just makes the anxiety stick more firmly and lead to further avoidance.
7. Encourage your child’s attempts to be brave, no matter how small they may seem to you. Use labeled praise such as “I’m so proud of you for sleeping in your own bed last night!”
8. Work with your child to outline small steps leading to a bigger goal.
9. Create opportunities for your child to practice being brave and coping, and then high-five his/her efforts!
10. Recognize when you are anxious and say aloud what you can do to calm down and solve the situation. You’ll be modeling coping for your child, but be mindful and don’t overshare your anxiety!

Graphics by: Mrs. Eun

kidlutions.com



Recommendations



- Acknowledge and normalize
- Allow for breaks or opportunities to de-stress.
- Modify expectations during times of high stress
- Helping student set small, realistic, achievable goals
- Share own experiences if applicable
- Actively listen and discuss
- Encourage healthy lifestyle

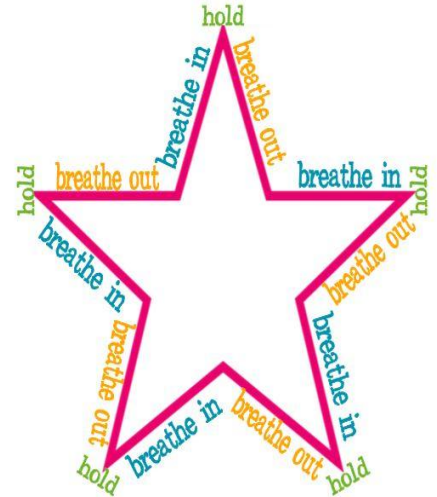


- Dismiss, minimize or ignore
- Say “it’s all in your head” or “there’s nothing to be afraid of”
- Do it all for them
- Say “Hurry Up!”
- Label



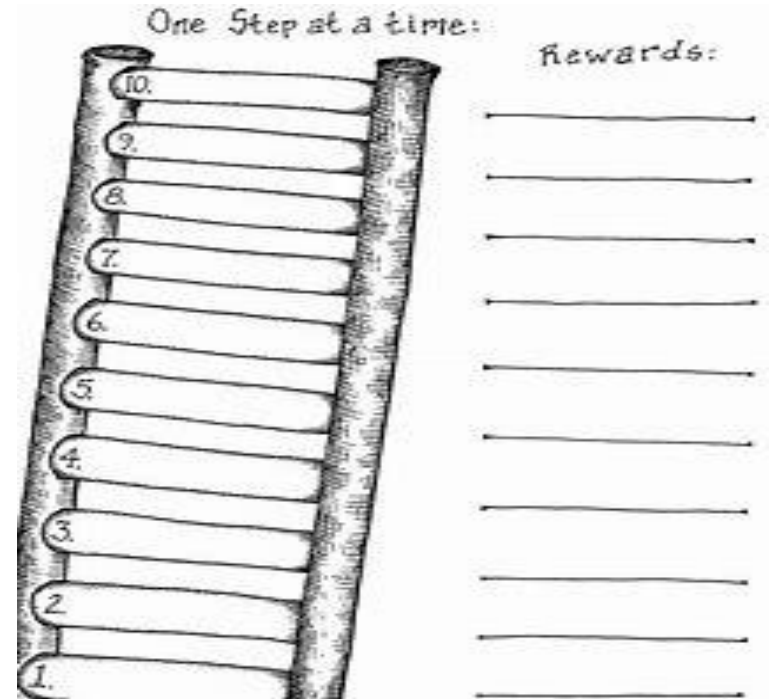
Helpful Tips and Tricks

- I Spy Senses
- Color Worry
- Breathing Shapes
- Children's Books: B is for Breathe
 - F is For Feelings
 - Listening to my Body
 - Worried Feelings are not Forever
- Free apps: Breathe Kids
 - SandDraw





- Breathing Techniques (4-7-8)
- Ladder Plan
- TSA Agent





Challenging Negative Self-Talk

Types of Questions	Example
Reality testing	Are these thoughts facts?
Different explanation	What else could this mean?
Put in perspective	Will this matter in five years' time?
Goal-directed thinking	Is thinking this way helping you feel good and achieve <u>your goal</u> ?



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**"I'M HERE
FOR YOU
WITH WHATEVER
YOU NEED
RIGHT NOW."**

**"It will pass.
Just keep breathing."**

**"I'M SORRY
YOU ARE
STRUGGLING
WITH THIS."**

**"What can I do
to help?"**

**"It's OK
to feel
this way."**



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QUESTIONS?

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