WELCOME to the

Supporting Our Students
ECHO

Session will start in less than 15 minutes
Adolescent Anxiety

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Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement

No Conflicts of Interest
Outline

• Anxiety 101
• Recognizing Anxiety in Students
• The Anxiety Cycle
• How Can Schools Help?
• Referring Out: CBT for Anxiety
• Resources
What is Anxiety

• Anxiety is a normal part of life

• Helps us detect and avoid potentially dangerous situations

• Anxiety is like an internal alarm system

“An emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure”

—American Psychological Association
When is Anxiety a Problem?

• When it persists and there is no real danger

• Seemingly uncontrollable, and overwhelming/excessive

• When anxiety interferes with daily activities (making friends, dating, completing homework, getting a driver’s license)

Anxiety = Overestimation of danger and the underestimation of our ability to cope
Prevalence of Anxiety Disorders

• An estimated 31.9% of adolescents have an anxiety disorder (Merikangas et al., 2010)

• Anxiety in teens is rising & receiving greater recognition (Bitsko et al., 2018)

• Anxiety disorders change from equal female–male prevalence during childhood to a 2:1 female–male prevalence after puberty (Copeland et al., 2014)
Categories of Anxiety Disorders

• Specific phobia
• Social anxiety disorder
• Separation anxiety disorder
• Generalized anxiety disorder
• Selective mutism
• Panic disorder
• Agoraphobia

Child Mind Institute, 2018
Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety Disorders

**Cognitive**
- concentration
- worry
- forgetfulness

**Physical**
- aches, pains
- tension
- sleep

**Behavioral**
- *changes*
  - Individual
  - Interpersonal

**Emotional**
- irritability
- sadness
- overwhelmed
How Does Anxiety Show Up in Schools?

- Inattention and restlessness
- Unexplained headaches, nausea, stomachaches
- School refusal
- Trouble separating from caregivers
- Disruptive behavior
- Perfectionism
- Avoiding group work or socializing (gym, lunch)
- Freezing during presentations or when called on
“The Avoidance Cycle”

Anxiety
“What if I don’t have anyone to sit with”

Go to the nurse during lunch period

Belief that avoidance is only/best way to cope

More worry
“I don’t have any friends”

Short-term relief
What Can Schools Do?

• Promote positive school climate & model self-care
• Teach skills (relaxation skills + proactive behaviors)
• Identify at-risk students
• Collaborate with families
• Refer to supports
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<th>Anxiety Do’s</th>
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<td><strong>Offer validation</strong></td>
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<td>“I hear how hard taking tests can be for you”</td>
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<td>“I can tell how important this exam is to you”</td>
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<td><strong>Encourage tolerating anxiety</strong></td>
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<td>“I know you’re worried, and that’s okay, I’m</td>
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<td>here to support you”</td>
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<td><strong>Express positive—but realistic—expectations</strong></td>
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<td>“You studied hard. I know you're going to doing</td>
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<td>the best you can”</td>
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<td><strong>Encourage skill utilization</strong></td>
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<td>“Would it be helpful to use the test-taking</td>
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<td>strategies we reviewed together?”</td>
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<td><strong>Encourage reframing thoughts</strong></td>
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<td>“The point of this test is to show what you</td>
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<td>know and what you don’t know yet”</td>
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<td><strong>Encourage calming activities</strong></td>
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<td>Breathe deeply from your belly; Tighten various</td>
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<td>muscle groups, and then relax them; Count to 10</td>
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<td><strong>Celebrate small wins</strong></td>
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<td>“I’m so proud of you for showing up to take the</td>
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<td>exam”</td>
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## Anxiety Don’ts

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<th>Don’t</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<td>Encourage avoidance</td>
<td>“You seem very anxious, why don’t we reschedule”  “You can substitute a paper for the exam”</td>
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<td>Ask leading questions</td>
<td>“Are you anxious that you’ll fail the class if you do poorly on the final?”</td>
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<td>Reinforce the student’s fears</td>
<td>“This is a really important test”</td>
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<td>Dismiss Concerns</td>
<td>“It’s just a test, there’s nothing to worry about”  “It’s really not a big deal”</td>
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<td>Extend anticipatory periods</td>
<td>“At the end of the semester you will take a final that’s worth 80% of your grade”</td>
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<td>Social Comparisons</td>
<td>“Nobody else in class seems as anxious as you about this exam”</td>
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When It’s Not Enough....
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) for Anxiety

• Involves exposure to the feared stimulus, while providing ways of coping other than escape and avoidance; process is gradual

• Helps teens understand how thinking contributes to anxiety and to modify unhelpful thoughts to decrease symptoms

Effectiveness of therapy
A combination of CBT therapy and medication proves to be a highly effective approach for treating anxiety

- 81% COMBINED THERAPY
- 60% CBT THERAPY ALONE
- 55% MEDICATION ALONE

Child Mind Institute, 2018
Key Points

• Anxiety disorders are the most common mental health disorders in childhood and adolescence
• Anxiety “looks” different in every person
• Facilitating avoidance maintains anxiety
• How to help: Respect feelings without empowering fears!
• CBT is an evidence-based treatment for anxiety
Resources: Electronic

Phone Apps

• **MindShift CBT**: Free app designed to help young people cope with anxiety
• **Mindful Gnats**: An app to help young people develop mindfulness and relaxation skills
• **Rootd**: An app to help people manage panic attacks

Websites

• **Anxietycanada.com**: Online resource providing self-help information and resources for parents about anxiety
• **Childmind.org**: Great resource for parents/educators on anxiety and other childhood disorders
Resources: Books

1. Under Pressure: Confronting the Epidemic of Stress and Anxiety in Girls by Lisa Damour, Ph.D.
2. How to Talk So Teens Will Listen & Listen So Teens Will Talk by Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish
3. Parenting the New Teen in the Age of Anxiety by Dr. John Duffy

Project ECHO
Dartmouth-Hitchcock
References


