

Anxiety

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developed using information from
Worcestershire TaMHS

What is Anxiety?

When you feel threatened your body reacts by making your heart beat faster and muscles work more quickly, it's a way of getting ready to run away or defend yourself and can be traced back to when humans were cavemen.



FIGHT or FLIGHT

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is another word for worries, fears, being shy, being scared or frightened. It is a normal emotion that helps you when you are threatened.

Body

- Heart races
- Muscles get tense
- Breath faster
- Flushed (red) skin
- Sweating
- Dizziness
- Headaches
- Dry mouth
- Stomach Aches
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Muscle aches and Pains
- Shaking

Thoughts

Focus on:-

- Danger
- Beliefs that something bad is about to happen
- Out of proportion and difficult to think
- Hard to concentrate
- Hard to remember things
- Interferes with ability to think clearly and rationally

Actions

- Want to run away
- Lash out
- Obsessive or compulsive behaviour to prevent feared event happening.

e.g. someone who has been a victim of burglary keeps checking their doors.

What are the Causes of
Anxiety?

What are the Causes of Anxiety?

- Bullying
- Friendship difficulties
- Bereavement and loss
- Parental separation
- Parental ill health
- Exams
- Learning Difficulties
- Abuse
- Neglect
- Domestic Violence
- Trauma
- Sensitive nature
- Being Female
- Anxious role models
- Medical Conditions
- Drugs

What else can cause anxious feelings?

Some Medical Conditions:-

- Hyperthyroidism
- Vitamin B12 deficiency
- Seizures
- Some Heart Conditions

Also:-

- Some non prescription drugs – caffeine, cocaine, LSD, ecstasy and amphetamines

What are the signs of
anxiety?

What are the Signs of Anxiety?

Infants and Toddlers



Signs of Anxiety

- Excessive upset when separated from someone close to them.
- Clinginess
- Sleep problems
- Eating problems

Primary Aged Children (5-10 years)



Signs of Anxiety

- Worry
- Fears
- Complain of physical symptoms – (which will not necessarily prevent them participating in activities or learning)
- Appear agitated
- Appear withdrawn
- Lose developmental skills
- Engage in repetitive play focussed on trauma
- Sleep problems
- Eating Problems

Adolescents (11 years+)



Signs of Anxiety

- Worry
- Have fears
- Complain of physical symptoms – (which will not necessarily prevent them participating in activities or interfere with academic performance)
- Stress – (which may cause boredom, social withdrawal, sadness, aggression and/or risk taking such as drug or alcohol abuse)
- Sleep problems
- Eating problems

- Symptoms usually resolve when the source of stress is removed and does not interfere with activities or relationships.

Case Study 1

- Year 8 girl not attended school for 10 weeks following a week off school with flu.
- Previous attendance 100%
- Parents and school concerned
- Parents separated when girl 8 years old
- Family health problems
- Worries about mum when mum goes out
- Reduced timetable previously tried but not successful
- ESW involvement
- Academically sound, but behind with school work.
- 3 older sisters all with history of school non attendance

Case Study

- Is this young person anxious? (if not what else could it be).
- What's stopping her going to school, what are her worries?
- What else could be tried?
- Does she need a CAMHS referral?

Case Study 2

- Jane, an 8 year old girl.
- good school attendance.
- Older brother, also has good school attendance but is angry.
- Both children witnessed their mother being emotionally abused by their father, which still continues despite parents now being divorced, both children live with mum.
- Jane thinks she is rubbish and her work is rubbish, always trying to please people and to do the right thing.
- Poor concentration.
- Comfort eats and is gaining weight.
- Mum is supportive but is overbearing.

- Is Jane anxious? (if not what else could it be).
- Does school have a role, if so what can be put in place?
- Does she need a CAMHS referral?

What is an Anxiety Disorder

Some children and young people experience anxiety so frequently and at such an intense level that it is termed a disorder

‘When anxiety becomes excessive and causes significant distress that results in fear and apprehension that is out of proportion to an individuals life situation or developmental stage and impairs an individuals ability to function, it is a mental health disorder’

New York Child Study Centre 2007

What Should I do ?

Anxiety can have a significant impact on educational progress because of:-

- Increased distractibility
- Poor concentration
- Fall in attendance

- Whilst there maybe many causes for anxiety in school, whatever the reason we all have a responsibility to “nip the problem in the bud”

Atkinson and Hornby 2000

Prevention

- Welcoming, safe and secure environments and this includes a proactive approach to behaviour and within schools attendance and anti bullying
- Positive peer relationships
- Use of time to explore feelings and worries
- Use of strategies such as circles of friends and peer mentoring to support children who are more vulnerable
- Being there – availability of adults to share worries
- Early intervention and interventions tailored to individual need can lead to better outcomes.

Panic Attacks

“ A panic attack is a sudden onset of intense apprehension, fear or terror. These attacks can begin suddenly and develop rapidly. This intense fear is inappropriate for the circumstances in which it is occurring”.

Kitchener & Jorm (2008)

Signs and Symptoms

- A sense that something terrible will happen, and feeling that events are unreal, fear of going crazy.
- Rapid irregular heart beat, palpitations, chest pain, shortness of breath, sensation of choking or being smothered, dizziness, sweating, nausea, numbness or tingling in fingers and toes etc, extreme tension.

What Should I do?

- If you are unsure whether child is having a panic attack, asthma attack or heart attack and the person is in extreme distress, call an ambulance.

What Should I do?

If you know it is a panic attack (it may have happened before):-

- Move the person to a quiet safe place if possible.
- In classroom it may be easier to clear the room
- Encourage slow, relaxed breathing – in for 3 seconds and out for 3 seconds

What Should I Do?

- Offer reassurance with sensitivity
‘ I can see that you a very worried’

will be more effective than,

‘Don’t be silly, there’s nothing to be frightened of’

What's not Helpful

Allowing the anxious person to avoid or walk away from the anxiety provoking environment/situation.

Still Concerned?

- Speak to your TaMHS project worker who can be contacted through your school.
- Remember they are there for all school staff and parents too.

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