

# Overcoming Anxiety: What Every Parent Needs to Know

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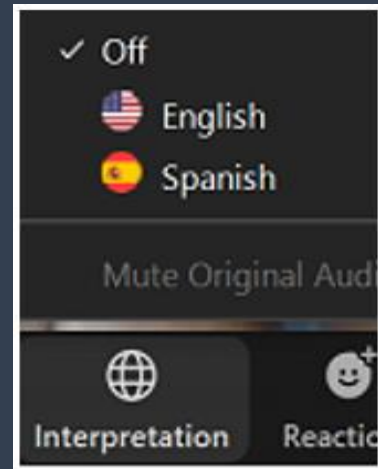
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Spring Branch ISD  
**parentU**  
A Family Learning Experience

# Interpretation Available / Interpretación Disponible



# Agenda

What is anxiety?

What is stress?

What about parental pressure?

What are the signs of anxiety?

How do we help?

When is it time for professional help?



# What is Anxiety?

A mental condition characterized by excessive apprehensiveness about **real or perceived** threats, typically leading to avoidance behaviors and often to physical symptoms such as increased heart rate and muscle tension.

# What is Stress?

A state of mental or emotional **strain** or **tension** resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances.

# What About Parental Pressure?

## When it's harmful:

- Higher rates of mental illness
- Higher risk of injuries
- Increased likelihood of cheating
- Refusing to participate
- Self-esteem problems
- Sleep deprivation

# What About Parental Pressure?

## What can parents do?

- Encourage children to do their best
- Ask yourself why your child's performance, test scores, success matters to you
- Talk to your child about their sports/assignments/performance
- Allow your child to express their emotions
- Reassure your child of your love
- Normalize mistakes

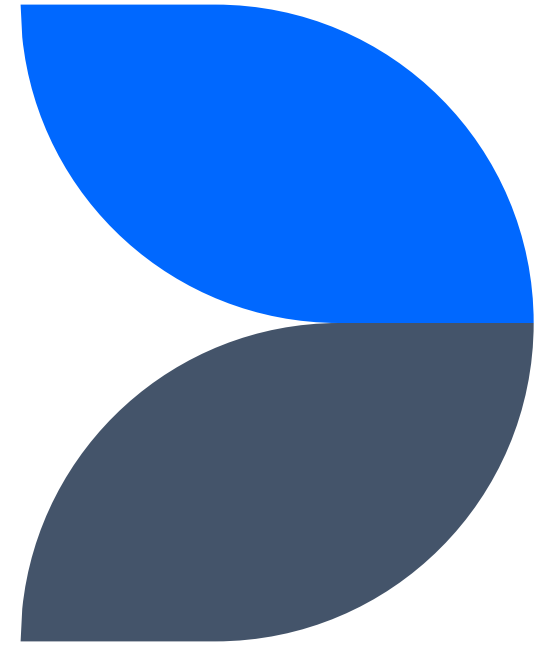
“ Constant pressure follows the idea that increasing pressure stimulates people to perform better and better, until an optimum point is reached. However, when pressure exceeds this optimum point, it has the opposite effect and performance begins to suffer. ”

Psychologists Robert Yerkes and  
John Dodson, 1908

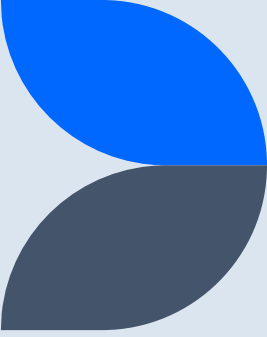


# Mind the “P”s

Signs of Anxiety



# The “P”'s of Anxiety



## **Perception**

Overestimation of the threat

## **Probability**

Anxiety always says there is a 100% chance

## **Perfectionism**

2 choices, perfect or fail

## **Pessimism**

Anxiety allows only a negative interpretation

## **Prediction**

The worst will always happen

## **Preoccupation**

Anxiety cannot tolerate uncertainty

## **Prevention**

Being anxious will prevent bad things from happening

## **Perspective**

”How I feel right now is forever.”

## **Performance**

”Your worth is found in your performance”

**Perception**  
Is it true?

**Probability**  
Assign a  
percentage

**Perfectionism**  
“good enough”  
more choices

**Pessimism**  
Less negative?  
What is accurate?

**Prediction**  
Stay in the here  
and now

**Preoccupation**  
Tolerate  
Uncertainty

**Prevention**  
How does anxiety  
impact you?

**Perspective**  
BIG picture  
1 hr, 1 day, 1 wk,  
1 month

**Performance**  
Positive  
replacement  
thoughts

“

**“When you're in a Slump,  
you're not in for much fun.**

**Un-slumping yourself  
is not easily done.”**

”

Dr. Seuss, *Oh, The Places You'll Go!*

Perception  
Overestimation of  
the threat

**FEAR**

Probability  
Anxiety always  
says there is a  
100% chance

**SHAME**

Perfectionism  
2 choices, perfect  
or fail

**SAD**

Pessimism  
Anxiety allows  
only a negative  
interpretation

Prediction  
The worst will  
always happen

Preoccupation  
Anxiety cannot  
tolerate  
uncertainty

Prevention  
Being anxious will  
prevent bad things  
from happening

Perspective  
"How I feel right  
now is forever."

**OVERWHELMED**

**INADEQUACY**  
Performance  
"Your worth is  
found in your  
performance"



# Pendulate to Regulate

FROM

TO

**FEAR**



**CURIOSITY**

**SHAME**



**PRIDE**

**SAD**



**LOVE, CARE**

**OVERWHELMED**



**SENSORY SOOTHING**

**INADEQUATE**



**STRENGTHS, GRATITUDE**



# HEALTHY EMOTIONAL REGULATION checklist



## FIRST Steps

- BREATHE! Have a go-to breathing skill.
- Notice your body. Where do you feel the emotion?
- Picture your "happy" place.
- Take a time out! Have a seat. Give yourself a minute to refocus.



## ACCEPT the emotion

- Put a name to the emotion.
- Rate the intensity of the emotion 1-10.
- Regulate, don't suppress or ignore.
- Don't judge yourself of the emotion. It just is!



## MANAGE your stress

- Get enough sleep, exercise regularly, eat a balanced diet.
- Practice Self Care: hobbies, friends, nature, pray, meditate.
- Talk to a professional.



## SOOTHE your senses

- Put a candy, mint, gum in your mouth. TASTE it!
- SMELL IT: calming essential oil, candle, air freshener, breathe it in!
- Put on a warm sweater, stand in front of the fan, release the tension from your shoulders. FEEL it!
- Put on some calming music, favorite feel good song. LISTEN!



This isn't how kids communicate.



# Healthy mental health conversation guidelines:

Talk about physical health and mental health.

Listen and reflect what you heard before you add new information.

Keep the conversation age appropriate.

Be real. Be honest. Admit if/when you are uncomfortable.

Apologize if you are at fault.

Normalize mistakes/failure.

Manage your expectations. Communicate your expectations. Be willing to adjust.

Seek help when needed.



# Conversation Starters

To best support the mental health of gifted learners, keep mental health on ongoing topic of conversation.

These conversation starters can help you find a place to begin.

| Concern             | Conversation Starter   |
|---------------------|--|
| Stress              | On a scale of 1-5, what is your stress level?<br>What do you do to decrease your stress? Feel better? Take a break?  |
| Anxiety             | What is bothering you most right now?<br>If I could grant one wish, what would you wish for?<br>What are you most afraid of today?   |
| Depression          | Do you know what is bothering you?<br>Are you feeling sad? About what?<br>Do you sometimes wish you were not alive?  |
| Suicidality         | Are you thinking of killing yourself?<br>Are you thinking of hurting yourself?<br>Have you ever hurt yourself?   |
| Bullying            | Does anyone bother you at school?<br>Has anyone hurt you at school?<br>Have you seen anyone be bullied?  |
| Social Isolation    | Do you have someone to sit with/talk to at school?<br>Who are your friends? What do you do with them?<br>What students in your class/school are most like you?<br>Who do you look forward to seeing at school? in class? |
| Low self-worth      | What do you like best about yourself?<br>What makes you special?<br>What do other people say is the best part about you?   |
| Performance Anxiety | What will happen if you are not successful?<br>What part worries you the most?<br>Who will be disappointed if you do not achieve   |

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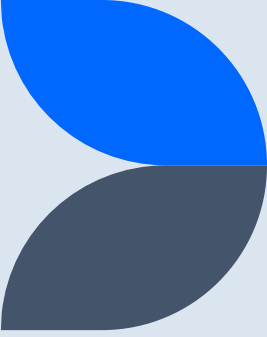
Approximately 35 percent of American children experience stress-related health problems.<sup>1</sup> According to psychologists, pediatricians and health care providers, experiencing stress in children plays a major role in increasing physical, mental and social problems.

National Center for  
Biotechnology Information  
NCBI

# When is it too much?



# 10 Reasons to Schedule a Therapy Appointment for Your Child



**Pleas for  
Help**

**Changes**

**Self-Harm  
Abuse**

**Bullying**

**Heightened  
Emotions**

**School  
Concerns**

**Not  
Functioning**

**Trauma**

**Abnormal  
Sleep  
Patterns**

**Parental  
Instinct**

# Summary

<https://psychcentral.com/lib/parental-pressure-and-kids-mental-health>

<https://www.mindtools.com/asq0vw2/coping-under-pressure>

<https://www.verywellfamily.com/the-dangers-of-putting-too-much-pressure-on-kids-1094823#:~:text=Kids%20who%20feel%20like%20they,Higher%20risk%20of%20injuries.>

<https://www.verywellmind.com/dsm-5-criteria-for-generalized-anxiety-disorder-1393147>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4166684/#:~:text=Approximately%2035%20percent%20of%20American%20children%20experience%20stress%2Drelated%20health%20problems.&text=According%20to%20many%20psychologists%2C%20pediatricians,physical%2C%20mental%20and%20social%20problems.>

<https://www.healthcentral.com/article/mental-health-effects-of-covid-19-on-students>



# Thank you

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