

MENTAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER

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SPRING BRANCH ISD



ANXIETY

Anxiety is a common, yet normal emotion that is experienced by everyone at some point in their lives. Anxiety can even have some benefits when experienced within normal limits. When activated, it can act as an internal alarm system to warn us when the threat of danger is near. Anxiety can also help to increase motivation and preparedness when facing challenges or new experiences (i.e. playing competitive sports, performances, first day of school, meeting new people).

Anxiety poses a concern when symptoms become more severe, are long lasting, and interfere with an individual's daily activities.

Physical symptoms of anxiety are characterized by rapid changes in heart rate and blood pressure, shortness of breath, dizziness, headache, sweating and stomach pains, including nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

Psychological symptoms are characterized by excessive fear and worry, racing thoughts, changes in concentration, anger and irritability, nervousness, and changes in sleep.

Behavioral symptoms are characterized by distress in social settings, avoidance of tasks or situations, withdrawal and isolation, increased phobia, and increased use of harmful coping skills.



HOLIDAY GRIEF, STRESS, AND ANXIETY



COPING WITH GRIEF AND LOSS

For some, the holidays can be a nostalgic experience, filled with joy and excitement. This is a time where most families gather together, engaging in anticipatory traditions while creating memories to last a lifetime. For others, the holidays may be a somber reminder that a loved one is no longer with us or is not able to be present due to other circumstances. Here are some tips to help your child cope with grief and loss during the holidays:

- Talk with your child about their loved one(s)
- Listen and answer any questions or concerns that may arise
- Create items of memorabilia and share favorite memorable traditions to honor loved ones
- Incorporate new traditions and experiences to commemorate loved ones
- Offer opportunities for children to express themselves during this time
- Engage in acts of service and kindness to help support others

Speak concretely with younger students. Avoid generic or oversimplified terms.



COMBATING HOLIDAY STRESS & ANXIETY

Preparing for the holidays can be stressful and increase symptoms of anxiety. To reduce anxiety and build resilience for yourself and your child, try the following:

- Plan ahead
- Be flexible
- Maintain routines
- Set realistic expectations for you and your family
- Prioritize and communicate needs
- Schedule time for breaks, rest and relaxation
- Set boundaries when needed
- Be aware of signs of anxiety and stress

Other helpful coping tips to enjoy this season include:

- Listening and singing along to your favorite holiday songs
- Watching your favorite holiday classics
- Enjoying holiday scented candles
- Sharing reasons to be thankful
- Drive by “Holiday Light” shows
- Cooking and baking for the holidays
- Enjoying a cup of hot tea or hot cocoa
- Decorating for the holiday season
- Taking fun holiday pictures
- Writing and sending holiday cards to nursing homes, shelters, veterans, etc.
- Spending quality time with loved ones



SEPARATION ANXIETY

As our students continue to transition back to the educational setting in a traditional sense, symptoms of anxiety have continued to increase, especially in young children. Separation anxiety is characterized by extreme fear or intense worry when there is a threat of separation from the parent, guardian, or caretaker. This can include the fear of being lost, left alone, or abandoned, excessive worry about losing a parent or loved one, and being scared to sleep alone. Below are some helpful tips when facing separation anxiety:

TIPS FOR KIDS

- Hug yourself
- Bring something from home to keep with you
- Think of a story you can tell your parents when you see them again
- Remember, sad feelings do not stay for long

TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Give your child visual reminders of when you will be back (i.e. watch, calendar with drawings/notes)
- Tell your child when you will return
- Prepare your child with any new setting prior to the day
- Set limits on your good-byes
- Remember, sad feelings do not stay for long

TIPS FOR EDUCATORS

- Plan ahead
- Consult with parent for helpful coping tools
- Provide a positive distraction
- Create a "cool down" space if needed
- Help the child feel safe and reassure them
- Connect student to a positive and consistent support on the campus (i.e. teacher, counselor, nurse)
- Be consistent
- Remember it is a process, don't give up



AFTER THE HOLIDAYS

Ways to prepare for your child's return to school

Children may have a variety of emotions when returning to school after an extended break. Some may feel anxious or even excited. However, for others, the transition back to school may be difficult and can cause challenges that have a negative impact on wellbeing and academic success. There are several ways to support your child and help make the transition back to school a little bit easier.

- **Have a routine** - Prepare for the transition in advance. You can adjust bedtimes and wakeup times the closer to the actual start date.
- **Talk about going back** - Normalize going back to school with conversations. Talk about positive experiences and things to look forward to.
- **Get organized** - Help students get prepared for school by organizing supplies and necessary items for the big day. Review coping skills and procedures.
- **Quiet time** - Limit screen time and encourage your child to read or practice a school related activity.



RESOURCES

"I Don't Want To Go To School: Helping Children Cope with Separation Anxiety" - Book by Nancy Pando

Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA)

Childmind.org

Moms.com



VISIT OUR WEBSITE

www.springbranchisd.com/mentalhealth



Have a safe and happy winter break!

FROM SBISD STUDENT SUPPORT!