

# ANXIETY

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# Presenters and Objectives

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- In this course, you will learn about anxiety from the viewpoint of your child.
  - This workshop is designed to break down anxiety so that you get a sense of what it is, why you or your student feel it, and how it happens. Provide coping strategies.





Anxiety is the body and mind's reaction to stressful, dangerous, or unfamiliar (new) situations.

Anxiety is a product of our natural "flight or fight" response to a perceived danger.



Our minds didn't make that decision, our bodies did. In a split second, we either ran from the fearful situation, or we stayed and fought.

When our brains make that split decision, we release the chemicals adrenaline ("uh -dren -uh -lin") and cortisol ("cor -ti - sall"), which give us a rush of energy and acts as a "super strength."

Today, our bodies don't need to have that level of reaction, but our bodies don't know the difference.



# The problem when we have too much anxiety...

- The problem students report because of experiencing anxiety is that they feel like anxiety is stronger than they are. They report that they feel helpless and out of control when their anxiety kicks in.

Some students report that they miss out on fun times because their anxiety is too much to handle.

When young adults feel like unhealthy patterns are taking over their life, they begin to lose enjoyment and they feel powerless.

## Why is learning about anxiety important?

- It is important to learn about anxiety because anxiety is a natural part of human life. It happens to everyone in different ways at some point. Knowing how to recognize it and handle it in a way that keeps you living the way you want to live is hugely important.
- Having to quit activities that one loves or being flooded with uncomfortable feelings because of anxiety is a sad reality for many kids.



# Anxiety vs. Anxiety Disorder

- Anxiety happens...Before a quiz or test, your body ramps up to perform. ... Before a sports event, your body ramps up to play. ... Before a performance, your body ramps up to succeed. ... When we're alone in the dark and we hear a strange noise. Our bodies are on alert and are figuring out whether to fight or flight. ... When we are facing something new, like the first day of school. Our bodies are figuring out if we are safe and if we'll be okay.





Anxiety disorder, on the other hand, is anxiety that becomes difficult for people to manage. It can make life difficult for them and keep them from doing things they love.

Anxiety disorders are different from being nervous or anxious. The word "disorder" in this situation means that things are not working properly and that there is a disturbance in the way anxiety is handled by our brains and bodies.

- The good news is that if properly handled, anxiety can be managed. The bad news is that many people with anxiety disorder do not seek help and they end up suffering needlessly.
- Occasional worry is normal. If your worry grows and becomes long -lasting, stay tuned for tips on how to manage it.
- Anxiety symptoms vary by person and can be physiological (in your body), psychological (emotional) or cognitive (in your thoughts).

Most students report feeling anxious about: Grades, Family issues, Relationships with peers, Performance in sports or competitive activities

When anxiety becomes difficult, students can be very hard on themselves. They may think it's their fault or that they need to be perfect. When this happens, many kids stop looking to themselves to feel good, and rather they look to others for approval.



When you feel anxious, your body goes on high alert, looking for possible danger and activating your fight or flight responses. As a result, anxiety comes out in physical (body) and psychological ways (thoughts/feelings).



Examples of Physical or body symptoms that occur from anxiety are tense shoulders, headaches, fast breathing, nervous, feeling nauseous, increased sweating, fatigue.



Examples of Psychological or thoughts/feelings symptoms that occur from anxiety are feeling on edge, thinking negatively about things, difficulty concentrating or completing tasks, change in appetite, sleep disturbances.



More examples of psychological or thoughts/feelings symptoms that occur from anxiety are feelings of danger/panic, fear of losing control, fear of dying, feeling upset/embarrassed about having anxiety, feeling overwhelmed.

# The Facts About Anxiety

- First, anxiety is normal - even anxiety disorder is common. 1 in 8 kids has anxiety, but some professionals think as many as 1 in 4 kids have it. Anxiety is the most common disorder in the world - you are far from alone if you have it! It does not mean that you are broken or that something is wrong with you.
- Having anxiety does not mean that you won't have a great future ahead. It means that certain things affect you in different ways and learning to manage them will make a huge difference.
- People can't tell if you have anxiety, you don't look "weird." Anxiety is a conversation in your brain that lives only in your head. In fact, most students admit that when their friends found out about their anxiety, they were surprised. They had no idea.

# The effects of anxiety can range from very small to overwhelming.

- An example: You texted a friend and they haven't replied to you. Someone without anxiety might think, "I guess they're busy" or "They'll get back to me soon."
- Someone with anxiety may overthink the situation and have thoughts such as: "Why haven't they replied to me!?" "What's wrong?" "Has something bad happened?" They may begin a thought process that takes over and becomes very upsetting.
- When people start anxious thinking, if they don't get a handle over it, it can spiral out of control.
- In the case of the friend who didn't respond to the text, the friend with anxiety lost their appetite, was unable to sleep, and felt extremely fearful that either something had happened to their friend or that the friend is upset with them
- They were so nervous (with no just cause), that they couldn't function.



Qualified people may include:

Counselor

Therapist

Doctor

Social Worker

Psychologist

- As you make your way through this workshop, if you feel like any of the descriptions of anxiety disorder fit your student, it still does not mean they have Generalized Anxiety Disorder. You need a qualified person to assess your student and decide if that is in fact the case.



# Factors that contribute to those who develop severe anxiety



# Genetics & Brain Chemistry

Students that have a family member who suffer from anxiety may have an increased chance of developing anxiety, as well.

When there is a disruption or malfunction to neurotransmitters (those chemicals that push information from one cell to the other) this may cause a person to experience anxiety.

Chemical Substances such as alcohol, caffeine, nicotine and drugs can make anxiety worse.

Some people are wired differently, and their personalities are a little more anxious than others.

# PERSONALITY

# Environment

- Social Stress
- Trauma
- Abuse
- School pressure
- Learned behavior

# **EFFECTIVE WAYS TO MANAGE ANXIETY**

# How to help control anxiety.

(Remember this is from your students' perspective) First know you are not alone. What you're feeling is totally normal, remember to tell yourself that. People who struggle with anxiety feel very similar to you. That's why talking about it is so helpful because it can validate your experience when you hear that you are not alone.

- One of the most important first steps is to ask for help. It may seem embarrassing or not worth your time to ask for help, but the results of this can bring you a lot of relief. The adrenaline and cortisol need to leave your body, the pressure can build and just talking about it can be of huge relief to many people.
- Most students report that they feel better knowing they can count on at least 3-5 people to talk to. Having a support system is really important. Growing up without support is possible but is much easier if you have a circle around you.



# Facts vs. Feelings

- Think about something you are worried about. Write it on a piece of paper or journal.
- What are some things that could happen because of your worry? What's the worst that could happen?
- On a scale of 1-10 how likely do you think it is that the worst of worries will come true?
- Take a moment to think about the facts.
  - What are the facts around your worry that prove it will likely happen?



- If your worry does not happen, what do you think would happen instead?
- If your worry came true, to the worst level, what do you think would happen? Would you be able to handle it? Would life be able to move forward in the same direction?

Instead of worrying about what COULD happen, it is important that people focus on what WILL happen.



# Self-Talk

- Challenge the negative thought.



# Imagery

- Imagine doing the activity and completing the activity well.



- Muscle Relaxation
- Exercise
- Deep breathing
- Aromatherapy
- Consider lifestyle changes such as drinking non caffeinated beverages.

- Therapy
- Build resiliency skills
  - Build strong relationships and social connections
  - Share your feelings with others
- Give back to others
- Build empathy
- Be goal oriented to shift your focus on solving problems instead of dwelling on them.
- Be optimistic – look for good outcomes

Maintain a compassionate  
and quiet tone of voice

Talk to them alone

Do not compare your teen to  
their siblings or peers.

Ask a lot of questions

Let THEM figure out their  
solutions. It will bring them  
even more confidence and  
help them believe that they  
CAN do it.



# One more resource...

[Mental Health - Charles County Public Schools \(ccboe.com\)](http://ccboe.com)



# Contact Information

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Your feedback is important to us. Please use the QR code to complete a survey or go to <https://forms.office.com/r/tBmte1Y7gv>