

Worry vs. Anxiety

People often use the terms *worry* and *anxiety* interchangeably. But, how we *experience* them can be different.





Worry

vs.

Anxiety

Worry about a specific threat/issue ie - performing well on a test.

Worry often triggers problem solving, strategies, or planning.

Worry is uncomfortable and mostly thought based.

When strategies are used, worry diminishes. It is a temporary state.

Managing worry is a life skill. Everyone experiences worry!

Anxiety is vague, more general, and often unattached to a “real” threat.

Anxiety can feel like a hamster on a wheel; problem solving becomes more difficult.

Anxiety has more intense feelings and is intrusive. It is often felt in the body - stomach aches, headaches, etc.

Less control to ease the anxious feelings. Lingers over time and/or focus of anxiety jumps topic/topic.



Behaviors that point to anxiety:

Distress seems excessive and out of proportion to the situation.

Frequent crying, anger, frustration, embarrassment, and physical complaints (headaches, stomach aches).

Repetitive questions or requests for reassurance.

Persistent “what If” concerns.

Difficulty responding to logical problem solving.

Persistent anticipatory concerns that lasts hours, days, or longer.



Anxious behaviors, continued:

Sleep disturbance, nightmares, refusal to sleep alone.

Perfectionism - unrealistic standards and expectation. Feelings of inadequacy.

Excessive concern about being “good” and pleasing others.

Avoidance of, or refusal to participate in, activities or school.

Disruptions to family relationships and friendships.



What can you do to help:

Talk with your child...ask about what worries them and validate their feelings.

Use open ended questions; (i.e.) What's worrying you at the moment? What makes you feel afraid?

Listen without interruption. Just listening can have positive effects.

Get your child moving - talking while taking a walk can be a great way to reduce stress (through exercise) while also giving a safe space to talk about feelings.

Build in positive and fun family/friend activities that your child enjoys.

Brainstorm strategies together that will help solve problems that contribute to the worry.



What to do.....

Reflect on your own temperament and coping style.

Model relaxation, time management, and problem -solving.

Tap into your child's knowledge, confidence, creativity, and humor.

Breathe deep <https://youtu.be/e2j7S8dy8j0>

Be mindful <https://youtu.be/rTvzhZxeMS4>

and Stay calm!

When you model calm, your child will feel and mirror that calm.

<https://youtu.be/m2sVjjCsA08>



What NOT to do:

Avoid the stressor:

Don't keep your child home from school or skip an activity.

Interrupt your child's sharing with quick solutions.

Suggest they "Just don't think about it".

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/special-matters/201904/the-dos-and-don-ts-parenting-anxious-teen>



Resources

Polson 203-245-6480

Polson School Counselors:

6th grade - Rachel Kilian

7th grade - Maryssa Romano

8th grade - Charlene Doane

Social Worker - Missy Hartmann

Psychologist - Ivana Sain

MYFS therapist - Taylor Pisano

Madison Youth and Family
Services (MYFS)

203-245-
5645

[https://www.madisonct.org/812/
Youth-Family-Services](https://www.madisonct.org/812/Youth-Family-Services)

Your child's pediatrician



Additional resources

Video from Eli Lebowitz, Ph.D; Director of Yale Child Study Center's Anxiety Clinic and founder of the SPACE (Supportive Parenting for Anxious Childhood Emotions) Program

<https://medicine.yale.edu/news-article/new-documentary-highlights-pioneering-anxiety-treatment-at-yale-child-study-center/>

Online newsletters - Newport Academy and Child Mind Institute

Coping Skills for Kids Workbook - Janine Halloran

The Worry Workbook - Imogen Harrison

The CBT Toolbox - Jeff Rigenbach

What To Do When You Worry Too Much Workbook- Dawn Huebner