

#SameHere Schools Summary of

Anxiety

Recognizing the Signs &
Building Coping Skills for Students
Kindergarten Through 8th Grade

Everyone's emotions exist on a scale. There are many things that can impact one's 'scale' in addition to adverse childhood experiences. 5 in 5 people experience some form of stress or worry.


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SCALE

Thriving

Gliding

Surviving

Fluctuating

Struggling

Sinking



All Kids Experience Some Form of Anxiety

Certain fears and concerns are typical for specific age groups. For example, young children (under the age of 7) are often afraid of loud noises, strangers, the dark, and imaginary figures.

Many of these specific fears and worries tend to disappear as children get older and develop more mastery of their feelings. However, some children may have some difficulties managing their emotions, especially during times of chronic stress and tension. These children could benefit from sharing their feelings and learning techniques to help them cope with their emotions during periods of stress.

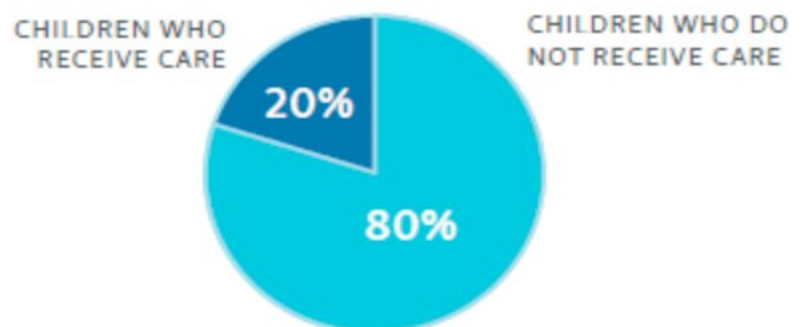
There is also the possibility that some fears, worries and phobias may persist over time and begin to interfere with a child's daily functioning (they may withdraw from certain activities, feel like they can't relax and/or have difficulty concentrating). In these circumstances parents/teachers may want to consider discussing the situation with school behavioral health staff for further evaluation and assistance.

There are also some children that may not fully recognize when their anxiety has grown in intensity and how it is interfering with their lives. It may be difficult for them to realize that something is 'wrong'. This is where knowing the student's behaviors, moods and feelings is especially important and learning ways to engage and support them becomes essential for their mental well-being.

In the past 10 years, there has been increasing recognition of anxiety in young people by health care providers, including a 17% increase in diagnosable **anxiety disorders**.

Unfortunately, symptoms of anxiety may not be always be recognized nor approached by adults. Sometimes symptoms and behaviors may even be minimized or ignored. Research has shown that as little as 1% of youth with anxiety disorders seek/receive treatment in the year that symptoms may have begun.

It is commonly believed that anxiety affects 30% of children and adolescents, yet up to 80% may never receive professional support.



Anxious Behavior

It's perfectly okay when kids . . .

- worry about an upcoming test
- keep an eye out for bees or dogs
- are concerned about if other kids like them

It's a potential **red flag** when they . . .

- vomit, lose sleep, or cry frequently from stress
- are inattentive and restless regularly
- participate in disruptive behavior
- have trouble answering questions in class
- make frequent trips to the nurse
- avoid socializing with other students



Things Children Say When Anxious

- Please note that some of these behaviors may be indicators of other mental health issues and should be approached as a general source of concern
- The chart below may be helpful in recognizing additional thoughts and behaviors

<u>Signs of Anxiety</u>		
Thinking/Learning	Behavioral	Physical
Concentration Problems	Fidgeting	Stomach Discomfort
Memory Issues	Task Avoidance	Rapid Heart Rate
Attention Problems	Rapid Speech	Flushing of the Skin
Problem-Solving Difficulties	Irritability	Perspiration
Focus on Small Details	Perfectionism	Headaches
Perseveration	Lack of Participation	Muscle Tension

Potential Causes of Anxiety & Risk Factors

Biological Factors & Brain Chemistry

A child who has a family member with an anxiety disorder is potentially more at risk to develop one as well. Genes help direct the way neurotransmitters, specific chemicals in the brain, work. If specific neurotransmitters are in short supply, or not working well, it can cause anxiety.

Environmental Factors

Events that happen in a child's life can be stressful and difficult to cope with. Loss of routine, serious illness, death of a loved one, divorce, violence, and/or abuse can create stressors and feelings of anxiety. The advent of COVID-19 has disrupted many students' home, school and social lives, and thus we expect to see anxious feelings.

Familial Factors & Learned Behaviors

Growing up in a family where others are fearful or anxious also can "teach" a child to be worried. Many behaviors and feelings are socially learned/projected.

Website Resources for Parents

Anxiety Disorder In Children

This website provides information and resources to parents of children suffering from anxiety.

Resources for Parents of Children with Anxiety

Websites, Books and other resources for parents

Anxiety and Depression Association of America

Things you can do at home to help your child manage their anxiety disorder

Child Mind Institute

An index of resources pertaining to anxiety in school age children

Mindfulness Exercises for Children and Teens

Website Resources for Teachers

Anxiety Disorder & COVID

Resources and Information to help children cope with changes resulting from COVID-19

UCLA Center for Child Anxiety

Comprehensive website that provides insight as to what anxiety looks like in children and ways to help children cope

Classroom Accommodations for Anxiety

List of suggested accommodations to be made within a classroom setting to better assist children suffering from anxiety

International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education

Provides clinical basis for teachers to recognize student anxiety, as well as ways to best help

Back to School Anxiety During COVID

This is an article specifically detailing what educators can do to best address student anxiety as it relates to returning to school during COVID

Child Mind Institute

An index of resources pertaining to anxiety in school age children

How Anxiety Leads to Disruptive Behavior

Details how children who may seem purely oppositional, are really suffering from anxiety

UC Davis LIVE: Coronavirus Edition

A video providing insight on best practices for educators when facing student anxiety during COVID



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THE GLOBAL MENTAL HEALTH MOVEMENT

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SCHOOLS