

Plumpton High School

Supporting Young People with Anxiety



**Parent Interest Group
Week 7, Term 3, 2016
30 August**



What is Anxiety

Anxiety is more than just feeling stressed or worried.

Anxious feelings are a normal reaction to a situation where a person feels under pressure – for example, meeting work deadlines, sitting exams or speaking in front of a group of people.

However, for some people these anxious feelings happen for no apparent reason or continue after the stressful event has passed.

For a person experiencing anxiety, anxious feelings cannot be brought under control easily.

Anxiety can be a serious condition that makes it hard for a person to cope with daily life.



What is Anxiety

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental health problem experienced by young Australians.

Anxiety disorders are estimated to affect 1 in 5 females aged 16-24 years, and nearly 1 in 10 males of the same age.

The most common anxiety disorders reported by young Australians are social anxiety disorder (5.4%) and post-traumatic stress disorder (7.7%).



What is Anxiety

Overall, about half of people with anxiety disorders experience their first symptoms by the age of 11 years, which is significantly younger than for most other mental health problems.

However, the typical age of onset varies between the different types of anxiety disorders: specific phobia and separation anxiety disorder often occur at a younger age than panic disorder, generalised anxiety disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder.



What is Anxiety

Anxiety disorders in young people rarely occur in isolation, and studies have found associations with other mental disorders, with depression in particular having high comorbidity.

Anxiety disorders during adolescence are strong predictors of the subsequent onset and persistence of other mental and substance use disorders, and is associated with considerable burden of disease.

These include drug and alcohol misuse, and reduced educational and occupational attainment.



What is Anxiety

There are many types of anxiety. While the symptoms for each type are different, some general signs and symptoms include:

- feeling very worried or anxious most of the time
- finding it difficult to calm down
- feeling overwhelmed or frightened by sudden feelings of intense panic/anxiety
- experiencing recurring thoughts that cause anxiety, but may seem silly to others
- avoiding situations or things which
- cause anxiety (e.g. social events or crowded places)
- experiencing ongoing difficulties
- (e.g. nightmares/fashbacks) after atraumatic event.



So what are the Questions?

Knowing that anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness among children and young people:

- ✓ What can we do to better support those with the condition?
- ✓ Should children be taught about anxiety?
- ✓ Find out strategies that can help children cope with anxiety?
- ✓ What parents can do and where to find further resources and support.



The Mental Health & Wellbeing of Young People



Supporting Children with Anxiety

Professor Jennie Hudson

www.generationnext.com.au

0:02 / 3:51



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sM7dEM9VGsA>



How to help your child?

Early detection and treatment of anxiety disorders can reduce their adverse effects.

Early intervention is particularly important as these disorders often become apparent at critical stages of development in childhood, adolescence and early adulthood.

Seek professional medical support and advice for interventions



How to help your child?

The management plan developed for a young person with anxiety will be dependent upon a range of factors including:

- The severity of symptoms
- Health services available, both in terms of actual services to refer to and the skills and experiences of workers involved
- Other presenting health issues
- Support network available, including family and friends, or school supports
- The young persons' preference for a particular treatment approach



How to help your child?

Self-help strategies can be really powerful tools in coping with anxiety and improving your daily life:

- **Track your thoughts:** Write them down or use a phone app like [MindShift](#), to figure out which thoughts are making you anxious.
- **Challenge your thinking:** Ask yourself how realistic your anxiety-causing thoughts really are, by weighing up the evidence for and against. What would you say to a friend who was having these thoughts?
- **Avoid avoidance:** By always dodging situations that make you anxious, you never get a chance to see that they might not be that bad. Instead, let yourself experience these feared situations, a little bit at a time.
- **Be mindful:** [Mindfulness](#) practice helps you pay attention to the present moment, and not get caught up in thoughts about the past or worry about the future.



How to help your child?

- **Problem-solve:** Not every problem can be solved, but there's usually [something you can do](#). Work out your goals, brainstorm possible solutions, and put these into practice.
- **Go easy on alcohol and drugs:** If you're using alcohol and drugs to cope, you could actually make your symptoms worse, both while you're using them, and in the long run.
- **Lifestyle matters:** [Eating well](#) can make a difference to your energy levels, and [exercise](#) is a natural anxiety buster. Sleep also has a huge effect on physical and emotional health.
- **Time-out:** Try to make sure you do at least one thing you enjoy each day. Here's some tips on [how to relax](#). Go for a walk outside, spend some time with a pet, learn to do something new.
- **Talk to someone you trust:** Talking to a friend or family member is a great for expressing how you feel, and also to get an outsider's perspective on what's going on.
- **Talk to someone you trust at school:** Speak to the school counsellor, your Positive Psychology Teacher, a trusted teacher, head teacher, deputy principal or the principal.



How to help your child?

Need help?

Kids Helpline

Age: 5-25

To talk to someone about anything that's going on in your life. Kids Helpline has phone counselling 24/7

1800 55 1800

Online text chat

www.kidshelp.com.au

eheadspace

Age: 12-25

To talk to someone and get advice about tough issues

1800 650 890

www.eheadspace.org.au

Get SMS Tips

ReachOut.com provides daily SMS tips on handling depression.

1800 234 236



How to help your child?

Cognitive behavioural therapy is the most researched treatment for anxiety in young people, and CBT in various formats (e.g. individual, group, with family involvement, or computerized) have been found to reduce symptoms of anxiety, PTSD, and OCD in this age group (2-5).

Other psychological therapies including exposure-based, psychodynamic, narrative, supportive counselling, and eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR) have also shown to be effective in reducing symptoms of anxiety and PTSD in children and adolescents



How to help your child?

Medication treatments can be effective in reducing the core symptoms of anxiety disorders in children and adolescents (most trials assessed the use of SSRIs (a class of antidepressants) in treating paediatric OCD).

However, their use in young people is cautioned given the concerns about increased risk of suicidal ideation and behaviour in children and adolescents using SSRIs.



References

1. Beyond Blue, Understanding Anxiety
<http://resources.beyondblue.org.au/prism/file?token=BL/0384>
2. Professor Jennie Hudson, Supporting Children with Anxiety,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sM7dEM9VGsA>
3. Headspace, Understanding Anxiety – for Health Professionals
<https://headspace.org.au/health-professionals/understanding-anxiety-for-health-professionals/>