

COPING WITH ANXIETY

“Do what you can, with what you’ve got, where you are.”

- Theodore Roosevelt

What is Anxiety?

If you asked five people what anxiety was, they may each give a different definition based on their personal experiences or experiences they have heard from others. You see, anxiety manifests differently for everyone. Some people have intrusive thoughts, some have somatic symptoms, some feel they can not breathe or forget where they are/what they are doing, some have different symptoms, and some have all of the above. Generally speaking, anxiety is a feeling that may be worry, nervousness, unease, and is typically related to an imminent event or something that has an uncertain outcome to the individual. It is important to note that just because someone has some instances of anxiety does not mean they have an anxiety disorder.

What do the Statistics Say?

According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America(see link below for website information)...

- Anxiety is one of the most common mental health disorders in the United States
- Anxiety is highly treatable yet not many individuals seek treatment
- People with anxiety are 3-5x's more likely to seek medical care than those who do not have anxiety

According to the National Institute of Health...

- 1 in 3 adolescents ages 13-18 will experience an anxiety disorder

What Can Cause Anxiety in Children and Adolescents?

There are multiple different areas that can impact levels of anxiety in a child/adolescent. Children/adolescents can sometimes see the world as a scary/threatening place (from experiences growing up, hearing about world events, reading/watching news, social media). Peer pressure, social media, and a high expectation to succeed impact all, especially adolescents. It is important to remember that the brain is not fully developed until later on in life, so with all this going on it can be confusing. Other areas that impact anxiety include puberty (change in hormones), substance use, depression, stressors related to school, family life, family history, and extracurricular activities. The time around the holidays can also be triggering in relation to celebrations and for some, grief.

How Can I Help?

The first way you can assist in helping a child/adolescent with potential anxiety is identifying the signs. Signs may include: recurring worries and fears, changes in behavior (such as irritability), avoiding activities that they used to enjoy, dropping grades/school avoidance, trouble sleeping,

risky behaviors/substance use, and somatic symptoms (physical pains or complaints). Addressing these areas with children can show that you are aware, and you care about them and want to make things a bit more manageable. Never tell a child you can make the anxiety just go away. Talking with them about their stressors also helps especially if they can't always identify them on their own. Being mindful of expectations put on them is huge. Many adolescents may be perfectionists or struggle with self image and feel they need to "live up" to expectations put on them either on purpose or in their eyes. Lastly, social media use should be monitored. Encourage breaks in usage of things such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok.

Should you identify that anxiety impacts a child/adolescent to the point where it is negatively impacting them in more than one setting (such as home, school, work, sports), please reach out to your child's primary care physician to discuss your observations. They may refer you to a psychiatrist or agency that has a therapist who can assist in building the coping skills needed to build a coping skills toolbox for anxiety.

How Can We Help?

At CVCS, our school's social workers work with children every day who have stressors and worries that cause anxiety. We can see students on a formal or informal basis to address these areas that impact them in school. Our school counselors and school psychologists have general knowledge of anxiety and coping skills that can be implemented in school to assist with symptoms as well. Please reach out to us if we can be of assistance in any way. Many teachers also can relate to children and can provide coping strategies for them in the classroom as well.

Where Can I Find More Information?

[Facts and Statistics](#)

[Harvard Health: Anxiety in Children](#)

[TED Talk: Anne Marie Albano: How to raise kids who can overcome anxiety](#)

[Child Mind Institute: How Anxiety Affects Teenagers](#)

[ADAA: How to Identify Anxiety in Adolescents and to Talk to Them About It](#)

[Kids Health For Teens: Anxiety Disorders](#)

Try These Activities...

[U of M: 3 Easy Anxiety Exercise Reliefs you can try Anywhere](#)

[15 Stress Reducing Exercises That you can do at Home](#)

[Box Breathing Exercise](#)

[4-7 -8 Breathing for Kids](#)

[What is Being Present? Mindfulness for Kids](#)

[20 Minute Yoga for Anxiety: Yoga with Adriene](#)

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