

Student Mental Wellness: Addressing School Stress, Anxiety and Depression



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School Stress



Common Sources

- * Virtual School
- * Moving to a new school
- * Starting new classes
- * Changes in routine
- * Extracurricular activities
- * Homework
- * Exams
- * Deadlines
- * Poor organization
- * Poor time management
- * Procrastination

Other Causes of School Stress

- * Social pressure
- * Social isolation
- * Traumatic life events
- * Drug use
- * Increased academic rigor
- * More responsibility
- * Uncertainty about the future
- * Fear of failure
- * College

Remember the Basics

- * A healthy diet
- * Sleep
- * Exercise

Helping Your Child with School Stress

- * Notice out loud
- * Listen to your child
- * Put a label on it
- * Help your child think of things to do
- * Listen and move on
- * Limit stress where possible
- * Just be there
- * Be patient

When More Help is Needed

- * Contact teachers directly to address specific concerns
- * Engage your child's school counselor
- * Additional resources available through Arlington Tiered System of Support

Anxiety and Depression: The what, how, and you

Child & Family Services
Arlington County Department of Human Services

Anxiety and Depression: When to be concerned

When symptoms last for a short period of time, it may be a passing case of “the blues” or “stress”. But if they last for more than two weeks and interfere with regular daily activities and family and school life, you or the person you are concerned about may have an anxiety or depressive disorder.

Anxiety

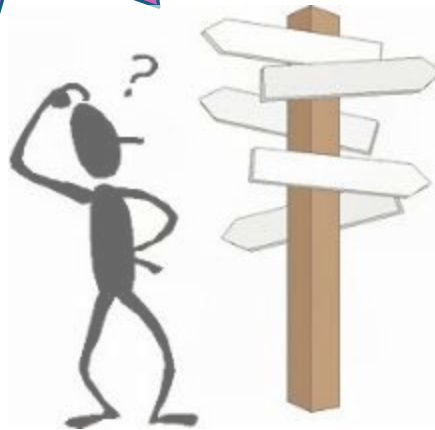
Anxiety?

- * Anxiety is a normal reaction to stress and can actually be beneficial in some situations.
- * For some people, however, anxiety can become excessive. While the person suffering may realize their anxiety is too much, they may also have difficulty controlling it and it may negatively affect their day-to-day living.
- * There are a wide variety of anxiety disorders, and they are among the most common mental disorders experienced by Americans.

What's the Difference?

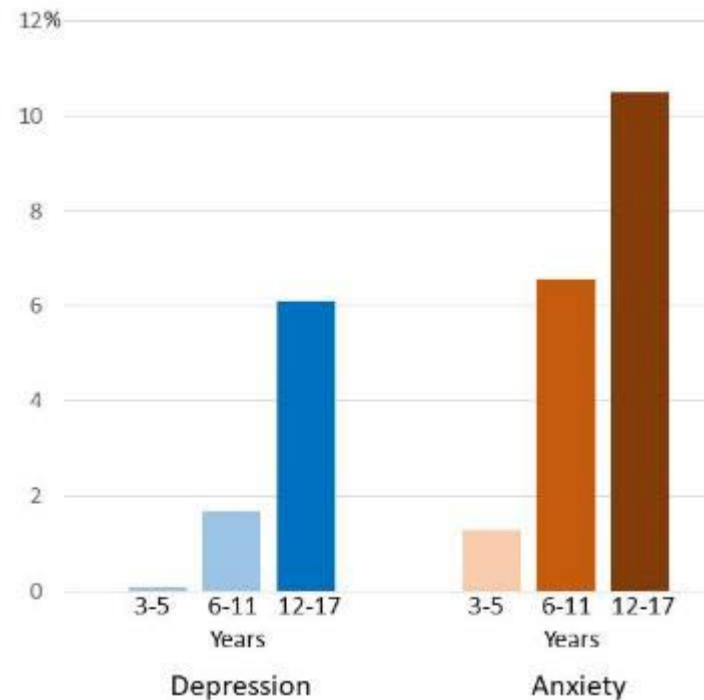
Anxiety is defined by persistent, excessive worries that don't go away even in the absence of a stressor

Stress is typically caused by an external trigger.

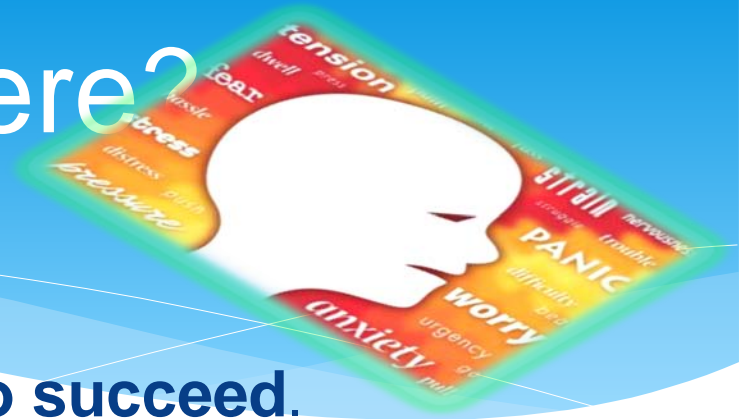


Anxiety: Who is at risk?

- * NIH reports nearly 1 in 3 of all adolescents ages 13 to 18 will experience an anxiety disorder.
- * 8% of all children and adolescents are diagnosed with an Anxiety Disorder
- * Over the past 10 years, there has been a 17% increase in anxiety disorder diagnosis of children by health care providers
- * Anxiety affects 30% of children and adolescents, yet 80% **never** get help.



How Did We Get Here?



- * **High expectations and pressure to succeed.**

- * Between standardized testing and a culture of achievement, today's youth can feel pressure to succeed in ways previous generations did not. A survey done every year by Higher Education Research asks incoming college freshmen if they feel overwhelmed by all they have to do. In 2016, 41% of students said "yes" compared with 28% in 2000 and 18% in 1985.

- * **A world that feels scary and threatening.**

- * Mass shootings in schools and in public, racial/social justice movements, police brutality, COVID, insurrection, economic hardship

- * **Social media**

- * Today's youth are tied to several formats of social media. Their self-esteem—and worldview —becomes connected to responses to social media posts. It's hard for them not to compare their life and social connections to what they see others posting on social media. An increase in misinformation being circulated on social forums targeting audiences.

Anxiety Disorders

- * Each anxiety disorder has different symptoms, but all the symptoms cluster around excessive, irrational fear and dread.
- * Types of disorders for youth and adults:
 - * panic disorder
 - * obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)
 - * post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
 - * social phobia (or social anxiety disorder)
 - * specific phobias
 - * generalized anxiety disorder (GAD)
 - * separation anxiety *Mainly youth



Anxiety: Physical Symptoms



- * Pounding or racing heart and shortness of breath
- * Upset stomach
- * Sweating, tremors and twitches
- * Headaches, fatigue and insomnia
- * Upset stomach, frequent urination or diarrhea
- * Having an increased heart rate
- * Breathing rapidly (hyperventilation)
- * Sweating
- * Trembling
- * Feeling weak or tired

Depression

Depression: What is it?

Everyone feels down or sad sometimes, but these feelings usually pass after a few days. When you have depression, you have trouble with daily life for weeks at a time. Depression is a serious illness that needs treatment. If left untreated, depression can lead to suicide.

Depression: Who is at risk?



- * 9.7% of youth (over 2.3 million youth) coped with severe major depression in last year
- * Percentage of youth this past year with Depression who did not receive treatment was 59.6% (over 1.9 million)
- * Data taken from Mental Health America
- *

Depression: Symptoms

- * Different people have different symptoms. Some symptoms of depression include:
 - * Feeling sad or "empty"
 - * Feeling hopeless, irritable, anxious, or guilty
 - * Loss of interest in favorite activities
 - * Feeling very tired
 - * Not being able to concentrate or remember details
 - * Not being able to sleep, or sleeping too much
 - * Overeating, or not wanting to eat at all
 - * Thoughts of suicide, suicide attempts
 - * Aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems.

Depression: Youth Symptoms

- * Depressed or irritable mood
- * Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- * Change in grades,
- * Getting into trouble at school
- * Refusing to go to school
- * Change in eating habits
- * Feeling angry or irritable
- * Mood swings
- * Feeling worthless or restless
- * Frequent sadness or crying
- * Withdrawal from friends & activities
- * Loss of energy
- * Low self-esteem
- * Thoughts of death or suicide



What causes depression?



- * Several factors, or a *combination of factors* (doesn't need to be a specific identifiable trigger), may contribute to depression.
- * **Genes**—people with a family history of depression may be more likely to develop it than those whose families do not have the illness. Older adults who had depression when they were younger are more at risk for developing depression in late life than those who did not have the illness earlier in life.
- * **Brain chemistry**—people with depression may have different brain chemistry than those without the illness.
- * **Stress**—loss of a loved one, trauma, a difficult relationship, or any stressful situation may trigger depression.

Ways to cope,
Ways to help

Ways to cope with anxiety & depression



- * Take care of yourself.
- * Eat healthy, well-balanced meals
- * Exercise on a regular basis
- * Get plenty of sleep
- * Give yourself a break if you feel stressed out
- * Talk to others. Share your problems and how you are feeling and coping with a parent, friend, counselor, doctor, or pastor.
- * Avoid drugs and alcohol. Drugs and alcohol may seem to help with the stress. In the long run, they create additional problems and increase the stress you are already feeling.
- * Take a break. If your stress is caused by a national or local event, take breaks from listening to the news stories, which can increase your stress.
- * **Recognize when you need more help. If problems continue or you are thinking about suicide, talk to a psychologist, social worker, or professional counselor.**

Helping Youth

- * **Maintain a normal routine.**

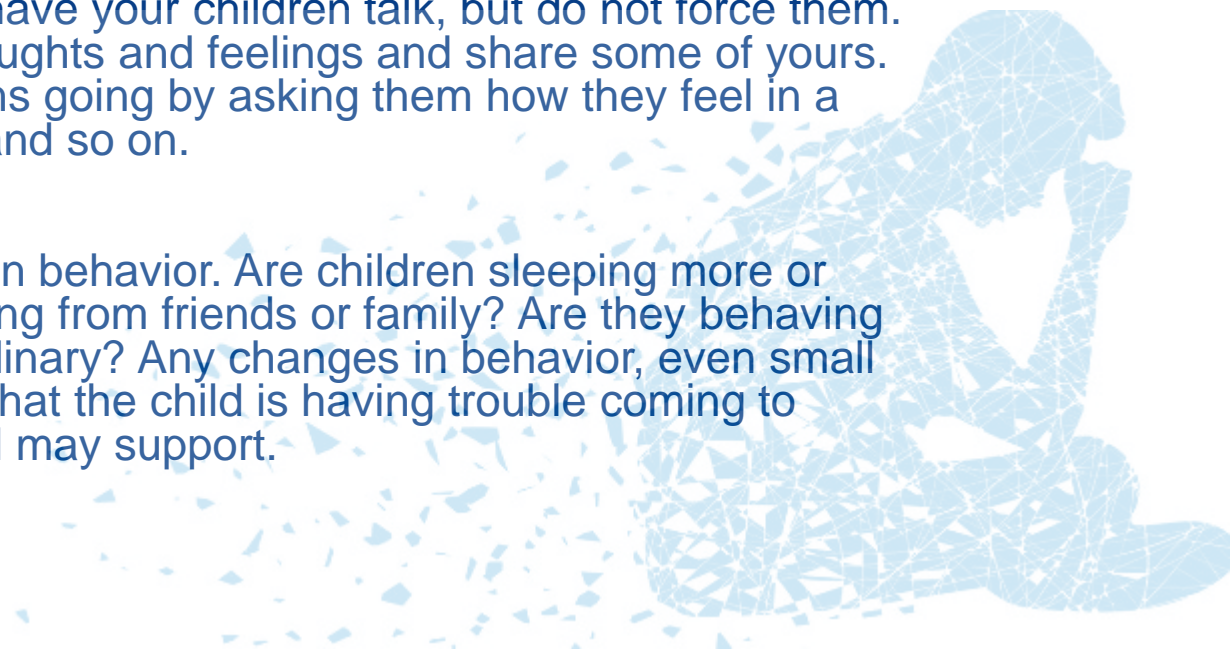
- * Helping children wake up, go to sleep, and eat meals at regular times provide them a sense of stability. Going to school and participating in typical after-school activities also provide stability and extra support.

- * **Talk, listen, and encourage expression**

- * Create opportunities to have your children talk, but do not force them. Listen to your child's thoughts and feelings and share some of yours. Keep these conversations going by asking them how they feel in a week, then in a month, and so on.

- * **Watch and listen**

- * Be alert for any change in behavior. Are children sleeping more or less? Are they withdrawing from friends or family? Are they behaving in any way out of the ordinary? Any changes in behavior, even small changes, may be signs that the child is having trouble coming to terms with the event and may support.



Helping Youth Continued

* Reassure

- * Stressful events can challenge a child's sense of physical and emotional safety and security. Take opportunities to reassure your child about his or her safety and well-being and discuss ways that you, the school, and the community are taking steps to keep them safe.

* Connect with others

- * Make an on-going effort to talk to other parents and your child's teachers about concerns and ways to help your child cope. You do not have to deal with problems alone-it is often helpful for parents, schools, and health professionals to work together to support and ensuring the well-being of all children in stressful times.

Resources

- * Local

- * Arlington Emergency Mental Health Services: 703-228-5160
- * Children's Mental Health: 703-228-1560
- * CR2 844-627-4747

- * National

- * National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (1-888-628-9454 for Spanish-speaking callers)
- * Youth Mental Health Line: 1-888-568-1112
- * Child-Help USA: 1-800-422-4453 (24 hour toll free) Coping With Stress

References

- * National Institute of Mental Health
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 - * <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/generalized-anxiety-disorder-gad/index.shtml>
- * Center for Disease Control
 - * http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pub/coping_with_stress_tips.html
- * Anxiety and Depression Association of America
 - * <http://www.adaa.org/living-with-anxiety/children>
- * Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
 - * http://www.dbsalliance.org/site/PageServer?pagename=education_statistics_depression
- * Nami
 - * http://www2.nami.org/Content/ContentGroups/HelpLine1/Anxiety_Disorders_in_Children_and_Adolescents.htm
- * Child Mind Institute
 - * <https://childmind.org/our-impact/childrens-mental-health-report/2018report/>

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- * Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital
 - * <https://www.hopkinsallchildrens.org/patients-families/health-library/healthdocnew/helping-kids-cope-with-stress?id=2577>