



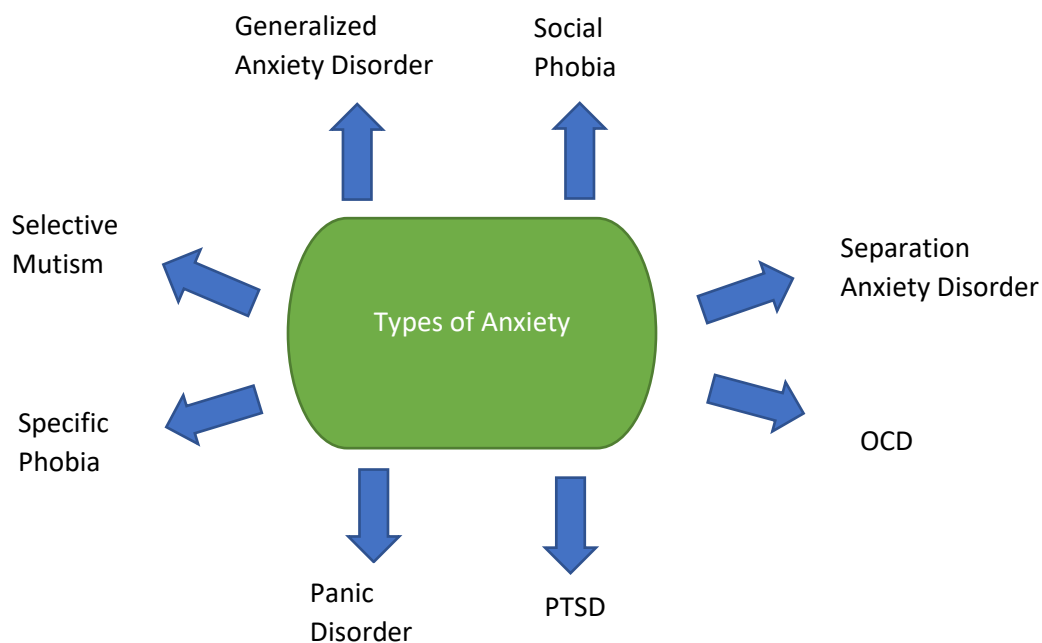
BEHAVIORAL PEDIATRICS resource center

Overview on Anxiety

Anxiety impacts both learning and behavior in children. Anxiety can look like fear, panic, hyperactivity, inattention or even illness. Paying attention is difficult for a student who is panicking on the inside. If a child has an anxiety disorder, they can be overcome with fear and worry, and it could have overall effects on the child's behavior, mood, sleep and eating (KidsHealth, 2018). All children will experience some anxiety as they grow up. It is developmentally appropriate for them to experience intense stress when separated from a person they are close to from the age of 8 months up into preschool years (AACAP, 2017). Anxiety is not natural and needs additional help when: the child's fear and worry aren't seeming to go away with time, the anxiety is only worsening with time, the child is no longer able to do normal tasks that are age appropriate, the anxiety starts affecting eating, sleeping and other tasks that are normal for a child their age (Smarter Parenting, 2017).

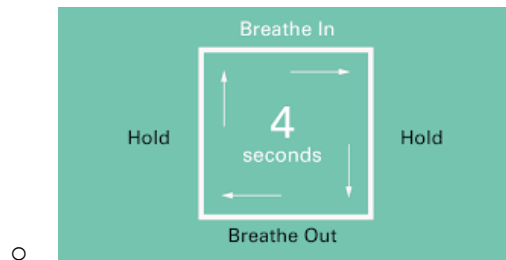
Common Symptoms

- Frequent worrying
- Trouble breathing
- Feelings of dizziness
- Sweating
- Accelerated heartrate
- Headache
- Feelings of nervousness and being afraid
- Hands or feet going numb or tingling
- Feeling weak
- Stomachache
- Unorganized thoughts



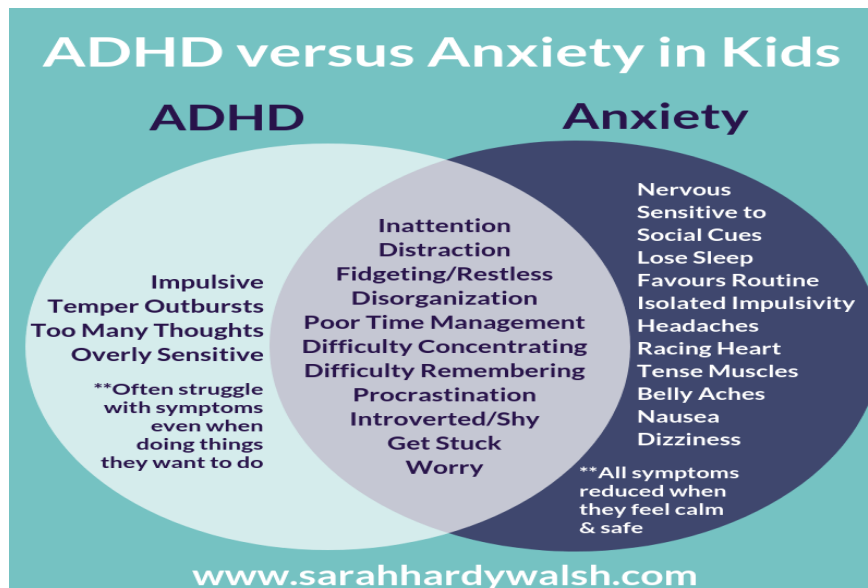
Classroom Tips for Anxious Children

- If you can tell a child is becoming overly anxious, you can have the whole class do a couple breathing exercises. Taking 5 deep breaths while tracing your fingers up while inhaling and down while exhaling is an easy technique with a great visual.
- Letting the child go outside for a few minutes to get some air can calm an overactive worrier.
- Having students keep a daily gratitude journal can help them from being overwhelmed by negative emotions that feed their anxiety. Encourage them to reread their entries when they are feeling anxious.
- If you see a child struggling, you could try sharing a story about managing anxiety with the whole class. Some children are more receptive when they are not singled out and the whole class is getting the information.
- Understand that a child with anxiety may need accommodations because they may freeze up during tests, especially if they are timed. Extended time and practice tests may help with this.
- Collaborate with parents and healthcare providers if you think a student would benefit from a 504 plan for anxiety.



Common Signs of Anxiety May Include

- Agitation / Crying
- Restlessness
- Not being able to focus
- Physical symptoms like headaches or stomachaches
- Avoidance (like not wanting to go to school or avoiding social situations)
- Meltdowns (while getting ready before school or after school before homework)
- Difficulties transitioning between tasks
- Having a hard time falling asleep
- Fearing being alone or overly worrying about everyday things
- Picking at skin
- Nail biting
- Being overly critical of themselves
- Rechecking over things to make sure something is locked, or something is in “the right place”
- Difficulty participating with their class or peers
- Freezing up when called on (not being able to answer a question even when they knew the answer before)
- Not being able to sit still
- Being disruptive
- Being overly clingy with parents or other adults
- Decreased memory



Free Resources on Anxiety

General information on anxiety: <http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/anxiety-disorders.html?ref=search>

https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/The-Anxious-Child-047.aspx

Tips for parents and caregivers to manage an anxious child: <https://adaa.org/living-with-anxiety/children/tips-parents-and-caregivers>

Parenting tips for Anxious Kids: <http://www.worrywisekids.org/node/36>

School Refusal: https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/School-Refusal-007.aspx

References

Attitudemag. (2019, August 1st). *Symptoms of Anxiety Disorder in Children*. Date Accessed August 8, 2019: <https://www.additudemag.com/anxiety-disorders-in-children-symptoms/> .

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. (2017, October). *Anxiety and Children*. Date Accessed July 31, 2019 from AACAP: https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/The-Anxious-Child-047.aspx .

KidsHealth. (2018, October). *Anxiety Disorders (for Parents)*. Date Accessed July 30, 2019 from KidsHealth: <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/anxiety-disorders.html?ref=search> .

Smarter Parenting. (2017). *Parenting Children with Anxiety*. Date Accessed August 8, 2019: https://www.smarterparenting.com/specific-lesson/view/anxiety/?gclid=EAlaIQobChMIrdiY3crz4wIVD5-fCh159gZ8EAYASAAEglf_D_BwE .

We Are Teachers. (2016, July 5th). *7 Ways to Help Students Who Struggle with Anxiety*. Date Accessed August 8, 2019: <https://www.weareteachers.com/7-ways-to-help-students-who-struggle-with-anxiety/> .

Parents, teachers or caregivers can use this form to share helpful tips.

Your student _____ has an anxiety disorder. This information below has been filled out by the student's family. Please share this information with all of this student's teachers including PE, art, and music and the bus driver.

Anxiety may be triggered by: _____

Strategies to improve focus: _____

Strategies to help calm down: _____

Preventative measures to reduce anxiety: _____

Common behaviors when anxious: _____

Situations that may worsen anxiety: _____

General tips: _____

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Don't Give this Page to Your Child's Teacher

Anxiety Parent Instructions

Fill out the form to help your child's teacher better understand your child's Anxiety Disorder. It is important that you give all 4 pages (the Anxiety information sheets and the form) to your child's teacher. Examples are provided below to make the form easier to complete. Please call or send a portal message if you have questions.

Your student _____ has an anxiety disorder. This information below has been filled out by the student's family. Please share this information with all of this student's teachers including PE, art, and music and the bus driver.

Anxiety may be triggered by: When my child is put on the spot or timed on schoolwork. When he feels pressured or when he embarrassed. Change from what was expected.

Strategies to improve focus: Talk to him in a clear and precise manner. Repeat instructions. Have him help others or the class pet.

Strategies to help calm down: Do breathing exercises, trace fingers while taking deep breaths to match, using a stress ball

Preventative measures to reduce anxiety: Using a stress ball or noise canceling headphone if he is having trouble concentrating. A quiet test environment. Providing the schedule for the day

Common behaviors that show they are anxious: He often can't sit still and fidgets excessively. He freezes up when asked questions and avoids eye contact. Hiding under the table or desk.

General tips: He generally feels more comfortable around adults and likes to help so it may make him less anxious if you give him little "tasks" for him to do for you.