

October 2020



Helen Ross McNabb Center

School-Based Services Newsletter

Anxiety Disorders & Test Anxiety



What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a normal reaction to stress and can actually be beneficial in some situations. It is related to the body's "Fight" or "Flight" system of response.

When does anxiety become a problem?

When people experience an excessive and uncontrollable level of anxiety that impacts their ability to complete tasks of daily living.

Types of Anxiety Disorders:

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Social Phobia (or Social Anxiety)

Signs a student may be struggling with anxiety

- Frequent absences
- Refusal to join school activities
- Decline in grades or unable to meet expectations
- Often spends time alone or has trouble making friends
- Physical complaints not attributable to a health issue
- Excessive worry about homework or grades
- Frequent crying
- Easily frustrated
- Fear of new situations
- Students may set high standards for themselves that cause anxiety when unable to meet
- Students may be consumed by fears of failure

Classroom Implications:

- Students may be hesitant to do group work or act out in class

*"Don't be ashamed of your story. It will inspire others."
-Unknown*

A Note From Kim:

Many students struggle with transitions, which are common triggers for acting out behaviors. You can assist your students with transitions by creating routines, previewing schedules and counting down, providing visual cues and for younger kids— even making a song about the transition. When the behavior changes, remember to praise a good transition to reinforce the positive behavior. If you have a student struggling with transitions, I am always available for consultation!

Classroom Strategies and Interventions to Support Students Struggling with Anxiety

- Reward brave, non-anxious behavior. If you catch a student doing something they wouldn't normally do, make a big deal about it.
- Check in with the student at the beginning of the day.
- Learn what situations the student can handle and how you can respond.
- Keep as much of the student's regular schedule as possible.
- Ask the student's parents what works at home to relieve anxiety.
- Recognize and reward small improvements.
- Provide a learning environment where mistakes are viewed as part of the learning process.
- Provide advance warning of a change in routines.
- Encourage and reward all positive steps in fighting anxiety.



Test Anxiety

A student can come to class, complete the homework, study, and arrive for the test confident about the material; however, taking the test may still be difficult if the student has Test Anxiety (a form of performance anxiety).

Test Anxiety may be occurring because of the following:

- Fear of Failure
- Poor Test History
- Lack of Preparation

Tips Students Can Use to Manage Test Anxiety

- **Be prepared:** study 1-2 weeks before the test in small increments.
- **Maintain a positive attitude:** Self-worth should not be dependent on a test grade.
- **Stay focused:** concentrate on the test, not other students during the exam.
- **Stay healthy:** get enough sleep and exercise; practice healthy eating.
- **Practice relaxation techniques:** take slow, deep breaths and relax muscles one at a time.
- **Use good test-taking skills:** read directions carefully and answer what you know first.



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Lenoir City Mental Health Resources

- HRMC’s Mobile Crisis Unit: 865-539-2409
- HRMC (Athens, Knox, or Oak Ridge): 1-877-302-1226
- Cherokee Health Systems: 865-986-8082
- Peninsula Outpatient: 865-970-9800
- Mental Health Association: 865-584-9125
- National Alliance on Mental Illness: 865-329-9925



Self-Care Corner

Tips for self awareness:

Body Scan Meditation:

- This type of meditation can be very helpful in learning where we hold stress in our bodies. Just close your eyes and begin focusing on your breath. Once you feel settled and relaxed, bring attention and focus to every part of your body- starting with your head. Begin scanning every part until you reach your toes. Once you determine where you hold the tension in your body, you can give that part of your body extra attention.

Affirm Yourself:

- Remind yourself daily how important your job is and what a great job you do! As teachers, you have one of the most vital jobs in the community, and it’s imperative that you don’t forget this. Tell yourself what a fantastic job you do every morning! Post positive affirmations where you’ll see them each day.

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