

Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health

C&A Cares Newsletter

June 5, 2020



Anxiety and depression

These days, when everyone is experiencing a high level of stress, it makes sense that a lot of people are worried about what might happen in the future and sad about what has been happening. Some people feel these reactions more intensely than others, so intense that it interferes with their ability to do the things they need to do in their daily lives and with the ability to enjoy life. When this happens, a person might be experiencing more than a normal reaction to a difficult situation; they might be experiencing anxiety or depression. There is hope for individuals experiencing these feelings to seek help and live a better, healthier life.

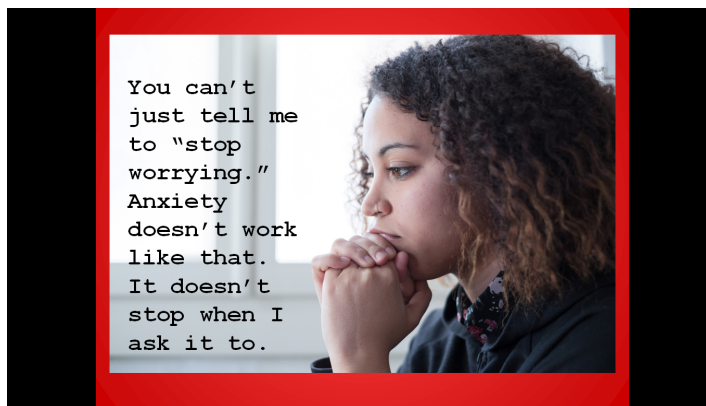
What is anxiety?

Anxiety is the natural way our bodies and minds react to stressful, dangerous or unfamiliar situations. It is that feeling of nervousness, distress or even dread that is felt before a significant event. Anxiety is fueled by our ability to imagine all sorts of unwanted and horrible possibilities. Anxious thoughts often come in the form of questions, "what if...?" Sometimes anxiety is experienced as a pounding heart, shortness of breath, sweating and racing thoughts. Other times, it is experienced as freezing up - mind going blank, muscles not moving and inability to speak. Anxiety is not based on logic, reason or probability. It happens automatically. Anxiety leads to behaviors aimed at avoiding unwanted experiences.

Anxiety can be good for us. Moderate levels of anxiety can help us to be more alert, aware and cautious so that we will stay safe and avoid danger. It can motivate us to prepare. For example, feeling some anxiety before taking a test might motivate us to study harder, practice more and put extra effort into preparing. When anxiety is strong, it stops being helpful and can become debilitating.

Symptoms of anxiety

- Persistent worrying
- Excessive fear
- Inability to relax
- Sleep disturbance
- Nightmares or night terrors
- Avoidance of feared situations
- Excessive shyness
- Social isolation
- Fear of embarrassment
- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- Physical complaint - headaches, stomachaches, racing heart, sweating, shaking, nausea, diarrhea, shortness of breath, dizziness
- Frequent bouts of tears
- Low frustration tolerance
- Panic attacks
- Failing grades
- Fidgeting, restlessness or inability to sit still



What can you do to help?

The goal isn't to eliminate anxiety, but to manage it. Remember, we do not want to lose the positive benefits of lower levels of anxiety.

If you know of someone who is struggling with anxiety offer your support, patience, understanding and encouragement. If you are the one who is feeling anxious, offer those things to yourself.

Take slow deep breaths. This helps to clear the mind and to settle the body. A person who is feeling less intense anxiety might have a difficult time remembering to do this. Have a caring person remind them and take a few breathers with them can be a big help.

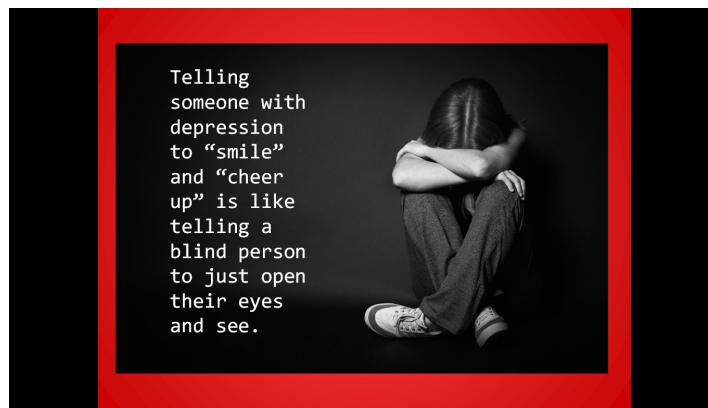
Do not avoid doing what needs to be done just because it triggers anxiety. The longer it is avoided, the bigger the fear becomes and the harder it will be to overcome that fear. The author Neil Gaiman made a really good point in his book, *Coraline*, when he wrote, "Being brave doesn't mean you aren't scared. Being brave means you are scared, really scared, badly scared and you do the right thing anyway."

What doesn't help is telling a person to stop worrying. Anxiety is not like a light that you can control with an on/off switch. Telling someone what they should or should not feel will not change the way that they feel. It just makes it unsafe to show those feelings in front of you.



Crisis Text Line is a free 24/7
emotional support for those in
crisis.

Anyone can use this service by
texting the number
741741
Texters remain anonymous



Depression vs. Sadness

Everyone feels sad sometimes. Sadness is a part of life. It is the appropriate response to sad things that happen in life. "Normal" sadness lasts for a short time and then goes away without leaving long-lasting effects.

Depression is a change in mood that persists over time. It does not go away on its own. It interferes with a person's ability to enjoy life, even when good things are happening. It drains all of your energy and stops you from taking part in activities you used to do easily. It makes everything seem pointless. Depression causes lasting changes in thinking, relationships and your way of life.

Symptoms of Depression

- Feeling irritable or unhappy most to the day, more days than not
- Less interest in and pleasure from activities that you once enjoyed
- Changes in weight or appetite
- Changes in sleep patterns (sleeping too much or too little).
- Restlessness or agitation
- Tiredness, fatigue, no energy nearly every day
- Feeling bad, worthless, hopeless or guilty
- Difficulty with concentration, memory or decision making
- Preoccupation with dark, gloomy themes include death and suicide

What Depression Looks Like in Children and Adolescents

- Easily irritated or argumentative
- Sulking, withdrawing from friends and family
- Becoming overly clingy
- Getting into fights or trouble at school
- Not wanting to go to school and/or not wanting to participate in other activities
- Physical complaints (headaches, stomach aches, body aches)
- Constantly bored and unable to find anything enjoyable to do
- Can lead to adoption of unhealthy behavior (including alcohol and substance use) to try to feel better.



What can you do to help?

If you know someone who is struggling with depression, offer your support, patience, understanding and encouragement. If you are the one who is feeling depressed, offer those things to yourself.

Depression is linked to a negative view of oneself. If you are struggling with depression, make a list of the things you like about yourself. If you want to help someone overcome depression, tell them about what you like about them. Although compliments about one's appearance (you have lovely blue eyes) or their possessions (you have more toy cars than anyone I know) are nice, it is powerful to recognize personality traits (you are kind, generous and creative).

Depression is also linked to negative view of other people around the world. To Counter this unhelpful belief, make a conscious effort to look for examples of people who are good and beautiful things that exist in the world, they're out there. We just often overlook them or fail to pause for a moment to really appreciate them.

Depression is sustained by a negative outlook for the future. The person is feeling miserable and believes it is never going to get any better. Everyone needs something to look forward to. Plan something fun or enjoyable to do every day. Identify a reason to get out of bed in the morning. Put long-term plans and events on a calendar and display it as a reminder of good things yet to come.

Never ignore comments about suicide. It is a myth that talking about suicide could plant the idea in someone's mind. If they are talking about it, or hinting about it, chances are they're already thinking about it. You can make a difference by listening and by helping to connect that person with professional care. If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline (1-800-273-8255), Crisis Services (330-452-6000) or text 4HOPE to 741741.

Resources:

For information about anxiety:

www.anxiety.org

For information about depression:

www.hopefordepression.org

For the Anxiety and Depression Association of America:

www.adaa.org



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