

Mental Health in the Middle

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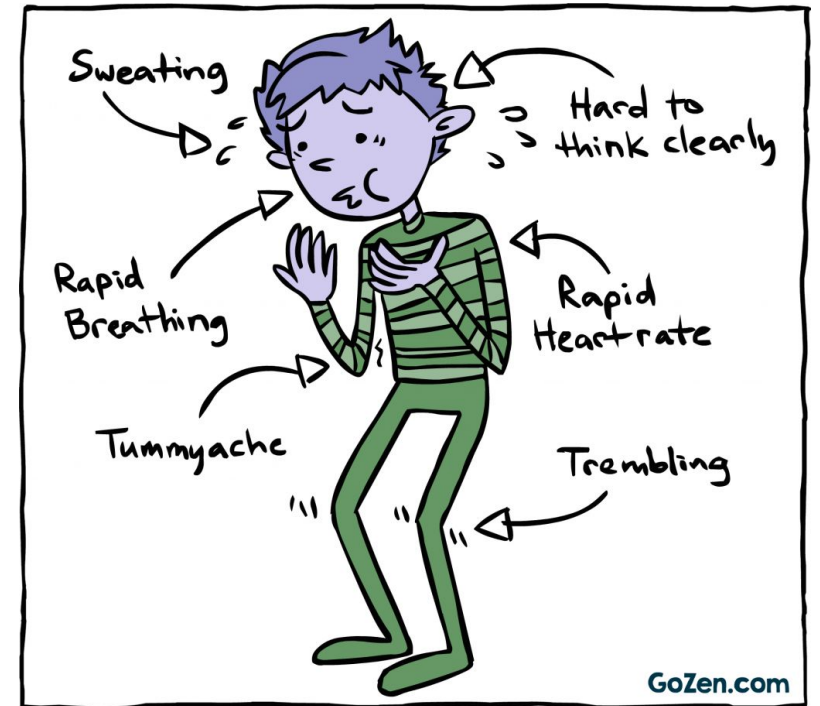
What is Anxiety

- Anxiety is a complex reaction to a perceived threat.
- Can result in our fight, flight, freeze and fawn stress responses
- Anxiety is about what **might** happen
- It is less related to actual events and more related to the **anticipation** of danger.
- Many children who struggle with anxiety disorders do not receive treatment



What Does Anxiety Look Like?

- Difficulty concentrating or focusing
- Difficulty controlling worries
- Panicking
- Avoiding people, places, or social situations
- Emotionally distraught when not meeting expectations
- Difficulty with transitions
- Restlessness or on edge
- Irritability
- Physical complaints (headaches, GI problems, excessive fatigue)
- Sleep Disturbance

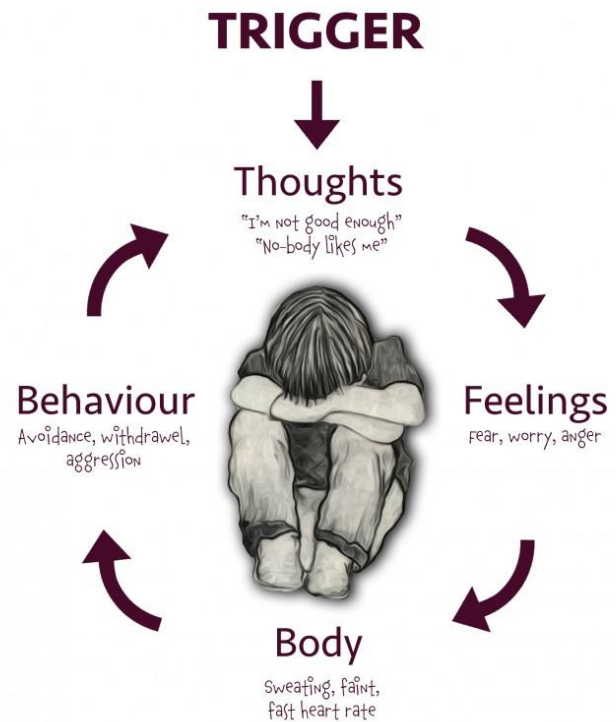


What causes anxiety?

- Environmental Factors:
 - School stress (homework, grades, tests)
 - Relationships
 - Sports
 - Appearance
 - Lack of sleep
 - Social Media
 - After school activities
- Genetics
- Brain Chemistry
- Substance Use



The Anxiety Cycle



Anxiety in School

- Impacts ability to learn (including attention/concentration, memory and information recall)
- Worry takes up mental capacity needed for other tasks, like completing work and problem solving.
- Anxiety can impact a student's social interactions
- Anxiety can impact physical health and impacts immune function
 - Somatic complaints such as stomach aches and headaches

What Can Parents Do?

- Model healthy ways to handle stress and anxiety.
- Provide praise and encouragement when your child faces challenges and fears.
- Encouraging the use of coping skills. Practice skills to help your child remain calm such as going for a walk together, practicing breathing exercises or listening to calming music.
- Be aware of transitions at home that might cause anxiety. Provide structure and routine as much as possible.
- Ask questions, keep the dialogue and conversation open. Validate your child's experiences and provide a supportive and understanding atmosphere to discuss these concerns.
- Consult with your doctor on your concerns about your child's anxiety.

Show you Care

It's **okay** to feel that way

Tell me **more** about it

I'm **here** for you

Managing reactions

You don't need to be an expert or have all the answers.



Give yourself permission to be human.

It's common to feel uncomfortable with this topic.



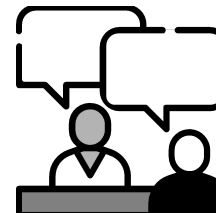
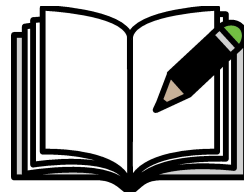
Talk to a supportive person beforehand and debrief after.



Most importantly, never keep what you learn a secret.

Building protective factors

Encourage: connection to school, participation in activities, and strong connections to friends.

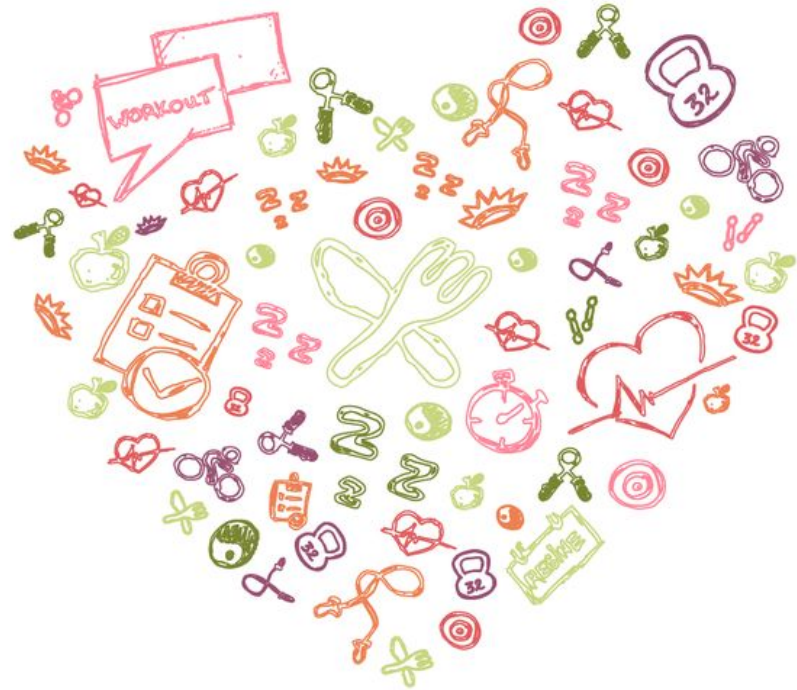


Tips for getting teens to talk

1. **Teen-led family meetings**; let your teen set the agenda
2. **Playing a game**; this makes teens more comfortable talking about a difficult topic
3. **If the subject comes up in a movie or TV show**, have a discussion about it
4. **Out for a walk**; the relaxed atmosphere can make it easier for some teens to open up
5. **Taking a drive**; sometimes it's easier to talk about difficult topics without eye contact
6. **Continuing the conversation or have multiple mini conversations** on a regular basis instead of one big talk
7. **Enlist other trusted adults**; sometimes a grandparent or trusted aunt/uncle can break through when parents have been shut out

What Can Students Do?

- Deep Breathing
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Create a relaxation kit
 - Worry Box
- Write it Out
 - Journal
 - Write and tear
- Talk Back to Thoughts
- Physical Activity



Facing Anxiety Together

- Self Regulation and Co-Regulation
- Practice PROACTIVELY!
- Incorporate activities into your daily life
 - Mindfulness
 - Practicing Gratitude
 - Physical Activity
 - Daily Communication

Caregiver/Child Activity

- Mindful Breathing
- Create a self care plan



Electronic Resources

Phone App's for Anxiety/Stress

- Breath
- Headspace
- Worry Watch
- Moods
- Calm
- Stop, Think, Breath
- Colorfy
- Breath2Relax
- Sleep Time
- What's Up?

Online Resources for Parents

- www.worrywise.org
- www.adaa.org
- 700 Children's Blog
(www.nationwidechildrens.org)
- The Child Mind Institute
(www.childmind.org)
- YouTube (to access mindfulness practices, mindful breathing exercises and guided meditations)

Online Resources for Students

- Teenmentalhealth.org
- Girlshealth.gov
- Mindfulness for Teens
(mindfulnessforteens.com)
- Reach Out
(au.reachout.com)
- YouTube (to access mindfulness practices, mindful breathing exercises and guided meditations)



Trends in Bexley Middle School

Sarah Busold & Tara Louys
BMS School Counselors

What may be causing your children anxiety?

Changes in demands with academics

Social changes, acceptance

Peer Conflict

Post Pandemic:

- ❖ Higher rates of distraction, irritability and fear among children
- ❖ Children with pre-existing mental health issues at higher risk

American Academy of Pediatrics

Social Media



How anxiety presents itself in school and what we are seeing

Frequent absences

Skipping class

Somatic complaints (headaches, muscle tension, stomachaches, etc.)

Constant texting with parent

Not turning in homework, struggling in certain subjects

Inattention and restlessness

Keeping head down, hoodie up

Disruptive behavior, Irritability

Trouble answering questions in class

Frequent trips to the nurse

Avoiding socializing or group work

[Child Mind Institute](#)

Prevention Services

“True prevention is not waiting for bad things to happen, its preventing things from happening in the first place”
– Don McPherson

We provide a comprehensive school counseling program which is a critical component of prevention - providing safe spaces to connect, share, and refer as needed if a student engages in unsafe/unhealthy behaviors.

- WEB (Where Everybody Belongs)
- Signs of Suicide (SOS) 7th grade
- Small groups: Mindfulness, Stress Management, DBT Skills-A, Life & Social Skills, Friendship Group and classroom presentations.
- NCH Summer Programs

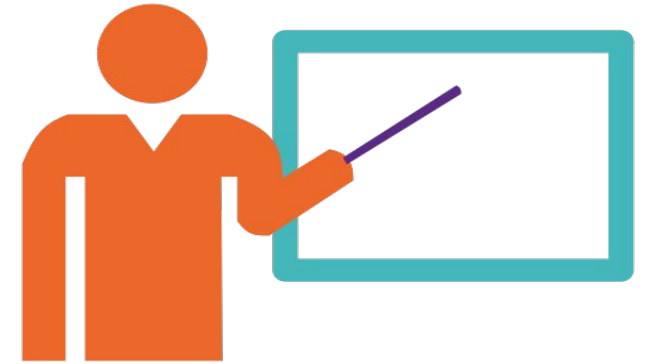
Prevention Service - *continued*

- In the classroom: calming corners & regulation kits
- Wellness Room
- MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support)
- Hope Squad- **new coming in January*
- Coping strategies can help!



We want you to know....

- ❏ Anxiety is typical for all of us
- ❏ Not all anxiety is an anxiety disorder
- ❏ Some anxiety can spring us into action
- ❏ Normal, natural, built in (flight or fight responses)
- ❏ We need this to prepare for future potential difficulties
- ❏ While too much interferes with learning - interventions can help



Want to Learn More?

- Weekly BMS newsletter
- Summer School catalogue
- Reach out to us!
 - ❖ Sarah Busold, School Counselor
 - ❖ Tara Louys, School Counselor
 - ❖ Brittany Nolan, NCH Therapist

Thank you for
attending!

