

Parent Workshop: Child and Adolescent Anxiety

Fear vs Anxiety

Fear- Response to an immediate threat

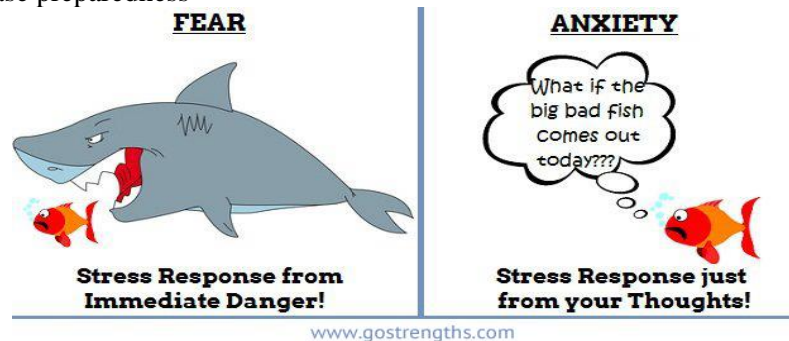
Anxiety-Apprehension about a future threat

Both involve physiological arousal

Both can be adaptive

Fear triggers “fight or flight”

Anxiety can increase preparedness



Anxiety

- Anxiety disorders are the most commonly diagnosed mental health disorders
- Some anxiety is *productive*; it helps keep us alert and out of danger
- *If a person experiences constant, uncontrollable worry, fear or dread, that is not based in rational facts can cause someone to withdraw from activities or change behaviors, it may be an anxiety disorder*

Signs of Anxiety in Children

- Somatic symptoms: such as headaches or stomach-aches
 - Young children (2-12 years old) often do not have the language skills to say “I am anxious” and will express it through somatic complaints
- Avoidance
- Tantrums
- Crying
- Refusing to go to school
- Meltdowns before school about clothing, hair, shoes, etc.
- Meltdowns after school about homework
- Difficulties with transitions within school, between school and an activity/sport
- Difficulty settling down for bed

Effects on School and Social Performance

- Struggle with various demands of school
- Inattention
- Perfectionistic
- Forgetful or unwilling to participate due to concerns about failure or embarrassment
- Avoidant of difficult tasks
- Does not volunteer or participate in classroom activities

- Withdrawal from others or situations
- Students may be perceived as unmotivated, lazy, uninterested in school

Mindfulness Activities

- Five Finger Breathing Activity
- Belly Breathing - taking deep meaningful breaths that fill our abdominal area
- Color Counting - counting the colors of the rainbow (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple) to refocus on the present.
- 5 Senses Body Scan - What do you see, feel, hear, taste, smell?
- Mindfulness Card Deck
- Guided Imagery



Home Based Interventions

- Be consistent
- Be patient
- Avoid being critical
- Maintain realistic goals and expectations for your child
- Do not communicate that perfection is expected or acceptable
- Accept that mistakes are a normal part of growing up
- Praise and reinforce effort
- Teach your child simple strategies to help with anxiety

- Do not treat feelings, questions, and statements about feeling anxious as silly or unimportant
- Seek outside help if the problem persists and continues to interfere with daily activities

NAMI Mercer County: Parent Support Network

National Alliance on Mental Illness: Mercer County

The Parent Support Network of Central New Jersey, developed by the Youth Mental Health Project and sponsored by NAMI Mercer, is a parent-driven family-focused program to support parents/caregivers who are concerned about their kids' struggles with anxiety, depression and/or emotional dysregulation.

NAMI Mercer hosts regular monthly meetings of The Parent Support Network of Central New Jersey, providing parents/caregivers who are concerned about their child's mental health and well-being valuable peer connections and the opportunity to share insights and resources through confidential, informational meetings run by and for parents. **(Please note: During the COVID-19 health crisis, meetings are being held virtually to help everyone stay safe and well.)**

<https://namimercer.org/find-support/parent-support-network/>

Phone: (609) 799-8994

Mental Health Hotlines

2nd Floor Youth Helpline of New Jersey - Call or Text 888-222-2228

New Jersey Hopeline - 1-855-654-6735

Crisis Text Line - Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a Crisis Counselor

The Trevor Project - Call 1-866-488-7386 or Text START to 678-678

Rutgers UBHC Acute Psychiatric Services - 855-515-5700

Penn Medicine Princeton Medical Center ER - 609-853-7730