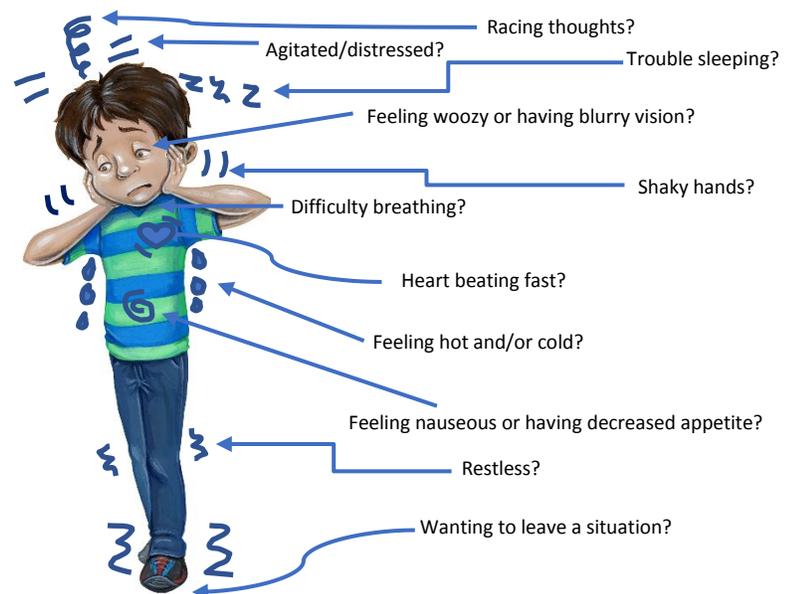


## WHAT IS ANXIETY?

- Anxiety is a mental and physical reaction to things that may appear to be threats.
- In small doses, anxiety can be helpful. It protects us from danger and helps us notice problems. But when anxiety grows to big, or occurs too frequently, it can keep us from our normal activities.
- Anxiety drives people to avoid things that scare them. When a scary thing is avoided there is a short-lived sense of relief. However, the next time the situation arises, it seems even scarier and the anxiety gets worse.
- Anxiety can look different from person to person; some people may experience worry about many areas in their life while others notice it in social settings or in response to specific things such as animals or heights.

## SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY

- Worry that's difficult to control
- Feeling very nervous
- Sleep problems
- Muscle tension
- Avoidance of situations
- Difficulty concentrating
- Increased heart rate
- Upset stomach
- Irritability
- Becoming easily tired



## WHO EXPERIENCES ANXIETY?

- Anxiety is the most common mental health disorder among adults and children.
- According to the National Institute of Mental Health, one in four adolescents have mild to moderate anxiety.
- Girls are more likely than boys to be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder.
- Anxiety can be seen even in young children.
- Anxiety in children and teens often overlaps with depression.

### RESOURCES

<http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/education/schools/school-of-medicine/departments/clinical-departments/psychiatry/divisions-and-clinics/child-and-adolescent-psychiatry/opal-k/upload/Care-Guide-Complete.pdf>

*Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed.)*

<https://adaa.org/sites/default/files/Anxiety%20Disorders%20in%20Children.pdf>

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/prevalence/any-anxiety-disorder-among-children.shtml>

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## TIPS FOR PARENTS

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- **Help kids recognize their anxiety.** Children and teens often don't know when they are anxious. Help children learn how their body responds to worry and help them label their feelings.
- **Listen and show support.** Encourage your child to open up about any fears and worries they may have. Let them know you care and think that what feel is *important*.
- **Stick to a routine.** Schedules and routines create a sense of structure and security. Make things seem normal, even though they *may not be*.
- **Praise small accomplishments.** Notice when your child follows through with trying something new or approaching something that makes them nervous. Tell them how much you like that they tried this new thing. Let them know trying is what is important not the outcome.
- **Notice your own reactions.** Pay attention to your thoughts and feelings during stressful times. Try to stay calm when your child becomes anxious about a situation or event.
- **Find treatment for your child.** If worry is getting in the way of normal, daily activities, they may benefit from therapy/counseling and medications. Talk with your doctor to decide what will work best for your family.
- **Get help.** If your child expresses thoughts about wanting to kill themselves or is saying unsafe things, call 911 or bring your child to the nearest Emergency Department.

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### RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- "The Anxiety Cure for Kids: A Guide for Parents" by Elizabeth DuPont Spencer, Robert DuPont, Caroline DuPont (2003)
- "What To Do if you Worry Too Much" by Dawn Huebner, Ph.D. (2005) (Interactive self-help guide for 6-12 year olds and their parents) <http://www.dawnhuebnerphd.com>
- Anxiety and Depression Association of America (Psychoeducational information for families and youth with anxiety symptoms and includes educational videos) <https://www.adaa.org>
- NIMH website on Anxiety (Information for families on anxiety disorders including OCD and PTSD) <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/anxietydisorders/index.shtml?wvsessionid=ww650bd43245ce405884dd789794894544>
- Anxiety BC: A Canadian-based website for families with children or adolescents with anxiety disorders <http://www.anxietybc.com/parent/anxiety.php>