



How to Recognize and Overcome Anxiety

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Lunch & Learn

Housekeeping

- For educational and quality control, we will be recording this zoom session.
- By participating, you are consenting to being recorded.
- Before this session is shared, we will edit to remove identifying information to protect your privacy.
- The Q&A section will be removed and only be shared as an anonymous transcript
- To ask a question, please type it in the chat box

Learning Objectives

- What is anxiety?
 - Overview
- How can I recognize it?
 - Self report, observation, assessment
- Anxiety and ASD
- Coping Strategies
 - Self care has never been more important!
- Resiliency
 - We can bounce back!

What is Anxiety anyway?

- We all experience it...
- Perception is your reality
- Everyday vs. Disorder

What do the Experts Say?

According to the American Psychological Association

.....

Anxiety is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure.

Anxiety and Comorbidity

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Panic Disorder
- Phobias
- Other diagnoses

NAMI Stats

- Anxiety Disorders are the the most common mental health concern in the United States
- Over 40 million adults in the U.S. have an anxiety disorder
- Approximately 7% of children ages 3-17 experience issues with anxiety each year

What does Anxiety feel like?

Emotional/Cognitive Symptoms

•
Intrusive thoughts

•
Catastrophizing

•
Loss of concentration

•
Restlessness or irritability

•
Anticipating the worst/ danger

Physiological Symptoms

•
Dizziness

•
Sweating

•
Shortness of breath

•
Rapid heartbeat

•
Stomach aches/muscle tension

Self-Report, Observation, and Assessment

- Evocative questions
- Scaling rulers
- Envisioning

“For a person to “grow,” we need an environment that provides us with genuine openness that enables self-disclosure, acceptance that includes being seen with **unconditional positive regard**, and empathy where we feel like we are being listened to and understood”.

-Carl Jung

Anxiety is one of the most common co-occurring psychiatric conditions in youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Anxiety and ASD

- Individualized
- Avoidance behaviors -ABC
- Look for physical symptoms
 - Complaining of stomach pains or headaches
- Tantrums over very specific tasks
 - turning the Chromebook on for virtual school



Susie Q Case Study

Susie Q is 18 and is beginning to exhibit a change in breathing pattern, red face, irritability, and even tells you in an alert phase to “get away!” and elopes.

How do you support?

Foster the Fight or Flight

- The symptoms manifest as the function of behavior
- First support and foster a safe environment
- Focus on working toward calm...demands go out the window

Individualized Treatment Planning

- Use of visual supports (breathing on watch, finger tapping/tracing 54321, color zones)
- Think sheet-Dialectical Behavioral Therapy and/or Stress Innoculation
- Calming/redirection strategies (slime, coloring, holding ice)

Support ASD and Anxiety

- Promote social and relationship skills
- Collaborate with other resources (we all have a support team)
- Trauma-informed care

Alerts for Anxiety

- Anxiety can be difficult to identify in children
- Seek therapeutic and medical advice or psychological assessment if needed
- It's beneficial to implement coping strategies and mindfulness activities; whether or not your child is experiencing anxiety

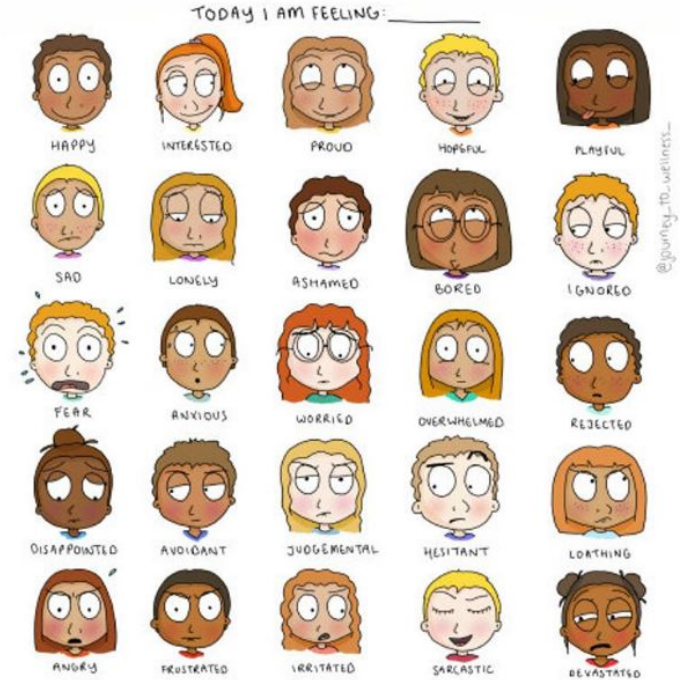
Coping Strategies

Visual Schedules and Routine

- Routine can lessen the fear of the unknown
- Visual schedules allow children to see what is next
- Control what you can...
 - Healthy eating (½ plate veggies+fruits and protein)
 - What brings you joy? Align your goals and values.
 - Movement medicine!

Coping Strategy Feelings Chart

- Helps identify emotions
- Strategy for all ages
- Emotional regulation



Coping Strategies: Sleep Hygiene

- Lack of quality sleep can be linked to feelings of anxiety
- What is your bedtime routine? What works for the whole family?
- Limiting screen time before bed (don't wake the brain up!)

Coping Strategies: Model Self Care

- Take deep breaths before approaching a stressful situation- explain to children
- Prioritize your own health and self-care
- Engage in mindfulness and lifestyle physical activities activities as a family

Managing Anxiety During the Pandemic

- Stick to a schedule as much as possible...ROUTINE IS EVERYTHING!
(visual schedules, “First Then” boards, visual timers)
- Create new traditions for your family. What do you value?
- Be aware of the time change
 - start making alterations to your schedule now
 - adapt with new routines!
- As a parent, make sure you are putting on your “oxygen mask” first!

Free Mindfulness Apps

- Headspace
 - <https://www.headspace.com/educators>
- Insight Timer
- Calm
- “Breathe, Think, Do” with Sesame Street
- Aura



The Resiliency Model

- Internal locus of control
- Strengths exploration
- Thought stopping/reframing
- Rewrite the narrative



Let's take a moment to breathe before we move to our next task of the day.

Thank YOU for joining us!

Upcoming Topics

Date	Topic	Presenter
10/22	Lunch and Learn: An Introduction to the new VCU-ACE Early Childhood Website and Resources	

For questions or more information

Please visit:

www.vcuautismcenter.org

Or

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