

*SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD OR
ADOLESCENT IN THESE
UNCERTAIN TIMES*

*CRG/CHILDREN'S RESOURCE GROUP
WWW.CHILDRENSRESOURCEGROUP.COM*

AS A RESULT OF THIS WEBINAR, PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

Clarify the intersection of stress, anxiety and depression

Describe the forms of anxiety that present in children and adolescents

Discuss the roles of therapy and medication in addressing anxiety

Identify the Top 10 things parents can do to support their children/adolescents

*STRESS IN TODAY'S WORLD:
We all know how she feels!*



THE INTERSECTION OF STRESS, ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION



ANXIETY IS A NORMAL HUMAN EXPERIENCE

- *Humans are biologically programmed to feel fear and worry*
- *Certain forms of anxiety are developmentally appropriate*
 - *stranger anxiety (6-8 months)*
 - *separation-anxiety (10-18 months)*
 - *fears of monsters & dark (toddlers)*
 - *shyness & self-consciousness in adolescence*
- *Uncertainty increases stress and anxiety*

SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY

Excessive worry

Irrational fear

Discomfort with others looking at us

Stomachaches, bowel problems, and other physical symptoms

Difficulty separating from familiar people and going to unfamiliar places

Perfectionism

Panic

Compulsive/repetitive behaviors

ANXIETY DISORDERS IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Lifetime prevalence for anxiety disorders is high (in past year 19%, lifetime prevalence approximately 32% of in adults)

Prevalence between similar to adults

Females much more likely to have anxiety (23.4% vs 14.3%)

Median age of onset is 11 years

Recent study indicated that over 50% of adolescents are reporting symptoms of anxiety

Mental health is a significant issue for young people in the U.S. with

7 in 10 teens experiencing struggles.

64% of teens believe that COVID-19 will have a lasting impact on their generation's mental health.

Even before COVID-19, **81%** of teens viewed mental health as a significant issue for youth in the U.S. The current crisis has only further magnified the issue.

55% of teens say they've experienced anxiety in their life

43% have experienced depression in their life



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ANXIETY IN YOUTH TAKES MANY FORMS

- *Adjustment Disorder with Anxiety*
- *Separation-anxiety disorder*
- *Generalized anxiety disorder*
- *Social anxiety disorder*
- *Specific phobias*
- *Panic disorder*
- *Obsessive-compulsive disorder*
- *Post-traumatic stress disorder*
- *Somatic Symptom Disorder*

TAKEAWAY MESSAGES

- *Anxiety disorders are common*
- *Onset is early (usually by adolescence)*
- *Condition is chronic – without intervention*
- *Rates of anxiety, depression and stress much higher in adolescents during coronavirus*
- *The tendency to develop anxiety has strong genetic predisposition*

TREATMENT OF ANXIETY

- *Recognize the symptoms of anxiety in your child/adolescent*
- *Provide support and consider therapy*
- *Consider medication*

Waking up to Racism: *Impact of the outpouring of racial protest*

Race-based stress or racial trauma:

- Reactions to dangerous racially influenced events
- Reactions to real or perceived experiences of racial discrimination

African-Americans: Stress Reactions

- Hypervigilance
- Heightened Sensitivity
- Change in emotional functioning
- Physiological symptoms
- Change in adaptive functioning
- Changes in sleep and eating patterns

White Community

- Allyship & Activism

Waking up to Racism: *Talking to your child about protest and racism*

- **Parents:** Take care of you first
- **Infants and Toddlers**
 - Lack understanding of the events themselves, but pick up on the emotions of others
 - Read, listen to or watch the news when the child is not present
 - Regulate and re-ground yourself before engaging with your child
 - Be intentional to present Brown and Black children in a positive light
 - Books with multi-racial characters
 - Multi-racial toys
- **Preschool & Elementary Ages**
 - Be intentional to respond to your child's questions regarding differences
 - Limit the exposure children this age have to media
 - Be proactive to engage your child in conversations about today's current events
 - Set screen time
 - Co-view the content
 - Find other activities: outside; cooking together; arts and crafts
 - Foster empathy and perspective taking
 - Purchase age appropriate books
 - Show videos of peaceful protest

Middle School and Adolescence

- Online activism: use of social media platforms for self-expression
- Intellectualizing today's events
- Make your questions personal to your child's experience
- Utilize movies and documentaries

Coping with Stress/Anxiety



ATTENTION SHIFT



RE-APPRAISE THE
SITUATION



INSERT LOGIC AND
REASON IN THE
DECISION-MAKING
PROCESS



RELAXATION
PRACTICES



FIND MOMENTS
OF JOY



CREATE
OPPORTUNITIES FOR
EXPOSURE



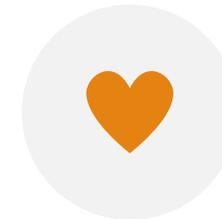
WRITE ABOUT IT



TALK BACK TO YOUR
WORRIES



USE BOOKS & OTHER
FORMS OF MEDIA



EMPATHIZE &
VALIDATE

Treatment : Psychotherapy

Individual Therapy

- Aims to alleviate internal distress, improve relationships, and raise a client's emotional and behavioral functioning at school, home, and other endeavors.
- Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Therapist keeps caregiver(s) apprised of the therapeutic progress and issues being addressed.
- Young children, effective individual therapy nearly always includes a parent guidance component.

When to consider Therapy

- Causes disruption to their functioning.
- Change in mood/behavior lasting 2 weeks or more and/or is reoccurring.
- Excessive fear and worry that can be 1) difficult to control and/or 2) disproportionate to the actual situation.
- Impacts sleep and eating habits.
- Disrupts interpersonal relationships.



TREATMENT: MEDICATION

Medication Treatment Starts with Diagnosis

Start with a thorough assessment of medical, and mental health by a psychologist, psychiatrist or Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner

- Initial assessment will include child's developmental history
- Family history
 - Often not discussed until a family member is in crisis
 - Genetic predisposition towards anxiety, depression or mood disorders

Neurotransmitters

- Medications work through neurotransmitters
- “A shortage or an excess of neurotransmitters is thought to be responsible for mental disorders.”
- Medications work to stimulate or inhibit the signals
- Presently there are 100 different neurotransmitters in the brain. Most psychotropic drugs target neurotransmitters to ultimately effect the brain activity.

Common neurotransmitters related to anxiety

Dopamine (DA)– controls movement, emotional responses and capacity to feel pleasure and pain (Steele and Keltner, 2013, p. 55).

Norepinephrine (NE)-related to blood pressure, increased alertness, hyperactivity and anxiety. NE reuptake inhibitors have been effective in the treatment of depression.

Serotonin- (5H-T) related to regulation of normal behaviors: sleep, mood, pain, appetite, peristalsis, and vasoconstriction.

Many subtypes of serotonin

Goal of treatment is to reduce symptoms

First line of treatment is serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)

Onset of action typically take 2-4 weeks to start to see improvement

Primary target is to reduce the low mood, anxiety, panic attacks, avoidant behaviors, re-experiencing of stressful event, or hyperarousal.

To discontinue: discuss with prescriber

- some meds can stopped
- some need to be tapered down slowly to avoid withdrawal syndrome

Common selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors

- **Celexa (Citalopram)**
- **Lexapro (escitalopram)**
- **Prozac (Fluoxetine)**
- **Paxil (Paroxetine)**
- **Zoloft (sertraline)**

“...it was a little white pill.”

Which
medication?

Which medication is started is based upon:

1. Diagnosis
2. History
3. Family history
4. Review of other medication trials
5. Pre-existing conditions or co-morbid diagnosis
6. And some good old-fashioned trial and error

****Partner with your prescriber to discuss concerns and fears regarding medication**

TOP 10 THINGS PARENTS SHOULD DO TO SUPPORT THEIR CHILD OR ADOLESCENT

10. Provide information geared to a child's/adolescents' s age, developmental level and maturity.

9. Establish warm and nurturant bedtime routines- even for their teenagers. Anxiety often peaks at bedtime and children and adolescents may need extra support during these times. Teaching breathing exercises can be helpful.

8. Try to listen carefully to their fears and worries if they are willing to share them. Try not to minimize their fears or offer quick solutions or false promises. Rather provide support as they come up with their own strategies as they are more likely to be tried.

TOP 10 THINGS PARENTS SHOULD DO TO SUPPORT THEIR CHILD OR ADOLESCENT

7. Monitor diet for children and adolescents as too many carbohydrates and calories may encourage stress eating and obesity. A diet heavy in carbohydrates and calories may also contribute to irritability and depressed mood.

6. Provide physical outlets and model an active lifestyle. Try to get everyone outside for part of the day.

5. Encourage social support of extended family and friend networks, even if interactions have to be virtual. Older relatives can sometimes give new perspectives.

TOP 10 THINGS PARENTS SHOULD DO TO SUPPORT THEIR CHILD OR ADOLESCENT

4. Monitor screen time enforcing limits appropriate to family values, and age and maturity of child/adolescent.

3. Encourage creative outlets such as drawing /painting/ listening or making music. Reading about individuals who have faced challenges including sports/ media figures or religious members may help put current stress into context.

2. Remind children and adolescents of other times that they have faced anxiety and adversity and how they successfully were able to handle those stressors.

THE #1 THING A
PARENT SHOULD DO:

Address their own anxiety and stress level so that they can model good coping behaviors - remembering that parents are a child's first and best teachers.

However, if a child or adolescent's anxiety appears overwhelming and is interfering with daily functioning, adaptive skills, school functioning and social relationships, it is time to seek additional help from a mental health professional.

Resources & Readings

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Books with Characters of Color

<https://www.commonsemmedia.org/lists/books-with-characters-of-color>

<https://thebrownbookshelf.com/>

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- Understood.Org <https://www.understood.org/en/friends-feelings/managing-feelings/stress-anxiety/anxiety-why-its-different-from-stress>
- <http://www.parentsmedguide.org/>



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