



The Clay Center for Young Healthy Minds

Shining light on mental health through education.

What If My Child Has Anxiety?

When it comes to anxiety in a child or teen, it is important to know what signs to look for, when to worry, and what to do. This handout shares information to support you in this process.

Anxiety is a normal, healthy emotion, and nearly all children experience periods of worry, fear, or hesitancy. But if your child's anxiety levels start to interfere with daily life including school, social life, and other activities they may have an **anxiety disorder**.

Four common anxiety disorders in kids are Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Social Anxiety Disorder, Panic Disorder, and Separation Anxiety Disorder. While unique features set these apart, they have similarities:

What to Look For

Common signs of anxiety in kids and teens:

- Excessive worrying
- Stomachaches and headaches
- Difficulty relaxing
- Fear of public humiliation
- Difficulty sleeping
- Avoiding situations & activities in which they previously participated
- Panic attacks

Signs in Younger Children

- Often show more physical discomfort. They may complain of stomachaches or headaches or throw tantrums.

Signs in Teens

- Can show physical symptoms. May appear withdrawn, apprehensive, and less engaged in daily activities. They may try to avoid certain situations or have trouble concentrating.

When to Worry

You know your child best. So, if you notice there has been a major change in your child's behavior from what it was before, this could be cause for concern. If you notice them struggling with any of the behaviors above, ask them about it. You could say, "You seem more anxious lately. Anything been on your mind?" Asking these questions lets your child know that you care about them.

What to Do

It is important to know that anxiety in children and teens is very treatable. If you're concerned about anxiety, call their pediatrician or a family physician. You can start by saying, "I've noticed changes in my child's behavior that are not typical for him/her." Your doctor can help you to figure out if there is cause for concern. If there is, there are many treatment options for anxiety, including talk therapy, counseling, and medications.

**Thank you for all you do to support a young person in your life.
It really makes a difference.**

To learn more about anxiety in kids and teens, visit us online:

www.mghclaycenter.org/topic/anxiety/

