

School-Based Strategies to Help Students Cope with Anxiety and Transitions



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Overview

- ❖ Common strategies for dealing with anxiety in students: Advantages & Disadvantages
- ❖ Tips for helping students cope with transitions and anxiety
- ❖ Useful resources
- ❖ Q & A

Common anxiety management strategies

- Think back to the most recent time you encountered a student exhibiting some anxiety in class/school.
- What do you do?
- Was it helpful for the student at that time?
- Did your actions help the student cope with anxiety better the next time?

Common anxiety management strategies

- Reassure the student.
- Calm student for a while.
- The more reassurances the teachers/counselors give, the more assurances the student will demand in the future.
- If reassurances are given repeatedly, it may become a form of positive attention to the student, which will reinforce the student's anxiety.

- Tell the student exactly what to do.
- Help the student to cope with the situation in the short-term.
- Reliance on adult direction may be a subtle form of avoidance.
- No immediate need for student to learn how to manage his/her anxiety.

Common anxiety management strategies

- Talk about what makes you anxious
- Normalize anxiety for student.
- Student may model the anxiety instead.

- Prevent the student's avoidance of feared situations
- Child has the opportunity to see that he/she can cope with their anxiety by facing up to the feared situations.
- More effective in the long-run.
- Difficult and stressful for teacher/counselor to see student in distress.

- Permit the student's avoidance of feared situations
- Immediate reduction in student's anxiety and distress.
- Teachers/counselors will make themselves popular with their child.
- Student never learns how to cope with anxiety.

Common anxiety management strategies

- Ignore the student's anxiety
- No risk of adult attention rewarding or encouraging anxiety.
- Student may feel “abandoned” in times of need.

Common anxiety management strategies

- Prompt the student to cope constructively with their anxiety
- Shows faith in student's ability to cope independently.
- Student learns to manage anxiety on his/her own.
- Takes time and patience.

Tips for helping students cope with transition

- What is a transition?
- What are the typical transitions in a student's life?
- What other possible atypical transitions may a student face?
- Think back to the time when you were:
 - On the first day of secondary school
- How do you feel?
- What helped you cope with your apprehension then?
- What made you more anxious/worried then?

BE
WATCHFUL

- **B**e prepared
- Prepare the student and parents in advance as much as possible.
- Provide information on the new situation/environment and the timetable/schedule for the first day/week.
- Provide avenue for the student/parents to seek more information/help.

- Engineer social support
- Have a buddy system
- Create opportunities to interact during recess
- Let the student know how to seek the form teacher/FTSC for help

- **W**atch out for symptoms of anxiety in your student
- As anxious children tend to keep their problems to themselves and are generally well behaved and quiet in class, their anxiety problems are often overlooked until they start to greatly affect the students functioning in school.
- Be alert to behavioral and physical signs of anxiety such as increasing avoidance of feared situations and complaints of stomachache, headaches or chest discomfort etc.

Key questions to ask myself

- Does my student show signs of avoidance in class and in school?
- Does my student exhibit symptoms of anxiety especially in situations that is uncomfortable to the student?
 - Headache or stomachache
 - Nausea
 - Vomiting
 - Shortness of breath/ dizziness
 - Heart palpitations
 - Muscle tension/ trembling
 - Poor concentration
 - Restlessness
 - Irritability
 - Fatigue

Key questions to ask myself

- Does my student worry a lot and focus only on negative outcomes?
- Is my student underperforming?

- **A**cknowledge your student's anxiety and provide a listening ear
- Validate your student's feelings. Do not dismiss their anxiety immediately.
- Whenever possible, listen to your student's thoughts and feelings first without any interruption. This allows your student to feel that you are concerned about him/her and what he/she is going through. This will encourage your student to reveal to you more about his/her fears.

- **T**ry to avoid giving excessive reassurances
- Resist giving reassurances repeatedly as it may become a form of positive attention for the student, which may encourage the student to exhibit more anxious behaviors.

- **C**almly react to your student's anxiety
- By responding to your student's anxiety in a calm manner, this not only helps reduce your student's perception of his/her fears as being threatening but also allows your student to model how you can cope with anxiety calmly.

- **H**elp your student understand about his/her anxiety
- Educate your student that his/her anxiety and the physical symptoms of anxiety that he/she is experiencing is normal, harmless and temporary.
- Let your student know that she is not alone in feeling anxious and that most children have anxiety problems at some point in their lives.

- **F**urnish your child with relaxation strategies
- Teach your child how to stay calm and reduce his/her physical symptoms of anxiety through deep-breathing exercise.
- Deep breathing exercise



- **U**se cognitive strategies such as coping statements and realistic thinking
- Develop coping statements with your students.
- For older students, you can teach your child to challenge his/her anxious or negative thoughts and change them to more realistic ones
- ❖ After helping the student to identify his/her anxious thoughts, get the student to consider these questions:
 - Is there any evidence for/against this thought?
 - What are some possible alternative explanations?
 - What will I advise my friend who is in a similar situation?



- **L**et your student face his/her fear gradually
- Encourage your student to use his/her relaxation exercises and/or cognitive strategies to overcome his/her fears or anxieties.
- Start with a situation that the student feels a bit anxious. After the student gains confidence that he/she can manage his/her anxiety in that situation, proceed gradually to situations that evoke greater levels of anxiety.
- Give your student lots of praise for trying to overcome his/her anxiety.

- www.roc-n-ash.com
- www.anxietybc.com

Q & A

Thank You