



Managing Anxiety Problems at School

A Resource for Teachers

Types:

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Social Anxiety Disorder
- Panic Disorder
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)



What you may see in the classroom:

- Extreme need for reassurance
- Somatic complaints (headaches, stomach aches)
- Avoidance of stressful situations (tests, public speaking)
- Refusal/severe reluctance to participate in eating or dressing in public, social activities (dances)
- Leaving without any notice
- Avoidance of school, locations in school, or of certain people
- Persistent perfectionism – schoolwork erased and rewritten many times
- Repeating rituals
- Working exceedingly slowly to feel it has been done properly

Classroom Strategies



- Be mindful that reassurance alone may not be enough to resolve the anxiety
- Establish down-to-earth expectations
- Encourage physical exercise and relaxation
- Check in with the student at the beginning of each day
- Create a 'things to do' checklist
- Encourage the use of a study schedule
- Provide brief, clear, explicit directions
- Create a 'coping' book
- Gradual desensitization – small steps – start where the student experiences no anxiety
- Do not force the student to speak in front of the class
- Provide options (small group, multimedia)
- Reassure the student that he/she is not alone in feeling embarrassed
- Pair the student up with 'friendly' classmates
- Help the student identify symptom onset

- **Permit the student to leave the classroom if a panic attack occurs; set a time for return (5-10 minutes)**
- **Model calm behaviour**
- **Use humour**
- **Try not to respond to the student's obsessive need for reassurance**
- **Do not criticize obsessive behaviours**
- **Recognize small improvements**
- **Modify your expectations at stressful times**
- **Give advance warnings**
- **See mistakes as a natural part of learning**



Helpful Resources

Websites:

- www.anxietycanada.com
- www.kidshealth.org
- www.aboutourkids.org

The following books are available at the Hamilton Public Library:

- **“Coping with Anxiety and Panic Attacks” by Jordan Lee**
- **“Keys to Parenting Your Anxious Child” by Katharina Manassis (Barron’s Parenting Keys Series)**
- **“Your Anxious Child: How Parents and Teachers Can Relieve Anxiety in Children” by John S. Dacey and Lisa B. Fiore**

Books for Children:

“A Hole in One - A tale from the Iris the Dragon Series” by Gayle Grass, illustrations by Graham Ross

“Up and Down the Worry Hill: A Children’s Book about Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder and Its Treatment” by Auren Pinto Wagner, illustrations by Paul A. Jutton

“Mr. Worry: A Story about OCD” written by Holly L. Niner, illustrated by Greg Swearingen

Websites for Children:

www.kidshealth.org: Stories from children and teens with anxiety difficulties – strategies and helpful tips

www.worrywisekids.org: A website for parents and children with information about types of anxiety, treatment and resources