

GUIDING ADOLESCENTS THROUGH ANXIETY: ADULT SUPPORT STRATEGIES

Nearly 32% of teens
suffer from an
anxiety disorder.

Anxiety refers to a natural response to stress or apprehension about what's to come. It's a feeling of fear, worry, or unease, typically about an imminent event or uncertain outcome. While occasional anxiety is a normal part of life, an anxiety disorder involves excessive and persistent worry and fear that can interfere with daily life, affecting a person's thoughts, emotions, and physical well-being.

Timely identification and intervention are essential for safeguarding your teen's well-being. Without proper treatment, adolescents might resort to self-medication using drugs or alcohol, and may even experience suicidal thoughts. Nevertheless, anxiety doesn't inevitably lead to self-destructive behavior.

***If you suspect your child is using drugs or alcohol, or is having thoughts of suicide, reach out to your pediatrician or dial 988 immediately.**

WHERE TO START

To better grasp your teen's situation, engage in dialogue with them. If you suspect your teen is undergoing difficulties, consider asking, "Are you experiencing feelings of anxiety?" Communicating with a teenager can be challenging. Here are a few pointers for your next conversation:



Show Empathy

Teens seek understanding and validation. Step into their perspective, articulate your comprehension, and avoid immediately providing advice. Respond using their language and the emotions they convey. For instance, acknowledge, "It seems like you might be feeling excluded."



Relate

Sharing your own teenage insecurities or experiences with anxiety can make you more relatable and approachable. Expressing your own feelings could encourage further conversation.



Start the Conversation

Regularly checking in with your teen and conveying your availability for discussions is crucial for fostering trust. Use open-ended questions, allowing them space to articulate their emotions. A helpful approach is to say, "Tell me more about that."

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

Excessive Worrying: Frequent and disproportionate.

Restlessness: Inability to relax and constant edginess.

Fatigue: Regular, unexplained tiredness not improved by rest.

Difficulty Concentrating: Trouble focusing, often seeming distracted.

Irritability: Easily agitated without clear cause.

Sleep Disturbances: Difficulty falling or staying asleep.

Muscle Tension: Tension like clenched jaws or tight muscles.

Avoid Triggers: Steering clear of anxiety-inducing situations & places.

Physical Symptoms: Rapid heartbeat, sweating, or trembling.

Panic Attacks: Intense fear episodes with physical discomfort.

Changes in Eating Habits: Significant appetite or eating changes.

Needing Reassurance: Often seeking extra confirmation or approval.

Social Withdrawal: Pulling back from social activities & relationships.

School Issues: Declining academic performance or school avoidance.

Mood Swings: Sudden, unexplained emotional changes.