

Anxiety and Stress in Gifted Children: Recognizing and managing it

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Anxiety is extremely common in gifted population



Why?

- * High excitability, intensity, and sensitivity
- * Often overthink
- * Driven by a sense of fairness and often the world is not fair
- * Social struggles
- * Asynchrony in development: Often, social and emotional development lags behind intellectual functioning

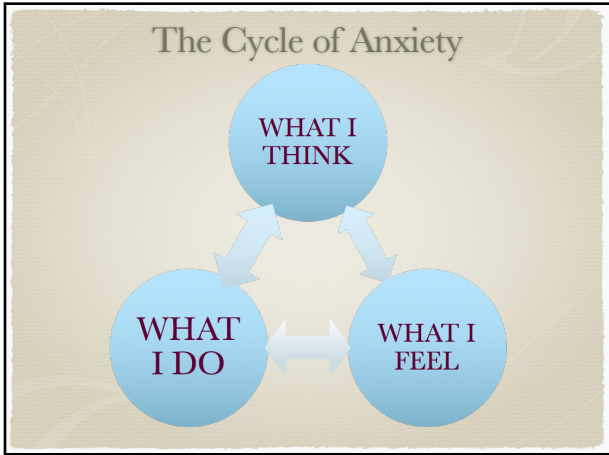
Ages and Stages: Normal Fears of Childhood

- * Infants and Toddlers: loud noises, large or unfamiliar objects, strangers
- * Preschoolers (ages 3-5): costumed characters, monsters, ghosts, fear of the dark and sleeping alone, specific fears (dogs, bugs, elevators, etc.), separation anxiety
- * Early School Age (ages 6-10): social pressures, real world dangers, death in the family, school failure
- * Middle School Age (ages 10-13): social status, making and keeping friends, avoiding enemies, academic and athletic performance
- * Adolescence: sexuality and body image, social relationships, the future, careers, moral issues

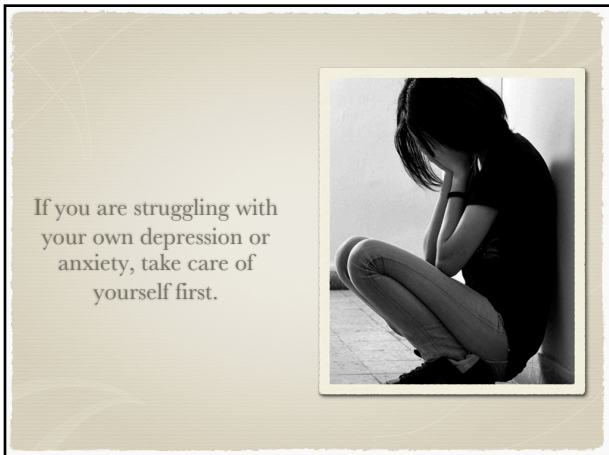
How Do We Recognize Anxiety in Gifted Children?

- * Perfectionism, excessive self criticism
- * Frequent complains of feeling tired or of aches and pains that have no medical basis
- * Irritability, because of frustration or sleep deprivation
- * Self-imposed isolation from family and peers
- * Reluctance to make decisions/choices

How can we help? Often the key is not to prevent anxiety or stress but to promote the child's confidence in handling it.







Encourage Good Sleep Hygiene

- * Avoid stimulating activities 2 hours before bed.
- * All electronics should be charged in parents' room overnight.
- * Bedtime routine should be calm, enjoyable, and relatively long. Also, the quiet time activities should take place in the room where your child sleeps.
- * Bedroom should be cool and quiet.
- * Bedroom should have a comfortable chair in it that child can go to if not asleep so that they can read or do a craft.

Sleep Hygiene (continued)

- * Once in bed, security objects in bed are helpful (instead of parents).
- * Put your child to bed drowsy but not asleep. Your child will learn to fall asleep on his or her own at bedtime and is more likely to fall back asleep on his or her own if awakened in the middle of the night.
- * Until child is asleep, checking in every 10, 15, or 20 minutes allows them to know you are present and they are safe which makes it likely they will learn to go to sleep by themselves.

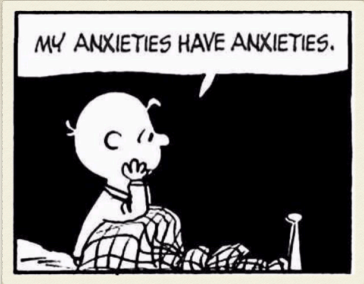
Foster a close and trusting relationship



Schedule special time with your child

- Once per day for 10-15 minutes or once per week for an hour or two
- Don't ask questions. Don't criticize. Don't give commands.
- Do offer praise. Do reflect what your child is saying. Do describe what's happening. Do express enthusiasm.





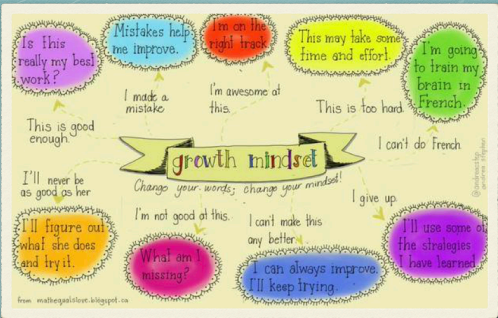
Remind them that everyone worries sometimes.

Discuss how life isn't always fair.



Helpful for Perfectionism

- * Teach growth mindset—scientifically proven benefits of struggling through it, making mistakes, and continuing to try.
- * Help your child understand that everyone experiences anxiety and mistakes when doing something new. Each time you do it, you get a little better.
- * Understand that completing work on time is more important than it being perfect and that attempting is more important than succeeding.



Growth mindset describes the underlying beliefs people have about learning and intelligence. When students believe they can get change and improve, they understand that effort makes them stronger. Therefore they put in extra time and effort, and that leads to higher achievement.

Breaking a Task Into Steps

- * What do you think the first step is here?
- * What would you want to do next?
- * How long do you think it will take?
- * By when do you want to have that part done?



To address social anxiety: Help children learn social and conversational skills.



Encourage random acts of kindness



Web Video Player ?

Enter the URL of your video from **YouTube** or **vimeo**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0v5E6yVp0I> **Set Video**

Help your child understand how their body works and how they are made not to think too much under acute stress.

Relaxation Exercise: Reset Breathing

- * Either close your eyes or focus on a visual point at least 5 feet in front of you
- * Inhale through your nose and the count of four. Pucker your lips and exhale slowly to the count of eight. Concentrate on the long sighing sound and feel the tension dissolve.
- * Repeat 10 times.



How do you know if you need professional help?

- * Behavior is physically dangerous to self or others.
- * Child verbalizes a wish to die.
- * Behavior is significantly interfering with family or school functioning (this includes academic and social functioning in both contexts).
- * When family doctor/pediatrician cannot explain the reason for ongoing and persistent physical symptoms or attribute them to any specific medical condition.
- * Parents have tried "everything" to help the child but find themselves in the same situation after months or even years.

Additional Indicators

- * Parents feel like their intuitive parenting skills that have worked well with their other children do not seem to work with this child.
- * Parents realize they are spending more of their time and energy on managing anxiety than simply being with or enjoying their child.
- * No friends or self-imposed social isolation.
- * Child has experienced a traumatic incident (something outside the norm of human experience).
- * Child asks to see a therapist.

Common Treatments for Anxiety in Children

- * Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- * Group Therapy
- * Biofeedback
- * Pharmacological Treatment

Resources and Helpful Information

- * Decades of Scientific Research that Started a Mindset Revolution. (n.d.). Retrieved October 16, 2016, from <https://www.mindsetworks.com/science/>
- * Online Programs for Children with Anxiety | Kids Anxiety Relief. (2016). Retrieved October 16, 2016, from <http://www.gozen.com/>
- * Pincus, D. (2012). *Growing up brave: Expert strategies for helping your child overcome fear, stress, and anxiety*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.
- * Rimm, S. B. (2006). *Keys to parenting the gifted child*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.
- * The Impact of Giftedness on Psychological Well-Being « SENG. (n.d.). Retrieved October 16, 2016, from <http://sengifted.org/archives/articles/the-impact-of-giftedness-on-psychological-well-being>
