

Help Your Middle Schooler Manage Stress and Anxiety

Dr. Jessica Bloomfield



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Goals for Tonight

- Recognize signs of anxiety and stress in teens,
- Differentiate between regular stress/anxiety and symptoms of a disorder,
- Understand current stressors facing teens,
- Learn how to help your kids manage stress and reduce anxiety

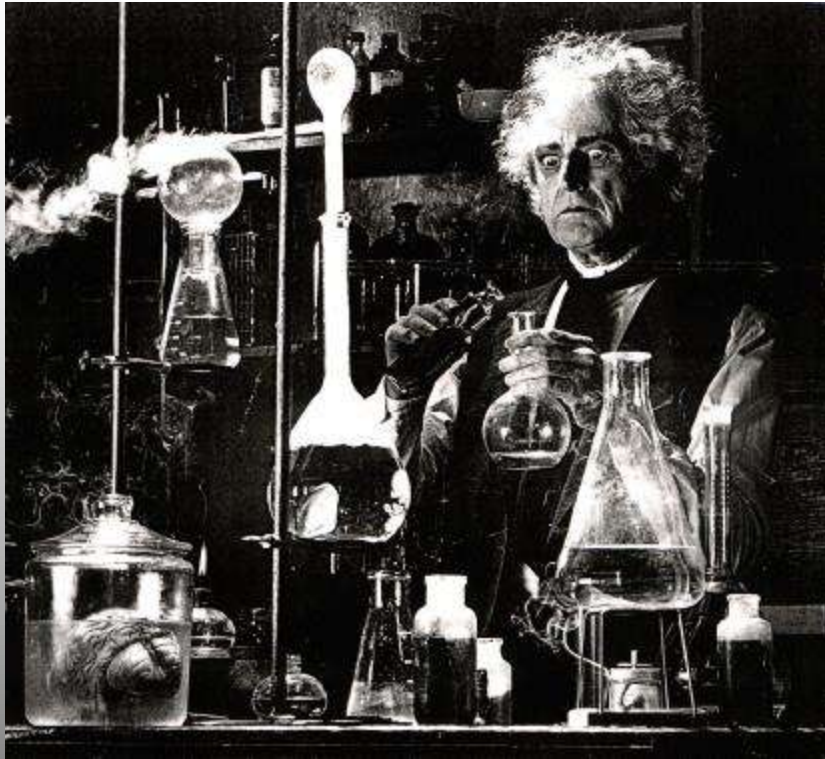


Anxiety and Stress are NORMAL

- Anxiety is a basic human emotion
 - ◆ It is a feeling of apprehension or fear.
 - ◆ The source is not always known.
- Stress is what you feel when you react to pressure from others or from yourself.
 - ◆ What is stressful to one person is not necessarily stressful to another.



What Causes Anxiety?



- Genetics
- Environment
- Biology

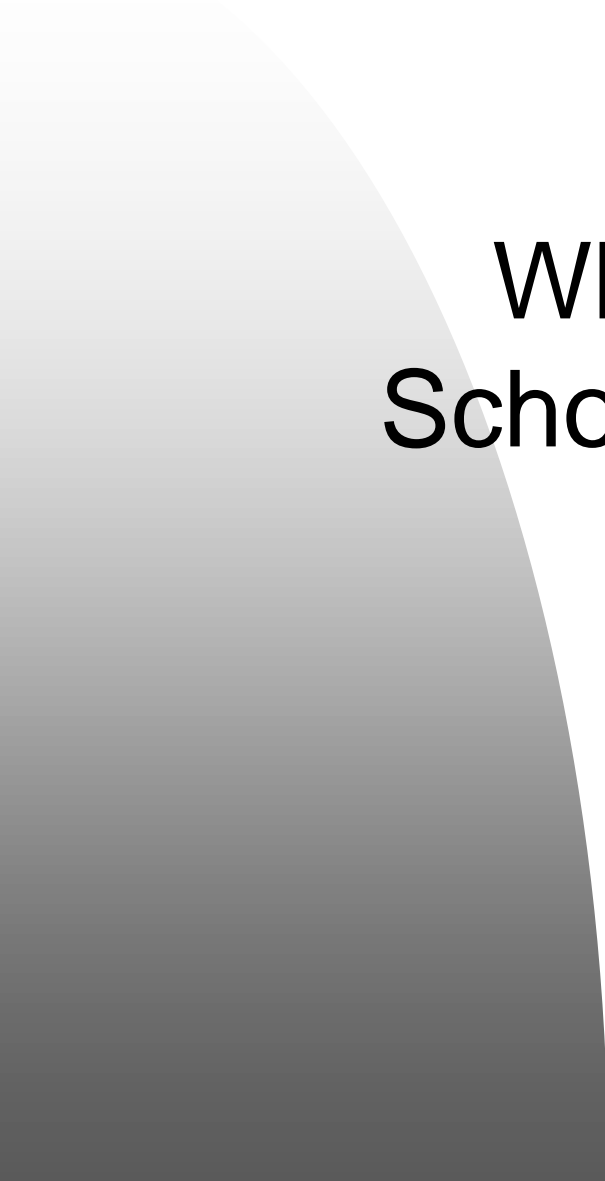
Anxiety Disorders

- About 13% of children and adolescents between 9 and 17 years old experience an anxiety disorder
- The anxiety interferes with functioning and daily activities
- Anxiety is more intense and lasts longer than appropriate



Overview of Common Anxiety Disorders

- **Panic Disorder:** a sudden, uncontrollable attack of terror that may include heart palpitations, dizziness, shortness of breath, and feeling of being out of control
- **Generalized Anxiety Disorder:** excessive anxiety and worry across many different situations lasting for at least six months
- **Social Phobia:** a persistent fear of one or more situations in which the person is exposed to possible scrutiny of others
- **Specific Phobia:** anxiety provoked consistently by exposure to a feared object or situation
- **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder:** repeated, intrusive and unwanted anxiety-producing thoughts, often accompanied by behaviors that relieve the anxiety
- **Post-traumatic Stress Disorder:** caused when someone experiences a traumatic event.



What Makes Middle Schoolers Feel Stressed and Anxious?

Sources of Anxiety

- Peers
- Family
- Changing Bodies
- School Work
- World events and issues
- Overscheduling
- Identity Development



Additional Sources

- Health problems
- Unsafe living environment/neighborhood
- Moving or changing schools
- Exposure to violence or injury
- Loss (relationships, death, etc.)

Signs of Stress or Anxiety

- Physical
 - ◆ Headaches, stomach aches, faintness, tension, sleep problems, exacerbation of chronic illness, etc.
- Behavioral
 - ◆ Avoidance, drinking and drugs, withdrawal, self harm, etc.
- Emotional
 - ◆ Anxiety, panic, depression, irritability, moodiness, anger, negativity, etc.

Impact of Anxiety?

- Avoidance
- Physiological consequences
- Feel out of control
- Decreased school performance
- Strained peer relationships
- Low self esteem
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Problems adjusting to work situations as adults

What Teens (and Adults!) Can Do to Manage Stress

- Relax
- Make a schedule that includes taking breaks. Stick to the schedule.
- Practice Yoga
- Cut back on commitments
- Exercise in moderation
- Eat regularly and healthfully
- Avoid caffeine, drugs, alcohol
- Rehearse situations that cause stress or anxiety
- Spend time with friends and family
- Listen to music
- Break big tasks into smaller components
- Seek out activities that are fun or enjoyable
- Be realistic! Learn to feel satisfied by doing a “good enough” job rather than a perfect one always.
- Ask for help when you need it
- Practice optimism
- Laugh



Parents Can Help!!!

- Help/encourage teen to practice any of the activities listed above
- Be a positive role model
- Talk to your teen
- Don't rescue from anxiety-inducing situations
- Support involvement in sports and other social activities
- Set limits
- Take an honest look at how much pressure you put on your teen
- Take care of yourself
- Keep good boundaries
- Get professional help if needed



Resources

www.education.com

National Institute of Mental Health

www.nimh.nih.gov

Teens Health

<http://teenshealth.org>

The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook

by: Edmund J. Bourne, Ph.D.

Presentation and Stress Management Handouts Available at:

www.southeastpsych.com

Contact Dr. Bloomfield:

jbloomfield@southeastpsych.com

(704) 552-0116