

ANXIETY HELPSHEET FOR PARENTS

Anxiety is a serious challenge that can get in the way of the things your teen really wants for their life. It's not an overreaction and it's not a phase. Some teens just feel the stress of growing up more heavily than others and need extra support for a time. Don't let your anxiety about their anxiety get in the way of stepping up and being the adult your kids need.

NOTICE THIS:

Your teen keeps getting stuck in fears about what *might* happen, avoiding things that used to bring them joy.



WATCH FOR THIS

1/3 of teens suffer from an anxiety disorder and many more from occasional bouts of anxiety.

Anxiety is an emotional response to everyday situations, based in a dread of what might happen ("what if's...").

Anxiety doesn't need a reason. We can even be anxious about being anxious!

Anxious teens will often respond by isolating, freezing up or getting angry when pushed.

Signals of anxiety include rapid breathing, increased heart rate, restlessness, irritability, sleep disturbance, headaches, stomach problems and difficulty concentrating.

Anxiety disorders are highly treatable through learning skills to manage stress.



SAY THIS

"Tell me how it feels when you are anxious. What's going on in your body and brain?"

"It must feel awful to carry this inside. What do you need from me as I support you?"

"Do your anxious feelings gather around a time or place? Is there any pattern we can find?"

"What have you done in the past that has been helpful? Can you do that now?"

"Your anxiety feels dreadful but it isn't dangerous. It's an emotion and there are lots of ways we can explore for taming these fearful feelings."

"Anxiety is something many people your age battle. It's hard - but we will get through this."



TRY THIS

Don't rescue. Repeatedly removing causes of anxiety will create a dependence on you and disempower your teen. Focus on equipping them to move through fearful feelings.

Help your teen create a "fight kit" with options to choose when anxiety is rising. Practice and include things like:

- Breathing: In for 5 counts and out for 5. Twenty times.
- Listing: Think of a topic (eg. dog names) and make the biggest list you can.
- Releasing: Tense then release each muscle, from toes to forehead.
- Observing: Look around and name everything you see.

Guide your teen in breaking big challenges down into manageable steps and celebrate each small victory.



RESOURCES

To access all of our helpsheets online, visit youthunlimited.com/teentools

Remember:

"Give all your cares to him because he cares for you."

(1 Peter 5:7)