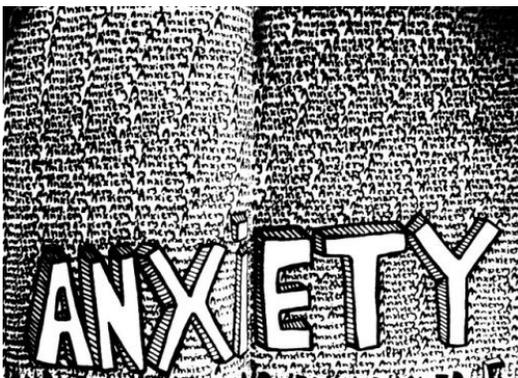


COUNSELING & CAREER CENTER NEWS

LSHS Guidance Team 425-335-1571 For more info: <http://viking.lkstevens.wednet.edu/page/1987>



How many students have an anxiety disorder?

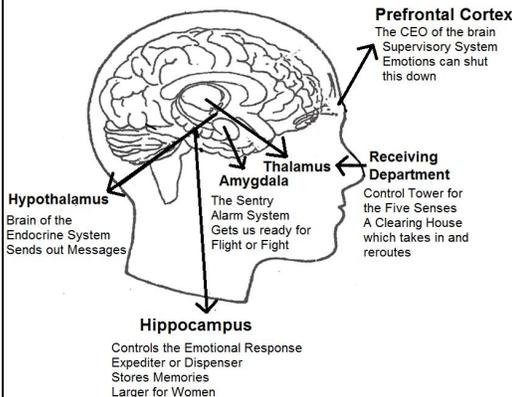
About **30% of girls and 20% of boys—totaling 6.3 million teens**—have had an anxiety disorder, according to data from the National Institute of Mental Health (2015); 5.9% have “severe” anxiety disorders. Anxiety is the most common mental-health disorder in the United States and is often comorbid with other disorder groups, such as depression.



What is the difference between normal stress/worries and an anxiety disorder?

Feeling anxious can help people focus, get things done, and can even enhance performance. However, anxiety disorders are different. Some examples could include:

“Normal” Worry	Anxiety Disorder
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Worrying doesn’t get in the way of a student’s daily activities & responsibilities → Students are able to control their worrying → Student’s worries are limited to a specific, small number of realistic concerns → Student’s bouts of anxiety last for a short period, including possible fear and/or insomnia following an event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Student’s anxiety significantly disrupts school, job, activities, or social life → Student’s anxiety is uncontrollable → Student worries about all sorts of things, and tends to expect the worst → Students worry almost every day, for a long period and suffer from anxiety years after an event



What are the causes of anxiety disorders?

Researchers are learning that anxiety disorders run in families, and that they have a biological basis, much like allergies or diabetes and other disorders. Anxiety disorders may develop from a complex set of risk factors, including genetics, brain chemistry, personality, and life events. (from ADAA). The “flight or fight” (or acute stress) response help us survive “true alarms,” or direct dangers, however, it becomes instinctual for students with anxiety to respond to “false alarms,” or perceived dangers, similarly.

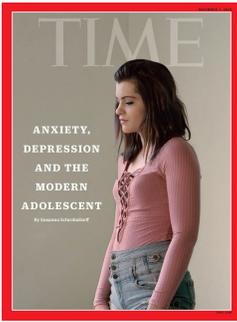
Curious about current trends (adolescent brain development, treatment options, etc)?

<https://childmind.org/downloads/2017-CMHR-PDF.pdf> And of course...there’s

an app for that! Mental Health Apps & ratings (ADAA): <https://adaa.org/finding-help/mobile-apps> - and did you know that our LSHS app added a “Get Help” button that leads to a SAP referral and Crisis information? Some examples of Mindfulness exercises are on p.3; mindfulness has been shown to help anxiety, low mood, and stress.

Why have the number of teens with anxiety increased?

High school students today have more anxiety symptoms and are twice as likely to see a mental health professional as teens in the 1980s (Social Indicators Research, 2015). The American College Health Association’s Annual Survey of Students notes that 62 percent (2016) of undergraduates reported “overwhelming anxiety” in the previous year. This rose from 50 percent in 2011. No definitive study exists that pinpoints causation. However, many professionals note possible contributing factors such as: loss of community connection & support, “helicopter” parenting, technology, false expectations of being ‘happy’ all of the time, poverty, disrupted family hierarchy, lack of delayed gratification skills, sleep deprivation, level of physical activity, and children/teens’ diet.



Continued...

Excerpt from the Nov 7, 2016 issue of TIME magazine: “Conventional wisdom says kids today are over supervised, prompting some parenting critics to look back fondly to the days of latchkey kids. But now, even though teens may be in the same room with their parents, they might also, thanks to their phones, be immersed in a painful emotional tangle with dozens of their classmates. Or they’re looking at other people’s lives on Instagram and feeling self-loathing (or worse). Or they’re caught up in a discussion about suicide with a bunch of people on the other side of the country they’ve never even met via an app that most adults have never heard of.”

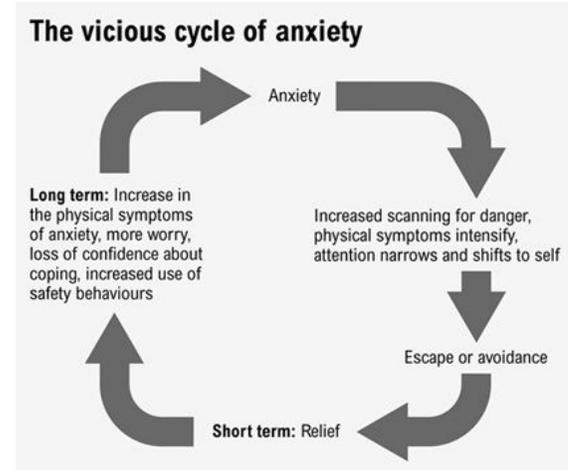
How does this apply to my classroom and/or work with students?

As you are probably aware, students may (or may not) exhibit the physical (see picture below right for possible symptoms), behavioral, and psychological symptoms in the classroom, such as:

- excessive worry and/or apprehension
- difficulties making decisions and/or focusing
- Patterns of missed deadlines, poor quality of work or grades
- dysfunctional thinking patterns (distorted ways of thinking about situations, themselves, and others) such as catastrophizing, discounting the positive, overgeneralizations, predicting the future in a negative light, etc. More subtle signs include inflexibility, over-reactivity, intense emotion, and impulsivity.



Schools, parents, and therapists have the difficult job of trying to figure out if they should protect anxious teenagers or push them to face their fears. Many students with 504 Plans for Anxiety Disorders (and often more) have accommodations to address the symptoms, such as:



As the chart shows, habitual avoidance or avoidance coping is harmful to students in the long run - when do we, as educators, gently encourage or challenge students to overcome habitual avoidance?

Specialist Access Alternative Presentations Alternative Test/Work Setting	Limited Public Speaking Frequent Breaks
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It can be difficult to determine how to interpret/put in practice some accommodations per student’s need, such as “Alternative Presentations.” Here are a few ideas from LSHS teachers:

- Make a video of their presentation to present to the class or teacher
- Present in front of a small group of their choosing or to the teacher at lunch
- Arrange ahead of time with the student what you/they can expect (if you would find it helpful, a sample form to copy, paste & make your own is on p.3)

***It is important to note, that the goal for these students is to help students develop enough coping strategies so that they CAN present in front of a small group or the class eventually. While we want to support students, we also want to encourage them to “avoid avoiding” whenever we can.

How else could a teacher help students with anxiety?

The good news is that you are probably doing most (if not all) of the suggestions already:

- Model self-regulation
- Continue to encourage/praise positive behaviors (remember LOVE’EMUP?)
- Suggest/provide ways to access additional academic support - Learning Commons, peer tutor, or your before/after school availability
- Consult with and/or refer to counselor for academic, personal/social, or career support
- Goal setting and decision-making

Mindfulness Exercises for students (that won't disrupt the class)

Giant Strides

Lift your feet eight times. Wait ten seconds. Then repeat the sequence two more times.
Imagine you're taking huge strides over hills and mountains, like a giant. The movement is slow and powerful, your immense body covering miles with every step.
...Remain sitting comfortably in your seat, with your back as upright as possible.
Raise the heel of one of your feet, keeping the ball of your foot firmly on the floor. Then press the ball of your foot down into the floor.

Ocean Waves

Close your eyes and imagine you are an ocean wave. Breathe in and out deeply as if you are an ocean wave crashing on the beach. Alternate the frequency of your breath to become shorter and longer waves.

Shoulder Shrugs

Roll your shoulders back and down so they are away from your ears.
Breathe deeply in through your nose as you raise your shoulders up by your ears. Breathe out and lower your shoulders. Repeat movement 3-5 times and feel the tension melt away.

Rainbow Walk -

The instructions are very simple: look for something red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. Keep going through the colors in order.

Counting Sounds -

Mentally count or list all the different sounds that you hear.

5-Finger Breathing -

As you breathe in and out, trace around your fingers. On the in-breath, trace up the outside of your left pinky finger with your right index finger. On the out-breath, trace down the other side. Repeat for the next four fingers. Notice how you feel afterwards.

Tense/release -

Tense a particular muscle group (like your hands or your feet)- tense to the count of 5, take a deep breath, then release the tension and exhale. Repeat.

Breathe -

Inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth. Breathe in for 4 counts, hold it for 4 counts, breathe out for 4 counts, hold it for 4 counts, and then repeat.

Control the Volume -

When the feelings get to be unbearable or overwhelming, imagine turning down the volume (like a TV or stereo) – turn down the volume on the emotions.

Sample information form (students could fill out):

Name: _____ Date: _____

Accommodation/s I'd like to talk about: _____

I want you (my teacher) to know: _____

Best time for communication (between teacher/student - circle)?

Before School

After School

In class

By email

More information:

<https://adaa.org/sites/default/files/Anxiety%20Disorders%20in%20Children.pdf>

<https://childmind.org/article/classroom-anxiety-in-children/>

A long but super interesting article from New York Times:

https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/11/magazine/why-are-more-american-teenagers-than-ever-suffering-from-severe-anxiety.html?_r=1

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