



# Anxiety



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Clinical Psychology PSX-002

# What is Anxiety?

✦ Defined by American Psychological Association

✦ Anxiety is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure (Anxiety, n.d.)

# Symptoms

✦ What are some of the general symptoms of Anxiety?

✦ Feelings of panic, fear, and uneasiness.

✦ Problems sleeping.

✦ Cold or sweaty hands and/or feet.

✦ Shortness of breath.

✦ Heart palpitations.

✦ An inability to be still and calm.

✦ Dry mouth.

(“Anxiety Disorders,” n.d.)

# Anxiety in Children

✦ Anxiety is a normal part of childhood

✦ Example: Seeing a scary movie, being able to be comforted. This anxiety is temporary.

✦ An anxiety disorder is not a normal part of childhood.

(Children and Teens, n.d.)

✦ "Anxiety disorders are among the most prevalent psychiatric disorders experienced by children" (Affrunti & Woodruff-Borden, 2015)

# Childhood Anxiety

## Disorders

✦ Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

✦ Obsessive Compulsion Disorder (OCD)

✦ Panic Disorder

✦ Separation Anxiety Disorder

✦ Social Anxiety Disorder

✦ Selective Mutism

✦ Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

✦ Specific Phobias

# Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

✦ "excessive worry about a variety of topics"  
(Carroll, 2014)

✦ When a child has GAD they

✦ Tend to worry about many things

✦ Very hard on themselves

✦ May seek constant approval or reassurance from others

✦ Strive for perfection

(“Childhood Anxiety Disorders”, n.d.)

# Symptoms

✦ Excessive worry

✦ restlessness

✦ fatigue

✦ difficulty concentrating

✦ irritability

✦ muscle tension

✦ sleep disturbance

(Davis, 2013, p. 425)

# Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

- ✦ Characterized by unwanted and intrusive thoughts (which are obsessions)
- ✦ Feeling compelled to constantly repeat ritual or routines to try and ease the anxiety (which are compulsions)
- ✦ Most children are diagnosed by age 10  
(“Childhood Anxiety Disorders”, n.d.)



# Common Obsessions

- ✦ Fear of dirt and germs and other contaminations
- ✦ Violation of religious or moral rules
- ✦ Harm to self or others
- ✦ Guilt, self-doubt
- ✦ Aggressive thoughts
- ✦ Body concerns

(Davis, 2013, p.422)

# Common Compulsions

- ✦ Washing or cleaning
- ✦ Counting, checking, arranging possessions
- ✦ Praying, confessing,
- ✦ Seeking reassurance

(Davis, 2013, p. 422)

# Panic Disorder

- ✦ Usually diagnosed when a child has two or more unexpected panic or anxiety attacks
- ✦ Meaning that they came suddenly and for no reason

(“Childhood Anxiety Disorders”, n.d.)

# Symptoms

## General symptoms

- ✦ shortness of breath
- ✦ chest pain
- ✦ fear of losing control or “going crazy”

For children most common are

- ✦ heart palpitations
- ✦ chest pain
- ✦ nausea

(Davis, 2013, p. 419-420)

# Separation Anxiety Disorder

- ✦ “When separation anxiety disorder occurs, a child experiences excessive anxiety away from home or when separated from parents or caregivers” (“Childhood Anxiety Disorders” n.d.)
- ✦ It is more common with ages seven to nine

# Symptoms

- ✦ May develop extreme homesickness even during brief separation
- ✦ Difficulty at bedtime
- ✦ Often a fear of a disaster befalling the primary attachment figure in their absence.

(Davis, 2013, p. 425)

# Social Anxiety Disorder

✦ intense fear of social and performance situations and activities

✦ Like:

✦ Being called on in class

✦ Starting an conversation with a peer

✦ Social anxiety can effect a child's school performance

✦ Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sa8zUrMRDzU>

(“Childhood Anxiety Disorders” n.d.)

# Selective Mutism

◆ What is it?

◆ When a child refuses to speak or talk in certain situations

◆ A child can have normal behavior and talk at home or in comfortable situations, which surprises parents when teacher reports that they refuse to speak at school

(“Childhood Anxiety Disorders”, n.d.)



# Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

- ✦ For a child or adolescent to be diagnosed with PTSD, the event must be
  - ✦ "traumatic enough to produce feelings of extreme fear, helplessness, or horror (or in children, developmentally atypical disorganized or agitated behavior)" (Davis, 2013, p. 423)

# Symptoms

- ◆ Other symptoms of PTSD include
  - ◆ intrusive thoughts or nightmares
  - ◆ avoidance of trauma-related stimuli or memories
  - ◆ increased psychological arousal not present before the trauma
- ◆ These symptoms must be present for more than 1 month

# Specific Phobias

- ✦ A specific Phobia is “marked, persistent, unusual, or excessive fear of a specific object or situation” (Davis, 2014, p. 420)
- ✦ It is important to note that some fear in children is normal during their development (Davis, 2014)

# Specific Phobias

## ◆ Possible subtypes of phobias

◆ animal type

◆ natural environment type (i.e., storms or heights)

◆ blood-injection-injury type

◆ situation type (i.e., tunnels, elevators, flying)

◆ or other type (which could include fear of sickness or a child's fear of costumed characters)

(Davis, 2013, p. 420)

# Specific Phobias

- ✦ Usually develops in later childhood
- ✦ To be diagnosed, a child under 18 must present symptoms for at least 6 months because some irrational fears in children are common
- ✦ Most common in children are animal and natural environment

(Davis, 2013, p 420-421)

# Symptoms

- ✦ Crying
- ✦ Tantrums
- ✦ Freezing in place
- ✦ Clinging to a familiar adult
- ✦ avoidance headaches and stomachaches

Children may also not see that their fear is unreasonable



✦ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aVvTEzvAtHo>

# Treatments

- ✦ Just like another medical condition, Anxiety disorders need to be treated
- ✦ There is no one "best" treatment that works for every child
- ✦ Most common used is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)



# Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

## ✦ What is CBT?

- ✦ CBT "is a type of talk therapy that has been scientifically shown to be effective in treating anxiety disorders" ("Treatment", n.d.)

# Other forms of Therapy

- ◆ There are also other forms of therapy used to help treat anxiety disorders
- ◆ Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT)
- ◆ Dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT)

# Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT)

- ✦ “uses strategies of acceptance and mindfulness
- ✦ (living in the moment, and experiencing things without judgment) as a way to cope with unwanted thoughts, feelings, and sensations” (“Treatment”, n.d.)

# dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT)

- ✦ “emphasizes taking responsibility for one's problems and helps children examine how they deal with conflict and intense negative emotions” (“Treatment” n.d.)

# Medication

- ✦ Medication can be useful in treating anxiety disorders
- ✦ In fact "a major research study found that a combination of CBT and an antidepressant worked better for children ages 7-17 than either treatment alone" ("Treatment", n.d.)
- ✦ Can be short-term or long-term depending on the how severe

# Medication cont

- ✦ Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) are the medications most commonly used in childhood and adult anxiety treatment
- ✦ some SSRIs for the treatment of pediatric obsessive-compulsive disorder have been approved by The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
- ✦ However there are some medicine such as tricyclic antidepressants and benzodiazepines, that are less commonly used to treat children

(“Treatment”, n.d.)

# Managing Anxiety

## (in general)

- ✦ Exercising
- ✦ Good nutrition
- ✦ Adequate amount of sleep
- ✦ Stress reduction
- ✦ Limit alcohol and caffeine consumption
- ✦ Learn what triggers anxiety
- ✦ Talk to someone

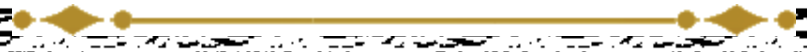


# Questions?





# Extra video



✦ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4VbxjsO9IYI>

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