

Evidence-Based but Counterintuitive Strategies to Help Children and Teens Living with Anxiety

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Intelligence, Creativity, Compassion...



“You can’t tell if you burnt your toast or if the curtains are on fire
based on how loud the alarm sounds”



Adaptive Anxiety vs. Disordered Anxiety

Adaptive Anxiety

- Keeps us safe
- A response to real danger
- Prevents the repeating of mistakes

Disordered Anxiety

- Results in functional impairment
- Equivalent to a “false alarm”
- Leads to unnecessary avoidance

Avoidance and Anxiety are Teammates



Why this is so important

Children and Adolescents

- Median age of onset 11 – earliest of all forms of psychopathology
- 8 % of children between ages 13 and 18 currently have an anxiety disorder
- 31.9% will have an anxiety disorder between the ages of 13 and 18
- 8.3% will have “severe” anxiety disorder
- Only 18 % of these teens receive treatment

Adolescents Girls

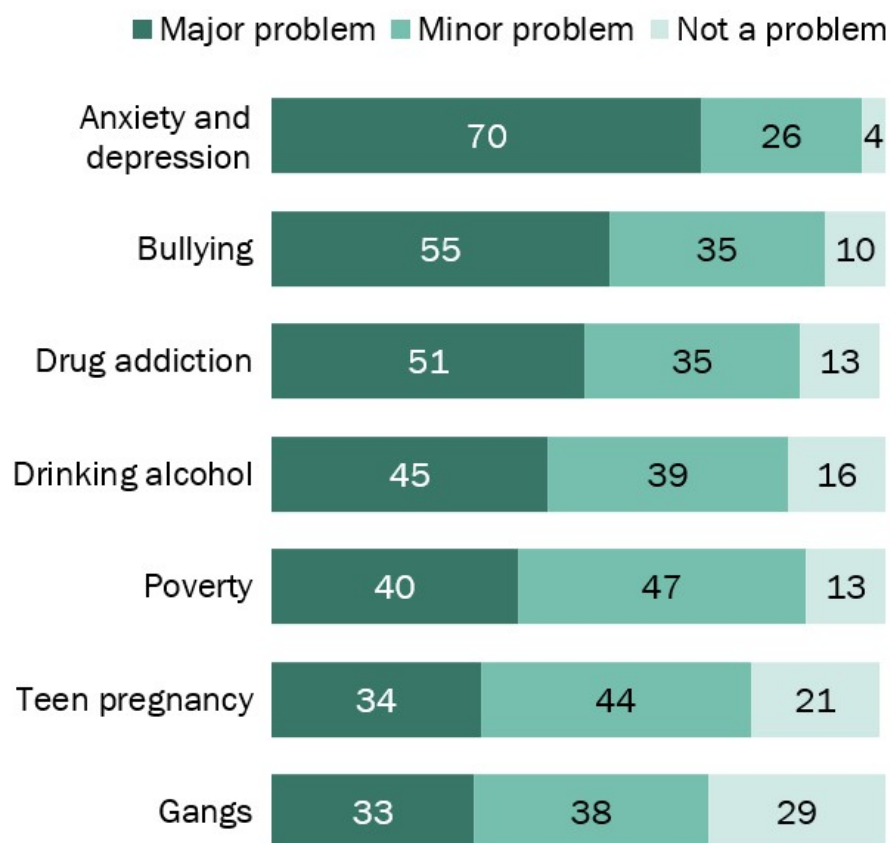
- 38% of girls will have at least one anxiety disorder between the ages of 13 and 18, (compared with 26.1% for boys)
- Compared with 4.2% of girls will have ADHD, 10.2% will have a substance abuse disorder, 3.8% will have an eating disorder

It Didn't Use to be This Way

- Teens are 5 to 8 times more likely to show symptoms of an anxiety disorder compared with teens during WWII and the Great Depression
- Depression in teens increased by 37% between 2005 and 2014
- College freshmen report highest stress and lowest mental health in 25 years

Anxiety and depression top list of problems teens see among their peers

% of teens saying each of the following is a ____ among people their age in the community where they live



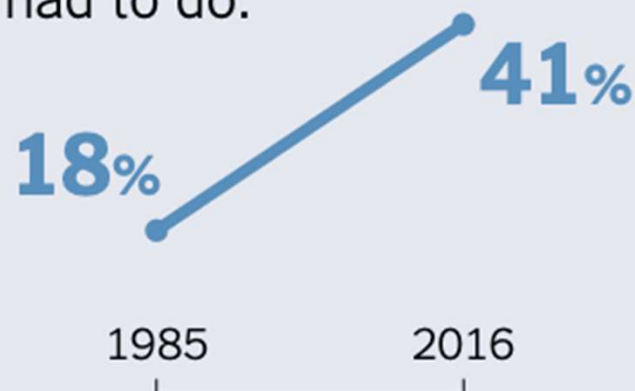
Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. teens ages 13 to 17 conducted Sept. 17-Nov. 25, 2018.

"Most U.S. Teens See Anxiety and Depression as a Major Problem Among Their Peers"

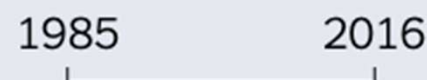
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

HEALTH

In the past year, felt overwhelmed by all you had to do.



Believe you are above average or better in terms of emotional health.



“Pooled estimates obtained in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic suggest that 1 in 4 youth globally are experiencing clinically elevated depression symptoms, while 1 in 5 youth are experiencing clinically elevated anxiety symptoms. These pooled estimates, which increased over time, are double of prepandemic estimates.”

Racine et al., 2021

Supporting Students During the Storm



Fire alarm at the top of the Empire State Building



Self-Coaching

- “Right now I’m having a scary thought that...”
- “Fear is temporary and harmless”
- “Scary thoughts can’t hurt me”
- “Just because I feel scared doesn’t mean anything bad is going to happen”
- “Just because I am scared doesn’t mean I can’t do it”
- “I am stronger than my fear”

“ You can be Scared and Brave at
the same time”

Fill in the Blank:

I can be anxious and _____
at the same time.

Importance of Resilience

- Foster connections
- Model altruism
- Structured Routine
- Take breaks and have unstructured time
- Teach and model self-care
- Acceptance of change
- Help children move towards goals
- Nurture a positive self-view
- Model optimistic outlook
- Facilitate self-discovery

“It’s not less of a car. You’re just driving it on the wrong surface”



Tolerance for Uncertainty

“Anxiety’s Kryptonite”

- A skill we all have
- Cognitive Reappraisal
- Acceptance model

Self-Efficacy

- An individual's belief in his/her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments
- I know I can do it because...
 - Mastery experiences
 - Vicarious Experiences
 - Verbal Persuasion
 - Emotional States

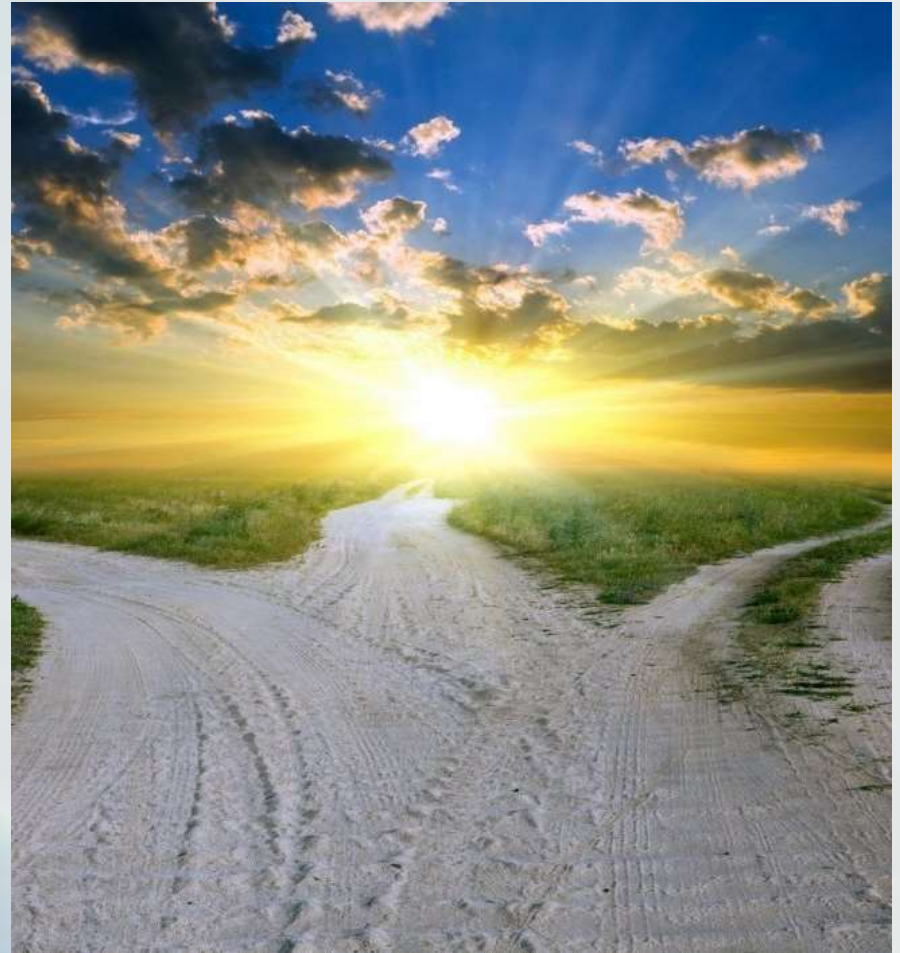
Why Does the Bird not Fear the Branch Breaking?



Flexibility is Strength



Which is the Path to Success?



“I’ve given you what you want. Now go away and never beg again.”



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