

Cheltenham Communities That Care

STRESS & ANXIETY

Have you ever felt stressed over a disagreement with friends, family, or co-workers? Have you been anxious about an upcoming meeting or presentation? While such emotions may be uncomfortable, it is normal to feel stressed or anxious about situations that we face, like going to an audition, participating in a sporting event, performing in a show, interviewing for a job, or taking an important test.

Stress and anxiety are part of everyday life. Sometimes these emotions can be useful tools. They can push us to prepare for an event, strive to do our best, learn new skills, and even motivate us to reach out to others for support. However, there are other times when stress and anxiety can be overwhelming. What is sometimes seen as a test of strength for some can also be a negative, even terrifying, experience for others.

What Is The Difference Between Stress And Anxiety?

Stress is how a person's body reacts to difficult situations, such as danger, challenges, and threats, or emotions, like anticipation and excitement. Reactions can be emotional and can cause worry, tension, and pressure.

Anxiety is how a person's body and/or mind responds to stress, even if there is no immediate problem. This means a person could suffer from anxiety because they are merely thinking about applying to college, auditioning for a solo, or planning a first date. Even if the event will not take place for several weeks or months, there may still be a fear of its future outcome.



Symptoms Of Stress And Anxiety Include:

- An increase or decrease in sleep
- Having nightmares
- Eating more or less than normal
- Feelings of irritability and anger
- Difficulty concentrating or paying attention, including at school
- Headaches and/or stomachaches
- A rise in heart rate and/or blood pressure
- Withdrawing from friends, family, enjoyed activities, and school
- Constant fears, frustrations, and worries
- Panic attacks

While normal levels of stress can subside in a matter of hours, anxiety can sometimes last for weeks, months, or even years. When struggling with anxiety becomes an extended battle, it's important to address the issue and seek treatment.

Recommended Coping Strategies Include:

- Having conversations with caring and responsible people
- Eating a healthy diet
- Engaging in physical activity
- Participating in music, art, writing, acting, and/or dance
- Practicing meditation techniques
- Getting enough sleep
- Seeking mental health/counseling services



What Can You Do As A Parent/Caregiver If Your Teen Is Stressed or Anxious?

- Acknowledge that your child's emotions are valid
- Ask questions about what your child is feeling and **listen** carefully to the answers
- Be accepting, reassuring, nonjudgmental, supportive, empathetic, and understanding
- Avoid telling your child how they should feel
- Brainstorm **copng skills** that might reduce stress and anxiety
- Discuss and role play scenarios that may be stressful
- Give **positive reinforcement and praise** when successes are achieved, as well as support and reassurance when setbacks occur.
- Act as a positive role model for your child
- Talk regularly about daily activities, issues, and interests, in addition to what causes their stress and anxiety
- **Get rid of any mental health stigmas** that you or your family might have
- **Seek assistance and schedule counseling services** when requested/as needed
- Discuss social media use, especially the harms of sending inappropriate images and messages. Advise your child not to send any inappropriate images or messages, and to inform you of any threats, inappropriate images, or bullying that they receive. Tell them to block anyone sending these messages.

Aldersgate

Child & Family Focus

Centers for Disease Control

Anxiety and Depression in Children

John Hopkins Medicine

Anxiety and Stress in Teens

HelpGuide.org

Anxiety in Children and Teens: A Parent's Guide

National Library of Medicine

Teens and stress: When it's more than worry



Local Resources & References