



# **Helping Students Manage Anxiety and Depression in the Classroom**

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# Anxiety and Depression

## ANXIETY

**Anxiety** disorders frequently have intense, excessive and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations. Often, anxiety disorders involve repeated episodes of sudden feelings of intense anxiety and fear or terror that reach a peak within minutes (panic attacks).

**Depression** is a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest. It affects how you feel, think and behave and can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems.

## DEPRESSION



2/4/20XX

# Anxiety and Depression in the Classroom

## Anxiety

- Visibly Tense
- Social withdrawal
- Headaches
- Nausea/Upset Stomach
- Panic Attacks
- “Time Traveling”
- Obsession with Perfection
- Assuming the worst

## Depression

- Cognitive/Memory problems
- Concentration problems
- Attention problems
- Negative view of self, world, and future
- Difficulty making decisions
- Feels loss of control
- Sad mood
- Social withdrawal

Up to 25%1 of students in your classroom may be experiencing anxiety at a level to be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder.

Examples of shaming statements are:  
"Why would you do that?" or "What is the matter with you?" or "You are acting crazy!"

Develop a plan for communication both during class and outside of class.

Take Concerns Seriously

Offer Validation and Acceptance

Avoid Shaming

Do Not "Call Out" Students in Class

Encourage Student to Tell if Struggling

Normalize and validate that you acknowledge their feelings are understandable.

During a private meeting, ask the student about their fears, what coping strategies they find to be most effective, and how you might be helpful. Develop specific statements to use when supporting your student in a triggering moment.

# Anxiety in the Classroom

## Distressing Situation

## Coping Thought

I am worried I won't pass this test

I can breathe through these feelings and continue with the test

I am never going to understand this math, I will fail, I will not be able to graduate.

I can accept these feelings. They are not facts.

# Coping Thoughts Exercise

# Examples of Coping Thoughts

"This situation won't last forever."

"I've been through many other difficult experiences, and I've survived."

"My feelings are uncomfortable right now, but I can accept them."

"I can be anxious and still deal with the situation."

"I can ride this out and not let it get to me."

"These are just my feelings, and eventually they'll go away."

"I am not in danger right now."

"This situation sucks, but it's only temporary."

"I am strong and I can deal with this."



# Depression Strategies

- Remind the student of his or her strengths using genuine, descriptive praise
- Help student focus on staying in the present- what to focus on today
- Rephrase your students' extreme language (e.g. "They all hate me." to "Some of these kids aren't my friends." or "I'm stupid." to "I need a little more practice.", etc)
- Encourage small steps- attendance vs participation
- Provide support if student is withdrawing- "I will come ask you to join if you withdraw"
- Model positive self-talk
- Reflective listening

# In Classroom techniques for coping

## Difficulty Studying

- Structured study partners, groups
- Focus on structured memorization and aids
- Time must be scheduled and outcome based- learn number of facts, complete in a timed fashion
- Study prompts- partial outlines, note templates

## Difficulty Test Taking

- Increase (not decrease!) structure...timed responses
- Practice tests in same environment.
- Consider reading questions and allowing to recite or write responses-be consistent

## Difficulty Concentrating

- Increase structure
- Seat near instructor (proximity control)
- Establish verbal and nonverbal cues to redirect attention
- Use concrete, simple directions (and check for comprehension)
- Disrupt anxiety-based behaviors- fidgeting pencil chewing- hand on desk etc.



# Communicating with Parents

## Before There is a Problem

- Parent Survey, student likes, dislikes, strengths, weaknesses
- Introductory email describing teaching goals and expectations
- Welcome parent's communications via App or email.
- Relationship is key

## Once a Problem is Identified

- Schedule a meeting to discuss concerns
- Present with student's strengths and achievements
- Present concerns clearly and with examples
- Manage own emotions
- Collect information regarding behavior at home
- Normalize anxiety and depression and reassure there is help
- Refer if necessary

# Sample Script for Parents

- “ I’ve observed Sally struggling with anxiety (depression) in the classroom. I first observed some fidgeting, difficulty concentrating, negative or anxious statements..(whatever you are specifically observing). I discussed this with her developed a plan for testing, studying, (describe efforts to help). I am speaking to you know to keep you informed and ask if you have noticed anything similar at home? (Gather information). I am going to keep an eye on how this may impact her performance and let you know how things are going. Please reach out if you notice anything concerning.

PRESENTATION TITLE

10

2/4/20XX

# Suicide and Self Harm

- The difference is “intent.” The intent of suicide is to end one’s life and end pain and suffering. The intent of self-harm behavior is seeking relief and release from emotional pain and stress.
- Both need intervention, notification and referral



# Self-Harm Warning Signs

- Many cuts/burns on the wrists, arms, legs, back, hips, or stomach
- Wearing baggy or loose clothes (e.g., wearing hoodies or long sleeves during hot days to conceal the wounds)
- Always making excuses for having cuts, marks or wounds on the body
- Finding razors, scissors, lighters or knives in strange places (i.e., the nightstand drawer or under the bed)
- Spending long periods locked in a bedroom or bathroom
- Isolation and avoiding social situations



# Suicide Warning Signs



- Talking about wanting to die or to kill oneself
- Fascinating over or preoccupying oneself with death
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly
- Isolating or withdrawing oneself
- Displaying mood swings
- Telling loved ones goodbye
- Setting one's affairs in order
- Giving things away, such as prized possessions

# Refer

- Mandated Reporting-
- Suicide Assessment:
  - “Are you having thoughts of harming yourself?”
  - “Do you have a plan?”
  - Yes to both is an automatic report for evaluation
- Notify Parents, follow procedure for law enforcement or parent escort
- Copy to parents
- Safety Planning:
  - Identify two people you can trust to talk to if feelings intensify
  - Apps, templates etc.
  - Copy to them to take a picture of and keep in their phone
- Resource Navigator--- Identify the referral

# Community Referral

## Suggesting a Community Referral Provide Information

### Referral

- Relationship is key
- State facts and remain neutral
- Validate concerns
- Normalize help
- Resource List
- Resource Navigator
- Explain the process
- Warm Hand Off
- Follow Up





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**Thank you!**