

# Student Anxiety: How to Cope

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Recently, I read an article about the increased level of student anxiety arising in our schools. National research indicates that one-third of teenagers will experience an anxiety disorder.



It is expected that 8 percent of students will be seriously impaired due to anxiety. These results indicate an increase from prior decades.

Student anxiety may arise from a range of causes from academic pressure to social forces. It reveals itself in younger children as well as in adolescents. Younger children may become clingy. When older children feel overwhelmed, they may become aggressive or refuse to participate in school activities.

## Parents Want to Help

How can parents help their children through these anxious times? Parents' gut reaction would often be to remove or lessen the source of the anxiety. For example, remove the child from a class that causes anxiety, or

talk to the teacher and ask him/ her to reduce the work load for the child. This type of avoidance or reduction may not help the child deal with the issue that is causing the anxiety. In fact, avoidance may cause the problem to get worse.

## Are We Making It Worse?

First, parents can look at themselves. Are they contributing to the anxiety about the future by being anxious themselves? Parent's negative comments and conversations about the future or current issues may cause their children fear and worry. Children need reassurance that together their family can and will get through any difficult times.

## Fear vs. Reality

Parents can also help by having their children describe what they are anxious about. For example, what are they afraid might happen if they stand up and give an oral report? How can they prepare to reduce the chances of problems? What can they do if a problem occurs?

Then after the event, they can debrief. How did it turn out? How did you handle problems that came up? How do you feel?

Often, the child will see that their fear was much worse

than the reality. This process will help them learn to recognize their anxiety and know they can cope with it.

## Anxious Times

Unfortunately, children face much more anxiety causing situations than their parents did. We cannot turn back the clock and make it go away, but we can teach our children how to cope. We can reassure them that they are not alone in their struggles. Parents' love and affection for their children can be the foundation on which they face the world.

With love and affection,

Rosemarie

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