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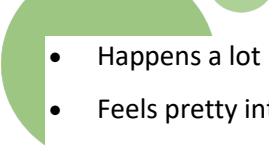
Anxiety is our body's normal reaction to perceived danger or important events. It can be like an internal alarm system that alerts us to danger and helps our body prepare to deal with it. For example, anxiety allows you to jump out of the way of a speeding car. It also lets us know when something important is happening and helps us perform at our best. Anxiety can prompt you to bring home your textbook to study for a final exam or motivate you to practice for a class presentation. Anxiety is something that everyone experiences from time to time.

Anxiety triggers something called the **“fight-flight-freeze”** response (F3). This automatic response affects our thoughts, body, and behaviours. When faced with a potential threat, your thoughts focus on the danger, your body revs up to help protect you, and you take action (fight, flight, or freeze). Imagine that you're out walking your dog and a skunk pops out of the bushes. You have thoughts about the skunk such as “What if it sprays us?” which helps you identify the potential danger. Your body also reacts (heart beats faster, muscle tense up) to help you get prepared to protect yourself. Then, you take action, such as remaining very still and hoping the skunk doesn't notice you (freeze) or running away (flight). As you can see, anxiety protects you. In fact, without it, we'd be extinct!

The F3 system is critical to our survival from true threat or danger, but what happens when there is no real danger? Interestingly, anxiety can also trigger this system into action when we believe there is a threat or danger even if there isn't. For example, you may yell at your mum for bugging you about taking your driving test when you don't feel ready (fight). Or you may call your dad to pick you up early from a new activity because you don't feel comfortable around unfamiliar people (flight). Or, you may feel as though your mind goes blank when the teacher asks you a question (freeze). These are examples of anxiety triggering the F3 alarm even though these situations are not really dangerous. We call this a “false alarm”. Although anxiety protects us in the face of real danger, it can become a problem when it

goes off when there is no **real** or immediate danger (ie. like a smoke alarm that goes off when you're just making toast).

Anxiety may be a problem if you notice that it:

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- Happens a lot
 - Feels pretty intense
 - Is upsetting and causes you distress
 - Stops you from doing fun and important things like going to school dances or parties, making friends or dating, getting your homework done, getting a job or your driver's license.

Where do I start if I feel I might have Anxiety?

Our lifestyle can have a big impact on how we feel. When we don't take care of ourselves, we can experience several problems, including sleep difficulties, fatigue, low energy, trouble concentrating, and increased tension and stress. These problems can leave us vulnerable to anxiety. Making healthy choices will help you feel better. Remember, the goal of developing a healthy lifestyle is not to eliminate anxiety (because anxiety plays an important adaptive role – without it we would not survive), but to help us to function at our best.

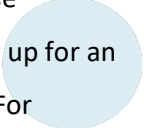
Having a healthy lifestyle puts us in a better position for managing anxiety. Here are some ideas for building a healthy lifestyle:

- **Set a Routine.**

Establish a routine by setting specific times for meals, work, housework, quiet time, and bedtime. We feel more secure when there is some predictability to our day. It also helps us get things done and reminds us to take time for ourselves. Having a routine can help you to set the stage to better manage your anxiety.

- **Become Active.**

Regular exercise can have a positive impact on both your emotional and physical health. In fact, exercise is one of the most powerful tools for managing stress and anxiety. However, it can be hard to start a regular exercise program. So, start small and work your way up. Aim for at least 20 minutes of physical exercise three to four times a week. You'll be more likely to stick with a program if you choose something you enjoy (such as skiing, hiking, gardening, or dancing). Try joining a gym, signing up for an exercise class, or finding a workout buddy. Find little ways to increase your physical activity. For example, park further away from the door, or take the stairs.



- **Eat Healthy.**

Having a well-balanced and healthy diet can make you feel better. Eat consistently throughout the day and don't skip meals. Your diet should include a variety of foods. Try to reduce your salt and sugar intake, eat more fruits and vegetables, and drink more water. Aim for three meals a day and one to two snacks. For more ideas on how to improve your diet talk to your doctor or a dietitian or refer to the Canada Food Guide.

- **Get a Good Night's Sleep.**

Sleep difficulties can contribute to anxiety problems and make it difficult to cope. Aim to get about 9 to 11 hours of sleep a night. However, this is just an estimate. People differ on how much sleep they need, and this amount can change with age. If you are experiencing sleep problems talk to your doctor.

- **Establish Social Supports.**

It is important to have people in your life that you can count on. It helps to be able to talk to a friend when you have had a bad day or are struggling with a problem. Having a good social network has been linked to greater well-being. Having at least one good supportive friend can make a difference.

Unfortunately, it can be hard to make friends.

- **Learn to Relax.**

Using relaxation strategies can help lower your overall tension and stress levels. However, relaxation is more than just sitting on the couch watching television. What makes a difference is "deep" relaxation, which is the opposite of what your body experiences when it is under stress.

- **Manage Your Time.**

Learning to manage your time more effectively can reduce stress. Use a day planner to schedule your activities. This will help you see if you're taking on too much, and help you make time for the things you need to do. Remember to make sure to schedule some time for relaxation and fun activities each day.

- **Reduce Stimulants.**

Excessive caffeine can lead to sleep problems and heightened anxiety. Try to reduce your caffeine intake. This includes coffee, some teas, soda, and chocolate. If you drink a lot of caffeinated beverages, it's better to gradually reduce the amount of caffeine that you have every day. Smoking is also a strong stimulant. In addition to the health benefits, quitting smoking may also leave you less prone to anxiety.

- **Avoid Alcohol and Drugs.**

It is NEVER a good idea to use alcohol or drugs to help you cope with anxiety – this just leads to more problems. If you have problems with anxiety, try to avoid using drugs and alcohol to cope with negative feelings. If you think that you may have a problem with drugs or alcohol, talk to your doctor.

- **Get a check-up.**

Make sure you are taking care of your body. See a doctor for regular check-ups.

- **Solve Problems.**

Problems are a common source of stress and can contribute to anxiety. Therefore, it is important to start identifying and dealing with your problems. However, it can be hard to know which problems to tackle and exactly how to go about solving them.

- **Reduce Stress.**

Sometimes life's demands become too much. Stress can have a negative impact on your health. Look for ways to reduce stress. Deal with problems, lean on supports, and take time for self-care. For instance, plan some time for yourself each day to read a book, go for a walk, watch a favorite TV program, or relax! You can also reduce stress by giving yourself a little extra time to get to places so that you're not rushing. Try giving yourself an extra 5 minutes – it can make a big difference!

HELPFUL HINTS:

1. **Start Small.** Making small changes can have a large impact on your life. Don't try to do everything all at once. Instead, pick one or two things and try them consistently. When you're ready, try adding a new strategy.
2. **Set Goals.** Identify some things you want to work on and set some realistic goals.
3. **Be Patient.** These strategies can take time to have a positive effect. Hang in there and stick with it!

Websites, Resources and Books for Families:

- **Fight Flight Freeze** – A Guide for Anxiety in Teens: <https://youtu.be/rpolpKTWrp4>
- **Anxiety Canada Website** <https://www.anxietycanada.com/> Comprehensive website. It has information about anxiety in children, adolescents, and adults. Go to "Learn About Anxiety" heading -> use the "Anxiety in Youth" (for teenagers) or "Anxiety in Children" for the most helpful information. This website has some online and app-based suggestions for treatment of anxiety through a variety of techniques. They have many downloadable resources to help in the management of anxiety.
- **CBT Guided Sessions Online** <http://www.lltff.com/>
- Information about emotional problems such as anxiety and depression – learn strategies that will help you with stressful life events. <http://ecouch.anu.edu.au>
- **Coping Cat** <http://www.copingcatparents.com> Comprehensive website, with high-quality information for parents to help them understand anxiety disorders. Typically aimed at younger

(pre-teen) age-groups. This website has some guidance about treatment, but many options refer to American counsellors. Some online treatment advice is helpful though.

- **Taming Worry Dragons:** <http://fsca.ca/taming-worry-dragons/> In-person program offered by Family Services of Central Alberta. Typically aimed at pre-teen age-group.
- **Nemours KidsHealth:** [Anxiety Disorders \(for Parents\) - Nemours KidsHealth](#) : Stories from children and teens with anxiety difficulties, strategies and helpful tips
- **Worry wise kids:** www.worrywisekids.org : A website for parents and children – types of anxiety, treatment and resources
- **“The Mindful Teen”:** <https://www.mindfulnessforteens.com/>
- www.anxietybc.com : **Anxiety Disorders of British Columbia** – provides parent and professional information on anxiety.
- <http://www.aboutourkids.org/> : **New York University School of Medicine** – parent information on child & teen health
- <http://friendsparentprogram.com/index.php> : B.C. Friends for Life Parent Program – Easy to-use resource materials on anxiety for parents of 5- to 15-year-olds.
- www.insync-group.ca : Information for youth, parents and professionals about self injury/self-harm from the Interdisciplinary National Self-Injury in Youth Network Canada

Books and resources for Caregivers/Parents:

- “Freeing Your Child from Anxiety: Powerful, Practical Solutions to Overcome Your Child’s Fears, Worries, and Phobias” by Tamar Chansky
- “Helping Your Anxious Child: A Step-By-Step Guide for Parents” by Ronald Rapee, Ann Wignall, Susan Spence, Vanessa Cobham & Heidi Lyneham
- “Keys to Parenting Your Anxious Child” by Katharina Manassis (Barron’s Parenting Keys Series)
- “Helping Your Child Overcome Separation Anxiety or School Refusal: A Step-by-Step Guide for Parents” by Andrew Eisen & Linda Engler
- “Talking Back to OCD: The Program That Helps Kids And Teens Say “No Way” –and Parents Say “Way to Go” by John March
- “The Mindful Teen” [The Mindful Teen: Powerful Skills to Help You Handle Stress One Moment at a Time : Vo MD FAAP, Dzung X.: Amazon.ca: Books](#)

Useful Books for Children:

- “A Hole in One - A Tale from the Iris the Dragon Series” by Gayle Grass, illustrated by Graham Ross
- “Up and Down the Worry Hill: A Children’s Book about Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder and Its Treatment” by Aureen Pinto Wagner, illustrations by Paul A. Jutton
- “Mr. Worry: A Story about OCD” by Holly L. Niner, illustrated by Greg Swearingen
- “Coping Cat Workbook” (Child Therapy Workbook Series) and “Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy for Anxious Children: Therapist Manual”, both by Philip Kendall and Kristina Hedtke
- MindMasters (Orlick): relaxation strategies with audio exercises
- “Taming Worry Dragons: A Manual for Children, Parents and Other Coaches” by E. Jane Garland & Sandra L. Clark

Useful Books for Youth:

- “The Mindful Teen” [The Mindful Teen: Powerful Skills to Help You Handle Stress One Moment at a Time : Vo MD FAAP, Dzung X.: Amazon.ca: Books](#)
- “Mind Over Mood: Change How You Feel by Changing the Way You Think” [Mind Over Mood: Change How You Feel by Changing the Way You Think: Greenberger PhD, Dennis, Padesky PhD, Christine A, Beck MD, Aaron T: 9781462520428: Books - Amazon.ca](#)

Kids Help Phone: Kids Help Phone is Canada’s only 24/7 e-mental health service offering free, confidential support to young people in English and French. www.kidshelpphone.ca or 1-800-668-6868

APPs:

[MindShift® CBT App | Anxiety Canada](#)

MindShift CBT
Free Evidence-Based Anxiety Relief

