

Anxiety and Our Children Additional Resources

Mental health matters - at all ages. With the onset of the pandemic, children, adolescents and young adults were hit hard with social distancing mandates, extra time spent on social media and technology, along with plenty of uncertainty and isolation. Beacon Pointe's Women's Advisory Institute recognized this trend and thought it important to provide necessary resources and information to the broader community about four key issues affecting children's mental health today and how to help.

The three key issues counselors are identifying among children, adolescents and young adults are emotion regulation, anxiety and depression. The following resources are intended to help parents navigate these three stressors, identify their signs and hopefully give children additional support.

Emotion Regulation (Children)

Self-regulation is the ability to manage emotions and behavior in accordance with the demands of the situation. It includes being able to resist highly emotional reactions to upsetting stimuli, to calm yourself down when you get upset, to adjust to a change in expectations, and to handle frustration without an outburst. It is a set of skills that enables children, as they mature, to direct their own behavior towards a goal, despite the unpredictability of the world and our own feelings. Most commonly, elementary school-aged children are the ones who need to be taught emotion regulation early on to help solidify healthy behavior and coping mechanisms for the future.

How can parents help teach emotional regulation skills? Approach it like a skill that needs to be taught and practiced. Harness emotional regulation skills by:

- Don't avoid triggering situations, rather coach through it;
- Dry runs, breaking chain into smaller more manageable parts;
- Non-judgmental and non-emotional feedback: what went wrong, and why, and how they can fix it next time;
- Model self-awareness, self-regulation and self-reflection;
- Adopt mindfulness and meditation strategies.

Additional Resources For Emotion Regulation:

Online

- [The Power of Mindfulness](#)
- [10 Mindfulness Activities for Teens](#)
- [25 Fun Mindfulness Activities for Children and Teens](#)

Books

- [Reset Your Child's Brain: A Four Week Plan to End Meltdowns, Raise Grades, and Boost Social Skills by Reversing the Effects of Electronic Screen- Time](#)
- [Today I Feel Silly & Other Moods That Make My Day](#)

Movies

- [Inside Out](#)

Depression (Adolescents, Young Adults)

Depressive disorder, frequently referred to simply as depression, is more than just feeling sad or going through a rough patch. It is a serious mental health condition that requires understanding and medical care. Left untreated, depression can be devastating for both those who have it and their loved ones. However, with detection, diagnosis and a treatment plan consisting of medication, psychotherapy and/or healthy lifestyle choices, many people can and do get better, shares Meredith Gerckens, Coordinator of School Counseling at Nutley Public Schools. Some will only experience one depressive episode in a lifetime, but for most, depressive disorder recurs. Without treatment, episodes may last a few months to several years. Depression can present different symptoms, depending on the person. But for most people, depressive disorder changes how they function day-to-day, and typically for more than two weeks. Common symptoms include:

- Changes in sleep and appetite;
- Lack of concentration;
- Loss of energy;
- Lack of interest in activities;
- Hopelessness or guilty thoughts;
- Changes in movement (less activity or agitation);
- Physical aches and pains;
- Suicidal thoughts.

IMPORTANT: If you believe someone is considering suicide, ASSUME you are the only one who is going to reach out. Have an honest conversation.

Hold a private conversation and listen to his/her story. Tell him/her you care about them and they are not alone. Ask directly if he/she is thinking about suicide. Encourage them to seek treatment or contact their doctor or therapist. Avoid debating the value of life, minimizing their problems, or giving advice.

If a person says they are considering suicide...

Take the person seriously, stay with him/her, help him/her remove lethal means and:

- Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255
- Text TALK to 741741 to text with a trained crisis counselor from the Crisis Text Line for free, 24/7
- Escort him/her to mental health services or an emergency room/911

Additional Resources:

Online

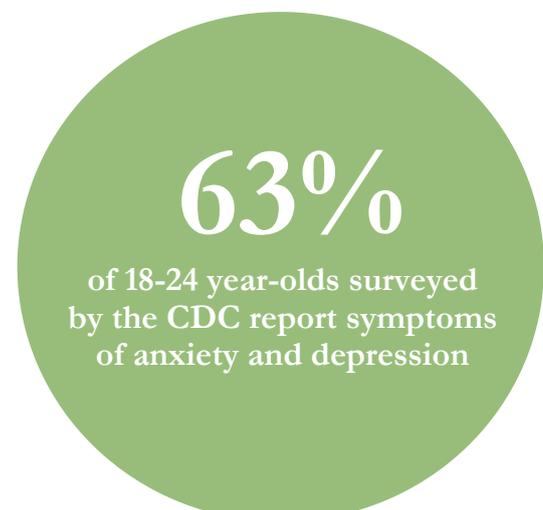
- [Mental Health America: Mental Health & COVID 19 Information & Resources](#)
- [Suicide Training Video: Warning Signs, Risk and Protective Factors Courtesy of Nutley Public Schools](#)
- [What to Do When Someone is at Risk](#)

Mobile Apps

- [TalkSpace](#)
- [Teen Counseling](#)
- [Betterhelp](#)

Anxiety (Adolescents, Young Adults)

Anxiety has become increasingly prevalent in adolescents and young adults. The feelings of unease, nervousness and worry are typical for high school age students and young adults starting college or their professional career.



If you have a loved one or family member who is experiencing anxiety, know that it is a completely normal response in conjunction with stressful events such as moving, changing jobs, having financial problems or socializing challenges. However, if symptoms of anxiety continue to become larger than the events that triggered them it could be a sign of an anxiety disorder.

One of the issues that counselors are beginning to see more of is anxiety around social events, and school. With the rise in social media usage, teens and young adults can easily compare their lives to others - and in turn stress about where they are in that comparison. Within the education realm, anxiety around performing well in school and test taking is a major theme with teens and college students. Many students aren't writing or taking notes due to the increased usage of virtual learning environments, which isn't helpful when it comes to the hand-brain connection that allows students to process and recall information. Many therapists encourage those children that may be struggling with anxiety, particularly in a classroom environment, to go back to old school ways of studying (making flashcards, creating a song or acronym to help remember key ideas, etc.).

16-20%

of students have
high test anxiety

"The most prevalent scholastic
impairment of our schools today."
- American Test Anxiety Association

Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety or Test Anxiety:

- Excessive worry and agitation
- Restlessness and fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating
- Panic attacks and irrational fears
- Avoiding social situations

Additional Resources:

Online

- [Anxiety.org](https://www.anxiety.org)
- [Test Anxiety Tips](#)
- [Tips for Beating Test Anxiety](#)
- [Test-Taking Strategies for Every Exam Type](#)
- [Finding Meaning - The Summer of Healing - a Podcast with Karen Moon](#)

Apps

- [Calm](#)
- [Insight Timer](#)

Body Image & Eating Disorders (EDs)

There is a common misconception that eating disorders are a lifestyle choice. They are in fact an incredibly dangerous disorder that can come in many different forms; anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge-eating disorders being among the most common. ED's can affect people of all ages and genders but frequently appear most often in the teen and young adult years. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, researchers of ED's have found that eating disorders can be caused by complex interactions of genetic, biological, psychological and social factors.

Sourced by Karen Moon, MSW, LCSW, Clinical Social Work Therapist and compiled by Dr. Helen Bowden, Ph.D., Coordinator of Eating Disorder Services at CSU Health Network, there are a wide array of resources available to help those struggling with body image and EDs. Again, with the rise in social media usage among children, teens and young adults, it is no surprise that EDs have skyrocketed in recent years. There are emotional, physical, and behavioral signs of an ED that you can be on the lookout for as a parent.

Signs & Symptoms of an ED:

- Preoccupation with weight, food, calories and dieting
- Skipping meals or taking small portions of food at meals
- Frequently checking in the mirror for flaws in appearance
- Noticeable fluctuations in weight, both up and down
- Menstrual irregularities (for women)
- Fainting, dizziness, stomach cramps, muscle weakness
- Dry skin, finer hair and brittle nails
- Sleep problems
- Mood swings

Additional Resources:

Online Support Groups

- [National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders \(ANAD\)](#)
- [The Eating Disorder Foundation](#)
- [Eating Disorder Hope](#)
- [National Eating Disorders Association \(NEDA\)](#)

Telehealth Nutritional Counseling Resources

- [Benevolent Bodies](#)
- [Kendall Reagan Nutrition Center](#)
- [Moxie Mind](#)
- [Nourished with Hannah](#)
- [Side by Side Nutrition](#)

Eating Disorder Hotlines

- [Overeaters Anonymous](#)
- [Multi-Service Eating Disorders Association National Eating Disorders Association Helpline](#)

Apps

- [7 Cups of Tea](#)
- [MindShift](#)
- [Optimism](#)

Podcasts

- [The Body Love Society](#)
- [The Body Image Podcast](#)
- [The Eating Disorder Recovery Podcast](#)
- [Love Food](#)
- [Mirror Mirror](#)
- [Recovery Warriors](#)

Mental health across all ages has been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Checking-in, being a resource and showing that you are there to talk should your children need it is one of the best ways to make sure they know they are supported.

The pandemic has been unprecedented in more ways than one, and it will take time for many to adjust, cope, and learn how to regulate how they feel.

Everyone deserves a little grace and we re-engage with a post-pandemic society. We hope these resources are a jumping off point for you to open a dialogue with your loved ones and ultimately support one another effectively.

