



ANXIETY DISORDERS FACT SHEET

ANXIETY is an illness characterized by excessive fear or worry that repeatedly interferes with a child's or youth's well-being.

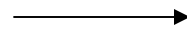
ANXIETY DISORDER is the most common mental illness among children and youth.

ANXIETY DISORDER affects all areas of a child's or youth's life – home, work, school, and social life.

CLINICAL SYMPTOMS

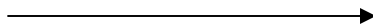
WHAT DOES A PARENT/CAREGIVER SEE?

**Separation Anxiety Disorder/
Panic Disorder**



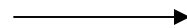
Intense anxiety about separation from parents; clinging; refusal to sleep alone or to go to school; pounding heart; sweating; shaking; nausea; dizziness; fear of dying

Social Phobia



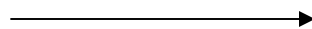
Noticeable anxiety in social situations; extremely self conscious; fear of humiliation or embarrassment; avoiding social interaction but has good relations with familiar people or in one-to-one situations; refuses to speak in front of others

Generalized Anxiety Disorder



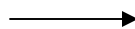
Many worries about everyday experiences such as school, sports, and appearance; worries about things before they happen; fear of doing things wrong even though work is excellent; headaches; stomach aches; frequent tears

Specific Phobias



Unrealistic and excessive fears about certain situations or objects; avoiding feared object/situation or refusing to go near them

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder



Complaints of upsetting thoughts; getting "stuck" doing something over and over; repeatedly touching or counting things; preoccupation with order; avoiding things that trigger upsetting thoughts

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES are treatments that have shown through clinical research to produce positive outcomes for children and their families.

The most common effective treatments for Anxiety Disorders are:

- **Psychoeducation**
- **Self-Monitoring**
- **Exposure**
- **Cognitive Therapy**
- **Problem-Solving**
- **Relaxation**



The most common effective treatments for Anxiety Disorders are:

Psychoeducation

Psychoeducation is teaching children/adolescents and their caretakers about their mental illness. The purpose is to help children/youth and their families understand how the illness affects them and what kind of activities or treatment might help. Psychoeducation helps children/youth and their families understand that there are others who have similar problems and that there are treatments that work. This type of education helps them understand what will happen in the treatment sessions and how long the treatment might take. They will also learn what role the parent, the therapist, and the child/youth will play in the treatment, and that they will be a team that will work on problems together.

Self-Monitoring

Children and youth with mental illness often need help identifying and labeling their feelings and emotions. Self-monitoring helps them to keep track of a specific feeling or behavior. They learn to develop a rating scale to measure these feelings. They might keep track of how sad or happy they are feeling, or they might keep track of how anxious or relaxed they are feeling. Learning to do this will help them understand what they can do to increase or decrease the ratings.

Exposure

Children and youth might develop unrealistic fears. These fears may be related to objects or situations. Exposure is a technique that helps the child/youth overcome fear. A therapist usually starts with indirect ways to help the child/youth stay calm while thinking about the issue. This might include practicing relaxation while talking about the issue. It might include looking at photos or imagining events while checking for tension or fear. Eventually the therapist will support the child/youth to face the actual object or situation.

Cognitive Therapy

Cognitive therapy is used to teach children and youth about how the way they think about things can affect how they feel, and how they feel can affect how they act (behave). Cognitive methods might be used to help children/youth understand how their thoughts are related to their moods and behaviors. They are taught strategies to help them check the accuracy of their thoughts and replace negative or unhelpful thoughts with more positive or helpful thoughts.

Problem-Solving

Children and youth with mental illnesses often think their problems are too big to handle. Problem-solving is a strategy that teaches a child how to clearly identify a problem, look at all possible solutions, and choose a solution. They also learn to evaluate their choices, and, if necessary, come up with different solutions. This strategy teaches children and youth how to use problem-solving in their day-to-day activities.

Relaxation

Ongoing anxiety or stress can make children and youth irritable and can interfere with concentration. Relaxation methods help children/youth reduce stress. These exercises include muscle-relaxation, breathing exercises, imagery, mediation, and similar activities. Some methods are meant to be used away from daily activities. Others are useful in the moment.