

ANXIETY 101:

WHAT YOU AND YOUR CHILD/TEEN NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ANXIETY

ANXIETY IS NORMAL. Everyone experiences anxiety from time to time. It alerts us to threats, protects us from danger and helps us reach important goals. For example, it is normal to feel anxious when encountering a bear on a hike, or before taking an important exam.

ANXIETY IS NOT DANGEROUS. Although anxiety feels uncomfortable, it is temporary and will eventually decrease. The sensations we experience in an anxious situation are designed to alert and activate us. They are normal and part of our body's natural response mechanism. Our body is smart enough to know when to "amp up" and when to "calm down."

ANXIETY IS ADAPTIVE. Anxiety helps us prepare for real danger, such as crossing a busy street. It can also help us perform at our best, and motivate us to study for an exam or practice for a big game. When we experience anxiety, it triggers our "fight-flight-freeze" response, and prepares our body to react. For instance, our heart beats faster to pump blood to our muscles, so we have the energy to run away or fight off danger. Without it, we would not survive. We need some anxiety.

ANXIETY IS PART OF LIFE. Trying to eliminate anxiety from your child's life is almost impossible, and even if it were possible, we are not sure you will have created a life worth living for your child. As a result, anxietybc.ca has been designed to provide you and your child with information, tools, resources, and more, to help your child become an expert on coping with anxiety. Since anxiety is everywhere, one of the greatest gifts you can give your anxious child or teen is the confidence and skill to tolerate anxiety whenever it occurs, and to continue living his/her life anyway!

ANXIETY CAN BECOME A PROBLEM. Small doses of anxiety in certain situations are useful. However, when your child is worrying much of the time, avoiding fun activities, or refusing to go to school because s/he is scared or worried, anxiety has become a problem. Think of anxiety like fog: if it covers everything, makes it hard to see, stops you from doing what you usually do, and generally gets in the way, then it has likely become a problem. Lastly, if you are in a situation where anxiety is overwhelming you, it's a good idea to talk or connect with someone, a family member, friend, school counsellor, your doctor or talk to a nurse at 811.

SELF HELP TIPS. Below are some self-help exercises that many people have found helpful. Try one or more of them and see if they work for you. Remember to be patient with yourself as you try something new. Just like learning a new sport or language, these too are new skills that often take time and practice to master:

- **Box Breathing:** Inhale for 4 seconds, suspend breath at the top for 4 seconds, exhale for 4 seconds, and once again suspend breath for 4 seconds. Repeat for a few minutes and notice what happens to your mind and body.
- **Exercise:** Any form of cardiovascular exercise can help relax our mind and body. Examples include, walking, running, hiking, swimming, or yoga. These should be considered even when you don't feel like doing anything.
- **Mindful meditation:** A simple meditation technique that often involves simply concentrating on our breathing, without trying to change it. You can try imagining that your lungs are like a balloon that you are inflating and deflating with each breath. Any time your thoughts wander (and they will), guide them gently back to the breath.
- **Progressive muscle relaxation:** Involves tensing individual muscles for several seconds to become aware of them and then relaxing them. This exercise is meant to relax the entire body. Try starting with the muscles in the face and working your way down the body one muscle group at a time.

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN/YOUTH

FORCE SOCIETY FOR KIDS MENTAL HEALTH

604-878-3400 forcesociety.com

LANGLEY COMMUNITY SERVICES SOCIETY

604-534-7921 lcss.ca

KELTY MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE CENTRE

604-875 2084 keltymentalhealth.ca

FAMILY SMART FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

[Familysmart.ca](http://familysmart.ca)

FRIENDS FOR LIFE PARENT PROGRAM

[Friendsparentprogram.com](http://friendsparentprogram.com)

WEBSITES

Teenmentalhealth.org

Anxietybc.com

Youthinbc.com

Heretohelp.ca

Mindcheck.ca

SELF-HELP APPS

‘breathe’

“mindshift”

“optimism”