



Anxiety in Children and Teens

Typical childhood fears by age

Most children will naturally grow out of these common fears.



Infants and toddlers	Separation from caregivers, strangers, loud noises
2-3 years	Animals, darkness, thunder/lightning, fire, water
4-5 years	Bugs, getting lost, monsters, death
5-7 years	Germs/illness, natural disasters, school
7-12 years	Performance anxiety, social situations, burglars/kidnappers, war

Source: www.understood.org

Additional Resources



- [For teens: a personal guide for managing stress](#)
- [Helping a teen create a stress management plan](#)
- [Helping your teen navigate life's obstacles](#)

Hidden Signs of Teen Anxiety



1. Emotional changes

- Feeling “keyed up” or jumpy
- Feeling on edge
- Irritability
- Difficulty concentrating
- Restlessness
- Unexplained outbursts

2. Social changes

- Avoiding social interactions with usual friends
- Avoiding extracurricular activities
- Isolating from peer group
- Spending increased time alone

3. Physical changes

- Frequent headaches, including migraines
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Excessive fatigue
- Complaints of not feeling well with no obvious medical cause
- Changes in eating habits

4. Sleep disturbances

- Difficulty falling asleep and/or staying asleep
- Frequent nightmares
- Not feeling refreshed after sleep

5. Poor school performance

- Significant jump in grades (usually downward)
- Frequently missed assignments
- Describes feeling overwhelmed by workload
- Procrastinates or has difficulty concentrating on homework assignments more than usual

6. Symptoms of panic attacks

- Rapid heartbeat
- Sweating and trembling
- Dizziness
- Upset stomach
- Difficulty breathing
- Chest pain
- Feeling like they’re dying
- Feeling like they’re “going crazy”
- Numbness or tingling in arms and legs
- Having “out of body” thoughts or feelings

Anxiety And College Students

Going away to college is a major milestone for your child. As such, it can also be extremely stressful. Leaving home (in many cases for the first time) and experiencing an entirely new environment can shake the confidence of even the most well-adjusted teen. When students aren't adequately prepared for this transition, the task of self-management can be overwhelming. Here's how you can help.



Discuss realistic expectations

Your child's high school successes won't always insulate them from academic and/or social stumbling blocks in college. Teens who struggle with anxiety are more likely to experience setbacks when faced with an onslaught of new and unfamiliar settings and experiences. Have a frank discussion about realistic expectations and healthy ways to deal with setbacks.

Establish a support plan

Most college campuses have student counseling services. Because these resources and their access options will vary, it's best to conduct research in advance. Keep in mind that there may be online or text resources, as well as in-person counseling. If you have additional concerns, a phone call to the college's counseling center could be beneficial. You may also want to contact your student's assigned academic advisor to learn protocols to access tutoring and other academic support if necessary.

Reinforce the importance of self-care

When a teen goes off to college, healthy routines can get left behind. Adequate sleep, regular exercise and a healthy diet are particularly important for students with anxiety. Your student might have a roommate who has a conflicting sleep schedule. Encourage your student to be open and honest with new roommates to find solutions that work for both of them. A single room may help. Reinforce the importance of self-care to keep your student on track.



Discuss practical coping skills

These might include meditation, journaling, deep breathing, visualization and weekly check-ins with a trusted family member. Click [here](#) to find out more.

Stay in touch

Establish a regular weekly check-in with your college student to offer support and encourage them to take advantage of on-campus resources if their anxiety escalates. Empower your student and send a positive, consistent message: "You can do this!"

Need more help?

Check out these additional resources for [students](#) and [parents](#).

Sources: American Academy of Pediatrics, McGraw-Hill, National Institute of Mental Health, psycom.net