



華人警訊服務中心 Chinese Community Policing Centre



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Prevalence of Anxiety

Anxiety is present across all mental illnesses, but experiencing it does not mean that an individual is mentally ill, and it certainly does not mean that there is anything inherently 'wrong' with them. According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA), up to 80% of anxiety in children goes unaddressed. This pamphlet will outline some examples of behaviours that might be indicative of anxiety, and some potential explanations for possible causes of them.

Example: You are hosting a social get-together, but your 14-year-old has retreated to their room and closed the door. They have stayed quiet up there so long that they might even have slipped your mind.

What might be going on?

It might appear that your adolescent is behaving rudely, but this social withdrawal might be indicative of social anxiety.

What can you do?

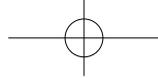
Encourage your adolescent to join in the fun. A prerequisite of this is that there has to be something fun available to join in on, so consider their interests when planning social gatherings.



Anxiety

Possible Signs, Symptoms,
and Solutions





Potential indicators of Anxiety

Example: Excessive finger-tapping, twitching, or restlessness.

What might be going on? Behaviours like these, along with proclamations of stomach-aches, might be indicative that the child is thinking about an upcoming, or present situation that is eliciting feelings of anxiety.

What can you do? If you notice behaviours like these, calmly ask your child how they feel, and what's on their mind.

Example: You arrive home from work 15 minutes later than normal, and you are greeted by a crying child who is convinced you were in a car accident.

What might be going on? Anxious children might catastrophize: thinking the worst of a situation, or 'making a mountain out of a molehill.' This may also be indicative of separation anxiety.

What can you do? Calmly reassure your child that you are safe. Help them to understand the elasticity of scheduling. If this behaviour persists over time, it may be a good idea to visit a child counsellor.



***Important Note: Not all children who display these behaviours are necessarily experiencing anxiety, and not all children who are experiencing anxiety will exhibit these behaviours. It is important to openly and acceptingly discuss your child's thoughts and feelings regularly.**

Example: Your child is constantly counting objects (e.g. cars on the street; steps while walking, etc.), or repeating other small, seemingly meaningless behaviours.

What might be going on? Excessively repeated ritualistic behaviours might be a self-devised coping strategy for your child to help manage their anxiety. They might be attempting to distract themselves, or they may have imagined a personal deal associated with the task (e.g. "if I can spot 100 cars on the way to school I will not be bullied").

What can you do? Behaviours such as these may be entirely harmless, but if you notice them reoccurring persistently over time, they might be indicative of anxiety. Calmly and politely ask your child what they are doing, and if there is any reason for it. If their answers concern you, it might be helpful to contact a child counsellor.

Tip: Be open and accepting when discussing mental health topics with your child.

