

CC Spaulding School Based Support

Behavioral Help Facts and Classroom Tips

About Anxiety Disorder

All children feel anxious at times but these are usually short-lived anxieties. Some children suffer from anxieties severe enough to interfere with the daily activities of childhood or adolescence. The most common anxiety disorders affecting children and adolescents are:

- **Generalized Anxiety Disorder:** Students experience extreme, unrealistic worry unrelated to recent events.
- **Phobias:** Students suffer unrealistic and excessive fears.
- **Social phobias:** These may center on a fear of being watched, criticized, or judged harshly by others.
- **Panic Disorder:** Students suffer repeated attacks without an apparent cause. These attacks are periods of intense fear accompanied by pounding heartbeat, sweating, dizziness, nausea, or a feeling of imminent death.
- **Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder:** Students become trapped in a pattern of repetitive thoughts and behaviors.
- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder:** Students experience strong memories, flashbacks, or troublesome thoughts of traumatic events.

Remember that students with an anxiety disorder are quiet and compliant, so signs may be missed. If you suspect anxiety disorder, refer the student to the Intervention Team.

Classroom Strategies and Accommodations

- Allow students to negotiate a flexible deadline for worrisome assignments.
- Have the student check with the teacher or have the teacher check with the student to make sure that assignments have been written down correctly.
- Consider modifying or adapting the curriculum to better suit the student's learning style—this may lessen his/her anxiety.
- Post the daily schedule where it can be seen easily so students know what to expect.
- Encourage follow-through on assignments or tasks, yet be flexible on deadlines.
- Reduce schoolwork load and homework when necessary.
- Consider a "Check-In / Check-Out" program where student meets with support staff at the beginning and end of the day.
- Keep as much of the child's regular schedule as possible.
- Ask parents what works at home.
- Encourage school attendance.

Symptoms or Behaviors

Frequent absences/tardiness
Refusal to join in social activities
Isolating behavior
Many physical complaints
Excessive worry
Extreme nervousness
Falling grades
Frequent bouts of tears
Frustration
Hair pulling
Fear of new situations
Need for constant praise

Educational Implications

Because students with anxiety disorders are easily frustrated, they may have difficulty completing their work. They worry so much about getting everything right that they take much longer to finish than other students. Their fears of being embarrassed, humiliated, or failing may result in school avoidance.