



Psyched Express

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Psyched Express is the official newsletter of
Dr. Kathryn Keithly, LEP and Carol Murphy, MA, CCC-SLP

Y.E.T. – Youth Evaluation and Therapy

Check out YET's new feature- Ask Dr. Katy!



Anxiety and Learning

The student in the picture above is anxious, probably worried about his performance on some academic task. Over the last several months, I have received many inquiries about children who are anxious, so many in fact that anxiety seemed to be needed as a newsletter topic. So here goes.....

Children and teens can be *normally* anxious about many things. They might experience some anxiety in various forms: worry, apprehension, dread, fear or distress or occasional nervousness. Intermittent anxieties can happen when a child is first faced with an unfamiliar or trying situation.

BUT, WHEN HAS ANXIETY PASSED THE BOUNDARIES OF NORMAL?

"Anxiety is considered a disorder not based on what a child is worrying about, but rather how that worry is impacting a child's functioning. The content may be "normal" but help is needed when a child is experiencing too much worry or suffering immensely over what may appear to be insignificant situations, when worry and avoidance become a child's automatic response in many situations, when they feel constantly keyed up, or when coaxing or reassurance are ineffective in moving them through. For these children anxiety is not protecting them, but rather preventing them from fully participating in typical activities of daily life-school, friendships, academic performance." (www.WorryWiseKids.org)

ANXIETY RED FLAGS

- Easily distressed, or agitated when in a stressful situation
- Repetitive reassurance questions, "what if" concerns, inconsolable, won't respond to logical arguments
- Headaches, stomachaches, regularly too sick to go to school
- Anticipatory anxiety, worrying hours, days, weeks ahead
- Disruptions of sleep with difficulty falling asleep, frequent nightmares, difficulty sleeping alone
- Perfectionism, self-critical, very high standards that make nothing good enough
- Overly-responsible, people pleasing, excessive concern that others are upset with him or her, unnecessary apologizing
- Demonstrating excessive avoidance, refuses to participate in expected activities, refusal to attend school
- Disruption of child or family functioning, difficulty with going to school, friend's houses, religious activities, family gatherings, errands, vacations
- Excessive time spent consoling child about distress with ordinary situations, excessive time coaxing child to do normal activities-homework, hygiene, meals

Don't you worry,
Don't you worry child,
See heaven's
got a
plan
for you

ANXIETY AND SCHOOL

There are numerous studies that show that students of all ages can be anxious about their academic or athletic performance, difficulty with learning, test taking ability, what other kids will say about them or to them at school, and problems interacting with peers or teachers. Fears about what may be happening at home can be brought to school and interfere with learning.

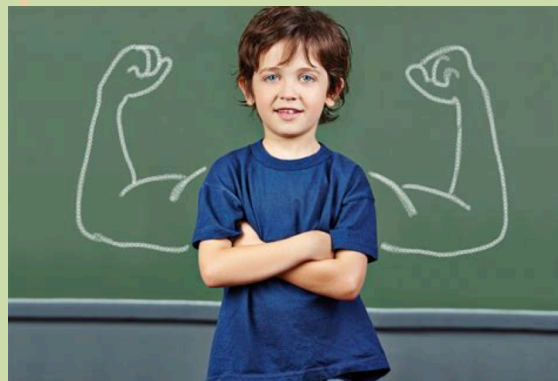
Though some parents and teachers may be told that a child's fear is normal, or that a child will outgrow it, whatever the age or type of fear, if a child's anxiety is interfering with his or her ability to function, it is prudent to seek professional consultation. *Anxiety disorders are the most treatable mental health condition in children, and early intervention can prevent a lifetime of suffering.* A psychologist can help in determining whether a child needs treatment, or can guide on how to better address the situation at home or in school.

Furthermore, deciphering the reason/s for the child's anxiety may reveal learning problems, co-morbid ADHD, family issues, communication problems or other underlying conditions that are fostering that anxiety. It is vitally important, therefore, not to just let it go. There are many assessment tools that can help in evaluating a child's or teen's anxiety and related issues.

IMPORTANCE OF SCREENING

One of the most useful, cost-effective tools for first helping to identify anxiety and related learning problems is a research-based developmental screening. Anxiety that might not be developmentally appropriate can be compared to other skills. Recommendations can be made and strategies can be given about how best to follow through.

PLEASE ASK ABOUT SCREENING



NEW FEATURE! ASK DR. KATY

**Please Email your Questions
to Dr. Katy. She will do her
best to answer them in this
new column.**

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