

MENTAL HEALTH MEMO

NOVEMBER 2022 | ANXIETY

WHAT IS ANXIETY

Anxiety is intense, excessive, and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations. Symptoms may include fast heart rate, rapid breathing, sweating, upset stomach, and feeling tired. Anxiety is about worry and fear which affects your thoughts and body. Anxiety can be treated by addressing the thoughts and physical reactions that are happening in your mind and body.



TIPS TO PARENT YOUR ANXIOUS CHILD

- Respect and validate their feelings.
- Teach your child deep, slow, belly breathing.
- Listen to your child and ask, “Tell me what you are thinking.”
- Rather than swooping in to reassure, ask your child, “how likely is (the thing you are afraid of) going to happen?”
- Prompt your child with, “Tell me some things you can do?”
- Give up the idea of “mental health days,” “skip days,” or other ways of avoiding feared situation
- Encourage your child’s attempts to be brave, no matter how small they may seem to you. Use labeled praise.
- Work with your child to outline small steps
- Create opportunities for your child to practice being brave and coping, including praising their efforts.
- Recognize when you are anxious and say aloud what you can do to calm down and solve the situation.

NORMAL ANXIETY OR ANXIETY DISORDER?

Every person, child, and adult, is going to feel anxious at some point. What differentiates normal from problematic anxiety is the degree to which the anxiety “interferes with functioning.” Children with anxiety disorders inevitably begin to “avoid situations, things, people, and places that make them anxious. Avoidance is the hallmark of anxiety disorders.

