

Healthy Youth Development

Taming the Beasts Within: Managing Teenage Anxieties

If it has even been easy being a teenager, few adults can remember when. In this era of “life by device” and constant social connections, layered on top of ever-present pressures for success, the skills necessary for managing anxiety are more important than ever.



Anxiety can be

- A normal experience in life that, **when managed effectively**, enhances motivation and vigilance
- **Common in many life circumstances**, especially those that involve significant change and conflict.
- **Intense, physical energy wrapped in obsessive worry, racing thoughts, impulsivity and indecision**
- **Misunderstood as anger, agitation, irritability and impatience**
- **Characterized by increased sweating, heart rate, blood pressure, fast shallow breathing, rapid speech, sleep disturbance and appetite fluctuation**
- **Preparing for *the fight, the flight* and sometimes, *the freeze***
- **Disorienting and disruptive-** a block to learning and healthy decision making
- A significant risk factor in **depression, substance abuse (self-medication), eating disorders and other health challenges**



YOGA
Meditation and Breathing

Managing Anxiety: Essential Skills for Building Resilience

- Is **body focused first**, then mentally focused- **calm first, then talk**
- Uses the body's built-in tools, e.g. **intentional breathing**, to “tell” the brain to calm and focus on body sensation (mindfulness)
- **Happens best in loving relationship** with others, e.g. opening up and being heard or being of service to others
- Is enhanced by being safely **held, touched or rocked**
- Can include **physical activity, e.g. dance, yoga, exercise** to counter stress hormones and better regulate bodily responses
- Can **mix intentional breathing with guided imagery-** memories from a fun trip or serene place (real or imagined)
- **Respond vs. React** to setbacks- collaborative problem solving in a calm state of mind resolves issues today and builds skills and confidence



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