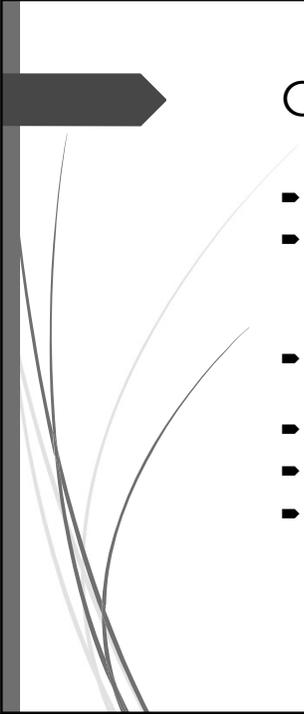


# Helping Your Teen With Stress/Anxiety During Unpredictable Times

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## Goals for Today

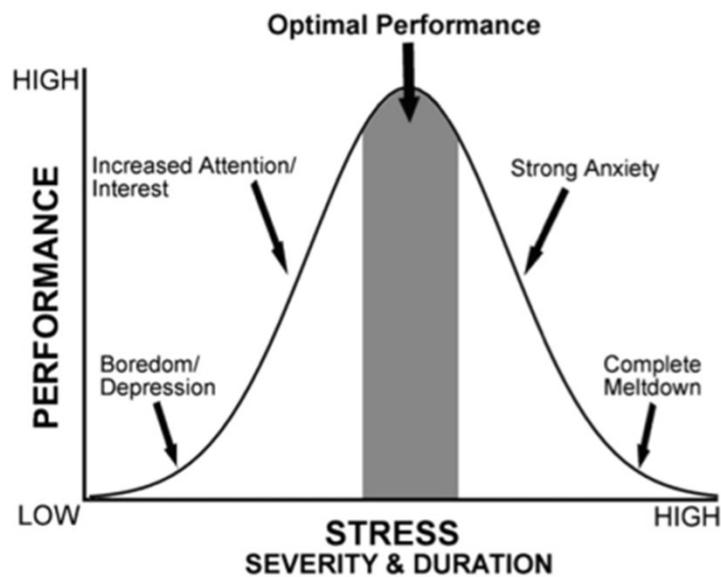
- Overview of anxiety
- What does anxiety look like?
  - Common symptoms
  - Consider YOUR teen's individual response tendencies
- Review evidence based strategies to help your teen cope with worry and stress
- Special Considerations during COVID-19
- Open discussion and questions
- Resources

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## Overview of Anxiety

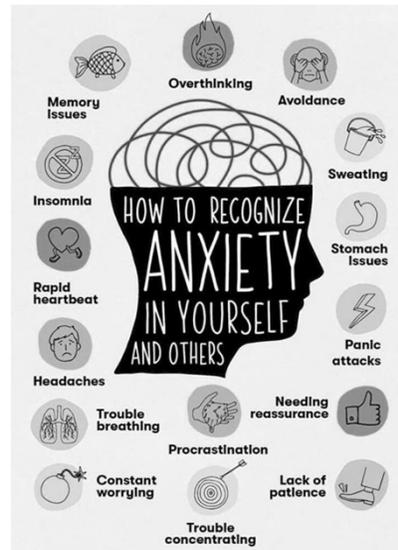
- What is anxiety?
  - "The **mind and body's reaction to stressful, dangerous, or unfamiliar situations**. It's a sense of uneasiness, distress, and dread you feel before a significant event." (www.anxiety.org)
  - Anxiety is an expected part of life and can be helpful- i.e., keeps us alert, aware, prepared; **however**, too much anxiety is harmful and can prevent us from functioning successfully in everyday life.
- Anxiety in Adolescence
  - Anxiety is the **most prevalent** mental health concern facing adolescents today; with an estimated prevalence of approximately **31%** (www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov).
  - Anxiety is also the most **UNDER-treated** disorder among youth, with only 18% of anxious teens receiving treatment (www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov).

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## What Does Anxiety Look Like?



*What does anxiety look like for YOUR teen?*

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## Strategies for Managing Anxiety: Start with the **Body**

- When faced with anxiety, the body is mobilizing in a state of fear and defense ([www.nicabm.org](http://www.nicabm.org))
  - Rapid heartrate, short/fast breathing, muscle tension, etc.
  - These are **symptoms** of anxiety and also **maintain** the anxious state through the release of stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline.
- How do we bring the body back down to baseline?
  - Breathing (trigger the relaxation response)
    - Slow exhalation
    - Pay attention to your breath
    - Sound (humming, singing)
    - \*there is no single technique works for everyone;

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## Strategies for Managing Anxiety: **Evaluate** the fear, Build **Resources**

- IF we **overestimate** a particular **danger**, anxiety increases ([www.nicabm.org](http://www.nicabm.org))
  - Try to help your teen accurately assess the situation. Collect facts.
    - Read trusted sources (age appropriate; small doses)
    - Discuss various pieces of evidence
    - Help your teen check their worries and see if they align with what we know; if they do not, help them develop alternative thoughts that more accurately reflect reality.
- IF we **underestimate** our **ability to cope**, anxiety also increases ([www.nicabm.org](http://www.nicabm.org))
  - Build coping strategies
    - What is making your teen anxious? Be specific.
    - What can they do to “be okay”/feel more safe in the feared situation?

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## Strategies for Managing Anxiety: Shifting **Perspective**

- Stay in the **present**
  - Shift attention away from the future
  - Stop ruminating about the past
- Consider this: **What we feed, grows.**
- How to nurture a non-anxious state of mind ([www.nicabm.org](http://www.nicabm.org)):
  - Meditation, breathing, grounding exercises, visualization/guided imagery
  - Find ways to express the feeling (creative endeavors, hobbies, exercise, music)
  - Observe, Reflect, Accept
  - Develop healthy lifestyle habits

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## Strategies for Managing Anxiety: Observe, Reflect, & **Accept**

- ▶ It's okay to feel anxious...
  - ▶ When scary things are happening or when big, important things are out of our control or unpredictable, anxiety is expected, even necessary.
  - ▶ Make space to feel anxious. Give your teen permission to be scared. Don't focus on making it go away completely.
  - ▶ Listen to your teen's fears. Walk through their experience with them.
  - ▶ Provide validation.
  - ▶ Share your own worries and how you are dealing with them.
  - ▶ Embrace the process.
    - ▶ What good things may come from a difficult situation? What bad?
    - ▶ Opportunities for courage/growth/change?

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## Strategies for Managing Anxiety: Healthy **Lifestyle Habits**

- ▶ Diet
  - ▶ Encourage your teen to eat well-balanced and nutritious meals.
  - ▶ Avoid caffeine, sugar, greasy, and processed foods and other substances in excess.
- ▶ Exercise
  - ▶ Encourage your teen to stay active.
  - ▶ Support their engagement in physical activities they enjoy.
    - ▶ \*At home: free online exercise/dance/yoga classes, stretch, go for walks (while abiding by social distancing rules), play in the yard
- ▶ Promote restful sleep
- ▶ Support healthy relationships/social engagement
  - ▶ Help your teen maintain connections with family and friends
  - ▶ \*At home: Skype, Zoom, FaceTime, social media (with caution), online gaming

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## Additional Strategies to Reduce Teen Anxiety While at Home:

- ▶ Maintain a daily routine.
  - ▶ Go to bed/wake up around the same time everyday.
  - ▶ Set specific times for work, school, meals, etc.
  - ▶ Be sure to schedule time for fun/pleasurable activities.
  - ▶ Plan regular opportunities for social engagement.
- ▶ Be available, but not hovering.
- ▶ Parents- manage your own anxiety and model healthy coping.
- ▶ Stay informed, but limit media intake and family discussions.
- ▶ Avoid shaming or dismissing your teen's concerns.

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## Contact Information

### **Morrissey-Compton Educational Center**

595 Price Blvd., Suite 100  
 Redwood City, CA 94063  
 (650) 322-5910 [www.morrissey-compton.org](http://www.morrissey-compton.org)

### **Parents Helping Parents**

1400 Parkmoor Ave., Suite 100  
 San Jose, CA 95126  
 (408) 727-5775 [info@php.com](mailto:info@php.com)

7500 Monterey Rd.  
 Gilroy, CA 95020  
 (408) 710-3257. [gilroy@php.com](mailto:gilroy@php.com)

[www.php.com](http://www.php.com)

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## Mental Health Support Services

**NAMI (National Alliance for Mental Illness) warmline:**  
**1-800-950-6264**, open M-F 10-6 EST

**SCC (Santa Clara County) Suicide hotline: 1-855-278-4204**

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## Additional Resources

- Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA)
- Anxiety & Depression Center
- National Institute of Mental Health – Anxiety Disorders
- American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry- Anxiety Resource Center
- **EMQ Child/Adolescent Mobile Crisis Program:** 408-379-9085, 1-877-412-7474
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** (toll free & 24/7): 1-800-273-8255
- **Trevor Lifeline** (LGBTQ): toll-free phone line at 1-866- 488-7386; **TrevorText**—text START to 678-678
- **Crisis Text Line:** provides free emotional support and information to teens in any type of crisis, including feeling suicidal. You can text with a trained specialist 24 hours a day. Text “HOME” to 741741.

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