

ANXIETY

Students in the school may experience anxiety for a variety of reasons. Counselors can work with school staff to identify these students, design interventions, and make appropriate referrals.

Symptoms

1. Excessive anxiety, worry or fear
2. A specific fear that significantly interferes with the student's daily life
3. Rapid heartbeat, shortness of breath, dizziness, nausea or digestion problems
4. Concentration difficulties, trouble sleeping, and irritability

Possible Causes

1. Traumatic experience
2. Projected anger – Ex: If physically abused, afraid of monsters hitting them
3. Physiological – central nervous system highly reactive
4. Inconsistent, neglectful or confusing environment
5. Perfectionist – standards too high. May be result from excessive criticism.

Goals

1. Verbally identify specific worries, fears and anxieties
2. Reduce anxiety so that daily functioning is not impaired.
3. Increase physical exercise as means of reducing anxiety feelings.
4. Implement relaxation and cognitive diversion activities to decrease the level of anxiety.

How to Help

1. Identify specific worries, fears and anxieties
2. Use behavioral techniques to face fears. If a student is agoraphobic, ask them to draw a picture of going outside. Then have them imagine going outside. Ask them to take one step outside. Increase the steps and amount of time outside until they are not fearful of going outside. Don't rush this process. It may take weeks or longer.
3. Be firm, encouraging and compassionate.
4. Promote security – provide a consistent and caring environment
5. Explore distorted cognitive messages that mediate the anxiety response
6. Encourage the expression of feelings
7. Use art, play or role-plays to practice strategies of handling anxiety and fears

8. Assist parents in placing the students in extracurricular activities that involve exercise and foster friendships
9. Assist parents in fostering a consistent, nurturing and dependable environment
10. Teach relaxation and cognitive diversion
11. Explore with student the steps needed to engage with friends