

# STRESS VS. ANXIETY

## POSITIVES & COPING

**Coffee with the Counselors**  
**Mrs. Winters, Ms. Stephenson, Mrs. Tripp**

# STRESS AND ANXIETY ARE COMMON

- ❑ Almost everyone has experience with stress and anxiety at some point in their lives.
- ❑ Many symptoms the same, but origins are different
  - ❑ uneasiness, tension, headaches, high blood pressure and loss of sleep

<https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/external/2018/06/stress-vs-anxiety/>

# STRESS

- ❑ External Trigger
- ❑ Short term- like a work or school deadline, argument with a loved one, etc.
- ❑ Long term- financial situation, chronic illness of self or loved one, etc.
- ❑ The right amount of acute stress, tunes up the brain and improves performance and health
- ❑ “Remembering the place where something stressful happened is beneficial to deal with future situations in the same place”
- ❑ Think of resilience and realizing they can overcome something stressful

<https://news.berkeley.edu/2013/04/16/researchers-find-out-why-some-stress-is-good-for-you/>

# ANXIETY

- ❑ “Defined by persistent, excessive worries that don’t go away even in the absence of a stressor”
- ❑ “Anxiety leads to a nearly identical set of symptoms as stress: insomnia, difficulty concentrating, fatigue, muscle tension and irritability”

<https://www.apa.org/topics/stress-anxiety-difference>

- ❑ Anxiety can also have benefits such as a “warning system”, motivation, a good leadership quality, and sometimes can actually make a better friend  
(<https://www.verywellmind.com/benefits-of-anxiety-2584134>)

# NORMAL STRESS/FEARS/ANXIETIES FOR ADOLESCENTS

- Being called on in class
- Peer judgement
- Social Comparison (I'm not as smart as\_\_\_\_, as talented as\_\_\_\_)
- Grades/Tests/Quizzes
- Management of school, social life, family obligations, extracurricular activities

# COPING STRATEGIES ARE THE SAME- THINGS WE ALL KNOW, BUT SOMETIMES FORGET

- ❑ Exercise and eat balanced diet regularly.
- ❑ Get enough sleep and have a good sleep routine.
- ❑ Learn relaxation exercises (for example- meditation).
- ❑ Rehearse and practice situations which cause stress. One example is taking a speech class if talking in front of a class makes you anxious.
- ❑ Planning ahead and time management- including planning enjoyable and stress reducing activities (especially in the midst of stressful times, it's a good reminder as you get closer- I know you have a big test this week, but this weekend you see a friend")

# COPING STRATEGIES ARE THE SAME- THINGS WE ALL KNOW, BUT SOMETIMES FORGET

- ❑ Plan breaks during stressful situations. For example- Use Lunch/Advisory for activities like listening to music, talking to a friend, drawing, writing, or spending time with a pet than might reduce stress on a more academically heavy day.
- ❑ Learn practical coping skills. For example, break a large task into smaller, more attainable tasks- my favorite is the 30 minute rule. Counselors can help with practical coping skills for individuals
- ❑ Model rational thinking and reframe irrational thoughts or negative self talk.

# NEGATIVE IMPACT OF AVOIDANCE

- ❑ There's a number of reasons why the frequency of avoidance seems to be increasing in the teen population
- ❑ It often becomes the main option that teens use to deal with stress or stressful events
- ❑ Avoiding seems like a good option to teens because it is effective in reducing stress in the moment.
- ❑ When the teen feels better through avoiding, they are more likely to avoid again and more likely to feel even more anxious
- ❑ Avoidance decreases opportunities for social interactions and problem solving

<https://www.thrivepointe.com/2019/05/avoidance-patterns-and-teens/>

# WHAT PARENTS CAN DO TO AVOID AVOIDANCE

1. **Connect and don't invalidate.** Before hearing Mom or Dad out, teens need to feel understood. A big misstep parents can make is to downplay the situation that the teen is worried about by saying “it isn’t a big deal” or “just go do it”. Try to understand more about what’s going on for your teen. Take note of shifts in your teen’s mood or behavior and try to bring it up in a compassionate way. For example, “I noticed you’ve been more distant today and I was wondering if you’re feeling stressed about something.”
2. **Normalize the situation.** Your teen might feel self-conscious about their feelings of worry or stress. Finding a way to help remind your teen that it’s normal to feel fear or anxiousness about some situations helps to increase a teen’s openness. You might try saying, “It makes total sense why you’d feel nervous or stressed about that.” Or “I bet a lot of people are feeling overwhelmed about that project/speech/test/etc.”
3. **Support and express confidence.** Once we’ve done the first two things, we have a better chance to help problem solve and express confidence in our teen without resistance. You might try exploring some of the long-term and short-term results of avoiding the situation. Sometimes just simply reminding the teen that they have what it takes is enough to help the teen go forward.

<https://www.thrivepointe.com/2019/05/avoidance-patterns-and-teens/>

# FINAL THOUGHTS

- ❑ Stress and Anxiety are different
- ❑ Both are normal and okay to feel
- ❑ Stress and Anxiety both have positive aspects and effects
- ❑ Coping through stressful situations build resiliency
- ❑ While avoidance has increased with frequency as a common coping mechanism in teens, it can have long term harmful effects
- ❑ There are strategies for parents to both model and encourage teens to use