Tutorial #2: Recognizing and Responding to Anxiety in the Classroom
Tutorial #1 – Creating and Sustaining Mentally Healthy Classrooms

Tutorial #2 – Understanding Anxiety Problems in the Classroom

Tutorial #3 – Understanding Mood Problems in the Classroom

Tutorial #4 – Understanding Attentional Problems in the Classroom

Brought to you by School Mental Health ASSIST

Working alongside the Ministry of Education, School Mental Health ASSIST is provincial implementation support team helping Ontario school boards to promote student mental health and well-being. This online professional learning series features highlights from facilitated workshop materials produced to support school board Mental Health Leadership Teams with educator mental health literacy. For more information about additional resources, contact your school board’s Mental Health Leader, or School Mental Health ASSIST.
Recognizing and Responding to Anxiety in the Classroom
Is today a good day for you to focus on this topic?

How will you maintain your own well-being as you consider this topic?
Most people are impacted by mental health problems at some point in their lives.

Personal resiliency is an important skill.

Teach self-care through modelling.

What is one small thing you will you do today to practice self-care?
SUPPORTING MINDS

Developed by the Ontario Ministry of Education
JK-12 educator resource
Helpful day to day resource for supporting students’ mental health

CLICK HERE FOR THE DOCUMENT

ONLINE SM/ART SERIES TUTORIAL #2
SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH ASSIST
ÉQUIPE D’APPUI POUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE DANS LES ÉCOLES
INTRODUCTION
SECTION ONE:

What is Anxiety?
WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Learning Objectives

To provide an introduction to the concept of anxiety

To explore typical responses to stress

To distinguish between healthy and unhealthy aspects of anxiety
Have you or someone you know experienced anxiety?

How do you know that it was anxiety?

Did the anxiety cause a physical reaction? Did it impact the person’s thinking or emotions? Did it impair social ability?
Anxiety may a problem when:

1. Is very intense.
2. Persists over longer periods of time.
3. Interferes with their ability to learn, socialize and participate in activities.
Patricia Marra Stapleton is a Psychological Associate and Mental Health Leader with the Toronto Catholic District School Board. She has a focus on creating Mentally Healthy Schools, classrooms, and students, believing that mental health underpins student achievement and well-being.
In an average class, 2 or 3 students may experience anxiety-related symptoms.

Manassis, 2012.

Anxiety disorders occur in 6 to 10% of youth. It is one of the most common mental health disorders.


Anxiety disorders frequently originate during childhood or adolescence.


For many reasons, most students who suffer from anxiety do not receive support.
ANXIETY DISORDERS

SECTION ONE

CLINICAL TERMS YOU MAY NEED TO KNOW

• Generalized anxiety disorder
• Separation anxiety disorder
• Social anxiety disorder
• Panic disorder
• Specific phobia
• Obsessive Compulsive disorder*

* Redefined in DSM-5
Anxiety can be a healthy and adaptive response to danger that keeps us safe.

Anxiety becomes unhealthy when it does not subside over time and impairs the normal day to day functioning of students.

Anxiety can have a profound impact on learning.
SECTION TWO: SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

What do Anxiety Problems Look Like?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To gain a basic understanding of the physical, social, emotional and cognitive signs of anxiety.

To provide a brief overview of anxiety’s impact on the brain.

To better recognize indicators of anxiety in students.
Where do we feel the ANXIETY in our bodies?

- Light Headed/Dizziness
- Perspiration
- Choking
- Increased Heart Rate
- Chest Pain/Tightness
- Rapid Breathing
- Nausea
- Tingling/Numbness
THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG

CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE VIDEO

CLICK HERE FOR THE DOCUMENT
ANXIETY RELATED ISSUES

Children and youth with anxiety may present with:

- School problems (based on worry and anxiety)
- Attention difficulties
- Issues with attendance
- Recurrent physical symptoms
- Social and relational concerns
- Irritability and mood symptoms
- Preoccupation with achievement
- Alcohol and drug use
THINK ABOUT YOUR STUDENTS

⚠️ Do you see any signs of anxiety?
⚠️ What appears above the iceberg?
⚠️ What might be going on below?
Anxiety disorders are categorized based on the features of the anxiety. Anxiety may be present in many forms.
# THE MOST PROMINENT SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY

## ELEMENTARY
- Attendance/separation issues
- Social issues – extreme shyness around peers
- Difficulty speaking in groups or class
- Refusal/avoidance

## SECONDARY
- Performance on test not matching abilities
- Social and relational concerns
- Recurring physical symptoms with no medical explanation (e.g. nausea)
- Panic
Anxiety can be difficult to recognize. Indicators can be both obvious and less apparent.

By recognizing the symptoms of anxiety, we can know when help is needed from a mental health professional through the referral process.
SECTION THREE: CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

What Can Educators Do?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To increase familiarity with universal strategies that can support students with anxiety.

To understand anxiety and how to apply strategies that will be supportive in the classroom.
SECTION THREE

SUPPORT FOR ALL - SOME - FEW

1. WELCOME
   - Student Engagement
   - Social and Physical Environments

2. UNDERSTAND
   - Well-Being Literacy and Knowing your Students
   - School and classroom leadership

3. INCLUDE
   - Early Identification
   - Targeted reduction of risk factors

4. NOTICE
   - Assessment and Modification
   - Social emotional skills and resiliency

5. INTERVENE
   - Mobilize board & community services
   - Assessment and Treatment Services

6. BOLSTER
   - Home, School, Community Partnerships
   - Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning

7. BRIDGE
   - Support
   - Foundation

8. FOUNDATION
   - School and classroom leadership

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üğüde d'APPUI POUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE DANS LES ÉCOLES
"take a breath"

mindful contemplation

focused stretching

progressive muscle relaxation

deep breathing exercises

Accommodations
- additional time
- opportunity to write in a quiet place
- gradually face the feared situation

WHAT CAN TEACHERS DO?

Reducing stress through deep breathing

BREATHE IN

1 2 3 4

BREATHE OUT

1 2 3 4

HOLD

1 2 3

HOLD

1 2 3 4

https://psychologyfoundation.org/Public/Programs/Copy_of_Stress_Lessons/Public/Programs/Stress_Lessons1/Stress_Lessons.aspx

CLICK HERE FOR THE WEBSITE

Jennifer Kolari

MSW, RSW is a therapist, author and international speaker.
Universal Tier 1 strategies provide foundational elements by normalizing anxious feelings, reducing potential sources of severe stress at school, promoting positive mental health and de-stigmatizing mental illness.

There are many universal classroom strategies which will help manage anxiety within the classroom.

Balancing stress is important and students will learn by observing their teachers who use personal anxiety reducing strategies.
SECTION FOUR: SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

What Can Educators Do?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To become familiar with strategies in the Supporting Minds document

To develop a repertoire of strategies to support students with anxiety

To help students develop a voice around self-advocacy

To become familiar with your board’s referral process
RACHELLE
Grade 12 student with anxiety
Symptoms since grade 2
Completely shutdown
Unavailable for learning
State of persistent shivering
Get to know the student
Take the student’s concerns seriously
Think about the iceberg and look at the reason underneath the behaviour, rather than just what you see outwardly
Acknowledge the concerns that the student has
Collaborate with parent(s)/guardian(s)
Connect with a mental health professional if necessary

“OSR” Ontario School Record
Work together to set realistic goals and identify priorities for intervention
Identify both short and long-term goals
Develop realistic expectations
Provide accommodations for learning
Define priorities for well-being and adjustment at school, not just getting work done
Promote optimism about the student’s ability to manage anxiety both in the short term and the long term
Dr. Katharina Manassis

M.D., FRCP(C): Author, certified Child Psychiatrist, and Professor Emerita at the University of Toronto.

MANAGEMENT AND INTERVENTION AT SCHOOL

Develop a support plan of specific strategies together with the student
Reinforce coping strategies
Provide flexibility and adjust work expectations as needed
Provide consistency in expectations and routines
Don’t single the student out for attention in the class
KNOW WHO TO REACH OUT TO

Who in your school can provide support?
How do you refer a student for a case conference?
Who is/are the mental health professionals for your school?
Who is your board’s Mental Health Leader?
Who can help you make a connection to community agencies?
What is the process for making contact with each of the above?
While general classroom strategies to reduce anxiety are helpful for all students, some students will require more targeted approaches. A repertoire of strategies is necessary to meet the specific needs of students. For students diagnosed with anxiety disorders, it is important that teachers and mental health professionals collaborate with students and their parents to develop a support plan and specific strategies. Be familiar with and use your school board’s referral process when needed to engage mental health professionals and community partners.
MORE INFORMATION

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If you have any questions, please contact us at: info@smh-assist.ca
Need help now? You can find support and resources at:

http://www.mentalhealthhelpline.ca/
https://ontario.cmha.ca/mental-health/services-and-support/crisis-support/