

ANXIETY: IS IT TREATABLE?

Newsletter from the desk of
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**ANXIETY DISORDERS
IMPACT 54% OF
FEMALES & 46% OF
MALES WITH AGE 7
BEING THE MEDIAN AGE
OF ONSET.**

**-WORLD HEALTH
ORGANIZATION**

*I recently moderated a panel discussion which followed the community viewing of the film *Angst*. *Angst* was a candid film about anxiety disorders, shared mainly from youths' perspective. The film, a documentary, showcased youth who "discussed their anxiety, its impact on their lives and relationships, as well as how they found solutions and hope." Everyone worries and faces different levels of anxiety. However, it is not a topic easily discussed. Similar to the film's producers, our goal is to raise awareness and make anxiety disorders part of a community conversation so that we can be better equipped to help our children.*

Anxiety is often discussed in closed quarters, making it easy to hide that anxiety disorders are the most common mental health challenge in the U.S. It is the leading mental health issue among American youth today.

What is Anxiety?

According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) nearly a third of adolescents ages 13 to 18 will meet the criteria for anxiety disorder by the age of 18.

Literature from the film *Angst* defines anxiety as "an emotion characterized by feelings of worry, fear, nervousness and apprehension." However, anxiety only becomes a problem (manifested into a disorder) when "it disrupts your day to day life" and prevents you from doing things that are fun and important or if "there is excessive and uncontrollable worry about everyday things."

Information from Child Mind Institute states that researchers believe that brain changes in adolescence increase a teen's vulnerability to depression and anxiety, and play a role in the severe gender disparity in these disorders.

Anxiety and Substance Use

While alcohol is commonly ill used for anxiety, according to NIDA, "teens prescribed anxiety or sleep medications like benzodiazepines, are more likely to abuse them later (compared to those who had never had a prescription). Teens also report they use those same medications to self treat." However, medication is not the only answer. Treatments that target stress (which is different from anxiety), such as mindfulness-based stress reduction, have been shown to be beneficial for reducing depression, anxiety and substance use. The *Angst* film suggested several techniques that can be used (please see the attached handout).

The Good News

Anxiety disorders are treatable. The American Psychiatric Association classifies anxiety disorders into six main types (see the attached handout from the film, *Angst*). Don't try to self diagnose, see a professional early on and take children seriously if they express symptoms of anxiety. The book *Outsmarting Worry*, by Dawn Huebner provides a good source of information for all ages. It's down-to-earth style makes it easy and quick to read. The simplified terms encourage discussion and clearly explain the skills needed to face and overcome extreme worry. There are many pathways to support and treatment, which can be explored with the proper guidance. Treating anxiety takes learning and practice.

**THERE WAS A 20%
INCREASE IN THE ANXIETY
DIAGNOSES FOR YOUTH
AGES 6-17 BETWEEN 2007
AND 2012.**

**-NATIONAL SURVEY OF
CHILDREN'S HEALTH**

To read more about anxiety paste the links below in your browser

<https://childmind.org/symptomchecker/>

<https://angstmovie.com/resources/>