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PREFACE

Dear Readers,

Anxiety is a form of stress and it is a natural human reaction. It is an important biological function because it helps us stay alert, focused, and ready to do our best. However, if the anxiety is prolonged & intense that is out of proportion to the present situation and affects a person's daily life and happiness, then it may be a form of 'Anxiety Disorder'. Anxiety disorders are among the most common mental health conditions. Children with anxiety problems may not even know what's causing the emotions, worries, and sensations they have.

In this issue, we have emphasized on the various types of 'Anxiety Disorders', ways to identify if a child is suffering from it and have also included ways to deal with it in the school.

We hope our readers get better equipped to handle children with psychological issues after reading our newsletters.

Enjoy Reading!

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Awareness About Anxiety

"I do not want to go to school!" or May be in class when a question is asked bursting into tears, or "I am having tummy-ache"- these are age-old complaints from children. But now a days research suggests that this protest can signal a deeper problem. Though it is normal for children to feel worried or anxious from time to time, such as when they are starting nursery school, or having examination. But some time this anxiety can prevent child from making friends, raising a hand in class, or participating in school or social activities accompanying with feelings of being ashamed, afraid, and alone. This is when we may need professional help to tackle it before it becomes a more serious issue.



Signs of Anxiety in Children

- Child can feel scared, panicky, embarrassed or ashamed.
- Child may find it hard to concentrate.
- Child may not sleep in the night because of bad dreams.
- Child may not eat properly.
- Child may quickly get angry or irritable, and become out of control during outbursts.
- Child may constantly worry or have negative thoughts.
- Child may feel tense and fidgety, or using the toilet often.
- Child may always cry.
- Child may be clingy all the time (when other children are ok).
- Child may complain of tummy aches and feeling unwell.

Different Types of Anxiety Disorder in Children

The reason for the anxiety (if there is one) will differ depending on the age of the child. Separation anxiety is common in younger children, whereas older children and teenagers tend to worry more about school performance, relationships or health.

Generalized Anxiety Symptoms:

- Fatigue or an inability to sleep
- Restlessness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability

Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD)

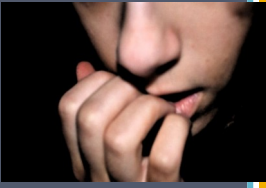
If the child has generalized anxiety disorder, or GAD, he or she will worry excessively about a variety of things, which may include issues such as-Family problems, Relationships with peers, Health, Grades, Performance in sports, Punctuality. Children with GAD strive for perfection. These children may also seek constant approval or reassurance from others.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

OCD is characterized by unwanted and intrusive thoughts (obsessions) and feeling compelled to repeatedly perform rituals and routines (compulsions) to try to ease anxiety. Most children with OCD are diagnosed around age 10, although the

Awareness About Anxiety

disorder can strike children as young as two or three. Boys are more likely to develop OCD before puberty, while girls tend to develop it during adolescence.



Obsessions Symptoms

- Constant, irrational worry about dirt, germs, or contamination
- Excessive concern with order, arrangement, or symmetry
- Fear of harm or danger to a loved one or self
- Religious rules or rituals
- Fear of losing something valuable

Compulsions Symptoms

- Washing and rewashing hands to avoid exposure to germs
- Checking and re-checking objects, information, or situations
- Repeating a name, phrase, tune, activity, or prayer
- Counting objects such as steps
- Seeking reassurance or doing things until they seem just right

Words Worth

Atychiphobia- Fear of failure

It is natural to have doubt regarding success in certain project, relationships or examinations. However, when the fear of failure takes on an extreme form then it is termed as Atychiphobia.

Individuals suffering from Atychiphobia mainly fear failure because they lack confidence in their abilities and fear of being ridiculed. This also includes certain cultural and social expectations regarding looks, relationships, education and in general preset definitions and norms of failures and success. Many coping with this give up trying completely especially where relationships, education or job are concerned. The most effective treatment for this is self motivation. Experts recommend breaking a task into smaller and manageable pieces and doing more gradually. This can help patients realize that failure does not mean the end of life rather it is crucial for the growing process.

Panic Disorder:

Panic disorder is diagnosed if the child suffers at least two unexpected panic or anxiety attacks—which means they come on suddenly and for no reason—followed by at least one month of concern over having another attack, losing control, or “going crazy.” Agoraphobia (Social Phobia) can develop when children begin to avoid situations and places in which they

had a previous panic attack or fear they would be unable to escape if experiencing an attack. Refusing to go to school is the most common manifestation of agoraphobia in kids.

Social Anxiety Symptoms

- Hesitance, passivity, and discomfort in the spotlight
- Avoiding or refusing to initiate conversations, invite friends to get together, order food in restaurants, or call, text, or e-mail peers
- Frequently avoiding eye contact with adults or peers
- Speaking very softly or mumbling
- Appearing isolated or on the fringes of the group
- Sitting alone in the library or cafeteria, or hanging back from a group in team meetings
- Overly concerned with negative evaluation, humiliation, or embarrassment
- Difficulty with public speaking, reading aloud, or being called on in class

demanding that someone stay with them at bedtime. Children with separation anxiety commonly worry about bad things happening to their parents or caregivers or may have a vague sense of something terrible occurring while they are apart.

Selective Mutism:

Children who refuse to speak in situations where talking is expected or necessary, to the extent that their refusal interferes with school and making friends, may suffer from selective mutism. Children suffering from selective mutism may stand motionless and expressionless, turn their heads, chew hair, avoid eye contact, or withdraw into a corner to avoid talking. The average age of diagnosis is between four and eight years old, or around the time a child enters school.

Specific Phobias:

A specific phobia is the intense, irrational fear of a specific object, such as animals, storms, heights, water, blood, the dark, and medical procedures. Fears are common

Panic Attack Symptoms

- Feeling of imminent danger or doom
- The need to escape
- Rapid heartbeat, Sweating, Trembling
- Shortness of breath or Feeling of choking
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Nausea or abdominal discomfort
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Fear of losing control or “going crazy”

Social Anxiety Disorder:

Social anxiety disorder, or social phobia, is characterized by an intense fear of social and performance situations and activities. This can significantly impair your child’s school performance and attendance, as well as the ability to socialize with peers and develop and maintain relationships.

Separation Anxiety Disorder:

When separation anxiety disorder occurs, a child experiences excessive anxiety away from home or when separated from parents or caregivers. Extreme homesickness and feelings of misery at not being with loved ones are common. Other symptoms include refusing to go to school, camp, or a sleepover, and



in childhood and often go away. A phobia is diagnosed if the fear persists for at least six months and interferes with a child's daily routine, such as refusing to play outdoors for fear of encountering a dog. Children will avoid situations or things that they fear or endure them with anxious feelings, which may show up as crying, tantrums, clinging, avoidance, headaches, and stomachaches.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Children with posttraumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, may have intense fear and anxiety; become emotionally numb or easily irritable; or avoid places, people, or activities after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic or life-threatening event. These events can include a serious accident, violent assault, physical abuse, or a natural disaster.

As caregiver or teacher, we need to keep it in mind that they may not always share these worries with us, and instead complain of tummy aches or feeling sick. One of the signs is crying or seeming tired in the morning. We need to keep ourselves alert and informed as this may be a problem that needs tackling if it is significantly affecting their daily life .

Idea – *An idea that can change your teaching*

Tackling Anxiety In Class

As teacher we must have experience some cases of students anxiety related issues. In such situations it is the teachers responsibility to look after that case and consult with the school counselor. Here we like to share some tips for handling anxious students in class room situation.

Seating within Classroom Anxious children often struggle with the unlikely fear that they will get in trouble from classmates. For them seating away from more boisterous classmates will be less distracting, and may help them focus on their work.

Class Participation Fears of getting the answer wrong, saying something embarrassing, or simply having other kids look at them may be concerns for an anxious child. Determine the child's comfort with either closed ended questions (requiring a yes or no) or with opinion questions, start with whichever is easiest. Use a signal to let the child know that his turn is coming. Provide opportunities for the child to share knowledge on topics in which he or she is most confident.



Class Presentations Children with extreme social anxiety may have difficulty with oral reports. Consider having the child present to the teacher alone.

Answering Questions at The Board For children with social anxiety, the combination of getting the answer wrong, and being visible to the whole class may be so overwhelming that they may opt to avoid school altogether. Consider having the child exempt from going up to the board until they are ready to handle that challenge, or, begin to approach that situation by eliminating the risk of being wrong, by simply asking the child to write the date on the board.

Lunchroom/Recess/Unstructured Activities Free choice times can be a welcomed and necessary break from the pressures of school, but fears of rejection in the cafeteria or on the playground can take the fun out of free time. Bridge the gap socially by creating ties between small groups of children. A lunch bunch with two or three children can create a shared experience which kids can then draw on later. When working in pairs or small groups, don't always have children choose the groupings themselves, alternate this with a "counting off" technique or drawing straws to allow variability in the groupings.

Safe Person Having one person at school who understands the child's worries and anxieties can make the difference between a child attending school and staying home. A guidance counselor, principal, nurse, or teacher can be identified as a point person for the child to check in with briefly (5-10 minutes) to help dispel worry thoughts, take deep breaths and return to class.

Cool Down Pass Pressures build for anxious children, being able to leave the situation briefly to get a drink of water or wash their face can allow them to clear their heads and return to class on a less anxious track. Since anxious children may be hesitant to ask for this and risk being the center of attention, use an orange card which the child simply places on his desk, or the teachers desk, which signals they are out on break.

Tackling Anxiety In Class

Assemblies/Large Group Activities Some children become anxious in crowds, until a child has mastered the auditorium, allow them to sit where they feel most comfortable (e.g., at the end of the row in the back of the auditorium), see if they can gradually rejoin their class.

Return After Illness Ever responsible, anxious kids may be very distressed about work they have missed while they were out. Assign a responsible buddy to copy notes and share handouts. If tests are given the day of the child's return, give them the option to take the test at another time and use the test-time to make up any other missing work.

Field Trips Compounding the daily stress of the anxious child, field trips include the factors of being away from home and parents, and a change in routine. Accommodate the child's level of readiness so that he or she can participate as fully as possible. Consider having the child in the "teachers's group," or having parents accompany the group until the child is ready to handle an excursion without these supports in place.

Change in Routine/Substitute Teachers Because anxious children try very hard to please and predict what is required in a situation, changes of any sort may be experienced as very stressful. When possible, send a note home the day before to alert the child/family to a change in routine, this will allow the child to process the change in his or her comfort zone and will make the transitions go more smoothly the next day.



Homework Expectations If children are spending inordinate amounts of time on homework because of OCD redoing, rechecking, rereading, or simply worrying that the assignment was not done thoroughly enough, the teacher can set a reasonable amount of time for homework and then reduce the homework load to fit into that time frame. Teachers can also provide time estimates for each assignment, so that the anxious child can attempt to stay within 10% of the estimated time. Eliminate repetition by having the child do every other math question, reduce reading and writing assignments, consider books on tape if a child is unable to read without repetition.

Dreamers are Believers

Believers are Achievers

Amitabh Mohan



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We invite our readers to be contributors. Write to us an idea or approach that you have tried and worked for our Idea column.

