



About Anxiety and Adolescents

At some stage in our lives, each one of us is likely to feel stressed, worried or anxious when faced with a difficult situation. A certain amount of worry and anxiety can be a good thing because it can give us the extra push we need to complete important tasks in our school or family life. If we were very calm all the time, we would probably perform quite poorly or simply do nothing at all! Too much worry for too long, however, is unhealthy and unhelpful and can affect our physical and emotional feelings as well as our thinking and behaviours.

Stress is what occurs when our worries are stronger and when we continue to experience the same worrying thoughts repeatedly. While people often say they are “stressed” – about assignments, exams, upcoming performances or just bad hair days – this stress is a normal part of life and typically goes away once the immediate problem or event has passed.

Anxiety occurs when these feelings of stress and worry become much more extreme and in response to things that are difficult to cope with over longer periods of time. Anxiety can sometimes seem out of proportion to the event we are faced with and is typically associated with worry about future events. Anxiety becomes a difficulty when it becomes overwhelming, impacts on life in a negative way and prevents your daughter from enjoying ‘normal’ life experiences.

Anxiety disorders are fairly common and generally start in late childhood or adolescence. Around one in 25 people aged between 13 and 17 will experience anxiety in any 12 month period. Anxiety is also twice as common in girls as boys. It is important to recognise and treat anxiety problems as early as possible, as this can prevent a lifetime of experiencing both anxiety and depression. You can help your daughter to cope with stress and anxiety by teaching and encouraging her to use these strategies:

1. ACTIVATE HELPFUL THOUGHTS

Model how to think in helpful, positive ways. Show your daughter how you have learnt to distract yourself from worrying thoughts. Encourage her to think really hard about a pleasant time you once had or something she can look forward to in the short, medium and long-term.

2. ALLOCATE QUALITY TIME

It is important to allocate special times as a family, discuss things that ARE going well and to celebrate little happy events when they DO occur.

3. CALM DOWN & CHILL OUT

Everyone needs to allocate calm, relaxing, quality time to do something they enjoy each day

4. EXERCISE

Exercise is great, and essential, for beating worry and stress as it helps to release the build up of adrenaline in the body. Exercising AT LEAST three times a week is a great start.

5. NETWORK

Model to your daughter how you maintain relationships to support you during difficult times. Encourage her to connect with you, a friend or another trusted adult to discuss any concerns.

6. PINPOINT THE PROBLEM AND HAVE A PLAN

Encourage your daughter to document her worries. Note time and place, triggers, body signals and any thoughts she had at the time along with actions she took to manage things. Discuss what worked and what didn't and what she will plan to do if it occurs again.

Resources: www.goodgrief.org.au; www.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters; www.pada.org.au
www.friends.org.au; www.beyondblue.org.au ; www.reachout.com.au



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THE BRAVE PROGRAM FOR TEENAGERS IS YOUR TEENAGER WORRIED, ANXIOUS OR NERVOUS? Want some help?

ABOUT THE BRAVE PROGRAM

Researchers at Macquarie University in Sydney have specifically developed internet-based and clinic-based programs for teenagers with anxiety. Both the internet and clinic-based treatment programs involve 12 sessions for teenagers and 7 sessions for parents. The sessions are completed weekly and usually take around an hour. During this time you will learn skills such as relaxation, problem solving, identifying anxious body signs and recognising helpful thinking styles, to help you cope with anxiety.

WHAT DOES BRAVE STAND FOR?

- B** Body Signs
- R** Relaxation
- A** Activate helpful thoughts
- V** Victory over your fears
- E** Enjoy! Reward yourself

WHAT TYPE OF TREATMENT IS USED IN THE BRAVE PROGRAM?

The BRAVE Program is based on cognitive-behavioural principles (CBT) for the treatment of adolescent anxiety. Therapy techniques include relaxation training, identification of emotions and thoughts, positive self-talk, coping skills, problem solving and graded exposure.

WHO CAN BE INVOLVED IN THE BRAVE PROGRAM?

The program is open to teenagers aged between 13 and 17 years, who are suffering from either Separation Anxiety, Specific Phobia, Social Phobia or Generalised Anxiety. As part of the research, families are randomly assigned to completing the program either in the clinic or over the internet, therefore families must be willing to partake in either condition as preferences cannot be taken. If you are placed in the clinic condition, you will be required to come to the Brave clinic at Macquarie University in North Ryde for each session. If you are placed in the internet condition, you will complete the sessions in your own home using a computer and will be asked to start either straight away or after a 12-week wait.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS WANTED

The BRAVE Program is currently part of a research project examining the effectiveness of delivering treatment for anxiety over the internet. For this reasons, families involved in the study will be asked to complete interviews and questionnaires at various stages of the study. Researchers from Macquarie University are seeking teenagers aged between 13 and 17 years who experience worry, anxiety or nerves. As part of the research study, the University is offering both clinic-based (to be conducted at Macquarie University) and internet-based programs to help teenagers cope with anxiety. The program involves sessions for both teenagers and their parents. To be eligible for the project, families must be willing to attend the university for treatment and have internet access at home.

HOW MUCH DOES THE PROGRAM COST?

A small fee of \$100 covers all assessments, teenager & parent sessions & course materials.

For more information, please contact Dr Amanda Gamble by phone: 029850 9012 or email: braveforteenagers@psy.mq.edu.au