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## WHAT IS ANXIETY IN TEENS?

Anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an event or situation with an uncertain outcome; it is a reaction to situations people perceive as stressful or dangerous. Most teens experience some level of anxiety, stress, or worry in response to unfamiliar situations and everyday life.

You may be worried or stressed about:

- School
- Family
- Local or world events and news
- Social media
- Difficult emotional events, such as romantic or friendship break ups or death
- Physical illness
- Or sometimes there is difficulty identifying why they feel a general sense of anxiety

Sometimes you might not know why you feel anxious. If your anxiety becomes severe and starts to interfere with your daily life, you should talk to your doctor.

## SYMPTOMS - OF ANXIETY CAN INCLUDE:

- Physiological symptoms: increased heart rate, sweating, feeling dizzy
- Feeling restless or irritable
- Getting tired easily
- Hard time concentrating
- Withdrawing from people and activities once enjoyed
- Intrusive thoughts of worry and difficulty trying to control worrying thoughts
- Sleep disruption

## ANXIETY ON THE FIELD

Players may demonstrate anxiety on the field in various ways:

- Hesitancy to play or seeming sluggish
- Irritability or over emotional during play
- Overreaction to injury or minor physical pain
- Increase of anger and decrease tolerance for typical aspects of the game

# COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT STRATEGIES



Everyone feels anxious at times, and there are simple strategies you can use to help players who are experiencing anxiety so that it doesn't hold them back or cause them to avoid life experiences.

## **Provide a predictable practice or game routine.**

Maintain this schedule as much as possible, with sufficient notice if there is a change.

## **Incorporate coping skills into practices.**

Since anxiety is anticipatory, grounding techniques like deep breathing and mindfulness can be incredibly helpful for players experiencing anxiety. Help them notice what's happening in the immediate environment and identify: something they can see; something they can feel; and something they can hear.

**The most important thing to remember about anxiety:** There is a delicate balance between providing too much reassurance and support versus too much emphasis on "just pushing-through" without validation. Both extremes can serve to foster and increase anxiety in players.

## **Develop a plan for helping players manage anxious behaviors.**

Help players identify specific coping strategies that may be helpful. Not all coping strategies will work for all players; some will find immediate appropriate distraction beneficial, others may find talking about their fears beneficial. This may be individualized and, if an adaptive coping strategy is used, should result in the long term reduction of anxiety.

## **Develop reasonable accommodations for any anxious player.**

This could include activities like starting practice after grounding techniques or ending early to avoid crowds - any activities that help support adaptive coping.

## RESOURCES

The [Anxiety BC Youth](#) website has a list of intervention strategies as well as a tool for students to create a MAP (My Anxiety Plan).

[Johns Hopkins 5 Tips for Overcoming Sports Anxiety](#)

[Sports Psychology Today: 3 Things Coaches Can Do to Help Players Overcome Anxiety](#)

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