

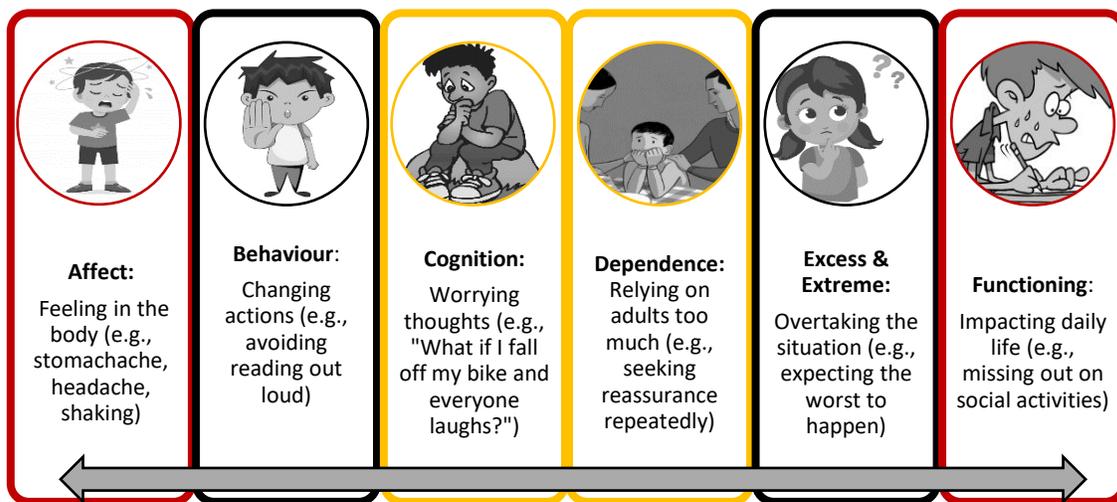
What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is apprehension or worry about situations or events with uncertain outcomes. It affects thoughts, emotions, behaviours and is associated with physical responses.

Anxiety is normal. Everyone experiences it occasionally and in some cases it can be helpful and motivating, such as when preparing for a test. However, anxiety can become a problem when it is too intense or happens too frequently.

Anxiety in children and youth is sometimes expressed as anger, difficulty sleeping, defiance, tantrums, problems with focus, avoidance, negativity, and over planning. They may refuse to attend school, struggle to complete assignments or avoid social situations or activities. The experiences vary for each child, and from situation to situation, but children who are generally anxious are often affected in the following six ways:

The ABC's of Anxiety



How to Support Students with Anxiety:

- **Encourage and Reinforce:** Encourage students to try new things and let them know mistakes are expected. Provide genuine and specific praise for effort, progress and persistence to focus on the process of learning rather than the outcome.
- **Break Down Expectations:** Have the same expectations as for a student without anxiety but introduce concepts or tasks as a process of achievable steps.
- **Focus on Positives:** Many students with anxiety tend to focus on negatives; by modelling and teaching positive self-talk we help students change their mindset and perspective.
- **Validate their Feelings:** When students share they are scared or worried about something, validate their experience (e.g., "I can see you're worried about this assignment"). Avoid dismissive reassurances (e.g., "You're okay") and instead point out a time when they handled anxious feelings well.
- **Saving Face:** Develop a system for a student to ask for help in a discrete way (e.g., coloured cards on her desk or a pre-arranged hand signal) and avoid public displays of feedback, critique or discipline.
- **Practice Relaxation Exercises:** Teach calming or relaxation exercises to help students cope with anxiety (e.g., deep breathing, yoga, visualizations).

Helpful Resources:

www.anxietycanada.com
<https://childmind.org/topics/concerns/anxiety/>
<http://www.adam.mb.ca/>