

WHEN ANXIETY EXPLODES

Anxiety can feel overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be, and it does get easier to manage with the right tools. We've compiled expert advice and resources we found this year while reporting "Generation Vexed" and hope it will help you and your family on this journey.

DEAL WITH THE CRISIS

If your child threatens self-harm or is contemplating suicide, call the National Suicide Prevention Line:
1-800-273-TALK

In Utah, the University of Utah 24/7 crisis line:
1-801-587-3000

SET UP SUPPORT

Check with your child's pediatrician or county mental health authority:
<https://hope4utah.com/utah-mental-health-agencies/>

Be prepared to discuss the frequency, duration and severity of the child's struggle. If a child is having an off day or two, but can eventually pull it together, that's different from a normally calm child who begins to explode or withdraw for longer periods of time.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

University of Utah's "warmline":
801-587-1055

For peer support with struggles short of a crisis, available from 9 a.m. - 10 p.m.

American Psychiatric Association:
www.psychiatry.org

Patients and Families, Find a Psychiatrist

Boys Town National Hotline: **1-800-448-3000**

Parents or teens, boys or girls, can talk with a Boys Town counselor 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, for

crisis intervention services, information and referrals

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Helpline: 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)

Available Monday - Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. ET

Crisis Text Line: Text **HELLO to 741741** from anywhere, anytime, about any type of crisis. A live, trained crisis counselor will respond quickly



TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Consider confiding in trusted friends about your family's struggle. A support network is crucial and may also lead you to other resources.

Accept that helping an anxious child may require significant mental, emotional and even financial investment. Educate yourself, ask questions and be your child's advocate without taking over or shielding them from opportunities to stretch and grow.

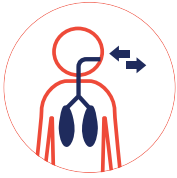
Recognize your child's anxiety is no one's fault, but a medical condition that can be managed.

Get enough sleep, eat well, take time to do things that you enjoy and that provide a break from the stressful situation at home.



ANXIETY TOOL KIT

Learn to lessen stress with tools the experts use and recommend:



Box breathing

Do these steps for four seconds apiece. Breathe in. Hold. Breathe out. Hold. Pay attention as you do it and feel yourself calm down.



Name the emotion

Identifying a stressful emotion can decrease its intensity by nearly half. Ask a child having an outburst to name what he's feeling — "Anger" "Sadness" "Fear" — and assign an intensity number, 1-10. It not only short-circuits the emotion, but forces the brain to think logically, shifting brain activity to the executive function, which imaging suggests goes dark when the amygdala is lit by emotion and anxiety.



Touch your heart

Listen to your heartbeat for a few seconds to calm down or lower stress.



Story in your head

When you speak your worries aloud, it's easier to see your panicked scenario as unlikely. Consider a boy waiting for a girl to respond to his prom invitation. His brain churns: She's giggling right now with her friends, who are going to ostracize him. Oh no. He'll have no friends. He'll never get married. "It carries emotion far beyond reality, but if you can speak it to yourself or a trusted friend, you quickly realize that's not the way it's going to be," says Joe Newman of Life Launch Centers.



Worry time

Set a limited but specific time to worry. When something starts bugging you during the day, acknowledge it and tell yourself you'll look at it during worry time. Then put it in an imaginary box that you'll open then. Be specific: 10 p.m.



Emphasize exercise

Physical activity releases stress while building confidence. It's also a good chance to make friends or learn new skills.



Go to sleep

Everything is harder to deal with when you're tired. Nearly everyone needs more sleep than they get, especially teens. Get a better night's sleep by removing technological distractions.



Eat well

Relying on sugar, caffeine, refined carbs and empty calories can leave you lightheaded and prone to crashing, which can make anxiety worse. Eating good food in a mindful way can also be a chance to slow down and recalibrate.



Welcome fear

Make your home a place where discomfort and fear are welcome, says Utah therapist Jenny Howe. "Oh, this is something you're scared of?" she says, "Great, let's talk about it and do it."

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Be mindful

Pay attention to your breath and scan your body with “loving kindness” — a good way to recognize “unpleasant emotions, aside from avoiding them,” which “never reduces the stress,” says Alexis V. Arczynski of the University of Utah Campus Counseling Center. Instead, acknowledge the feeling, either “swipe” it away or unpack it — no judgment for feeling how you feel.



Talk it out

Anxiety and depression often trap people — especially teens — in their

own heads. Talking candidly with a trusted friend or family member can help lessen the feeling that “no one understands.”



Unplug

While not all anxiety stems from or is related to social media, anyone who’s anxious may find that a break from the curated world of Instagram and the constant offerings of YouTube can be refreshing.

LEARN MORE ABOUT ANXIETY AND MENTAL HEALTH

BOOKS

For parents

“**When Panic Attacks**” by David D. Burns

“**The Self-Driven Child**” by William Stixrud and Ned Johnson

“**Freedom from Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder**” by Jonathan Grayson

“**The Triple Bind: Saving Our Teenage Girls From Today’s Pressures and Conflicting Expectations**” by Stephen Hinshaw

“**Doing School: How We Are Creating a Generation of Stressed-Out, Materialistic, and Miseducated Students**” by Denise Pope

<http://www.challengesuccess.org/resources/books/>



For teens

“**The Shyness & Social Anxiety Workbook for Teens**” by Jennifer Shannon

“**What To Do When You Worry Too Much**” by Dawn Huebner

“**The Panic Workbook for Teens**” by Debra Kissen, Bari Goldman Cohen and Kathi F. Abitbol

“**The Anger Workbook for Teens**” by Raychelle Cassada Lohmann

“**The Anxiety Workbook for Teens**” by Lisa M. Schab

For kids

“**Duke’s Journey of Courage**” by Tanya Lindquist

“**Tiger-Tiger, Is It True?**” by Byron Katie

“**David and the Worry Beast: Helping Children Cope with Anxiety**” by Anne Marie Guanci

WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO

Moving beyond grades, test scores and performance

Stanford Senior Lecturer Denise Pope co-founded Challenge Success 15 years ago after she saw too many college students arrive at Stanford with high GPAs but mentally fried, sleep-deprived and on medication for anxiety and depression.

The program encourages primary and secondary schools to reduce the pressure on kids by adjusting schedules and expectations — encouraging overall well-

being through later start times, project-based learning, mindfulness practices, changes in grading and parent buy-in.

The nonprofit has worked with over 450 schools across the country — though none in Utah yet. Here's what the Challenge Success' **SPACE** framework looks like for the 501 K-8 students at The Alexander Dawson School at Rainbow Mountain in Las Vegas, Nevada, according to Roxanne Stansbury, assistant head of school.

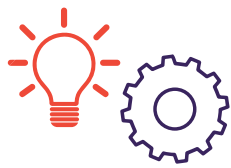
S



Students' schedule and use of time

- Teachers use an online “conflict calendar” to avoid kids having tests or big projects due on the same day in multiple classes.
- A floating schedule means subjects rotate times each day, recognizing that kids may learn better at different times of the day.

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Project and problem-based learning

- All students engage in hands-on learning and exploration — like how second graders take care of an organic garden and plan a farmers' market, then use the proceeds to invest in microbanking in the country they're studying.

A



Alternative and authentic assessment

- As part of the project-based learning, students are graded on a “key performance,” rather than just tests.

C



Climate of care

- Students learn social-emotional skills, mindfulness, meditation, positive coping strategies.
- Daily 20-minute check-in gives students time to talk with an adviser or ask questions of other teachers to encourage self-advocacy.

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Education for the whole community

- School officials encourage parents to prioritize sleep, unstructured play time and family time over homework, especially when homework seems to be taking an excessively long time.
- A student advisory board decided to plan the school's January open house to teach their parents about the importance of sleep.