

# Coping with Anxiety: Parenting Strategies for Middle School & High School Students



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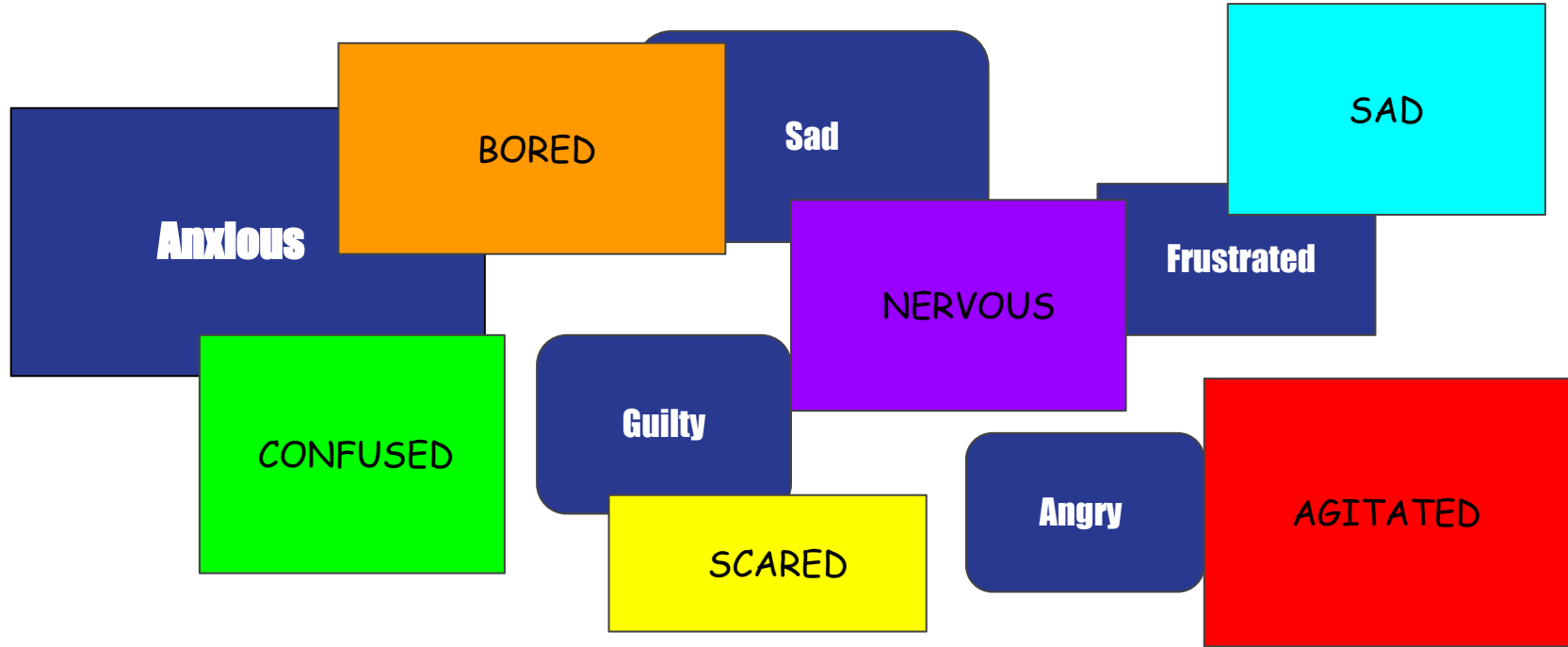


# Mindfulness Exercise

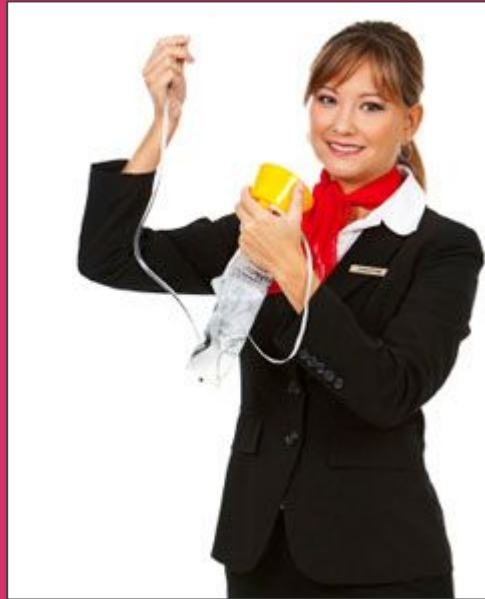


[Mini Meditation](#)

# How are we feeling?



# Coping Strategies for Parents



- 5 Coping Strategies with Dr. Laurie Santos
  - Exercise, Gratitude, Sleep, Get Social, Be with Your Emotions
    - RAIN - Recognize, Allow, Investigate, Nurture your emotions
- Limit news & social media
- Model self-compassion
- Release emotions
- Be realistic & honest
- Find happiness and show gratitude
- Seek Connection

# Signs of Anxiety in Tweens & Teens

Anxiety is a *normal and expected* reaction to stressful situations

Teens may not recognize their anxiety or be able to identify the source(s) of their fear. Here's how anxiety can manifest in teens:

- Behavioral changes - increased moodiness & irritability
- Somatic complaints such as headaches or stomach aches
- Appearing restless or fidgety
- Reassurance seeking
- Low Motivation
- Difficulty concentrating
- Trouble sleeping or fatigue

# Signs of Anxiety in Tweens & Teens

More significant levels of anxiety may be present if your child demonstrates:

- Avoidance of specific activities, situations or people
- A tendency to worry about what can go wrong in any scenario
- Worries or fears that interfere with normal daily activities
- Persistent distress despite an adult's reassurances
- Trouble sleeping at night
- Frequent physical symptoms, such as headaches or stomach pain, that do not stem from other medical conditions
- Repeated episodes of sudden, unexpected or intense fear that comes with symptoms like heart pounding, trouble breathing, or feeling shaky, sweaty or dizzy

# Anxiety & Coping Flexibility

Anxiety is born out of:

- Feelings of Uncertainty
- Loss of control

Coping Flexibility:

- Focus on the things they can control
  - Examples: Routine, eating, exercise, social connection, homework
- Focus on the present
- Stick to the facts



# Coping Strategies for Teens

- Get fresh air
- Deep breathing
- Move your body- walk, run, hike, yoga, play a sport
- Journal [List of Prompts](#)
- Play with a pet
- Take a warm bath
- Practice mindfulness
- Listen to calming music
- Talk to a friend or family member
- Cook or bake something yummy
- Read a book
- Draw, paint, or color





*“Together we will cry and face fear and grief. I will want to take away your pain. But instead I will sit with you and teach you how to feel it.”*

*- Brene Brown*

# The Power of Validation

[Video: It's not about the nail](#)

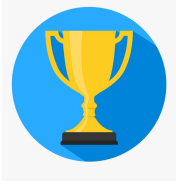
Validation helps teens to feel and express their emotions, develop a secure sense of self, gain confidence, feel more connected to their parents and have better relationships in adulthood.

## Keys to Putting This Into Practice:

- Ask your teen “how are you feeling?”
- Actively listen, validate, and show empathy
- Hold yourself back from trying to “fix” or offer solutions
- Validation does not require you to agree with your teen’s feelings
- Don’t validate what is not valid
  - Example: The *feeling* of being stressed and not wanting to attend zoom classes is valid, but the behavior of not attending classes is not valid.



# Motivation



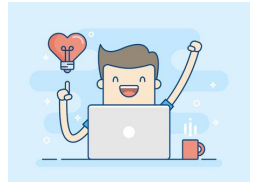
## Extrinsic

Good Grades  
Awards  
College  
Money  
Winning



## Intrinsic

Enjoyment  
Purpose  
Growth  
Passion  
Self-expression



# Fostering Motivation

- Give your teens as much say as possible over their learning
  - Let them decide how to tackle their assignments, prepare for tests, & where they study best
- Use praise that is specific and celebrates **effort** rather than talent
  - Ex. “I can tell you must’ve worked really hard on your history paper due to all the details and research you found about WWII”
- Talk openly with your teens about the tactics you use when you’re struggling to find intrinsic motivation
- Allow your teen to identify strategies that will help increase their motivation
  - The key is to allow your child to problem solve without telling them what to do

\*For teens that are struggling to get started remind them that\*:

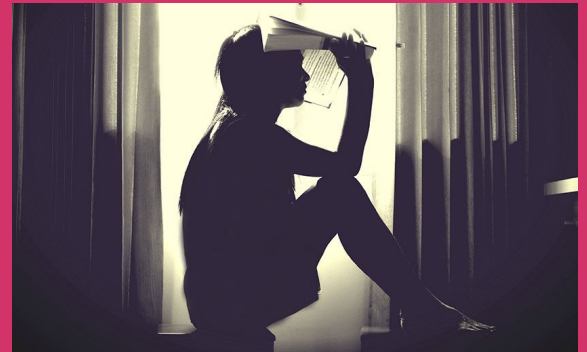
***Motivation Follows Action***

***Don’t think, just do & motivation will follow***

# Fostering Motivation Cont.

Parents should keep a close eye on teens who might be checking out of school and talk to their teens **without getting angry** about what's getting in the way.

- Be open to adjusting expectations if you're child's emotional experience is interfering with school. Adding more pressure and trying to control them will make them feel less capable and discouraged, and lead to a contentious parent-child relationship.
- If your teen is completely checked-out despite trying these above techniques reach out their guidance counselor and/or me for support.
- Further intervention may be needed.



# A Note on Resilience




# Resources

## Articles:

- [Child Mind Institute: Anxiety and Coping with the Coronavirus](#)
- [NYT: Helping Children with Anxiety in the Pandemic](#)
- [NYT: How to Do School When Motivation Has Gone Missing](#)
- [Washington Post: Uncertainty fuels anxiety..](#)
- [7 Ways to Build Resilience in Children During Covid-19](#)

## Podcasts:

- The Happiness Lab with Dr. Laurie Santos
  - Unlocking Us with Brene Brown
  - Dear Therapists with Lori Gottlieb & Guy Winch
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# Contact Information

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**Kids In Crisis 24-Hour Helpline  
for Parents & Students: 203-661-1911**



# Questions?

