

# Navigating Through Anxiety:

*Destination.....*

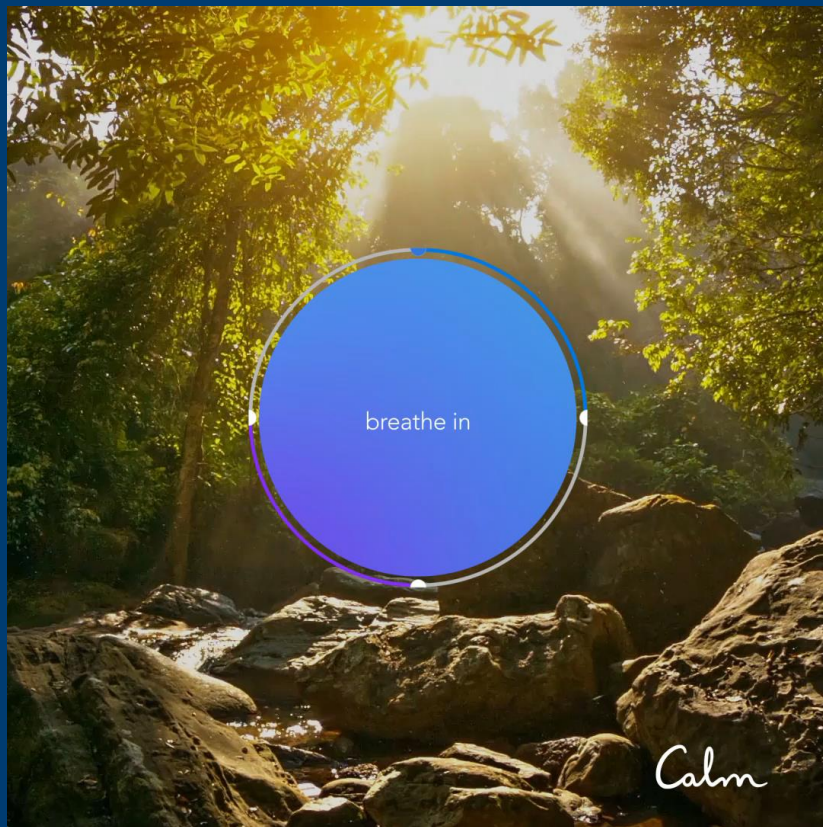
## Healthy Mindfulness!!

*Presented by Cindy Gerhardt,  
NPTA Healthy Minds Ambassador*



# Learning Objectives

- \* To understand the causes of anxiety and stress that we experience in day-to-day situations
- \* To recognize symptoms of anxiety we display and how they can impact and influence the youth in our homes and communities
- \* To learn techniques and habits that can have positive impacts on reducing the effects of stress in our lives



breathe in

*Calm*

***Anxiety** is a common mental health condition characterized by excessive worry, fear, and nervousness.*

*It is a natural response to stress or potential threats, but when it becomes persistent and interferes with daily life, it can be considered an anxiety disorder.*

**What is Anxiety?**

## **Normal Anxiety:**

### *Temporary and Situational:*

Anxiety is a natural human response to stress or danger, often short-lived and related to a specific situation.

### *Adaptive:*

It can help prepare us for challenges or keep us alert in dangerous situations.

***Normal anxiety doesn't cause significant distress or interfere with daily functioning.***

# What is Anxiety?

## **Anxiety Disorder:**

### *Persistent and Excessive:*

Anxiety becomes a disorder when it is persistent, excessive, and disproportionate to the situation.

### *Interferes with Daily Life:*

Anxiety disorders cause significant distress and interfere with daily activities, relationships, and overall functioning.

***Anxiety disorders often require professional intervention, such as therapy or medication, to manage symptoms and improve quality of life.***

# What is Anxiety?

# Types of Anxiety Disorders

- **General Anxiety Disorder:** Persistent, excessive, uncontrolled worry and negative thoughts. Some worry is about actual events, while other times the worst is expected for no apparent reason.
- **Panic Disorder:** A sudden, intense fear that produces powerful physical symptoms that last a few minutes. Panic attacks can be caused by a specific trigger or come on unexpectedly.
- **Social Anxiety Disorder:** Intense fear of social or performance situations that is rooted in significant worry about being negatively judged or embarrassed by others.
- **Separation Anxiety Disorder:** Fear of being separated from a person someone feels attached to, often caused by excessive worry that something bad will happen to their loved one while separated and they will be left alone.
- **Phobia Disorder:** An intense, irrational, out of proportion fear of the potential danger of a specific object or situation.

- **Past year prevalence:** 19.1% of U.S. adults had any anxiety disorder in the past year.
- **Lifetime prevalence:** An estimated 31.1% of U.S. adults experience any anxiety disorder at some time in their lives.
- **Gender differences:** Past year prevalence of any anxiety disorder was higher for females (23.4%) than for males (14.3%).
- **Anxiety disorders are common:** Anxiety disorders are the most common mental health concern in the United States.
- **Over 40 million adults:** Over 40 million adults in the U.S. have an anxiety disorder.

## Who has Anxiety?

- **Prevalence:** Approximately 1 in 12 **children** aged 3-17 have anxiety.
- **Adolescents:** An estimated 31.9% of adolescents had any anxiety disorder.
- **Severe anxiety:** The National Institute of Mental Health estimates that the prevalence of severe anxiety is about 1 in 17.

## Who has Anxiety?

- Feeling dread, nervous, irritable, restless, fidgety or on edge
- Worrying excessively about the future      • Anticipating the worst
- Increased heart rate, chest pain, breathing rapidly or shortness of breath, sweating, tingling, trembling, nausea or feeling dizzy
- Feeling weak or tired      • Racing thoughts      • Muscle tension
- Difficulty concentrating      • Trouble sleeping      \*Feeling out of control
- Fear of social situations, leaving home/being separated from a loved one

**Recognize Any of These?**

# Are You Signaling?

- Facial expressions
- Choice of words
- Volume
- Level of engagement
- Intensity of conversations
- Loss of appetite

# What Are Your Triggers?

- Financial worries
- Job insecurity
- Health
- Social issues
- Long term stability
- Aging parents
- Work/Life balance
- Household calendar

# What Are Some of YOUR Triggers?

# What Are Some of YOUR Triggers?



## HEALTHY MINDS: ANXIETY ASSESSMENT

Occasional worries or stress are normal parts of everyday life. When these worries lead to struggles at home, in school and with friendships or cause panic attacks, your child may be experiencing anxiety.

The purpose of this form is to help assess your child's risk factors for anxiety, look for any anxiety signs and symptoms, and determine if your child may need professional help.

### ANXIETY RISK FACTORS (Ask yourself these questions about your child; circle your answer)

- |   |     |    |            |
|---|-----|----|------------|
| 1. Do they have immediate family members with a history of anxiety disorder?        | Yes | No | Don't Know |
| 2. Do they have a chronic or severe medical condition?                              | Yes | No | Don't Know |
| 3. Have they experienced any trauma?  | Yes | No | Don't Know |
| 4. Do they have a disability, are LGBTQ+ or a racial, ethnic or religious minority? | Yes | No | Don't Know |

Answering "yes" to ANY of these risk factors means your child is more likely than a child without these risk factors to develop anxiety at some point in their lives.

### ANXIETY SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS (Ask yourself these questions about your child; circle your answer)

- |  |     |    |            |
|--|-----|----|------------|
| 1. Do they express extreme worry, dread, panic, doom, fear or anxiety?           | Yes | No | Don't Know |
| 2. Are they having trouble sleeping?   | Yes | No | Don't Know |
| 3. Are they having racing thoughts or trouble concentrating?                     | Yes | No | Don't Know |
| 4. Do they seem irritable, angry or easily upset?                                | Yes | No | Don't Know |
| 5. Are they fidgety or unable to sit still?                                      | Yes | No | Don't Know |
| 6. Do they get a lot of stomach aches or headaches?                              | Yes | No | Don't Know |
| 7. Do they make up reasons to not go to school?                                  | Yes | No | Don't Know |
| 8. Do they resist doing homework or get emotional when you push them to do it?   | Yes | No | Don't Know |
| 9. Do they get overwhelmed by common day-to-day activities?                      | Yes | No | Don't Know |
| 10. Do they have tantrums?   | Yes | No | Don't Know |
| 11. Do they have friends?  | Yes | No | Don't Know |
| 12. Do they refuse to participate in activities because they are afraid?         | Yes | No | Don't Know |
| 13. Are they more clinging than other children or fear being separated from you? | Yes | No | Don't Know |
| 14. Are they more shy, anxious or worried than other children their age?         | Yes | No | Don't Know |
| 15. Has your child had a panic attack?   | Yes | No | Don't Know |

### DO THEY NEED HELP?

If you answer "yes" to ANY of these questions, your child may need help from a doctor, counselor or therapist.

- |  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. My child shows three or more anxiety signs and symptoms.                            | Yes | No |
| 2. My child cannot control their extreme worry, dread, panic, doom, fear or anxiety.   | Yes | No |
| 3. My child's anxious feelings interfere with daily activities or social interactions. | Yes | No |
| 4. My child's anxious feelings happen frequently or do not go away.                    | Yes | No |

[Healthy Minds: Get Help](#) provides options for getting the help your child needs.

# Anxiety Assessment

<https://www.pta.org/home/programs/Healthy-Lifestyles/mental-health/families#topics>

- Set boundaries
  - Time
  - Social Media/News
  - Calendar
- Mindfulness techniques
  - Yoga/Stretching
  - Walk outdoors
  - Puzzles/Reading/Crafts

## **Ways to Combat Anxiety**

- Make a Plan
  - Revisit personal missteps
  - Address issues with time management
  - Talk about changes in home routines
  - Know when to disengage
  - Ask for help with daily tasks
  - Find your support group

## **Ways to Combat Anxiety**

**What are some of YOUR Coping Habits?**



[PTA.org/HealthyLifestyles](https://pta.org/HealthyLifestyles)



[PTA.org/HealthyLifestyles](https://www.pta.org/HealthyLifestyles)



[PTA.org/HealthyLifestyles](https://www.pta.org/HealthyLifestyles)

# Sharing is Caring

# Teacher Appreciation Week 2025

Learn how teachers light the way to brighter futures during Teacher Appreciation Week 2025, May 5-9.

LEARN MORE →

2025  
National  
PTA  
Virtual  
Convention

General Programs Resources

School of Excellence ▼

Reflections ▼

Family Reading Experience ▼

STEM + Families ▼

PTA Connected ▼

Healthy Lifestyles ▲

Healthy Bodies

Healthy Minds

Healthy Earth

PTA Wellness Fairs with Walmart

Walmart Business FAQ

THE SMART TALK



Have **The Smart Talk** to set digital ground rules with your kids.

[www.TheSmartTalk.org](http://www.TheSmartTalk.org)

PTA norton

NATIONAL PTA  
**REFLECTIONS**<sup>®</sup>  
Awards & Supplies



**ShopPTA.com**

In an effort to help every child reach their full potential, PTA advocates for policies and legislation that ensure equity for every student, promote a positive school climate and support the whole child and family to prepare all students with social and emotional skills to succeed in adulthood.

## Healthy Minds Resources

We share free tips and tools for both **PTA leaders** and **families** to learn more about how to promote mental health. Click below to go directly to the section with resources created just for you.

For Families →

For PTA Leaders →

PTA Connected

Healthy Lifestyles

Healthy Bodies

Healthy Minds

Mental Health for  
Families

Mental Health for  
PTA Leaders

Healthy Earth

PTA Wellness Fairs with  
Walmart

Walmart Business FAQ

About PTA

The Smart **Talk**

Have **The Smart Talk** to set digital  
ground rules with your kids.

## For Families: Healthy Minds

### FAMILIES

- Family Toolkit
- Topic-Specific Family Resources
- PTA Healthy Minds Videos

Mental health impacts how we think, feel and behave, contributing to our overall wellbeing. **By prioritizing the mental health of our youth, we can guide them to learn critical life skills, to adapt and grow through challenges and to build meaningful relationships.**

Our aim is to help parents and caregivers guide youth to develop critical life skills that will allow them to reach their full potential and be able to thrive.

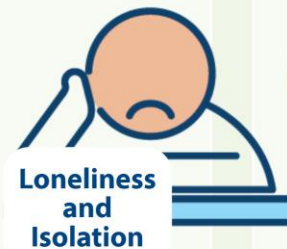
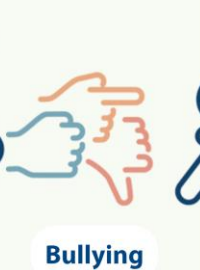
#### Families play an important role in:

- Providing children with strong mental health support and tools to identify and manage emotions.
- Incorporating positive mental health practices into their daily lives to cope with challenges and build resilience.
- Creating safe spaces to support children if they are struggling emotionally, mentally and physically.



## Topic-Specific Family Resources

Depending on where your family is on your mental health journey, you may be looking for different types of supports. Although everyone's circumstances are different, there are actions all families can take to strengthen their mental health—and you can start by taking small steps!

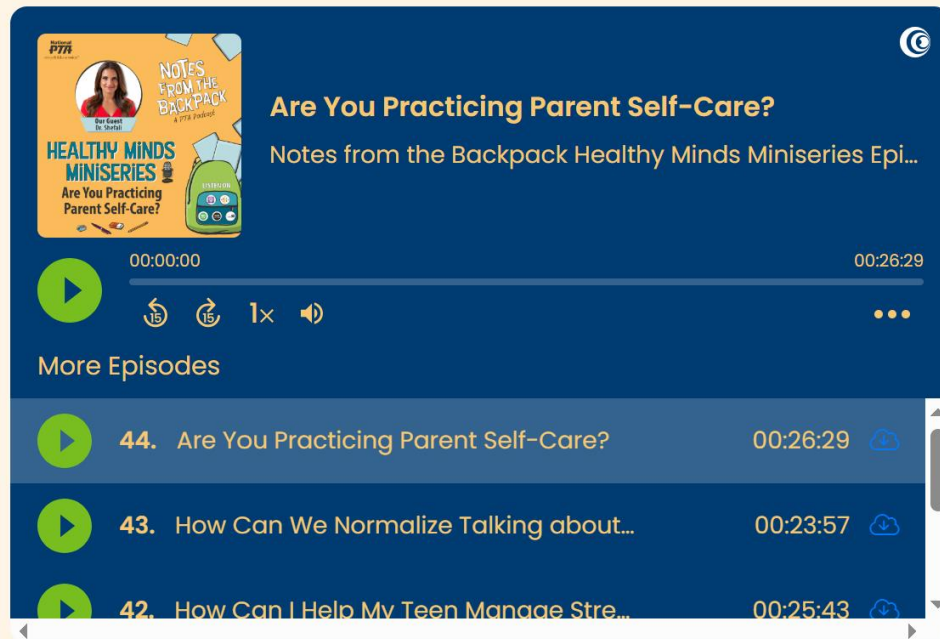


# NOTES FROM THE BACKPACK

A PTA Podcast

**Notes from the Backpack** features real conversations with real parents, experts and educators who offer real-life advice, ideas and strategies parents can use to help their children succeed in and out of school.

## Episodes Focused on Mental Health



The screenshot shows a podcast player interface. At the top left is the PTA logo. The main title is "NOTES FROM THE BACKPACK" with a subtitle "a PTA podcast". Below this is the episode title "Are You Practicing Parent Self-Care?" and the series name "HEALTHY MINDS MINISERIES". The episode duration is 00:00:00 / 00:26:29. The player controls include a play button, a 15-second rewind button, a 15-second fast forward button, a 1x speed button, and a volume icon. Below the player is a section titled "More Episodes" with a list of three episodes:

Episode Number	Episode Title	Duration	Download Icon
44.	Are You Practicing Parent Self-Care?	00:26:29	Download
43.	How Can We Normalize Talking about...	00:23:57	Download
42.	How Can I Help My Teen Manage Stre...	00:25:43	Download



## HEALTHY MINDS FAMILY ACTION PLAN

When families commit to good mental health together everyone benefits. Commit to yours today.

Making small changes in lifestyle and behavior as a family today can make a big difference for everyone's mental health and well-being tomorrow.

**My family commits to keeping our minds healthy and strong by:**

*(Check what your family will do)*

- Scheduling a regular family meeting every \_\_\_\_\_ to talk about everyone's feelings and concerns.
- Being aware of what is happening in each other's lives.
- Eating healthier foods.
- Eating more meals together.
- Exercising regularly.
- Limiting everyone's screen time on all devices outside of work or school.
- Putting all devices on the family charging station at bedtime.
- Getting the recommended amount of sleep each night.
- Establishing a consistent daily routine.
- Reducing stress.
- Practicing this relaxation technique when we feel stressed out or anxious: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**As a parent/grandparent/caregiver I commit to:**

*(Check which changes you will make)*

- Honestly share with my family what is happening in my life, both good and bad.
- Buying healthier foods for my family.
- Exercising \_\_\_\_\_ minutes \_\_\_\_\_ days a week.
- Limiting my screen time outside of work to \_\_\_\_\_ hours a day.
- Setting up a family device charging station in the house here: \_\_\_\_\_
- Sleeping \_\_\_\_\_ hours a night.
- Getting rid of stress in my life by: \_\_\_\_\_
- Being a good mental health role model to my kids.

**As a child I commit to:**

*(Check which changes you will make)*

- Honestly sharing with my family what is happening in my life, both good and bad.
- Exercising \_\_\_\_\_ minutes \_\_\_\_\_ days a week.
- Limiting my screen time outside of school to \_\_\_\_\_ hours a day.
- Sleeping \_\_\_\_\_ hours a night.
- Getting rid of stress in my life by: \_\_\_\_\_

# Family Action Plan



## HEALTHY MINDS FAMILY DISCUSSION GUIDE

It's important to know what's happening in your child's life and how they are feeling. Asking prompting, open-ended questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" answer can help you have a better understanding of your child's mental health. Here are some questions that may help your child open up and talk to you about their feelings.

### GENERAL HEALTHY MINDS QUESTIONS

#### Questions For Children of Any Age

1. What was the best part of your day today?
2. Is there anything that is bothering you or making you feel stressed out? What is it?
3. Is there anything that I am doing that is making you feel unhappy?
4. When you feel sad, worried or down, are you able to do things to help yourself feel better?  
If yes, what do you do?
5. How is your body feeling?
6. What is your favorite thing about yourself?
7. What is your favorite thing to do? When was the last time you did it?
8. Who in the world do you think knows you best? Why did you choose them?
9. Do you ever feel like you do not matter?
10. Is there anything that you need my help with?

#### Questions For Elementary-Aged Children

1. What part of your day made you smile? What was the hardest part of your day?
2. Let's take a happiness temperature check. Cold means you feel sad or down, warm means you feel happy, hot mean you feel angry or mad about something. What is your happiness temperature right now?
3. How happy are you on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the happiest?
4. Who is your best friend? Why?
5. Do you ever feel like hurting yourself?

#### Questions For Teenagers

1. What is the most exciting thing happening in your life right now?
2. What is the most stressful or overwhelming thing happening in your life right now?
3. Who is in your group of friends? What kinds of things do you like doing together?
4. When you think about your future, what do you see?
5. Do you ever wish you were not alive anymore?

# Family Discussion Guide



everychild.onevoice.®

Cindy Gerhardt

*NPTA Healthy Minds  
Ambassador*

*cgerhardt@pta.org*