

Anxiety

The most common mental health disorder.

WARNING SIGNS AND COPING SKILLS

Signs of anxiety

In young children:

1. Unexplained physical ailments, such as stomachaches or headaches
2. Clinginess and fear of separation
3. Refusing to speak in school

In older students:

1. Avoiding developmentally appropriate situations or activities, such as school attendance and sleepovers
2. Uncharacteristically irritable, oppositional or defiant behavior
3. Inability to tolerate uncertainty about the future
4. Social isolation

How schools can help reduce or prevent anxiety

1. Identify young children who seem lonely and withdrawn, and give them opportunities to learn social skills.
2. Review coping skills before handing back tests.
3. Give awards for growth and improvement, not just achievement.
4. Offer work breaks—featuring Mad Libs, sudoku, trivia questions and other games—that distract anxious kids from intrusive thoughts.