



REMEMBER

- Parents often feel overwhelmed by their young person's anxiety because it seems irrational and disrupts plans. Often parents - and youth workers - wonder if their kids are just "over-reacting". Help the parents to educate themselves and find support through the local Mental Health organization or online resources. Information can help combat their own anxiety about their teen's anxiety.
- Guide teens to come up with an imaginary picture of how their anxiety feels (e.g. a storm) and then imagine meeting Jesus in the middle of it. Being with him there and seeing what he sees and does is a beautiful way to introduce them to the One who is with them - always.
- The sword of truth has power. Suggest verses like these for their fight kit: Josh 1:9; Ps 118:6; 1 Peter 5:7; Is 41:10; Is 43:1-4.



RECOGNIZE

- Almost 20% of youth feel stress so extreme it keeps them from functioning properly.
- Rising numbers of teens carry worry and stress, but an anxiety disorder describes worry or dread that makes doing everyday things incredibly difficult. It is more intense and often spills into all of life. Rather than being anxious about something, the teen is often just anxious.
- Anxiety is focused in future possibilities ("...what if...") which can result in being anxious about getting anxious.
- Anxious teens will often pull out, freeze up or get angry when pushed; they show signs in their body like quick breathing, sped up heart, shifting eyes, headaches, stomach problems and difficulty concentrating.
- Anxiety is a function of emotion more than logic. The teen's fears may seem illogical to you, but can be incredibly intense for them. Although it's easy to feel powerless against anxiety, teens who learn skills for managing their emotions find that over time the anxiety has less and less power. Anxiety disorders are highly treatable through changing thinking patterns and learning coping strategies to deal with emotions. A visit to a medical doctor can start the process but only 20% of teens suffering from anxiety actually access any help.



RESPOND

- **Educate.** Help them begin to understand and "read" their own anxiety. Understanding what is going on can lessen the impact of intense emotion.
 - **Offer Empathy.** Try to step into their shoes and validate the distress they feel. Let them know that what they are feeling is experienced by many people and they don't need to be afraid of it.
 - **Don't Rescue.** Trying to remove anything that could cause anxiety creates a dependence on us and is actually disempowering for the teen. Teach them that they can learn to move through it. Be open to working with them to modify what is expected without fully removing the challenge.
- **Create a "Fight Kit."** Brainstorm together 4 things to do when they begin to feel anxious. Collect the ideas on their phone, in a journal, in a pencil case and encourage them to choose what they think they need to do when anxiety begins to grow.
 - **Take Small Bites.** If their anxiety is centered around doing an activity, break it into small steps and encourage them to take only the next small step. Celebrate each success.
 - **Create a "worry jar".** The teen can "park" their worries in the jar, written on a slip of paper, and worry about them at a designated time each week/each day. This gives a place for repeated worries to rest, knowing they will be dealt with at the selected time.
 - **Teach them coping skills.** Look for ways of moving the focus to outside of their emotions when anxiety begins to take over. Ideas: (i) breathe slowly, deeply and repeatedly (ii) think of a topic and begin listing things in that category (iii) start at their toes and tense then release each muscle, moving all the way up to their forehead. Notice the feeling of release each time.

ANXIETY

lifeteams
resources



RESOURCES

Mindshift is an app for teens to work through anxiety when it hits.

keltymentalhealth.ca/anxiety - information and links to more resources.

www.anxietycanada.ca - A wealth of practical resources to understand, manage and respond to anxiety.