

ANXIETY DISORDERS

INCLUSIVENESS

“ Anxiety is a thin stream of fear trickling through the mind. If encouraged, it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained.”

(Arthur Somers Roche)

The Aim of Scouting is to promote the development of individuals, enabling them to grow and take their place in society as active citizens. As we move forward with the Canadian Path we are much more aware of each individual's personal progression, inclusive of their varying abilities. This inclusiveness within Scouting uniquely positions us to play an important role in modifying community attitudes and behaviour towards individuals with identified needs; it starts with Scouts.

Please use this guide for a better understanding of youth with Anxiety Disorders; how as Scouters, we can make a difference through simple interventions, program modifications and knowing where to get help when needed.

DESCRIPTION

Anxiety is a normal human emotion that everyone experiences at times. Many people feel anxious, or nervous, when faced with a problem, before taking a test, or making an important decision. Anxiety Disorders, however, are different. They can cause such distress that it interferes with a person's ability to lead a normal life. An Anxiety Disorder is a serious mental illness. For youth with Anxiety Disorders, worry and fear are constant and overwhelming, and can be crippling.

TYPES OF ANXIETY DISORDERS

Panic Disorder (Panic Attacks):

Youth with this condition have feelings of terror that strike suddenly and repeatedly with no warning. Other symptoms of a panic attack include sweating, chest pain, palpitations (irregular heartbeats), and a feeling of choking, which may make the youth feel like they are having a heart attack or “going crazy.”

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD):

Youth with OCD are plagued by constant thoughts; obsessions or fears that cause them to perform certain rituals, compulsions or routines. An example is a person with an unreasonable fear of germs who constantly washes his or her hands.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):

PTSD is a condition that can develop following a traumatic and/or terrifying event, such as a sexual or physical assault, the unexpected death of a loved one, or a natural disaster. Youth with PTSD often have lasting and frightening thoughts and memories of the event and tend to be emotionally numb.

Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD):

Also called Social Phobia, involves overwhelming worry and self-consciousness about everyday social situations. The worry often centers on a fear of being judged by others, or behaving in a way that might cause embarrassment or lead to ridicule.

Specific Phobias:

A specific phobia is an intense fear of a specific object or situation, such as snakes, heights, or flying. The level of fear is usually inappropriate to the situation and may cause the youth to avoid common, everyday situations.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD):

This disorder involves excessive, unrealistic worry and tension, even if there is little or nothing to provoke the anxiety.



CHARACTERISTICS/BEHAVIOURS

- Feelings of panic, fear, and uneasiness
- Uncontrollable, obsessive thoughts
- Repeated thoughts or flashbacks of traumatic experiences
- Nightmares
- Ritualistic behaviors, such as repeated hand washing
- Problems sleeping
- Cold or sweaty hands and/or feet
- Shortness of breath
- Palpitations
- An inability to be still and calm
- Dry mouth
- Numbness or tingling in the hands or feet
- Nausea
- Muscle tension
- Dizziness

IN A SCOUTING SITUATION

- These youth need our positive encouragement, supportive coaching and empathy
- Let the youth know that you are aware of their anxiety and that you are ready to help them work through it
- The youth with anxiety may present as sensitive, self-conscious and resistant to trying new challenges
- Often the youth will project a negative outlook and lack self-reassurance
- Have the youth replace defeating self talk with positive remarks
- Strive to be understanding and an energetic, ACTIVE listener
- Avoid labeling the youth
- Discourage the youth from dwelling on mistakes

PROGRAM MODIFICATION SUGGESTIONS

- Encourage the youth to take deep breaths before attempting the new activity
- Have the youth do stretching exercises to relax muscles and diminish physical tension
- Assist the youth with problem solving solutions to new challenges
- Provide the youth with coping strategies to overcome possible peer pressure incidents

FURTHER ASSISTANCE

This Info Sheet is a resource guide only and is not intended to be therapeutic, diagnostic, medical, or legal advice. Our best source of assistance for youth with identified needs is the youth's parents or caregivers; the information provided is designed to support the relationship that exists between a youth and his/her parents or healthcare providers and the Scouters involved with the youth.

SOURCES

www.cmha.ca/mental-health/understanding-mental-illness/anxiety-disorders/, www.webmd.com/anxiety-panic/guide/mental-health-anxiety-disorders, and material adapted and used by permission of Anxiety Canada, The Scout Association (UK), Scouts Australia, and Scouting Ireland

