

General Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

GAD is characterized by constant worry. Children suffering from GAD will worry about the usual things that most children worry about like tests, making mistakes, or homework; but may also worry about other less expected issues such as world violence, birthday parties, or a loved one's safety. Though all children worry, the worries of children with GADs are so intense that they affect the ability to cope with everyday life. In diagnosing GAD, frequency, duration, and intensity of anxiety symptoms are considered. Symptoms may present physically, cognitively, and/or behaviourally. Though students may be aware that their concerns are irrational or excessive, the ability to control them is inhibited.

The physical symptoms of anxiety can be mistaken for signs of a physical illness. Physical symptoms such as an increased heart rate, sweating, or shaking are the result of the body's "fight or flight" response. The "fight or flight" response can be easily triggered or excessive in a person with an anxiety disorder.

COMMON ISSUES WITH GAD

- Students may experience difficulty sleeping, eating, or controlling their mood and behaviour.
- Physical symptoms can also include frequent headaches, pains, and stomach aches.
- Students may have difficulty focusing their attention or concentrating on a task.
- Students may have difficulty starting and completing an assignment due to worries about getting it right or having enough time to complete it. This may also lead to task avoidance.
- Students may experience unrealistic fears about daily activities.
- Challenges with friendships and family relationships may be present due to worries and reassurance-seeking behaviours.

HOW WE SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH GAD

- ✓ Aligning work with a student's learning needs to boost confidence and competency in a subject area
- ✓ Teaching tools and strategies related to task initiation and completion
- ✓ Providing encouragement and positive reinforcement through the learning process
- ✓ Developing executive functioning procedures to support assignment completion goals
- ✓ Infusing multisensory learning with physical activity

"I do worry - a lot - about everything. Whenever I have a test I'm sure I'm going to fail. The worst is when I have a presentation. I can't sleep the night before because I'm so freaked out that I'll mess up and get a bad grade and if I don't keep my grades up there's no way I will get into a good university."

- Jacob



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LEARNING SPACE