

## **Anxiety in Teens.**

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, it's time we start addressing the growing issue of Anxiety in teens. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, 25% of 13 to 19-year-olds deal with an anxiety disorder.

Anxiety is your body's typical reaction to stress. It's a feeling of being really scared or apprehensive of what's about to happen. For example, an upcoming exam (mocks), grades or giving a speech may cause most people to feel anxious. Feeling anxious is a good thing as it also motivates you to give your best. The symptoms of an anxiety attack are palpitations, shortness of breath, shaking & sweating profusely. Usually, all these occur in a matter of minutes. It's termed as an Anxiety Disorder when you're feeling extremely anxious repetitively, and these feelings last for longer than 6 months & start affecting your daily life.

Anxiety comes from a place of being extremely overwhelmed. It can also come from the loss of a loved one or a traumatic experience. Primary factors for anxiety in teens are usually pressures from school, exams, peers & parents. Although social media popularity, cyberbullying, online gaming and occasionally self-expectations to be the best at everything, eventually leave them feeling overwhelmed and on the verge of a meltdown.

To overcome the feeling of anxiety or panic attacks teens must bring overall lifestyle changes starting with:

- 1) **Better Time Management & Organizational Skills:** Plan in advance for your exams or any big event, prioritize your work & knock off the least favourite things first to avoid procrastination.
- 2) **Healthy Eating Habits:** Try minimizing sugar & junk intake to once a week. A healthy body keeps your mind alert & is a feel-good factor.
- 3) **Practice Kindness & Gratitude:** An old spiritual saying is "Where attention goes, energy flows" If you focus on being kind & grateful every single day, you're directing your energy on the positives, leaving no room for negative or toxic energy.
- 4) **Daily Journaling:** Maintaining a daily journal helps in clarity of thoughts, organization & is considered therapeutic.
- 5) **Cross out the distractions:** The temptation to succumb to social media or excessive screen time in teens is tremendous, so try disciplining your usage. Understand that it's virtual and superficial, hence less likely to have any positive impact in your real life achievements. Time is a precious gift, use it wisely.
- 6) **Get Sunshine:** The lifestyle of today's teens consists of usually staying indoors and being digitally connected especially during holidays. Break that habit & go for a run, a walk on the grass and get some fresh air regularly.

7) **Guided Meditation:** This has an immediate effect on anxiety. Download any meditation app like insight timer, choose a topic, plug-in your headphones and you can meditate for as little as 3 minutes. It dissipates the feeling of anxiety. 100% tried, tested & approved by teens.

A few final tips on how to deal with an anxiety attack when it hits you:

**a) Take Action:** If you feel you are closer to having an anxiety attack take any action: go for a walk, start on the assignment, listen to music, call a friend, share with a parent.

**b) Breathe:** Slow inhalations - slow exhalation 10 times. Repeat affirmations like "I am strength, I am power, I am determination", alternatively use guided meditation to calm down.

**c) Look for inspiration:** Focus on the positives, read an inspiring quote or watch a motivational video.

#### **An important message to all parents:**

Anxiety attacks are common in teens as they also deal with physiological & psychological changes. Anxiety attacks can be scary for teens. Please do not ignore the signs & kindly show compassion to anyone dealing with anxiety. If the symptoms occur regularly for over 6 months, kindly see a therapist. Remember that it is absolutely normal to seek help, we all need help but are too scared to ask.

#### **To my teens:**

Please do not find all your answers on Google as it can be misleading at your age. Please share with a trusted adult if you suffer from anxiety, seek medical intervention if necessary.

Remember ...This too shall pass :)

Happy Mental Health Awareness Month!

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