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Ke Kulanui o Hawai'i ma Mānoa

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# Understanding Anxiety in Teens

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# Agenda

- ❑ Understanding Anxiety
- ❑ What to do if your child has excessive anxiety
- ❑ Q&A



# Understanding Anxiety

# Anxiety = body's natural response to stress

## Fear

- ❑ Usually real threat (Bear)
- ❑ Here & now



## Anxiety

- ❑ Anticipation of threat (Thoughts)
- ❑ Future



# Anxiety = our body's natural alarm system

## Triggers

Novelty  
Signals for Punishment  
Signal for Non-Reward



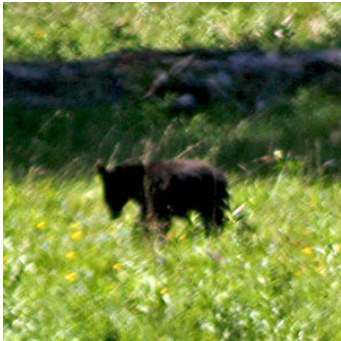
## Stage 1 (anxiety)

Narrowing of attention  
Inhibition of gross motor behavior  
Increased vigilance or scanning  
Increased alertness  
Priming of fight-flight-freeze



## Stage 2 (fear)

Fight  
Flight  
Freeze



Anxiety Alarm System

# How does anxiety work?

**Stop, look, and listen response**



**Fight or flight response**



Anxiety helps us to be alert to danger and therefore be able to avoid it

# When is anxiety helpful?

- Heightened alert and energy before performance or test
- Determining whether a situation poses a threat
- In active dangerous situations



# When does it go wrong?

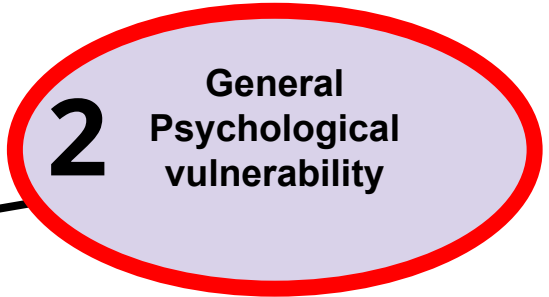
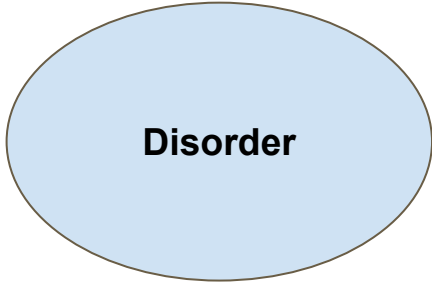
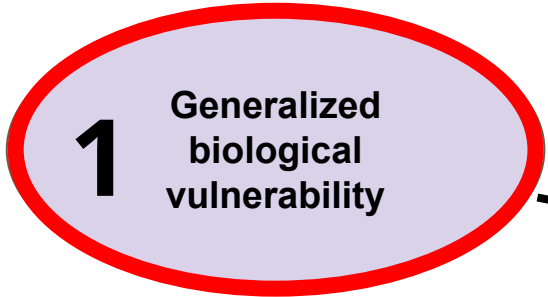
- No anxiety
  - No response to dangerous situations
- Too much anxiety
  - Responding as if a situation is dangerous when it is not
  - Constant hypervigilance & distress
  - Inability to complete tasks or participate in activities

**When the battle music starts but you see no enemies:**





# Triple Vulnerability Model



# Anxiety Prevalence

- ❑ Anxiety is one of the **4** most commonly diagnosed mental disorders in youth; **9.4%** of youth have been formally diagnosed with some type of anxiety disorder (= **5.8** million).
- ❑ **15%** of youth in Hawai'i experience at least **1** mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral difficulty\*; **23%** more youth struggled with anxiety or depression in 2020, compared to 2016

(\* in 2019-2020; [Hawai'i Children's Action Network](#) )

## Challenges to obtaining services

Difficulty finding a provider that is a good fit for your family



Limited resources (e.g., rural health needs)



# Types of anxiety disorders



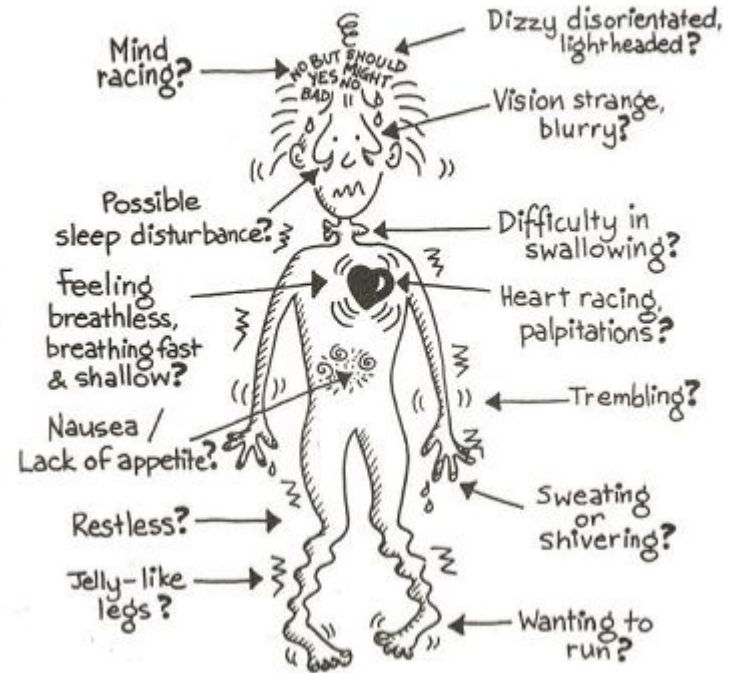
- ❑ Separation anxiety disorder
- ❑ Selective mutism
- ❑ Specific phobia
- ❑ Social anxiety disorder
- ❑ Panic disorder
- ❑ Agoraphobia
- ❑ Generalized anxiety disorder
- ❑ Substance/medication-induced anxiety disorder

# Physiological symptoms

- Bodily complaints



## DOES THIS LOOK FAMILIAR?



# Mood symptoms

- ❑ Emotional components
- ❑ Worry
- ❑ Dread
- ❑ Panic
- ❑ Irritability
- ❑ Fluttery, jittery, jumpy
- ❑ “Feeling yucky” or “Feeling weird”



# Behavioral symptoms

- Generally more overt signs
- Avoidance
- Nail biting
- Thumb sucking
- Compulsion
- Hypervigilance
- Inattentive
- Distractive
- Restless

## 8 WAYS A CHILD'S ANXIETY SHOWS UP AS SOMETHING ELSE

### 1. Anger

The perception of danger, stress or opposition is enough to trigger the fight or flight response leaving your child angry and without a way to communicate why.



### 2. Difficulty Sleeping

In children, having difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep is one of the hallmark characteristics of anxiety.



### 3. Defiance

Unable to communicate what is really going on, it is easy to interpret the child's defiance as a lack of discipline instead of an attempt to control a situation where they feel anxious and helpless.



### 5. Lack of Focus

Children with anxiety are often so caught up in their own thoughts that they do not pay attention to what is going on around them.

# FOCUS

### 6. Avoidance

Children who are trying to avoid a particular person, place or task often end up experiencing more of whatever it is they are avoiding.



### 8. Overplanning

Overplanning and defiance go hand in hand in their root cause. Where anxiety can cause some children to try to take back control through defiant behavior, it can cause others to overplan for situations where planning is minimal or unnecessary.



### 4. Chandeliering

Chandeliering is when a seemingly calm person suddenly flies off the handle for no reason. They have pushed hurt and anxiety so deep for so long that a seemingly innocent comment or event suddenly sends them straight through the chandelier.



### 7. Negativity

People with anxiety tend to experience negative thoughts at a much greater intensity than positive ones.

# Cognitive symptoms

- ❑ Reflects the way youth package information
- ❑ Internal dialogues filled by catastrophic predictions and expectations of unsuccessful coping
  - ❑ E.g., "Something bad will happen and I won't be able to handle it"
- ❑ Generate more negative self-talk than non-anxious youth



# My child is showing signs of excessive anxiety, what should I do?





# Refer your child to receive Evidence-Based Anxiety Treatment

- ❑ Psychoeducation
- ❑ Exposure

- ❑ Goal = calibrating the body's anxiety system



# Psychoeducation - learning about anxiety, normalizing

- Fire alarm metaphor
  - Lets us know when there is danger
    - If it didn't go off, we wouldn't know when to leave
    - If it went off all the time, we would be really stressed

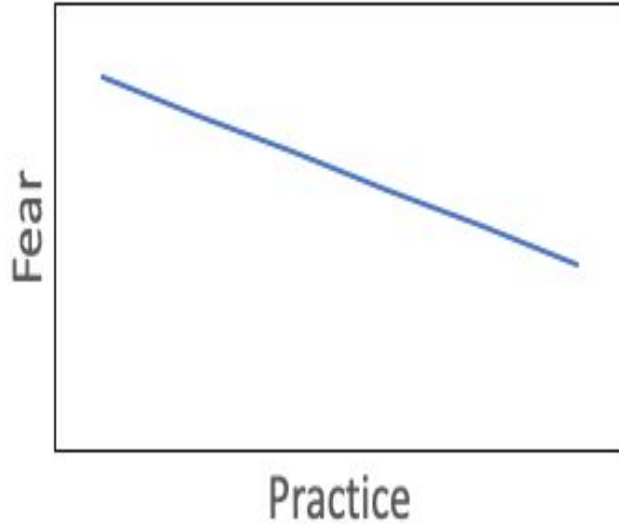


# Psychoeducation - calibrating our body's anxiety alarm system

- Anxiety is our body's alarm system
  - True alarm vs. False alarm
- Building hope and motivation for subsequent treatment - paving way for exposure
- Breaking any cycle of safety or avoidance behaviors
  - e.g., washing hands for an excessive length, not leaving their room

# EXPOSURE

- Through the practice of “exposing” oneself to situations that set off the body’s “false alarms,” people can learn how to better cope with the anxiety they feel in these situations



**Real life:**  
Being exposed to  
a fear in real life



**Imagined:**  
Vividly imagining a fear



**Virtual reality:**  
Using virtual reality  
to be exposed to a fear



**Interoceptive:**  
Bringing sensations  
into play in an effort to  
disconfirm the idea that  
physical sensations will  
lead to harmful events

## Fear Ladder

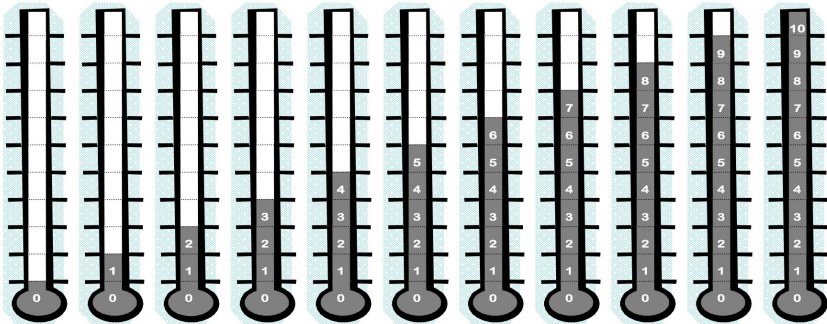
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please give a rating for how scary each of these things are today. Remember to use the scale from 0 to 10.

Filled out by: ( ) child ( ) parent ( ) other \_\_\_\_\_

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <i>Going to school for an entire day</i>                              |  |
| <i>Working in pairs with other students in the classroom</i>          |  |
| <i>Thinking about going to school</i>                                 |  |
| <i>Standing in the school parking lot</i>                             |  |
| <i>Attending a class with less than 10 other students in the room</i> |  |
| <i>Logging into a virtual classroom from home</i>                     |  |
| <i>Playing with friends during recess</i>                             |  |
| <i>Going to school for a half-day</i>                                 |  |
|   |  |



# EXPOSURE

- Involves practicing putting oneself in anxiety-provoking situations
- Goals
  - Reduce anxiety
  - To provide opportunities for corrective learning to occur - recalibrating body's alarm system
  - Learn to become more comfortable with uncertainty

## Practice

### How Will Practice Help My Child?

Practice is the best possible way to overcome fear because it helps your child get used to doing things that are difficult at first. Through practice, your child will quickly learn to do things that were too hard before.

Practicing to reduce fear and anxiety is a lot like practicing a musical instrument or a sport. A child who practices guitar will get better at playing guitar. A child who practices soccer



will get better at playing soccer. And a child who practices doing the things that make him or her nervous will get better—less nervous—at doing those things. For example, with practice, a child who is nervous around dogs can become more comfortable around them.

Practicing things that cause anxiety may not feel good at the time, just as music practice or exercise drills might not always seem fun. Practice is not always easy, but you

#### Practice can decrease anxiety about:

*Animals • High places • Riding the bus • Going to school • Being teased • Being embarrassed • Swimming • Being in the dark • Being away from parents • Talking to other people • Trying to be perfect • Feeling out of breath • Feeling out of control • Getting a shot • Being around adults • Being around other children • Many, many other things*

can make things easier by offering help and support to your child.

### How Do We Practice?

Practice is similar to physical exercise. Your child will need to start slowly, with small tasks. Then, as your child gets in shape, he or she can take on bigger challenges and practice more often. We will work together with your child to make sure he or she is practicing the right amount.

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <p>1 Choose a target fear</p>    | <p>Pick a fear you'd like your child to work on (e.g., standing near a dog, sleeping over at a friend's house, or talking to other children). Try to start with something that is not too challenging. You might even want to break things down into steps so your child can work on one smaller, easier thing at a time. Your child can move on to more difficult things as he or she progresses.</p> <p>A fear I would like to see go away is:</p> <p>.....</p> |
| <p>2 Pick a time to practice</p> | <p>Choose a time when everything is calm and no one feels rushed. Sometimes practice can take a while, so remember to leave plenty of time.</p> <p>An example of a good time to help my child practice is:</p> <p>.....</p>   |
| <p>3 Take ratings</p>            | <p>Take ratings every few minutes. Remember, the ratings range from 0 to 10, and higher numbers mean higher amounts of fear or anxiety. Over time, our goal is for the numbers to go down. Use the Practice Record to keep track of the ratings. This is the best way to see how well the practice is working and to figure out what to practice next.</p>  |

The role of the parent in therapy may include...

- ☐ Help with out-of-session exposure practices
- ☐ Lots of praise for their bravery!



# How to find help

Help  
Your  
**Keiki.com**



- What you can find on the website:
  - common issues
  - referral sources
  - what to look for in a therapist
  - educational resource videos and articles
- Website was created to help parents make an educated decision to advocate for evidence-based services for their child

# See What Works:

[Parent Education](#)  
[Praise](#)  
[Tangible Rewards](#)  
[Cognitive](#)  
[Child and Youth Education](#)  
[Relaxation](#)  
[Cognitive Behavioral Therapy \[CBT\]](#)  
[Exposure](#)  
[Modeling](#)

## RESOURCES

- [Florida International University \(FIU\) Center for Children and Families – Free Parenting Workshop: Tips for Reducing Anxiety in Children](#)
- [Parent-to-parent support – Child & Family Service: Ohana Support Services](#)
- [Separation Anxiety Tips – LEAP Clinic](#)
- [TA Tidbit 2017: Anxiety Disorders](#)
- [Treatment – The Center for Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: Child and Adolescent Stress and Anxiety Program](#)
- [Understanding Anxiety Disorders: For Young Adults – Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)
- [Understanding Anxiety Disorders: For Caregivers – Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)
- [Understanding Anxiety in Children and Teens: 2018 Children's Mental Health Report – Child Mind Institute](#)
- [Understanding Obsessive Compulsive Disorder \(OCD\): For Young Adults – Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)
- [Understanding Obsessive Compulsive Disorder \(OCD\): For Caregivers – Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)

Information for this site has been obtained from the following resources:

- [American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry](#)
- [National Institutes of Mental Health](#)



## Anxiety

Types include: panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, etc.

## Attentional

Is it hard for your child to sit still? Does your child act without thinking first? Does your child often start but not finish things?

## Autism

Autism is a disorder that is usually first diagnosed in early childhood.

## Depression

It's more than just a feeling of being "down in the dumps" for a few days. It is a disorder of the brain.

## Disruptive

Disruptive behavior disorders are among the easiest to identify of all co-existing conditions.

## Eating

Girls are more likely than boys to have eating disorders. They usually start in the teenage years.

## Elimination

Does your child seem too old to have toileting accidents? Is your child urinating or having a bowel movement at inappropriate times and places?

## Mania

Moodiness and tantrums are typical for children, but if these issues persist or become extreme it could be a sign of a serious mood disorder called Mania.

## Substance Use

When do you need to ask for help for your child's use of drugs or alcohol?

## Suicidality

Know the warning signs for suicidality and risk factors to protect your keiki.

## Trauma

Major psychological and emotional events may contribute to the development of trauma-related disorders.



# DOH Referral process

- To **apply for services**, fill out a form either **online or mailable copy**.
- If you need help with the application, have any general questions, or questions about eligibility, please contact your nearest **Family Guidance Center (FGC)**.



**CAMHD — Click here to learn more about your FGC and to reach the online application**



**CAMHD — FAQ Brochure**

# DOE referral process

1. **Request for evaluation** (to your child's home school)
  - a. verbally (in person or on the phone),
  - b. in a written letter (including fax or email), or
  - c. on the State of Hawai'i Request for Evaluation Form.
2. The school may arrange a **meeting** with you and relevant personnel to discuss any concerns.
3. The team will **review available information** to decide if an evaluation is needed and determine suitable assessment(s)
4. The school will **inform you whether an evaluation will be conducted or not**, at which point caregiver consent would be required to proceed.



**Hawai'i DOE —  
Student Services  
Branch Page**

# How to find help



HAWAI'I PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION *FOR A HEALTHY HAWAI'I*



Hawai'i Pro Bono Mental Health Center  
No cost services for those without health care  
insurance

## FIND A PSYCHOLOGIST/LICENSED MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

### Locate and Contact a Licensed Provider

#### Important note:

If you are looking for a licensed psychologist or an HPA member mental health professional, this locator service can serve as a valuable resource. The information provided here is reproduced at each listed member's request. The Hawai'i Psychological Association provides these listings as a service to its members and to provide resources to the community. The Association is not responsible for the accuracy of information or the performance of any services provided by those listed. The Association is not endorsing or recommending any particular member for any particular treatment or service.

Not all listed members are Clinical Psychologists. Some are licensed providers from other professions (such as Marriage and Family Therapists). Others may be located outside of Hawai'i, or may be academics or government employees. Individual listings will clarify the scope of the provider's practice.

#### How to search:

Search one or more terms that might appear *in any of the columns shown* (such as *name, city, zip code, insurance, phone*) separated by spaces.

For example: **hilo couples hmsa**

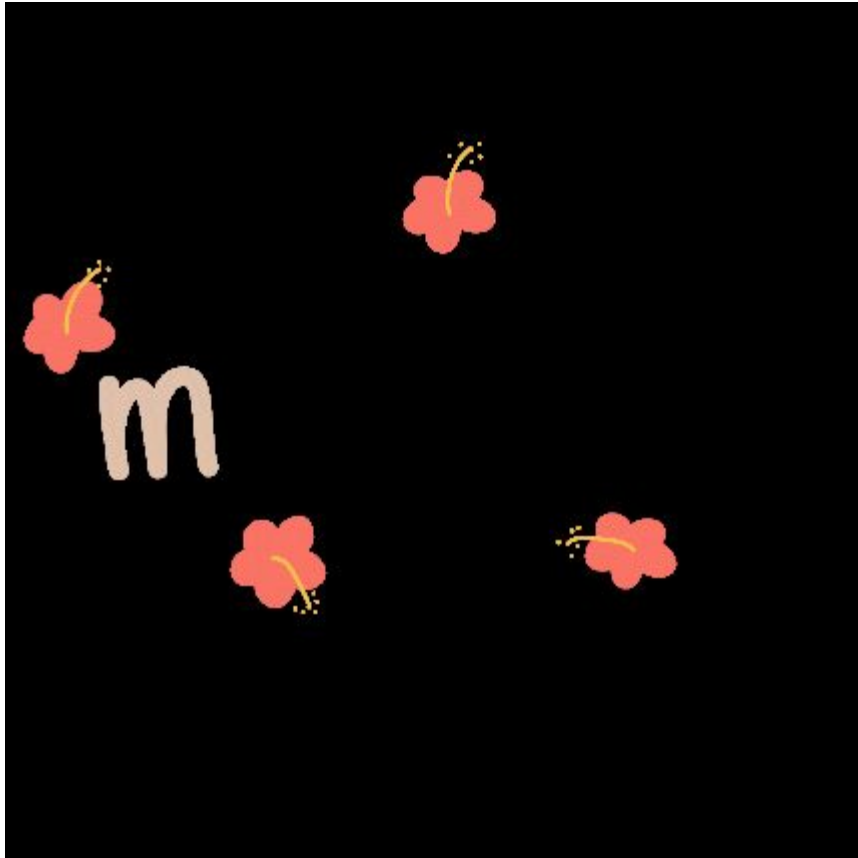
As you type the roster will shrink to show only matching entries.

Or, to add more fields and options use the Advanced Search link below.

In addition, you can select any of the following filters (scroll the list to see more Islands/neighborhoods).

[Clear values](#)

|                         |                      |                      |
|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| First name              | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Middle name             | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Last name               | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Business Address        | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Professional Name       | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Populations served      | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Areas of specialization | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Insurances Accepted     | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Assessment/Testing      | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Treatment Modalities    | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Certifications          | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |



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