



Recognizing Anxiety in Youth presented by Angela Begres

## Transcript:

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Presenter: Angela Begres  
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ANN SCHENSKY: Hello, everyone, and welcome to our webinar, Recognizing Anxiety in Youth.

Today's webinar is presented by Angela Begres, and my name is Ann Schensky, and I will be one of the moderators for today's webinar. Sarah McMinn will also be moderating the Q&A section at the end of the webinar. Today's webinars brought to you by the Great Lakes MHTTCH, and SAMHSA.

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If you're having technical issues, please individually message either Stephanie Behlman or Kristina Spannauer and they will be happy to help you. You can get to them in the chat section.

If you're interested in any of the other presentations or activities that we have, please feel free to visit us on social media.

And our speaker today is Angela Begres, and I'm going to turn it over to Sarah to introduce her.

SARAH MCMINN: Thank you, Ann.

Angela, we are so excited to have you here today. So Angela is a licensed clinical social worker, who did her training at the University of Chicago, where she obtained her MSW. She is an experienced trainer and presenter, contracted both independently, and through various non-profits in the Chicago area, Michigan, and others, with experience integrating mental health



education programs into the curriculum for students and staff, within the Chicago and West Cook County public schools.

In partnership with the National Alliance for Mental Health Metro Suburban, Angela also developed a program to help decrease students' stress and implement mindfulness in classrooms. She has also worked with Chicago Family Services, providing parent education, with efforts to get parents reunited with their children.

Welcome, Angela. Thank you so much for speaking with us today, and I'm going to turn it over to you.

ANGELA BEGRES: All right, thank you. Good evening, good morning, and good afternoon to everyone. And my name is Angela Begreas, and I'm a licensed clinical social worker. I work for Partners for Healthy Lives, and I promote and provide a lot of mental health education in our communities. I also do counseling and therapy for young adults and adolescents.

And we're here today to learn a little bit more about recognizing anxiety in youth. So I'm really happy to be here with everyone, and we're going to get started.

So here's an overview of what we will be learning today throughout the course, for the hour. We're going to talk a little bit about what is anxiety, and the different types of anxiety. What is healthy and unhealthy anxiety? I we'll also talk about what are some signs and symptoms of anxiety in youth. And then we're going to learn some strategies that we can use for students in the school.

I will also be talking a little bit more about how we can support youth-- and ourselves-- as schools reopen this year, keeping in consideration that this year is a little bit different due to COVID. And then, I will end by talking about when to seek help, what to expect when we do seek help, and then some available resources.

But before we get started, I would like to see who is in the room, so I'm going to put up a poll, just to see what is your role in your community.

If you can all please take a minute just to answer this poll.

All right, so let's hear the results. OK, it looks like we have mostly social workers. We have some teachers, parents, and then the majority are other. So for all of you who chose other, can you tell me what is your role with you? You can write that on the chat.

OK, therapists, prevention program coordinator, project coordinator-- OK-- school based counselors. All right. This is great. Well, thank you, everyone for



sharing. And so it looks like we have a lot of knowledge in the room, as well. And that's going to be really helpful throughout the course.

All right, so thank you all for participating. It's helpful to get an idea who is here, and then that way we can provide some more specific resources and examples.

All right so, let's keep going. Before we start talking about anxiety, I think it's really important talk about resiliency and self-care. So most people are impacted by mental health at some point in their life. And personal resiliency is an important skill. We know that adults and youth tend to be very resilient-- especially adolescents tend to be a very, very resilient-- and oftentimes are able to come back to their typical self, despite a lot of their situation.

And so, when we think about that the word resiliency, it the ability for somebody to bounce back. And with adolescence, despite all of the changes that happen during adolescence-- like puberty, and changes to school, and home environment-- we know that they oftentimes can bounce back, and they're able to successfully go through those adolescent years and be successful adults.

However, self-care is really important for us to be resilient. And the best way for us to teach self-care is through modeling it. Before we even get started talking about anxiety, I want us to think about our own self-care. Now, when you think about what is one small thing you will do today to practice self-care. And if we can share that with the whole group, that would be really helpful. We can all use some ideas and tips to add to our tool box on how to practice health care for ourselves, especially considering that we have a lot of people who are in the helping professions.

So I say, go to bed on time. Take lunch, absolutely. Physical activity. We're actually going to talk about physical activity a little bit. Yoga. Sleep. I sleep a lot. Good. Thank you. These are all really helpful skills.

All right. So let's go on and talk a little bit more about the prevalence of anxiety. So anxiety disorders affect the person approximately 6% to 10% of youth, and it's one of the most common mental health disorders. In an average class, two to three students experience anxiety-- anxiety-related symptoms. And anxiety disorders frequently originate during childhood and adolescence.

However, anxiety often goes undiagnosed, and most children with anxiety never receive treatment. So, for all of you who are here, why do you think some young people-- or what do you think are some of the reasons why young people don't receive treatment for anxiety? What are some thoughts on why young people go undiagnosed for anxiety disorders?



A lot of times, they look like something else. That's true. Misdiagnosed. Yes, sometimes, you may look like defiance. Very good.

So one reason for that may be that anxiety symptoms are so variable, right? They may look very different for different people. Kids with generalized anxiety often feel overwhelmed with worry, And some have physical symptoms, such as headaches or stomachache. Others have intense social phobia that prevent them from doing things, like going to birthday parties or practicing in extracurricular activities.

So often parents, teachers, and even some health care professionals don't realize the severity of anxiety symptoms, or recognize that it should be treated. So oftentimes, it just goes on unrecognized, or we may not think that a young person needs treatment. There is the idea that kids will outgrow this problem related to anxiety. But the evidence doesn't support that. So we definitely want to treat anxiety symptoms, because we don't tend to outgrow those. Like any other mental health disorder, the longer we live with those symptoms, the more impactful and more severe it becomes. So getting treatment as early as possible is going to be helpful in treating the disorder, and also in reducing the symptoms of it.

So there is healthy and unhealthy anxiety. So anxiety can be a healthy and adaptive response to danger that keeps us safe, right? We know that oftentimes, we are very cautious with things. So, for example, we may get a little anxious when we look down, if we are in a high storied building-- in a high-level building. If we look down, we may notice and we may feel some level of anxiety. So some of that response in our body is typical and important, because it helps us and it keeps us safe.

However, anxiety becomes unhealthy when it does not subside over time, and impairs the normal day to day functioning of youth. So when we try to identify the difference between healthy and unhealthy anxiety we want to, keep in mind how impactful it is, and how long have we been feeling this way. So the duration and the impact is what helps us identify the difference between healthy and unhealthy.

And anxiety can have profound impact on learning. Most mental health disorders begin during adolescence. Especially anxiety oftentimes begins during middle and high school. And so, it severely-- anxiety symptoms severely impact student learning.

So there are three forms of student anxiety. You probably have heard some of this in the past. One of the most common student anxiety is school refusal. So it's one of the most obvious signs of stress and anxiety. It's referred to as the school refusal, or school phobia. This is when the student will go to great lengths to avoid schooling every day. School refusal can look like can look like losing touch with their regular social circle, dropping out of extracurricular activities, skipping classes, and refusing to go to school.



In severe cases of student anxiety, school refusal can be serious-- can be so serious that it can lead to that student dropping out of school temporarily, or permanently. So school refusal may be one thing you hear often. The student doesn't want to go to school. They might even feel sick. So when I used to work in a school, there may be students who, on Monday have developed headaches, developed stomachaches, and went to great lengths to appear sick, so they have to go to school, and it's very common. And we're going to talk a little bit about treating for school refusal a little bit later.

The next type of student anxiety is test anxiety. And this is the type of performance anxiety. Test anxiety often goes hand-in-hand with learning issues. For children who have ADHD or a learning disability, often feel anxious about school, which makes sense. If we have ADHD, or we have a learning disability, the concept of taking a test can intensify our anxiety.

And this may be due to, maybe the limited amount of time to take a test. Or knowing that we process information a little bit slowly. And so the idea of taking a test, at times, can lead to heightened anxiety. And we tend to see this a lot when we have young people who either have already a learning disability or ADHD.

And the last one is social anxiety. And this will oftentimes begin by the age of 13. And social anxiety is associated with social interaction. So, for example, a student with social anxiety disorder may suddenly stop engaging with friends and social activities altogether. They may start to find excuses to why they can't make plans with others. This is especially difficult for youth, because social interaction is so crucial around this age group. And you may start to notice the young person may be no longer wanting to take place in any extracurricular activity.

You might notice-- if you're a teacher in the classroom-- you might notice a young person try their hardest to avoid getting called out, or feel really uncomfortable when there is group work. I know that when I was in school, social anxiety was something that I experienced, and it was really hard. It's often perceived by others as you being rude or careless, and so it can be really hard on a young person to have that experience.

So there all these common anxiety disorders in youth and in adults. You might have heard some of these already. So we have panic disorder, which might include sudden, intense fearfulness, the fear of dying or losing control. And then there's also the physical symptoms to panic disorders. So we may feel dizziness, dryness of breath, and racing hearts with them. You might also notice people talking about feeling like they're going to die, with a very intense fear.

Not everyone who has anxiety disorders might experience a panic disorder. And, also, we may experience, a panic attack, without necessarily having an



anxiety disorder. So they oftentimes go hand in hand. But a panic disorder is something that is related to having multiple panic attacks.

Then we have social anxiety, which we talked a little bit about. It's really associated with social situations. Sometimes it could even include speaking in front of others.

Then we have generalized anxiety disorder, which is a general fear or worry. And it could include an inability to relax, so often being on edge. There's also some physical elements to that, such as chest pain, headache, fatigue muscle tension, or vomiting. And especially in youth, when we notice general anxiety in younger youth-- like middle school-- we may even see a lot of vomiting or stomach aches. So, a lot of physiological symptoms with that.

And the last one is post-traumatic stress disorder. So this is triggered by traumatic events, and trauma is the number one risk factor for mental health disorders. So if we know a young person who's experienced a traumatic event, we just want to be mindful, because we know that this can oftentimes lead to a mental health disorder. So the more we can provide support for the young person, the more likely they are to the more likely we are to prevent the onset of a mental illness.

So here are the signs and symptoms. Here some things that we may be able to notice, right? If we are concerned about a young person, a teenager, a student, here some of those kinds of symptoms we can recognize. So the first thing we may notice is some emotional changes. So these can include feeling irritated, having difficulty concentrating. The student may also feel restless and may act out in unexpected ways, to avoid a situation they perceive as threatening. So, for example, a student may purposely get kicked out of class before a quiz if they have test anxiety.

I said that there's an emotional response to anxiety. We also have some social changes, which we've already talked about social anxiety, but I think it's important to mention in this case, that in some severe cases of social anxiety, youth may develop selective mutism. And this is something that we want to be-- we want to be mindful as educators. If we notice some of these types of symptoms-- especially when it comes to social changes-- we don't want to perceive them as a young person being disobedient. Instead, we want to make sure that we help the person get some professional help.

Then there's physical changes that come with that, as well. And we've talked about some of the physical changes. But one thing to keep in mind, is that it's crucial to look for patterns, rather than jumping to conclusions right away. So for example, I mentioned earlier if you notice a young person-- a student-- who comes into the class every day when there's a test, and they misbehave to get kicked out of their class.



So those patterns in their in their behavior-- if you notice, like I said earlier, there was a student who maybe every time before a test had a stomachache, or was complaining about stomach aches, and wanted to go to the nurse. So keeping in mind what may be some of the patterns that the young person is displaying.

Some physical changes also include headaches, dizziness, sweating, body or muscle aches, nausea or upset stomach, excessive fatigue, and changes in diet, and unexplained illnesses. You might also notice with anxiety, you can see some self driven eating disorders because of anxiety. So sometimes anxiety can go hand-in-hand with eating disorders.

Sleep disturbance is also a sign of a symptom of anxiety. We know that young people need 8 to 10 hours of sleep. I think adults need that, too, but we just can't get that. But young people really need those hours of sleep, because we help them with brain development. But, oftentimes when a young person is experiencing anxiety, it can affect their sleep habits. So this may be having trouble falling asleep, this may mean being asleep longer, and nightmares, and waking up still feeling tired. So a lot of these things can impact those symptoms of anxiety, as well. If we're not getting enough sleep, it could intensify all of the other symptoms that we've talked about before.

Another thing to keep in mind with this I sleep disturbances, is that we also want to be mindful of patterns in the young person's behavior. So maybe something's happening. Again, is the young person having more nightmares or more difficulty falling asleep during the school week? Or is this something that's happening during the weekend? Are there specific things that might lead to that? Maybe a young person with social anxiety may not be able to sleep before having to give a presentation, or before taking a test. But just being mindful of those patterns.

And other signs and symptoms that you may notice is poor school performance. Children who feel well do well. So when a young-- when the student is not performing well in school, that's a warning sign. It can be a warning sign of anxiety, as well as many other things.

We talked about panic attacks already. We talked about school refusal. Another common sign and symptom is tantrums. And we don't often associate tantrums with anxiety. The thing that's really helpful is to be mindful of this, because children or students might express their anxiety through their behavior. So they may throw a tantrum before being dropped off at school, and this may be a sign of separation anxiety. A student may act out in a class, so they can avoid an uncomfortable situation, like taking a test or giving a presentation. We might also see tantrums more with younger kids-- so middle school. But we might also see tantrums and more expressed in behavioral during high school, as well.



And then, obsession with perfection. We oftentimes overlook these warning signs, and I think this is one of the most important ones when we think of when we think about anxiety. And if it involves the youth constantly worrying about being perfect, and putting pressure on themselves to never make a mistake. An obsession with perfection is very unhealthy, and it can be extremely detrimental to the student's wellbeing and self-esteem.

When we think about-- we oftentimes blame or think it's the parent's fault that the young person is being obsessed with perfection. But oftentimes it's self-inflicted. To the young person, they have their own idea of what perfect looks like, and what it needs to be. And it can really, really impact the young person's self-esteem.

And lastly we have pessimism. So that's another sign in which the student assumes the worst. So this can be really hurtful, and oftentimes it might mean, like, why would I try that if I'm going to fail? Or, what's the purpose of me getting a good grade, if I'm never going to get into a college of my dreams? So it's the idea the glass half empty, as opposed to half full.

So there's things that we can do to support youth who might be either showing some of these signs of symptoms. I always say when we think about any mental illness, they can be mild, moderate, or severe. So some people might have mild levels of social anxiety, where it may be really difficult to engage, but once they start engaging they're able to be successful at that. Whereas others, it is so difficult to engage-- the idea out of engaging in that behavior can lead to a lot of physiological symptoms, like headache, stomachache, vomiting, diarrhea. So we always want to keep in mind the severity, and also keep in mind that for some youth, it could be easier to overcome some of these anxieties. Whereas for others, it may require some professional help.

And as educators, as individuals in the helping professions, we can help assess what level severity are the symptoms. And there's some things that we can do to help ourselves, and then we're going to talk about when to seek professional help.

So a lot of you mentioned earlier-- when you talked about your self-care-- you mentioned mindfulness. And I know that that's a hip word-- we use mindfulness for everything. But we know that mindfulness and practice on a regular basis can be really helpful for anxiety. So what that means is that we want to teach young people to practice mindfulness when they're not feeling high levels of anxiety.

I often, sometimes when I work with young adults or kids, I tell them that I want you to practice mindfulness every day, like after you brush your teeth, or after you do a daily habit, so that it becomes part of your routine. And once it's part of your routine, it takes action when you're feeling anxious, so that it starts working when you're feeling anxious. And I'm going to give you some helpful tips on how to practice mindfulness in a little bit.





Other things that we can do as educators, if possible, we want to provide some accommodations. So what might that look like? Accommodations may look like giving the young person extra time to take their test, if they have their anxiety. It might mean keeping in mind, where do we seat that young person in that classroom-- the student in the classroom? So if he'll feel better if he sits in a corner, in the back, in the front of the room? Thinking about some of those accommodations can be really helpful.

We might also provide a quiet place for the young person to take a test, or to write their paper. And then one thing that oftentimes is suggested, as well, is allowing the student or they youth to gradually face their fear in situations. So it's important to remember that the best way to overcome anxiety-- the best way to overcome our fears is by facing those fears. And with anxiety, that is one of the best treatment, is facing the fear situation. And so when possible-- and with some guidance-- we want to encourage that young person to face that fearful situation.

And then when we think about school refusal, the last thing we want to do is play into that young person not wanting to go to school. Because that intensifies the fear that if you go to school, something bad happens, and so we want to be really mindful with that.

We also want to take the student's concerns seriously. What's going on with the young person, if they are having some level test anxiety? How can we support them? Why is that happening? If they're having some social anxiety, what are some things that we can do to support them? So we're taking those concerns seriously.

I always encourage people to-- often times anxiety disorders, or depression, or any other mental health disorder-- oftentimes is expressed in behavior. So acting out, distracting the classroom. And so, keeping in mind that these could be warning signs, and maybe not necessarily a situation of testing the limit.

We also want to collaborate with parents and guardians. As teachers and educators, we want to make sure that we get the parents involved. We want to get an idea of how the student or the youth behaves at home, if they have similar behaviors at home. And, as teachers and educators, we also are crucial in getting appropriate diagnoses for young people. And so earlier, when we talked about what may be some barriers in seeking help from those professionals, we talked about you know not being able to identify with symptoms. Or not being able to get help.

And so when we work with students every single day, we get to recognize their behaviors, we get to know them. And so teachers take a big part in the appropriate diagnosis for youths, whether it's anxiety, whether it's depression, or any other mental health disorder.



And we want to connect with a mental health professional, if necessary. So we want to normalize mental illnesses. We want to normalize anxiety. We know that this is something that we can all experience at some point in our life. For some, we can overcome it. And for others, we may need some support. And so, not only do we want to connect the young person to those professionals, but us as individuals who connect with those young people, we want to normalize it and let them know that it is OK to seek help, and sometimes seeking help is going to make us feel better.

Just like with the physical illness, if we have a cold, if we have asthma, we oftentimes have to go talk to a doctor. So they can provide us with the best treatment for those things the same thing happens with a mental illness. So the more we normal life is, the more likely we are to encourage people to seek help, not only for the youth, but even for the parents who can also have some stigmas around mental illnesses.

So I talked about reducing stress through breathing and mindfulness. So this is a type of mindfulness that I really enjoy. I think we can do that at any point in our day. And this is called square breathing. Basically what we do is that we inhale through our nose, and we count to four. Then we hold in our lungs, and we count to four. Then we blow out slowly, and we count to four. And then we hold your lungs empty, and we count to four. And so this doesn't take too long. It's helpful. And we know that when we breathe in oxygen to our brain, we change the way our brain is functioning. We're bringing some fresh oxygen, and that can really help us feel calmer. So square breathing can be something we can implement with youth at any point during the school day, or even at home.

Other types of mindfulness can be focused stretching. So stretching your body mindfulness and focusing it on different areas of your body. Another helpful if progressive muscle relaxation. So basically what that looks like, is we're going to ask a young person to put pressure on all of their body, and progressively start reducing it. And so you may say, OK, let's progressively stop reducing that the force to our legs, and they go slowly. And then add your stomach. And then through your arms. And then, lastly, through your face. And the idea to relax all your muscles.

And the last thing I oftentimes suggest for people-- and this can work for any age youth-- is a calm down corner. So as opposed to using timeout, or any other kind of ways to manage behavior, creating a calm down corner in the house, or in there in the school, or in the classroom, where we just allow the young person-- who is overstimulated, who may be breathing a lot of feelings-- to go to a corner and just calm down.

And it's more about changing our language. When we say time out, that that's a negative word. So when we say calm down, that's telling us what we need to do. Just calm down. Just take some breaths. So calm down corners can be really helpful, and there's a lot of resources on how we may just develop



some calm down corners by putting together some posters that talk about mindful breathing, some posters with how we're feeling, doing things that help us relax-- like a squishy ball, a fidget tool-- and just allowing the young person or the kid to sit in that calm down corner for a few minutes, so that they can collect themselves. All of those can be really helpful. Especially with anxiety, we know that it triggers our nervous system, so those calm down corners can be really useful.

All right, here's some other ways that we can help youth who experience anxiety. So the first thing I want to do is help reduce the trigger. So what that means is we won't be able to solve all of the young person's problems, but there are things that we can do to accommodate them, and help them reduce their symptoms of anxiety.

So what that may look like is if the young person feels very anxious after school, we might just allow them to take a few hours or a few minutes to calm down before they go on to their household routine. Or whether it is do their homework. So maybe say, OK, when you come home from school, you're going to be able to relax for 30 minutes, and then after that, you'll start your homework. So just allow the young person to let you know how we can help them, and how we can help reduce those triggers.

Remind them that they don't have to be perfect. Like I said before, the students and the youth tend to put that pressure on themselves. So we want to frequently remind them that no one's perfect, and that we don't expect them to be perfect. So perfectionism drives feelings of worry and anxiety. While setting appropriate expectations is a good thing, reminding the teen that they don't have to be perfect may help them to relax in life, and learn a healthy way to achieve their goals.

The next thing is encourage them to engage in healthy outlets. And I always like to say a healthy outlet are really important. One thing that I often recommend is exercise-- whatever level of exercise. Exercise is a very helpful, natural remedy for anxiety and depression. So whether that is running in place for a couple of minutes, doing jumping dogs, walking your dog-- it doesn't have to be intense interval training. It can just be something that allows their body to-- something to burn out some energy. So exercise can be really helpful, and it could be a healthy outlet.

When we're thinking about engaging in healthy outlets, I also encourage you to let the young person decide what might be healthy for them. Because we might know some things that are healthy for us, but we don't necessarily know what that young person might enjoy. So giving them options and letting them choose could be really helpful.

Also, allow the young person to vent when needed. I don't know about you all, but sometimes when I'm very stressed and I have a lot of things going on, the situation feels a lot worse in my mind. So when we allow that young person to



vent and talk about their problems out loud, they might start to recognize that their situation is not as big as they thought it would be. So it can be really helpful.

And we can also empathize. Empathize and share about our own anxiety and fear. So when we think about empathizing, it's just letting the young person know that what they're feeling is real. And so that goes along with youth they need validation. Absolutely. When we think of empathizing, we think of validating their feelings, understanding that their feelings are real. And sometimes it can be helpful to share about our own anxiety and fear.

I would be mindful about this, because we don't want to make the situation about ourselves. But it can be helpful to normalize anxiety for some youths, That they're not the only ones feeling this way-- that other people have also felt anxious, that other people also feel fear. And that can help normalize those feelings. I may even help the young person talk a little bit more about their feelings.

Another way to help the youth is to stay calm. So we want to stay calm when the young person is anxious. Because if you have a person who may be experiencing a panic attack, we want to make sure that we don't meet them at their same level. I always like to say, we want to be the safety net for them. So that means staying calm, keeping your tone of voice low, again, using those positive words, so, just stay calm, sit down-- things that maybe indicate action, as opposed to saying, you're not in danger, because those things can be more-- it can sound more negative and scary, so just use those positive words.

And then we talked about incorporating relaxing activities into your daily life. And that's why from the get-go in this presentation, I talked so much about our own self-care. And we want to make sure that we model that for youth. Whether that is at home, if we're parents, whether they're at school, if we're a teacher. We want to make sure that we're modeling those behaviors for youth.

So even in ourselves, when we notice ourselves getting triggered or being overwhelmed, to say, like, I need a minute to breathe. I need to count my own breath. I need to do my four square breathing. And if they notice that we're modeling that with them, they're more likely to practice that themselves.

And lastly, explore. Sometimes it may require exploring what are other options. If the young person is not able to manage those symptoms on their own, if we are not able to help them as their parents or their teachers, then it's really helpful to explore and see if it would be helpful to talk to a therapist. And there's another stigma by seeking help for mental illnesses, but we want to talk about what that looks like, and help young people make some choices and decisions on how they would like to get help for their men or their anxiety symptoms.



So now let's talk a little bit more about managing anxiety during re-opening. And when we think about-- during re-opening, we're thinking about this school year, which is going to look very different than any other school year, because we're opening in the midst of a pandemic. There's so much uncertainty, And we are filled with information about COVID-19, via our television, social media feeds, our email inboxes, and it's no wonder we're all feeling higher levels of anxiety recently.

And so we want to be mindful of that, and notice the fact that we are also feeling anxious, as parents, as educators, as social workers, and how to handle COVID-19. It's been months now that we're living in these uncertainties, so we want to be mindful that we are experiencing some levels of anxiety. But we also want to be mindful that we already have some skills on how to manage stress. And so we can utilize some of those skills that we have learned to fill our lives in dealing with the reopening of schools this year, and dealing with the uncertainty of what the school year is going to look like in the midst of COVID-19, in the midst of all of this social injustice that is happening in the world. So we want to be mindful of that, and recognize that this is creating anxiety not only for ourselves, but also for the youth, or kids. Our youth and our kids.

So how do we manage anxiety? So the first thing is focus on what you can control. We cannot control everything, but there are certain things that we can control, and the most helpful thing we can do in this situation is practice acceptance. Acceptance that we don't have control over everything, and that we can just focus on the things that we can control. So that might look like-- I often tell my parents-- that might look like start preparing just for week one. Or just focus on day one. Like what is the first day of school going to look like? And as opposed to thinking about, what's going to happen if school closes down? Or what's going to happen in three months? Just focus on the first day. Just focus on your first on the first week.

And also, prepare for the future. So have a place in the home that is ready for school at home. Helping let the young person choose what their school-- their home school would look like. So where do you want your school desk to be? What would you like to add to your home school area? Whether that is some posters, whether it is they want to have different color papers, or pencil. Those are things that we can control, creating a safe space at the house for the young person, and focusing just on the first week.

Same with teachers. In the schools, I've noticed a lot of teachers have the same uncertainty that parents have and the students have. And so it is kind of a cycle. We just want to focus on the things that we can control.

The next thing is youth skills to assess risk. We want to assess the risk. So what that means is if your kids, your students-- this is mostly for parents-- if your kids really are craving social interactions and they really need it, then we want to assess risk. So are their peers willing to wear masks? Are their peers



willing to socially distance? Are their peers willing to meet somewhere outside? So what is the risk, and does that risk asset-- or are there more pros and cons and how can we make this in informed how can we make an informed decision on those things.

It's also important to maintain social connections. So in times of extreme stress, people who have solid social support are less likely to feel traumatized and overwhelmed. So I know that it's happened to all of us. We disconnected from our social circle when COVID started, but I think it's time for us to start reconnecting. And that might be through FaceTime, through virtual sessions or meetings, or it can be a person with certain precautions. Right? But it's really, really important to start the social-- to maintain your social connections.

And the same thing with youth. So many students, when the schools closed, their main issue was, I miss my friends. I miss connecting. I miss my teachers. So how do we maintain those social connections?

At schools-- this was, I think, kindergarten, where the teacher kind of met with the students in the park and was able to do some activity with the students in the park for once a week. Right? So just thinking about, how can we be creative in the midst of all of these changes?

Be transparent about ground rules. Right? Have clear conversations with people. We all take different precautions when it comes to COVID-19. And it's not our job to tell people what they need to do, but it is our job to keep ourself safe. So we want to make sure that we let people know what we expect from them. If we're going to see them, what are some things that we expect, right?

So are you willing to wear a mask when you come meet me? Are you willing to stay six feet apart, right? So make sure that we do have those conversations with our friends, with our loved ones, even sometimes with schools or with other people that we interact with.

And then take breaks. Take breaks when you need them. Right? As adults, we need those breaks, especially during these times. We want to make sure that if we're starting to feel irritated, overwhelmed, before we snap, I always just say, hey, I need a five-minute break. I need to think through this. I need to, you know, kind of go outside and take a walk before I can come back to this situation.

Sometimes we can take breaks. Sometimes we can't. And so if we make a mistake, it's OK to come back and say, hey, I'm sorry. I overreacted. It wasn't your fault. I was just feeling a little overwhelmed. And that, too, can show students and kids how to manage difficult conversations or how to fix when we've hurt someone's feelings.

And then don't hesitate to seek help. And we've talked about that. I'm going to talk about this a little more. Here are some things that we're going to talk



about in the next couple of nights. We'll talk about treatment, health promotion, prevention, and mental health literacy.

So these are just some considerations for all of you-- and mostly for all of you who are teachers. And maybe you know this already, but it can be helpful to kind of remind yourself as school gets started. Right?

Who in your school can provide support for youth who might be experiencing some of the symptoms of anxiety? Who are the mental health professionals in your school? Right? Maybe this has changed. And I don't know if it happens every summer. But it could have changed.

And then, who can help you make a connection to community agencies? Right? Oftentimes, the reason why we don't seek help is because we don't know where the resources are. So for all of you who are here, we really want you to think about, who are those community agencies that can provide resources for yourself, for youth, for your friend's kid, right? Because these are really, really important times. And we know that sometimes seeking help can make a big difference in a young person's life.

So what to know about treatment-- so there's different types of treatment for anxiety. But this is kind of what is evidence-based-- this is best practice, I guess, for anxiety. So psychological treatments, such as talk therapy, are effective and considered to be first line treatments. So talk therapy.

One thing I would say about talk therapy is that, just like anything else, when you go see a doctor, you might go to one doctor and you don't like it. You could switch to a different doctor. Don't be afraid to-- if something doesn't feel right, if you don't feel like you connect to the therapist-- to be open and share that with the therapist. Share that with your parents, and let them know.

I see someone talked about CBT. So that's a good type of treatment. Cognitive behavioral therapy is one of the most effective treatments when it comes to anxiety. We also know that medications, such as SSRIs, can be helpful.

And again, I would always say, first of all, check with your primary care provider. Check with a professional. And be informed. Right? What are the best types of treatment? Is treatment working? Can medication help? Just be informed.

And allow the young person to-- never allow the young person to avoid situations that make them anxious. Right? Because sometimes that makes things worse. So I talked a little bit about school anxiety. And so being mindful that we don't want to give in to some of those anxieties for youth, because it can only validate their fears.



And then anxious kids often have anxious parents. Right? So there is some genetic predisposition to anxiety disorders. So what this means is just be mindful. If you're a parent, be mindful of that. Right?

And that should make us more aware of some of the signs and symptoms. And the earlier the young person can get help, the earlier the young person can get treatment, the better the results are.

So let's not be afraid to connect those youths to those professionals, right, to those therapists. And allow them to make some natural connections with those therapists as well. And normalize the idea that if one thing doesn't work, if one type of treatment doesn't work, then they can try something else.

So here's some basic goals of treatment. Right? What is treatment supposed to do when someone experiences anxiety? Well, mental health treatment should improve the systems. Right? They should also improve the ability to function at home, at work, and at school and connect with friends.

Depending on the severity of the anxiety disorder, it can stop a disorder from coming back. And like I said before, anxiety can be mild, moderate, or severe. So for some, treatment can kind of completely reduce the symptoms. For others, it can-- treatment can help manage those symptoms. Right?

And so we want to be mindful of that. And we should never promise a young person, hey, if you get treatment, you're never going to feel this way. Because we don't know. Right? So be really mindful of that.

And we always want to encourage best evidence-based treatment. We always want to encourage evidence-based treatment. When we're talking to a therapist, when we're working with a profession, we want to ask, you know, what type of treatments do you use? And always be mindful of evidence-based treatment. And one of those is cognitive behavioral therapy.

And then we have those kind of promotions-- promoting wellness. Right? So those self-help strategies. So I talked about exercise. Exercise can be really helpful. Having a good diet-- so for some of us who tend to be anxious, we have to be really mindful with our diet, especially when we think about things that include too much caffeine. Right? So drinking too much coffee, tea, a lot of sweets, because those things can trigger our nervous system and increase those symptoms of anxiety.

So being mindful with that, too, with kids, right? If they tend to be prone to anxiety, we have to be mindful with their diet. Limit the sugars in their food. I mean, the other day, I was looking at my milk. And 2% milk has, like, 5 grams of sugar. And so things that we might think are healthy might not be as healthy.





So look for those things in the ingredients too, right? How much sugar does it have? Does it have any caffeine? Because that can affect and trigger symptoms of anxiety.

We talked about proper sleep hygiene. So encouraging youth to sleep those 8 to 10 hours. And the best way to do that is to have a sleep time routine. And, you know, summer's almost ending. For some, summer already ended. And so that means your bedtime routine has shifted.

So instead of going to sleep at 10:00, right now, we're going back to sleeping at 9:00. And then, slowly, it's coming back to 8:30 if we think that's appropriate. Right? We're really, really encouraging a healthy sleep routine as well. So proper sleep hygiene-- we talked about that.

And then positive relationships. Right? Positive relationships with family and positive relationships with peers. We know that during adolescence, one of the biggest supports are friends. And so, as parents, we also may want to consider knowing who their peers are, knowing who their peers' parents are, and making sure that our youth are engaging with positive relationships.

So that comes to the end of my presentation. I have some available resources. As you may know, it can be really helpful just to always provide youth with-- to always provide youth with the hotline number. Right? This is a crisis hotline number. If a young person is experiencing too much anxiety, sometimes it might trigger thoughts of suicide. So we always, always want to have the hotline number available.

Also, there's a text line-- 741741. Youth sometimes feel more comfortable texting. And so these hotlines are helpful. They have professionals on the other end. And they're able to just provide some triage, whether it is an emergency and they need to get immediate help or they can use other types of support.

These hotlines are not only for youth. If you have questions, if you want to get some additional support, you can always say, hey, I don't know how to help, or it sounds like you're struggling. Can we try calling this hotline together? Or can we try texting this hotline together?

And don't be afraid to do those things together, or you yourself calling and asking for some help and for some resources. They have a lot of support for those. And I know that it's something that's been utilized a lot during this difficult year.

And then I have some helpful apps. Many of you probably have heard of Calm, which is kind of a mindfulness app that can be really helpful. We have a Worry Time app that kind of helps when you're feeling really worried. And then a Breathe app, a kind of app which helps you kind of monitor your breathing.



So research shows that individuals who live with anxiety tend to breathe faster, which kind of coincides with the lack of oxygen in our brain. And allows trigger of our nervous system. And so training ourselves to breathe slower and more mindfulness can alleviate some of the symptoms of anxiety as well.

And then, I have found books to be really helpful in educating younger kids on anxiety. And so I created a list of some of the books that I like to use with my youth to teach them about anxiety. And it's a variety of different ones. Some of them are about bedtime fears. Other ones are about generalized anxiety, selective mutism, OCD, and even post-traumatic stress disorder. So hopefully this is helpful for all of you as well.

And lastly, I have some references and helpful articles that you all may be able to use and maybe read more about. So that's it for my presentation. I hope it was helpful. I think we're going to open it for some Q&A.

SARAH MCMINN: Thank you, Angela. That was wonderful. A lot of really good information for professionals and students and educators. So thank you.

Unfortunately, we won't have time for everybody's questions today. But we will keep the questions and work to get answers to you all in our follow-up communication. So if you don't have your questions answered today, look for some follow up from us in the next week or so.

So I just wanted to start with kind of a broad question, since we only have time for one or two, Angela. Across the nation, children will be attending school in some capacity. How might anxiety be presented now, under the pandemic, during remote learning and physical attendance at schools? How might it look in the future? Or how might it look right now?

ANGELA BEGRES: That's a really good question. I think we're all going to have a hard time assessing for anxiety virtually. But I would say some of the signs and symptoms will still be the same. Right? If you notice the student is maybe not showing up to their classes, to their virtual classes. If you notice the student not turning in their assignments. Right?

You might even notice students being very honest virtually and saying, I'm having a really hard time. I'm not functioning well. And so a lot of those things we talked about on school performance will still take place-- noticing they're grades, noticing how they turn in their assignments, and even noticing their appearance.

SARAH MCMINN: Great. Thank you. And just one more while we wrap up. And then we'll send it back to Ann. What can helping professionals do to reach the parents if the parents also have anxiety? Do you have any suggestions on how to have everybody get connected during this time of being apart?



ANGELA BEGRES: Yeah. So usually, I do two things. One, I send parents resources via email, like check-ins. Like, hey, I've been working with your kid. Here are some resources that you and your kids can go through together. And then another suggestion would be having a parent-child session. That way, you get to also get to know the parent and provide them with some resources that might be helpful for them.

SARAH MCMINN: Great. Thank you so much. I'm going to turn it over to Ann to wrap up our session today. And again, if your questions weren't answered, please be on the lookout for some follow-up information from us. And we will ensure that we get you all of the wonderful resources that Angela provided today as well. Thank you so much, Angela. This was very informative.

ANGELA BEGRES: Thank you all.

ANN SCHENSKY: Thank you both, Angela and Sarah. This, in fact, was amazing. What I wanted to just let people know is that the PowerPoint slides, the recording of this webinar, and other resources will be posted on the Great Lakes MHTTC products and resources page. It'll take us about a week to get all those things up there. So be on the lookout for that.

Also, you will be getting a brief survey. If you could please just take a couple of minutes to fill that out, it would be very helpful to us. We really appreciate it. SAMHSA likes to know how people are reacting to our presentations. So that would be great.

And if you have any other questions, you can let us know. But we want to thank you all for your time. And have a great afternoon.