

ALCDSB MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS NEWSLETTER

Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board

September 2016

Feeling anxious about a new school year is common!

Any time we are about to start something new and strange and we are unsure what to expect or how we will cope, we can feel anxious, excited and/or stressed. A young child who may have never attended school will be exposed to many unknowns; new people, new demands, and do so alone and without the immediate presence of his or her family. Under these circumstances, it is normal to feel insecure about how to manage. Secondary school students feel anxious about things also, but can express this in different, often more internal and self-conscious ways. Parents can also feel stress both in response to their children's feelings and because of their own experiences at school.

These stresses may be even more pronounced when the child is starting school, changing school, or when the family are newcomers. **With support and encouragement, most children will find their way, cope well and grow from these experiences.**



FIRST DAY BACK TO SCHOOL FROM DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW



In This Issue

- Signs of Anxiety
- Alleviating anxious feelings
- When anxiety becomes a problem
- Anxiety Resources

What are signs of Anxiety that parents and staff can look for?

Preschool and Elementary students

- Restless, irritable, agitated, or resistant.
- Temper tantrums or extreme meltdowns.
- May check to see if threat is there or seek reassurance.
- Nightmares or sleep terrors possible.
- Feeling physically ill (e.g., stomach aches).
- Trouble recognizing/verbalizing what they are feeling and why.

Secondary School students

- Has a more developed ability to internalize the anxiety response.
- Worried, withdrawn, or complain of feeling sick (frequent stomachaches or other physical complaints).
- May have difficulty sleeping and be preoccupied.
- May keep their worries and fears to themselves. Anxiety is not only internalized, it may appear as ‘acting out’ behaviour.

How to help alleviate anxious feelings?

- Don't tell your child not to worry. Tell them it is normal and okay to feel anxious. Share that even you get worried sometimes when you are starting something new.
- Encourage kids to talk. Ask how your child feels about the new school year, accept and acknowledge them without judgment, help them to draw or speak their thoughts.
- Stay calm: Children pick up on parent's and staff's anxiety. Model optimism and confidence.
- Let your children know you care. For example, send personal notes in their lunch bags.
- Arrange play dates to help them make friends.
- Teach relaxation techniques, such as: slow deep breathing, taking a walk or physical activity can help reduce the physical feelings of anxiety, teach them (and model/practice) mindfulness through meditation

For more information: www.hincksdellcrest.org/abc

Check out ALCDSB's new Mental Health & Wellness webpage!

As of September 2016, the Mental Health and Wellness team will be launching a webpage on the ALCDSB website.

Check out this page for FAQ's, resources, a list of mental health and wellness programs at ALCDSB and much more!

When does anxiety become a problem? Knowing when to seek help.

Anxious individuals chronically develop negative and distorted thinking patterns, behave in ways that react and help them cope with anxiety, and experience anxious emotions and physical reactions. They typically overestimate the risk or danger and underestimate or overlook their ability to cope. Sometimes situations can be overwhelming, parents and school staff are at a loss as to how they can help or are stretched to the point at which they do not have the resources to help.

If anxiety lasts more than a month and does not show signs of going away, and if it interferes with functioning socially, academically, or in other activities of daily living, then it may be time to seek help. For more information: www.hincksdellcrest.org

In elementary aged children this looks like:

More clingy throughout the day, has trouble going to sleep or insists on a Parent or school staff staying with them.

Anxious feelings leads to avoidance, panic attacks or severe changes in behaviour.

If the child is not speaking at school or in class.

In secondary school children:

If they are unusually and persistently nervous, worried, on edge, tense, sad, overwhelmed, angry, frustrated, irritable, or stressed.

Catastrophizing or consistently expecting the worst.

Often jumps to negative conclusions.

Personalizing bad experiences (e.g., I am a loser, I will fail, I'm always alone)

Lack of confidence in one's coping ability

If these problems persist, it may be time to talk to a teacher or school principal who can engage Professional Support Services such as a social worker/psychologist to support the student.

Anxiety Resources:

Children's Mental Health Ontario:
www.kidsmentalhealth.ca

eMental Healthy: www.ementalhealth.ca

Open Line, Open Mind:
www.openlineopenmind.com

Quinte Health Care– Open Line, Open Mind:
www.qhc.on.ca

School Mental Health Assist: www.smh-assist.ca

Kids Help Phone: www.kidshelpphone.ca

The ABC's of Mental Health (Parent/Teacher Resources): www.hincksdellcrest.org

Ontario Centre of Excellence for Children and Youth

Contact Us

Contact your school for more information from the school's Child and Youth Worker or school principal.

For more information from ALCDSB Mental Health Lead, contact Kaveh Khanverdi

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kave@alcdsb.on.ca

On behalf of the Mental Health and Well-Being Leadership Team at the Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board, we hope everyone had an amazing, enjoyable, refreshing, and safe summer.

We hope you did what inspired and relaxed you. We hope you created lasting memories with your loved ones. We are looking forward to fantastic and exciting year.