

### Differentiating Anxiety and ADHD Symptoms

<b>Symptom</b>	<b>Anxiety Cause</b>	<b>ADHD Cause</b>
<i>Inattention, easily distracted, doesn't seem to listen, doesn't follow through on instructions</i>	Distracted by worries, rituals, and fears; may be afraid of hearing question wrong; may race through assignment, not follow directions due to nerves	Distracted by kids and noises, may notice that teacher is saying something, but doesn't process the instruction; may rush to get unwanted task done quickly to go on to something more fun
<i>Unable to concentrate on work</i>	Afraid that work will be too hard or will have to be done perfectly so avoids; can't tolerate feeling of not being sure something is right	Difficulty sitting still due to boredom
<i>Impulsivity; blurts out answers, interrupts, can't wait one's turn</i>	Fear that he will forget answer; needs reassurance that he is right, unable to leave a mistake as is	Not enough processing available between idea and action – no mental brakes; unaware of interrupting
<i>Hyperactivity; fidgety, gets up from seat; talking excessively</i>	Fidgety from anticipation, tension, or worry – can't sit still, wants to go home, get the day over with. Nervous energy; may be checking compulsions with questions; may be experiencing trauma flashbacks (PTSD)	Physical need to move, keep hands busy

What to do to alleviate anxiety:

Exercise

Healthy nutrition (avoid sugars)

Get enough sleep

Reduce risk:

Identify stresses at school or home

Problem solve to reduce stress

Universal Interventions to build emotional strength

Good connections with supportive, nurturing adults (teachers, parents, group leaders)

Listen to and support the child

Relaxing exercise

## **What Can Anxiety Look Like?**

(Information from the Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health)

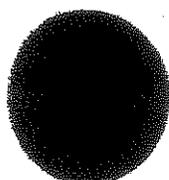
- Tiredness, fatigue, difficulty getting through the day
- Frequent bouts of tears
- Anger, opposition, defiance, aggression
- Obsessions (consuming thoughts and worries)
- Compulsions (behaviour rituals)
- Refusal or reluctance to attend school
- Excessive worrying
- Fear of new situations
- Physical complaints not attributable to a health problem (e.g., stomach aches, headaches)
- Social isolation/withdrawal from peers

The children at our school are learning about SNAP<sup>®</sup> in school assemblies, by talking about SNAP in their classrooms and by seeing SNAP signs and notices around the school.



SNAP stands for Stop Now And Plan. SNAP helps kids to stop and think before they act! This is how it can help:

A problem occurs, the children are encouraged to describe how they feel, (*angry, frustrated, mad, sad*), how their bodies change/feel (*Hot, tense, red face, fast heart beat, hands in fists*) and what they may be thinking when they are angry or upset. (*I can't believe this is happening to me, I'm going to get him back*) The problem is the trigger.



Stop

What next?

**Stop:** things kids can do to stop themselves from getting more upset and calm their bodies down:

- Snap their fingers
- Take deep breaths
- Put their hands in their pockets
- Count to ten

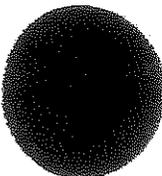


Now

And

**Now And:** Things kids can say to themselves to help them calm down and get ready to think of plans. (This is the critical moment)

- "I can stop, I need to stop!"
- "This is hard but I can do it!"
- "What will happen if they lash out?"



Plan

**Plan:** The children need to pick a plan that will work for them.

- Check the problem out with the other person involved, use words and I statements to talk about the problem
- Walking away and ignore the issue
- Ask for help from a friend or teacher
- Find something else to do, play a game or play with a friend

The children are being encouraged to think about possible plans and pick one that will work for them. By encouraging the children to think before they act, use calming strategies and then pick a plan that will make their problem smaller not bigger they can start to feel better about themselves, avoid trouble and become great problem solvers!