

# IS ANXIETY AMONG ADOLESCENTS ON THE RISE?

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# AGENDA

- Current status of adolescent mental health
- Quick review of adolescent development
- Adolescent stress and anxiety
- Strategies and resources

# CHILD & ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health in childhood means reaching developmental and emotional milestones, and learning healthy social skills and how to cope when there are problems.

Mental disorders among children are described as serious changes in the way children typically learn, behave, or handle their emotions, which cause distress and problems getting through the day.

# CONDITIONS AFFECTING FUNCTIONING

## Mental Disorders

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)
- Conduct Disorder (CD)
- Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Tourette Syndrome
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

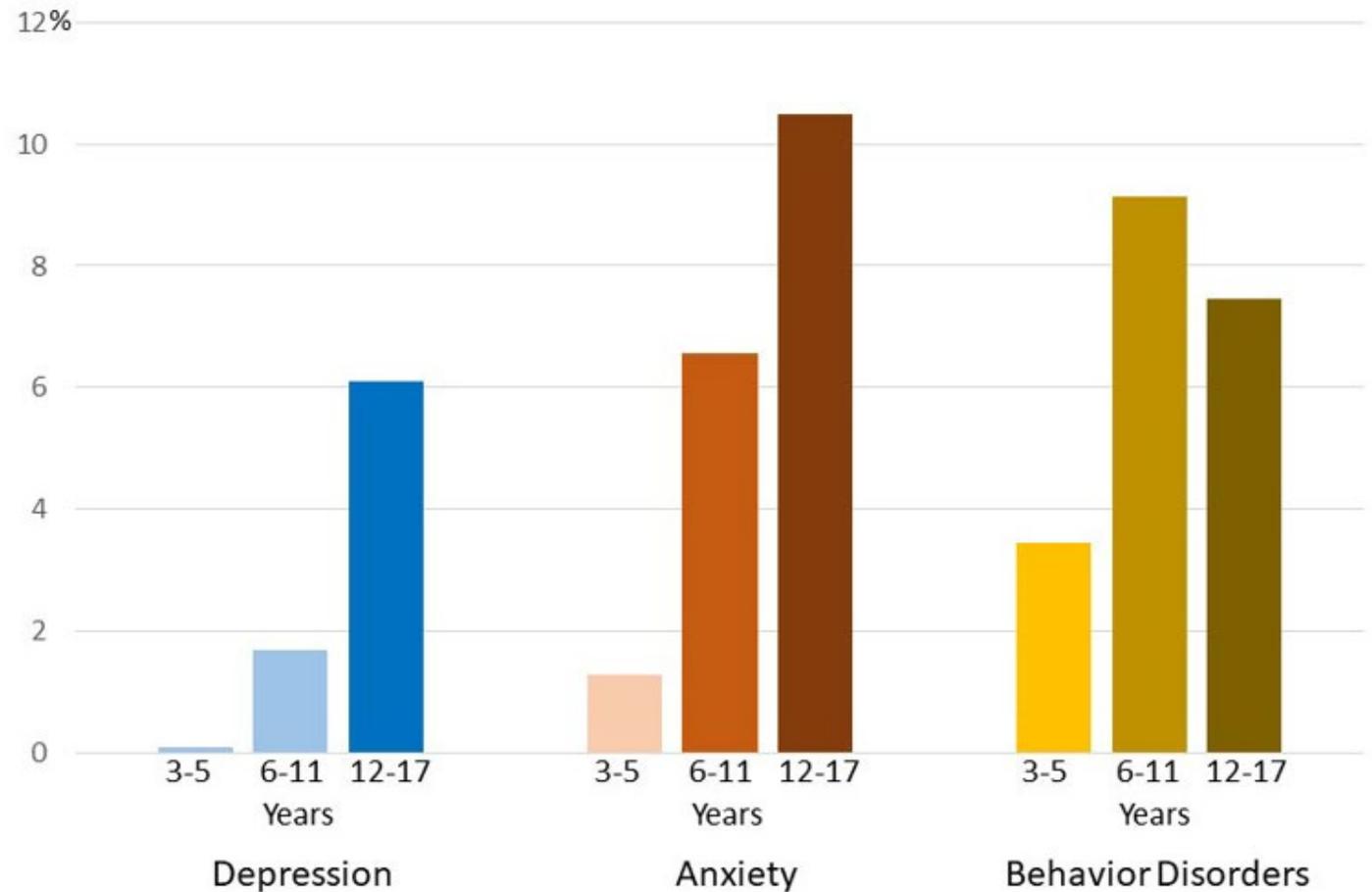
## Disabilities & Other

- Learning disabilities
- Developmental disabilities
- Autism spectrum disorder
- Substance use
- Self-harm



# CHILD & ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH

Depression, Anxiety, Behavior Disorders, by Age



CDC:

<https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmetalhealth/data.html>

# A CLOSER LOOK AT DEPRESSION

In 2017, 32% of all high school students reported feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for two or more weeks in a row in the last year (an indicator of clinical depression).

- More girls than boys reported feeling sad or hopeless (41% and 21%, respectively)
  - lesbian and bisexual females, 69%
  - gay and bisexual males, 46%
- The number of high school students who report serious thoughts of suicide dropped from 29% in 1991 to 14% in 2009 -- and then increased to 17% by 2017
  - 7% reported suicide attempts

## NOT THE FULL PICTURE

- Prevalence data only an estimate
- Diagnoses often inaccurate
- Mental health services – not available, not desired
- Many experience emotional distress, but are not recognized



LET'S REMEMBER WHAT IS HAPPENING IN ADOLESCENCE

## Adolescent Brain Development

- Period of growth
- Brain centers still maturing
- Imbalance: Emotional brain in the driver's seat

### PREFRONTAL CORTEX

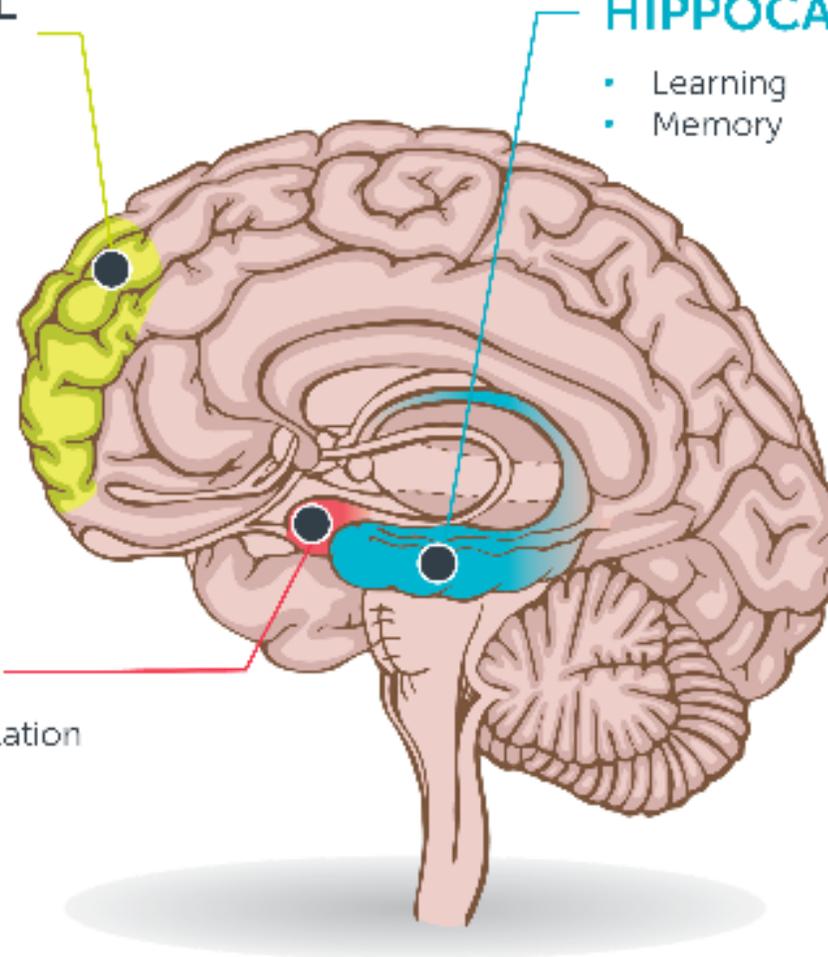
- Attention
- Concentration
- Focus

### HIPPOCAMPUS

- Learning
- Memory

### AMYGDALA

- Emotional Regulation
- Reactivity



# Tasks of Adolescence

Adjust to maturing bodies and feelings

Develop/apply abstract thinking skills

Develop/apply more complex perspective taking

Renegotiate relationship with adults

Take on increasingly mature roles and responsibilities

Develop identity (different aspects)

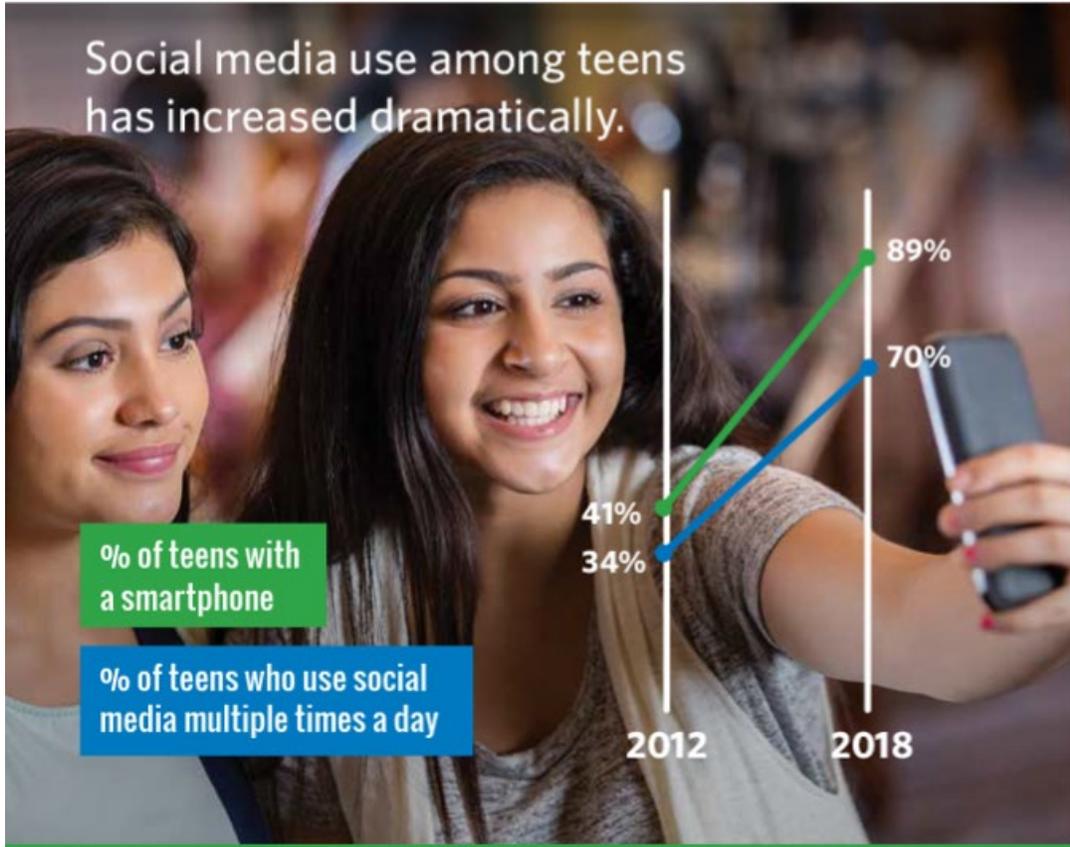


Develop/apply new coping skills

Identify moral standards, values, and beliefs

Form friendships that are close and supportive

Understand/express more complex emotional experiences



The average 8 to 12 year-old American kid spent four hours and 44 minutes looking at screens each day in 2019

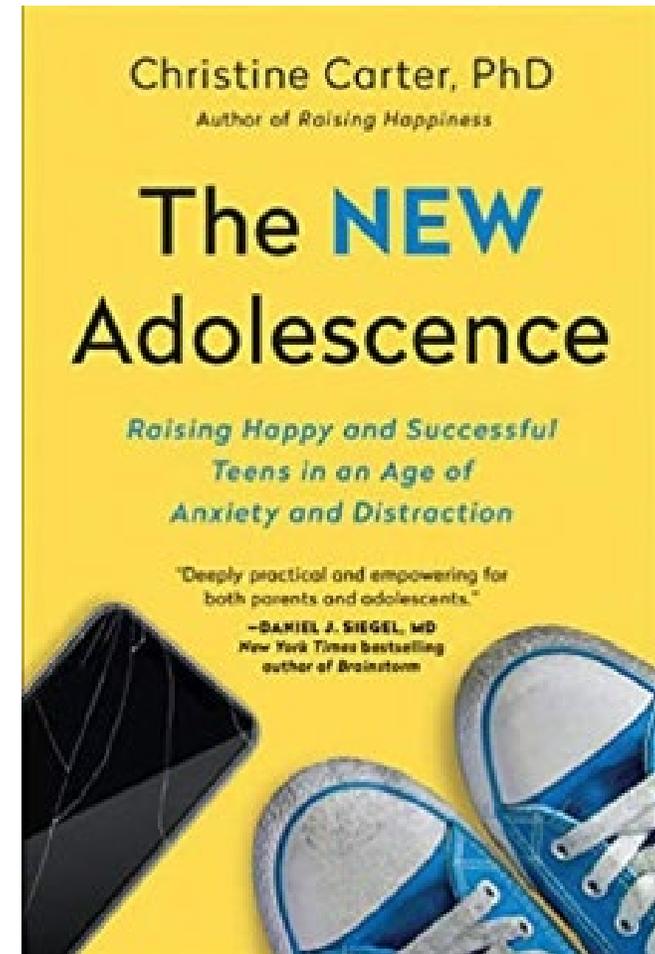
American teens, ages 13 to 18, used entertainment screen media for an average of seven hours and 22 minutes each day in 2019

<https://www.common sense media.org/social-media-social-life-infographic>

# EXPLOSION OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

# IMPACT?

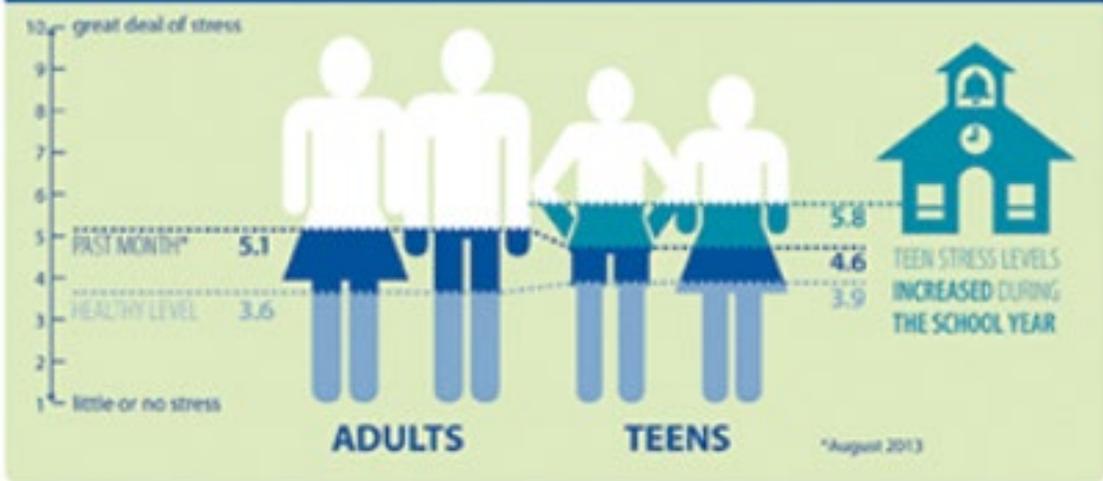
- Research ambivalent
  - Youth with low social and emotional stability more likely to experience negative impact
- Changes in
  - connection (loneliness, comparison, exclusion)
  - focus (↓ deep learning, toxic overuse inhibits dopamine function → depression, anxiety)
  - rest (cognitive overload, sleep deprivation)



# Stress in America™

Teens are under pressure.  
They face a troubling outlook, reporting comparable stress levels and symptoms of stress as adults.

## TEENS REPORT STRESS SIMILAR TO ADULTS, EXCEEDING LEVELS SEEN AS HEALTHY

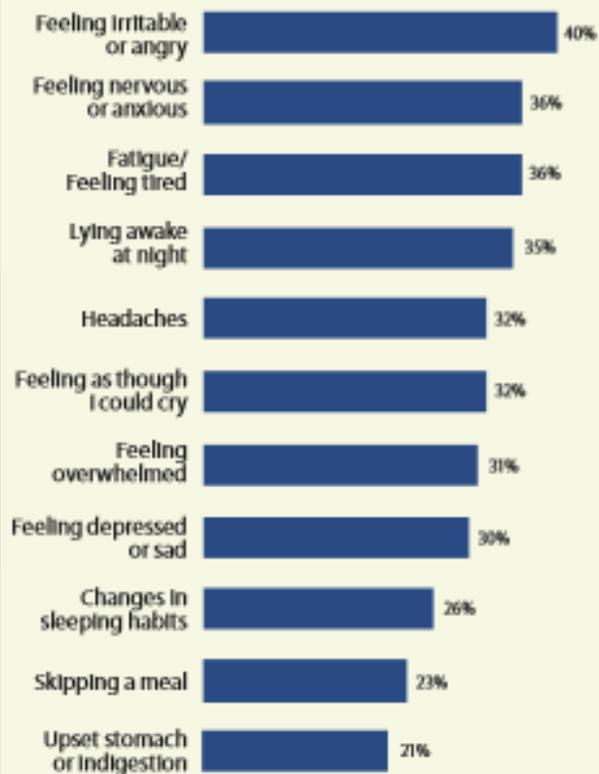


**34%** OF TEENS PREDICT THEIR STRESS TO INCREASE IN NEXT YEAR

APA. 2014. Stress in America  
<https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2013/stress-report.pdf>

**TEENS REPORT SYMPTOMS OF STRESS DURING THE PAST MONTH, WITH 74% REPORTING HAVING HAD MORE THAN ONE SYMPTOM.**

**Symptoms of Teen Stress**



BASE: All respondents 2013 (Teens n=1018)

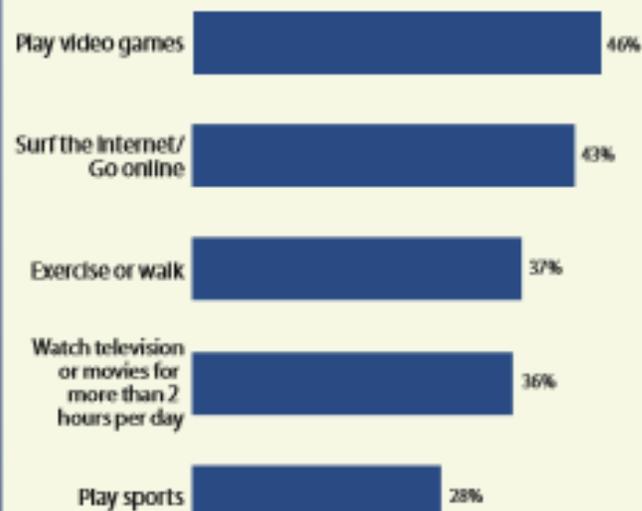
Q770 During the last month, did you ever lay awake because you were feeling stressed?

Q800 During the last month, did you ever skip a meal because you were under stress?

Q810 Which of the following, if any, have you experienced in the last month as a result of stress?

**MORE TEENS ENGAGE IN SEDENTARY ACTIVITIES TO COPE WITH STRESS THAN USE PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT.**

**Stress Management Techniques of Teens**



BASE: All respondents 2013 (Teens n=1018)

Q965 Do you do any of the following to relieve or manage stress? Please select all that apply.

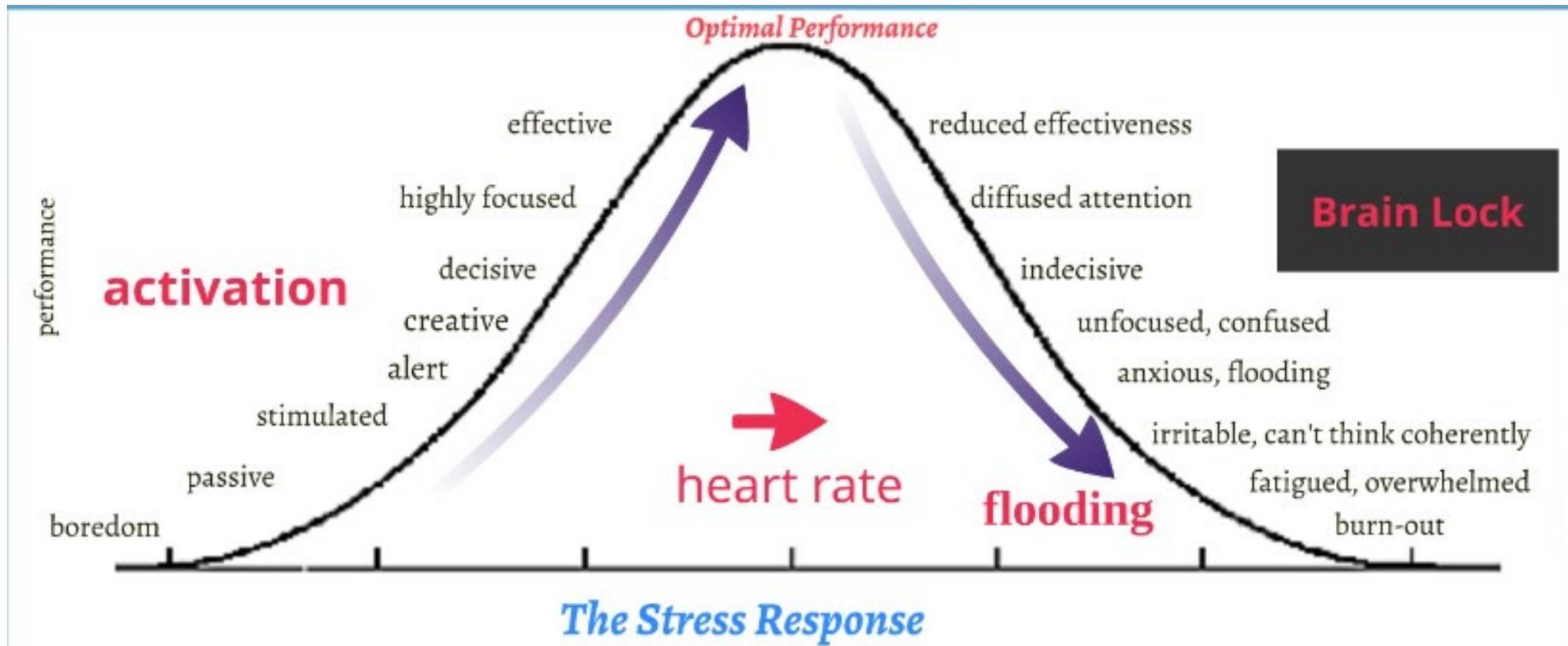
\*New wording in 2013 - formerly "Play video games or surf the Internet."

## Fight Flight Freeze – Anxiety Explained For Teens



<https://www.anxietycanada.com/learn-about-anxiety/anxiety-in-youth/>

# STRESS RESPONSE



# ANXIETY



- A number of disorders that share features of excessive fear and anxiety and related behavioral disturbances. (DSM-V)

## Stress

- physiological response to a perceived threat (FFF)

## Fear/worry

- emotions caused by imminent threat

## Anxiety

- fear/worry about the stress/threat; longer term

## Anxiety Disorder

- persistent anxiety that meets criteria

# HOW DO YOU HANDLE STRESS/ANXIETY?

## Adaptive Coping

- Exercise
- Mindfulness
- Relaxation techniques
- Music
- Hobbies
- ...

## Maladaptive Coping

- Binge watching
- Gaming
- Eating
- Substance abuse
- ...

# STRESSORS

## *Contributors to high levels of student stress*

Social media (exclusion, curated sites, compulsive habits)

Milieu of competitive students and focus on brand colleges

Parent co-rumination with a child: "wiring in" anxiety

Cultural/ global anxiety: eco-collapse, economic opportunity panic

Unique stressors of high income and low income homes

Has being "stressed out" become a reinforced emotional state?

*Have we overdone problem-talk, diagnosing, quick referrals, victimhood, reinforcing problem-saturated stories about oneself, pathology focus, and focus on shame? (in some sectors?)*

Laura Kastner,  
Learning &  
The Brain  
Conference  
Presentation  
2/2020

# GENERAL, SOCIAL ANXIETY

- Excessive anxiety and worry about events or activities in social settings and performance situations
- Difficulty controlling worries (thinking traps)
- Somatic complaints
- Restlessness, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, irritability, muscle tension
- Sleep difficulties

# THINKING TRAPS

Below is a list of common thinking traps.

<p><b>Thinking Trap:</b></p> <p><b>All or Nothing Thinking (or Black and White Thinking)</b></p> 	<p><b>What's Going On</b></p> <p>Thinking only of possible outcomes at either extreme (really good or really bad) and not seeing all the possible outcomes in-between (or the "grey"). Most of life is somewhere in the middle.</p>	<p><b>Examples</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One friend gets angry at you » "Nobody likes me, I'm totally unlovable and selfish."</li><li>• Failing one test » "I'm obviously a stupid loser."</li><li>• Presentation at school » "I'm going to either ace the performance or totally flop."</li></ul>
<p><b>Thinking Trap:</b></p> <p><b>Catastrophizing</b></p>	<p><b>What's Going On</b></p>	<p><b>Examples</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Getting one bad grade » "I won't get into university and I'll end</li></ul>

Source: Anxiety Canada  
<https://www.anxietycanada.com/articles/thinking-traps/>

# WHAT ARE YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING UNDER COVID-19

## Anxiety/fear

- Uncertainty of COVID-19
- 24/7 media saturation

## More, not fewer responsibilities now at home

- Caring for family members, home-schooling or child care of siblings, expectations from parents, academic productivity, boundaries

## Inequitable home resources for adequate learning

- Inadequate internet, computer availability, quiet space

## Loss

- Autonomy & individualized identities; privacy
- School life safety/routine/ social support network
- Loss of loved ones

# SUPPORTIVE APPROACH

## Active Listening

Laura Kastner,  
Learning & The  
Brain Conference  
Presentation  
2/2020

- \* Accept and empathize**
- \* Enlighten students on the science of stress**
- \* Appreciate the multi-determinants of stress**
- \* Be the adult who can enhance coping**
- \* Support resilience, problem-solving,  
and emotional and social  
competence  
(aka MENTAL HEALTH)**

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## Integrate social and emotional learning activities



[http://www.actforyouth.net/youth\\_development/professionals/sel](http://www.actforyouth.net/youth_development/professionals/sel)

# RESOURCES

- CASEL SEL Resources - <https://casel.org/covid-resources/>
- Child Mind Institute - <https://childmind.org/topics/concerns/anxiety/>

## For Youth

Anxiety Canada - <https://www.anxietycanada.com/learn-about-anxiety/anxiety-in-youth>

KidsHealth: Stress and Coping Center – <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/center/stress-center.html?WT.ac=ctg#catemotions>

Kenneth Ginsberg: Fostering Resilience: A Personalized Guide for Managing Stress - [http://fosteringresilience.com/what\\_is\\_stress.php](http://fosteringresilience.com/what_is_stress.php)

## REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

CDC: Children's Mental Health - <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/data.html>

Healthy Children.Org - <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/emotional-problems/Pages/Anxiety-Disorders.aspx>

American Academy for Child & Adolescent Psychiatry: Anxiety Disorder Resource Center  
[https://www.aacap.org/aacap/families\\_and\\_youth/Resource\\_Centers/Anxiety\\_Disorder\\_Resource\\_Center/Home.aspx](https://www.aacap.org/aacap/families_and_youth/Resource_Centers/Anxiety_Disorder_Resource_Center/Home.aspx)

APA: Stress in America - <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2013/stress-report.pdf>

APA. COVID-19 Resources - <https://www.apa.org/topics/covid-19/>

## (PARENTING) BOOKS

- Christine Carter. 2020. *The New Adolescence. Raising Happy and successful Teens in an Age of Anxiety and Distraction.* Dallas: BenBella Books, Inc.
- Kenneth R. Ginsburg with Martha M. Jablow. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) 2015. *Building Resilience in Children and Teens.* American Academy of Pediatrics



QUESTIONS?

Thank You!