



## **Female Mental Health**

Did you know that females are twice as much as males to be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder? While anxiety disorders can affect anyone at any age, girls between 10 and 18 years old are especially susceptible for some reason. Some experts believe it may have something to do with the hormonal changes in a girl's body that are going on at this time. Furthermore, the differences in the rates found in females can be related to the number of individuals who actually seek traditional professional help.

### **Different Types of Anxiety Disorders**

There are several types of anxiety disorders that can affect your daughter. Some of these include separation anxiety disorder, social anxiety, panic disorder, and generalized anxiety disorder. We will briefly describe the main types below:



### **Generalized Anxiety Disorder**

If your daughter is having trouble controlling her anxiety and worrying about more than one issue such as the future, her health, and the world in general, this is generalized anxiety disorder. This can be debilitating, cause insomnia, appetite loss, depression, and she may spend more time playing video games or watching television rather than hanging out with others.

## **Social Anxiety Disorder**

Although it is normal for your daughter to worry about what others think about her, it is not good when she is so consumed by fear that she avoids people and places. She may stop talking or texting on the phone, avoid her friends, refuse to talk in class, or may even stop going to public places with you or the rest of the family.

## **Separation Anxiety Disorder**

Separation anxiety disorder (SAD) may be a problem if your child is worrying excessively that something bad will happen to you or her if you are not together. This may be evident by avoiding sleepovers, going to school, or having you leave the house for work, errands, or any other reason. She may even get physically ill with symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, headaches, and sleeplessness.

\*\*\*Please do not be confused with Seasonal Affective Disorder also labelled as (SAD) – which is a form of depression that occurs at the same time each year, usually in winter. Otherwise known as seasonal depression, SAD can affect your mood, sleep, appetite, and energy levels, taking a toll on all aspects of your life from your relationships and social life to work, school, and your sense of self-worth.

## **Panic Disorder**

This is a very scary situation that will scare both you and her. It can happen out of the blue for reasons unknown to you or her. All of a sudden, she may start to cry or shake, be unable to catch her breath, become dizzy or nauseous. If you have ever had a panic attack, you know how terrifying this can be for an adult, let alone for a child.

### **What can you do?**

Well, what you are doing right now is a great start...educating yourself and speaking with people about various ways you can support her is key.

#### **1. Validating Her Anxiety**

First of all, you need to validate her feelings and reassure her that she is not being judged. Make sure she knows that you understand and that you believe what she is feeling is real. Do not just say “everything will be okay” and expect her to quit worrying because that will only leave you and her more frustrated. They need to hear that you may not have all the answers right in the moment, but TOGETHER, will figure out how she can start to feel different.

## 2. Help Her Figure It Out

Teach her to think about what she feels as if it is a visible thing. Have her think of her feelings like they are little annoying critters that she can see and tell to go away. Have her think about them logically and realize that her worries may not be as bad as they seem. This requires a gentle approach as to avoid minimizing how she feels.

## 3. Tell Her About Your Own Worries

Let her know that anxiety is a common feeling and that everyone worries sometimes. Tell her some of the things that worry you sometimes. This may help her feel less alone. Be mindful to do this in a way that is not comparing who has more reasons to be anxious more than another. Remember all mental health concerns are very subjective and individual. You may need to keep your chats with her simple and short so you do not make her worry about your worries too.

## 4. Explore how she feels about Speaking with Someone Else

The best way for her to work this out is to talk to someone who is trained to deal with anxiety disorders as they will have an approach and various strategies to help move her through a recovery process. However, maybe someone from the church, school or even a trusted adult within the family might be a better starting point. Please be mindful of your own view regarding seeking help, if she experiences a feeling of embarrassment or shame coming from you regarding the

situation, she may become closed o the idea of taking the brave step of accepting help.

Unsure of what to do next? Please know our staff are only a phone call and/or text away.

Here to serve you well,

WMRCC team