

Mental Health Support Program for Students

Reducing Exam Anxiety

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is the state of arousal experienced when a person is in the face of a stimulus, and which reveals itself through physical, mental and emotional changes. Anxiety is a natural part of life, and at the same time it is a basic emotion necessary for a person to survive.

Anxiety includes some or more of the emotions such as sadness, fear, idea of failure, inability to predict results.

What is exam anxiety?

Individuals are faced with exams during their education. Success in exams is an important process for both students and their families. The criteria for success of children are assessed through exams. The exam anxiety, as an emotion in the cognitive, affective, or behavioral characteristics, is defined as a tension which is felt for any examination or evaluation and prevents the individual from revealing his/her real performance.

Anxiety is emerged by various physical and psychological changes before an exam and it is an intense emotion which can negatively affect an individual's performance during the exam.

There are three basic factors causing exam anxiety in students. These are the factors such as expectations and pressure of the family on the child, expectations and policies of the school, personal traits of the student.

It is shown that exam anxiety is generally related to factors such as fear of failure and fear of negative evaluation by others. In addition, personal characteristics such as confidence level and self-esteem are important in exam anxiety. It is also pointed out that the pressure of parents is associated with high anxiety. The more pressure the family puts on the student and has high expectations, the level of anxiety increases proportionally. Considering the relationship between the parents' pressure and high expectations with the exam anxiety, it is seen how important it is to prefer a supportive approach instead of pressure.

What are the Symptoms of Exam Anxiety?

These include restlessness, worry, uneasiness, distress, fear of failure, unwillingness to work, physical complaints like nausea, tachycardia, chills, dry mouth, tediousness, sweating, sleep disorders, abdominal pain, etc. and deterioration in attention and concentration, decreased self-confidence.

How to Understand Exam Anxiety?

A significant decrease in student achievement is observed. Studying procrastination, refusal to

talk about exams and exam preparation are seen. They feel uncomfortable when they faced with questions. Distraction, inability to focus, a remarkable increase in physical complaints (abdominal pain, nausea, sweating, sleep disturbances, loss of appetite or in contrast overeating, being in a bad mood in general, etc.), despite the hard work the low performance show presence of anxiety.

What Are Alternative Thoughts in Exam Anxiety?

“What should I do? ” “Can I do the best I can?” “What's the worst thing that can happen?” “This is not the end of the world, It can be made good.” “Failing this time doesn't mean that I'll always fail” “It's true that I don't have enough time, but how can I use my time effectively?” “Even if I can't study all resources, I can prepare for the exam by giving priority to important sections, and at least I will get points from these sections.” “If I succeed, this will be an important milestone of my life. Failure doesn't mean that I'm lazy and incompetent. It means that I need to study harder.” “It's up to me to use time for my own benefit.” These are alternative thoughts for overcoming the anxiety.

8 Steps to Reduce Exam Anxiety in Children!

Step 1: Reducing the existing expectation of the family

Step 2: Teacher's support to reduce pressure on the child

Step 3: Parents should be more understanding and tolerant of their children in order to reduce the anxiety level of the child

Step 4: Supporting and raising the child's existing self-confidence

Step 5: By directing negative thoughts of the child, which may lead to exam anxiety, to different areas through activities like plays, dramas, etc. in order to face their feelings and to ensure development of positive self-perception

Step 6: Application of breathing exercises and relaxation exercises by the child

Step 7: Helping the child try to accept and recognize the anxiety, not to suppress it

Step 8: Receiving support from Psychological Counseling and Guidance service for eliminating the exam anxiety of the child.

Anger Management

1. Adolescence

Adolescence is defined as the transition period between childhood and adulthood. In these stages, individuals experience changes both in terms of psychological, physiological and social development. Therefore, it is difficult to give a certain age limit for adolescence. Generally, experts' opinion is that adolescence starts at the age of 10-11 in girls and at the age of 12-13 in boys, and ends in the age range of 19-21. Throughout the adolescence period, the individual starts to know himself/herself and learn the rules of the society that he/she is involved. For individuals at this stage, who have enough support and experience from their families, adolescence period may be lived more calmly and successfully. Adolescence is a period in which efforts are made to accept gender identity, freeing themselves from addiction to their parents, to search their social position and to canalizing themselves to a profession. Stages of adolescence can be examined as early adolescence, middle adolescence and late adolescence.

9 1.a. 1. Early Adolescence Period

It is expressed as the age range of ten to fourteen. It has been observed that rapid growth and sexual development have a positive effect on boys but girls may have lower self-esteem, higher depressive disorder, anxiety disorders and eating disorders than their peers. Individuals at early adolescence stage may have more conflict with parents, desire to spend more time with friends, enjoyment of being alone, not seeing their parents as perfect as before, increasing interest in risky behaviors, anger, touchiness, sexual fantasies and dreams.

1. b. Middle Adolescence Period

It covers the age range of 15-18. In individuals at this stage, separation from families, efforts to become an individual and to make families to adopt this situation are being seen. In this period, conflicts can be lived between families and individuals. Because, in middle adolescence, individuals move away from their families, they strengthen relationships with their friends, and especially establish relationships with the opposite sex. Additionally, risk-taking behaviors begin to appear in this period and a desire to be autonomous can be seen in individuals. They begin to discover ways to manage increased sexual impulses and anger.

1. c. Late Adolescence Period

It starts at the age of 18 and ends with the development of identity. In this period, the conflicts experienced in the past during the identity acquisition phase are experienced again and the

gainings are shaped according to the person's new values and roles. Completion of moral emotion in individuals can be seen at the end of adolescence or during late adolescence.

Anger in Adolescence

Intense anger seen during adolescence is one of the basic emotions such as love, fear and pleasure. Anger is an emotional reaction to oppression, disappointment, hurt, fear, violation of our rights. Although anger is a natural emotion, it leads to aggression and negative behaviors if it is not controlled.

Causes of Anger

Accordingly, there are many causes come to mind while experiencing anger. Although there are many causes of anger, the most remarkable and the most prominent one shown by the researches is the state of frustration. According to Cüceloğlu, frustration is “a negative feeling which emerges when we cannot attain an object that we want, or a certain purpose that we want to achieve, or when we are prevented from meeting one of our needs.” In case of frustration, the tolerance limit of individuals may decrease and their reactions may become illogical. Beck has stated that anger is caused if an individual feels a danger against his/her needs or safety, in other words against his/her freedom (rejection, frustration, hurt, insulting, deprivation, humiliation, physical assault).

Forms of Anger Expression

A. Internalizing Anger

In general, these individuals may experience a polarization between truth-falsity or injustice-injustice based on the idea that they will be punished, and depending on their cognitive background, they may tend to keep anger in, or to keep it out in different ways. Even if bottling up anger may be thought as the problem has disappeared momentarily, anger does not disappear and the problem may continue to increase.

B. Externalizing Anger

The individual may react aggressively or destructively to the other person during anger. He/she may show his/her anger on the sly by taunting, passive aggression or using offensive words. If these tensions are not solved, they may cause communication disorders, deep separations and hurts.

C. Anger Management

Anger, whether internalized or externalized, has been reported to have negative effects on the individual if it is not properly expressed and discharged. Anger, which is the cause of

destructive, damaging, irreversible and criminal behavior, needs to be controlled. Anger is an important factor in many situations where interpersonal problems are experienced; physical and mental health of individuals can be seriously affected from anger. Anger responses not expressed in appropriate and healthy ways may increase immune system risks, cardiovascular diseases and gastrointestinal system diseases in individuals. Maybe the most effective and healthy way of expressing anger is, by realizing this feeling and expressing emotions and thoughts about the event or people correctly, expressing this without hurting other people. Individuals sometimes try to control themselves during anger by calming themselves. They do this by controlling their inner reactions, not through their behaviors, which shows us that anger is a feeling that needs to be evacuated in a healthy way. The important cognitive foundation comprising the background of anger control is to believe that it is necessary to behave cautiously, patiently and in control in relationships with others for the sake of exalting and making the personality valuable. In other words, the individual has a tendency to hold the anger expression back by thinking to be stimulated with anger control and by staying calm.

Let's Control Our Anger (10 Steps)

Step 1: To ensure that adolescents are aware of behaviors that may hurt themselves and / or others

Step 2: To ensure that adolescents to learn the skills and techniques of replacing hurtful behaviors with other behaviors

Step 3: To ensure development of new and more harmonious behaviors by adolescents and enabling them to practice these behaviors in the real life

Step 4: To learn and practice relaxation techniques (starting from eye, neck, head region, arm and chest muscles, back, legs, back muscles of the neck, facial muscles, muscles in the upper part of the head) by adolescents

Step 5: To ensure that the adolescent to inculcate himself against the source of anger (I have to be calm, think of my loved ones and my parents, this will end a little later and everything will return to normal, nothing can be more worthy than life and breathing.)

Step 6: To develop healthy communication skills (Communication skills such as speaking and listening gained from childhood are an important step in anger control in adolescence.)

Step 7: To ensure a balance between anger and conscience (Even if anger is prevented by mind, it should be known that anger is a strong emotion enough to suppress the mind, and empathy with the other person should be ensured through development of the conscience mechanism.)

Step 8: Continuous empathy (The individual's ability to look at events through another's window, to make sense of events as the other person sees and feels, that is, empathy is an important step in our anger control.)

Step 9: Using "I language" instead of "You language" (While you language emphasizes negativity in communication, in contrast of "you language", "I language" brings situations where messages are more easily shared, and what is felt is at the forefront.)

Step 10: Try to understand before defending