



*South East Toronto*

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**Family Health Team**

Welcome back!

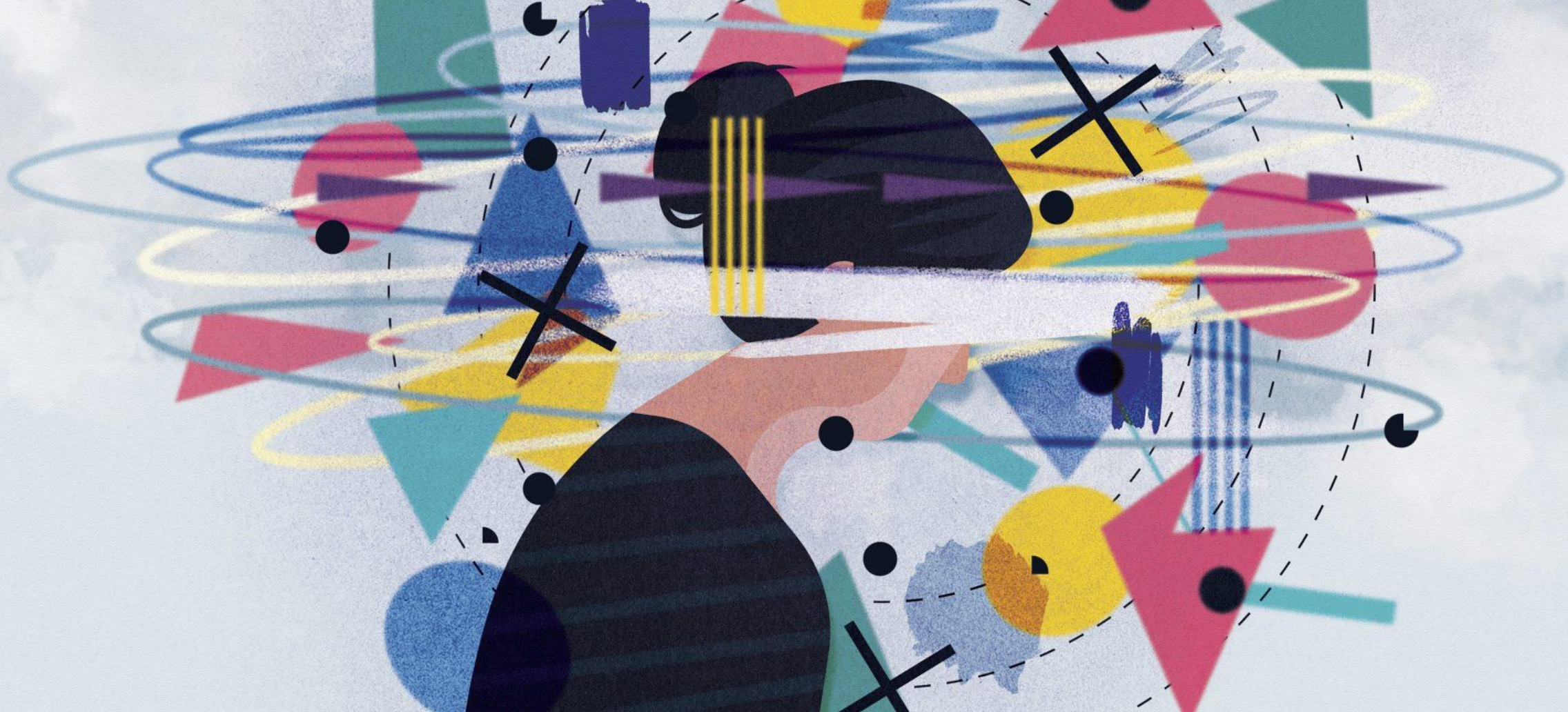


**Thea Smith MSW RSW** is a registered social worker with expertise in developmental psychology, child and adolescent mental health and family systems. Thea has worked in a counseling capacity in both community and healthcare settings for several years. At SETFHT Thea provides psychotherapy to children and youth, as well as parental support.

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## PLEASE NOTE:

*While based in research and developmental knowledge, everything discussed here are mere suggestions to guide you as opposed to instruct you on your parenting. We all come from different value systems, and you are the expert on your own family. As well, all children are unique so what works for one may not make sense for another. Since this is general advice, if you are looking for personalized guidance please reach out to your doctor.*



# Anxiety and the Family: Supporting a Child or Teen with Anxiety

SETFHT PARENTING WEBINAR SERIES

*In this webinar  
parents and  
caregivers will:*

- Learn what anxiety is and why it occurs
- Differentiate between everyday anxiety and an anxiety disorder
- Increase vocabulary to talk about anxiety with your family
- Gain strategies to better support young people with anxiety



# What is anxiety?

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**FLIGHT**



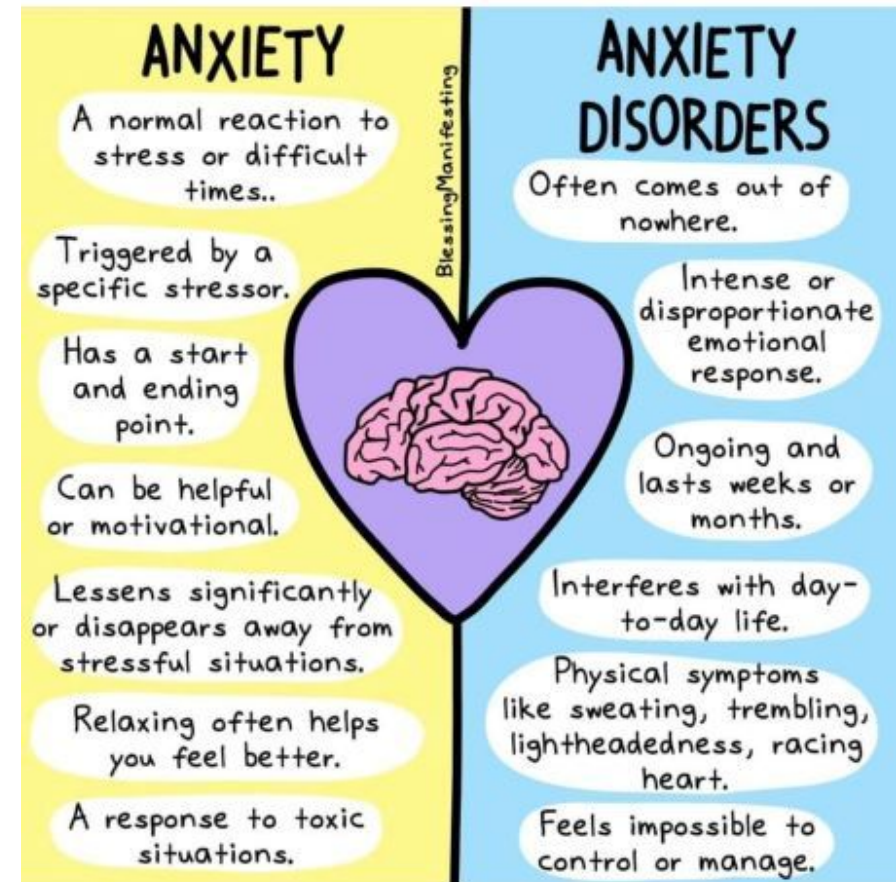
**FIGHT**



**FREEZE**

# Everyday anxiety vs. anxiety disorder

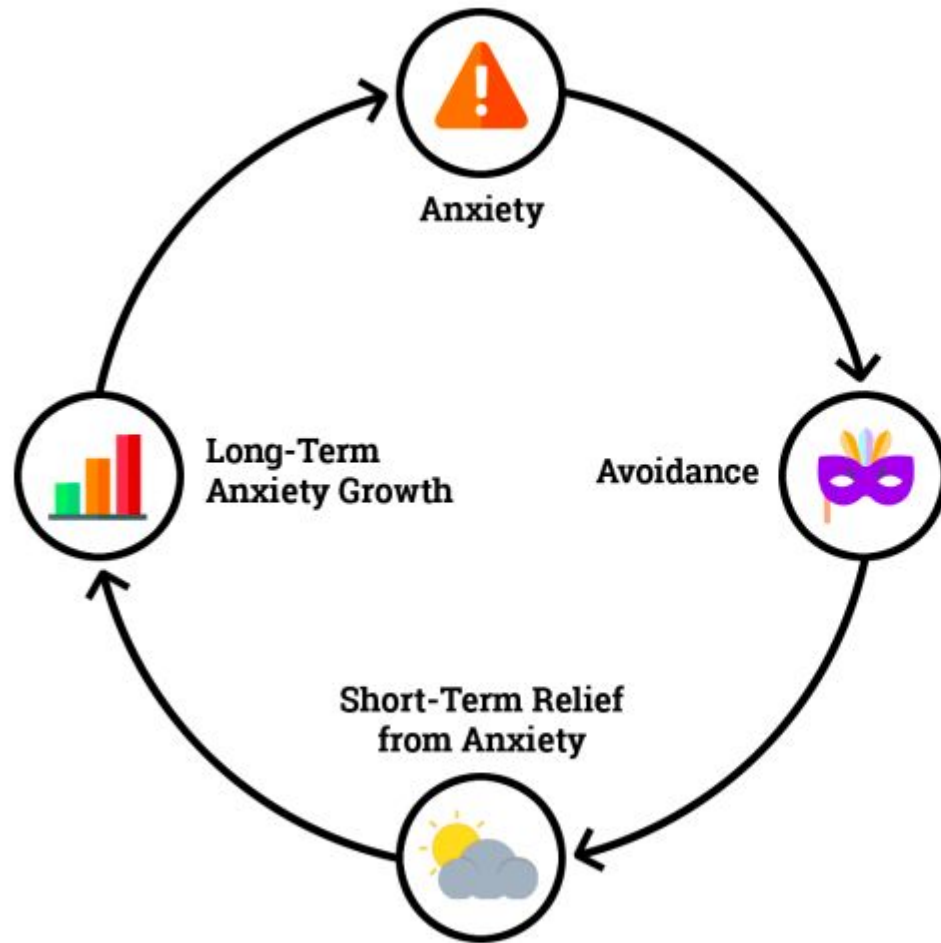
- Persistent, excessive worry for 6+ months
- Gets in the way of daily tasks and activities
- Physical symptoms, psychological symptoms, behavioural symptoms





Anxiety may show up in a variety of ways in children and adolescents:

- Sleep issues
- Low appetite/stomach ache
- Social isolation
- Tantrums or anger issues
- Academic struggles
- Physical health complaints
- Constant reassurance seeking



### **Anxiety**

An anxiety-producing situation leads to uncomfortable symptoms such as worry, fear, a racing heart, sweating, or a feeling of being overwhelmed.

### **Avoidance**

Uncomfortable symptoms are controlled by avoiding the anxiety-producing situation. Examples of avoidance include:

- Skipping class to avoid giving a presentation
- Using drugs or alcohol to numb feelings
- Procrastinating on challenging tasks

### **Short-Term Relief from Anxiety**

Avoidance of the anxiety-producing situation gives an immediate sense of relief. The symptoms of anxiety lessen, but only temporarily.

### **Long-Term Anxiety Growth**

The fear that initially led to avoidance worsens, and the brain learns that when the anxiety-producing situation is avoided, the symptoms go away. As a result, the symptoms of anxiety will be worse the next time, and avoidance is more likely.

# Cycle of Anxiety

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# Impact on the family system

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- When one family member struggles with mental health, the entire system is affected
- Applies for other mental and physical health issues
- Ripple effect

Frustration

Sadness

Emotions that may come  
up in response to a  
child/teen with anxiety

Anger

Helplessness

Overwhelm

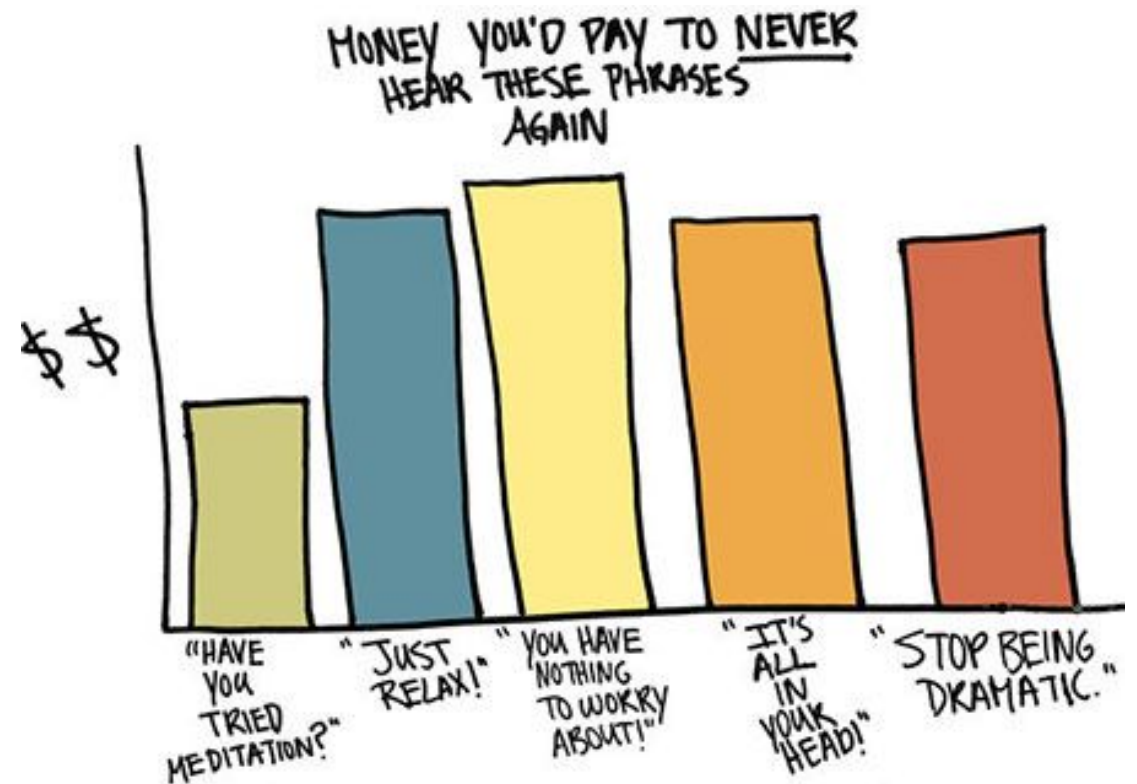
Fear

Guilt

# Strategies for responding to anxiety

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- Educate about anxiety
- Model healthy coping skills
- Practice perspective taking
- Support without enabling
- Build confidence and coping skills



Breathe into your belly

Drink water

Sing out loud

Do the "Down Dog" pose

Watch fish

Shake a glitter jar

Write a letter

Blow on a pinwheel

Repeat a mantra

Envision your best self

Jump rope

Count backwards from 100

Walk in nature

Go for a run

Take a cold shower

Take a hot bath

Blow bubbles

Give a bear hug

Have a cup of tea

# Calm Down Coping Skills

by gozen.com

# Taking care of yourself as a caregiver

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# Frequently Asked Questions

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- I don't want my child to have mental health issues - what can I do to stop them from happening?
- I find it hard to relate to the things that my child/teen becomes anxious about. How can I be supportive if I don't agree with them?
- There are so many coping strategies online, where should I start?
- What resources can I give my child/teen if they want more support?





# Resources for Children/Teens

## Kids Help Phone

- Counselling, information and referrals for children and youth
- Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Call: 1-800-668-6868 or Text: CONNECT to 686868

## What's Up Walk In

- Immediate mental health counselling for children, youth, young adults and their families
- Call: 1-866-585-6486 or Visit [www.whatsupwalkin.ca/](http://www.whatsupwalkin.ca/)

## Mind Your Mind

- An online space designed for youth, where they can get information, resources and tools to manage stress, crisis and mental health related problems
- Visit: [www.mindyourmind.ca](http://www.mindyourmind.ca)

## Mindshift CBT (App)

- Free, scientifically-based anxiety tool for ages 12+
- Visit: [www.anxietycanada.com/resources/mindshift-cbt/](http://www.anxietycanada.com/resources/mindshift-cbt/)

# Summary - Anxiety and the Family: Supporting a Child or Teen with Anxiety

1. Anxiety is something to be managed, not eliminated
2. Parents can model healthy ways to manage anxiety
3. Practice taking their perspective
4. Provide support without enabling or avoiding
5. Build confidence in facing fears and help them develop their own coping strategies to use in the moment

What's to  
come...

- Parenting Webinar Series 3: Self-Esteem – Building Confidence in Young People

# References and Resources

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Child Mind - Anxiety 101s

[www.childmind.org/topics/anxiety/](http://www.childmind.org/topics/anxiety/)

Coping Skills for Kids - Calming Anxiety Strategies

[www.copingskillsforkids.com/calming-anxiety](http://www.copingskillsforkids.com/calming-anxiety)

SickKids Community Mental Health - How Can I Help my Child with Worries?

[www.sickkidscmh.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Worries-Final-May-2020.pdf](http://www.sickkidscmh.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Worries-Final-May-2020.pdf)

Very Well Family - Handling Anxiety in Childhood

[www.verywellfamily.com/how-to-handle-anxiety-in-children-620517](http://www.verywellfamily.com/how-to-handle-anxiety-in-children-620517)

Kelty Mental Health - Recommended Anxiety Resources

[www.keltymentalhealth.ca/collection/keltys-recommended-resources-anxiety](http://www.keltymentalhealth.ca/collection/keltys-recommended-resources-anxiety)



The end

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