

Teen Stress & Anxiety



1 in 4

teens will have a diagnosable anxiety disorder by late adolescence. In teenagers, anxiety often looks like **anger or avoidance, not worry.**

COMMON SIGNS OF ANXIETY IN TEENS

Anger and irritability

An overloaded nervous system runs out of patience. Anxious teens often look angry, not scared.

Constant reassurance-seeking

The same worried question on repeat. Relief lasts minutes, then it returns.

Perfectionism

Rewriting homework for hours, or quitting anything they can't do perfectly right away.

Going very quiet

Pulling back in class and with friends. Often fear of getting it wrong, not apathy.

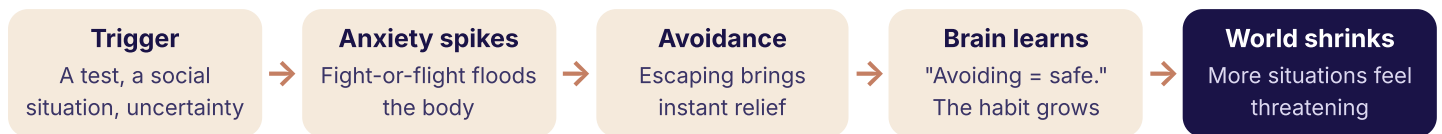
Stomachaches or headaches

Recurring complaints with no medical cause, especially before school.

Compulsive scrolling

Not boredom. Quick relief from discomfort, at a long-term cost.

The Anxiety-Avoidance Cycle



The antidote to anxiety is approach, not avoidance.

✓ What Helps at Home

- **Name the alarm.** "This is my brain's alarm firing, not real danger."
- **Box breathing**, practiced daily in calm moments:
IN 4 HOLD 4 OUT 4 HOLD 4
- **Small, steady steps toward** feared situations instead of away from them.
- **Move toward what matters.** Don't wait for the anxiety to be gone to start living.

✗ What Backfires

- **Constant reassurance.** It confirms there was something to fear.
- **Accommodating avoidance.** It feels like love, but teaches anxiety that it works.
- **"Just don't think about it."** Suppressing a thought makes it louder.
- **Waiting until after finals.** Avoidance patterns get stronger with time.

Treatments With the Strongest Evidence

Approach	What it focuses on	Evidence
CBT	Changing anxious thought patterns and gradually facing feared situations	★★★★★
Exposure therapy	Facing fears step by step to build new "safety memories"	★★★★★
ACT	Acting on personal values even while anxious thoughts are present	★★★★★
Mindfulness	Calming reactivity to anxious thoughts; best as an add-on	★★★★★

When To Seek an Evaluation

School & Activities

- School refusal or avoidance
- Dropping activities they used to love

Daily Life

- Symptoms lasting 4 to 6 weeks or more
- Friendships, sleep, or family life suffering

What Good Treatment Includes

- Thorough assessment first
- CBT and ACT, with exposure
- Parents actively involved
- Clear, measurable goals



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Is It Stress or Something More? We Can Help.

If worry, irritability, or avoidance is getting in the way of school, friendships, or family life, call our practice for an evaluation.
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