

Anxiety As An Emotion

WHAT IS ANXIETY?



Anxiety is the **most common mental disorder in Australia**. It is most prevalent in the **12-17 year old** age group. So, there is no surprise that you will see a lot of this in your classrooms.

Anxiety, stress, worry and nervousness, are often used interchangeably. We all have times when we feel these emotions in reaction to things going on in our life. After whatever is bothering us is over, the feelings disappear.

The difference with these feelings of anxiety and an anxiety disorder has to do with intensity and duration.

Young people with an **anxiety disorder** will feel an **intense fear or worry most of the time even when the stressor has passed.**

FIRE ALARM ANALOGY



Resilient Youth use this ‘**Fire Alarm**’ analogy that we suggest using with your students:

Describe to students how **anxiety** is like a **warning system in our mind and body**, it tells us when something isn’t right. **It can be helpful to think of anxiety like a ‘fire alarm’.** A fire alarm warns us of danger, so we can act and stay safe.

However, some people’s alarm (anxiety) can be too sensitive, and it goes off when there is no danger, meaning we can be confused about when to act and when not to. **Reflect on when your anxiety helps you and when it does not.**

How sensitive is your fire alarm? When your fire alarm sounds, what do you need to do to switch it off?

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?



- Difficulty **concentrating**.
- Uncontrollable **worry about the unknown**.
- **Isolating** from usual social activities.
- **Reduced focus** due to overtiredness.
- **Restlessness** and/or **irritability**.

“ANXIETY IS ONE OF THE MOST CONTAGIOUS EMOTIONS WE EXPERIENCE.”

Brene Brown

CULTIVATING SUPPORTIVE CLASSROOMS WITH TRP

Good news is whether your student has an anxiety disorder or is feeling anxious, these are some **strategies that you are learning in your TRP program that will have a positive impact.**



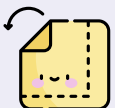
Gratitude

Research suggests that **gratitude can reduce anxiety**. When we practice gratitude regularly we reduce the stress hormone levels in our body. Ask yourself: 'What went well today?'. **Focus on the positives of the day and in that moment.**



Empathy

Checking in regularly with everyone around how they are feeling – take the emotional temperature of the room, especially when **setting new tasks** or when **big events are coming up** such as excursion, tests, etc. Using the emoji faces in the student journals are a great way to do this.



Mindfulness

- **Play calming music** when starting the day, during independent work or group tasks.
- **Provide a range of mindfulness activities for students to engage in regularly** by prioritising time in your daily routine e.g. yoga, guided breathing exercises, mindful colouring in, puzzles, origami.



Emotional Literacy

- Talk about what happens in the mind and body when we feel stressed/worried. **Naming and understanding what is going on helps us communicate what is happening and what we may need.** Think, feel, act maps are a great way to do this.
- **Use the fire alarm analogy** and have a class discussion about strategies to turn off our alarm. Visually display the strategies and remind students to use these self calming tools as they need.
- Write down all worries and categorise into 'What's in our control?' and 'What's out of our control?'.



Daily Practices

- Think about how you set up your classroom for calm. Natural light, natural tones, declutter, include visual timetables to **provide certainty about upcoming daily activities**.
- Use **clear instructions and processes** for lessons, eg. break down big tasks into smaller steps.
- Model how to **use positive thinking and mindsets to manage our feelings**. For example, questions like 'What's the worst thing that can happen?', 'How likely is it that it will happen?', 'If it does happen, then what?', 'Last time we did this, what happened?'.

MINDFULL BREATHING

Here's some **tools you can use today in your classroom** to support those students **experiencing anxiety or feeling anxious**.

THE

RESILIENCE
PROJECT™

THE 5 4 3 2 1
METHOD

Practice tuning into what's happening around you.

This exercise will help you feel calm and enter the present moment through naming things you notice with each of your 5 senses.

5 things I SEE...	4 things I FEEL...
3 things I HEAR...	2 things I SMELL...
1 things I TASTE...	

TESTIMONIALS

“Many of our students identify **breathing as their preferred go-to strategy for regulating strong emotions and navigating tricky situations**. We have found that practising guided meditations and structured breathing activities during TRP lessons has enabled students to use this as a strategy to regulate and settle back into learning after outside play times.”

Ellie, a Teacher at a TRP school.

“**Breathing helps me to calm down** when I am feeling angry or upset. It helps me to think clearer.”

Matthew, a Year 6 TRP student.