

Anxiety – Strategies for Parents and How to Communicate with Your Anxious Teens

We acknowledge that we live, and play on the unceded and traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples – skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), sel'íl'wítulh (Tsleil-Waututh), and x^wməθk^wəy'əm (Musqueam) nations.

**Presented by Stephanie Tsui and Tamara McKay
Lord Byng Secondary Counselling Department**

Outline:

1. Introductions
2. Strategies
 - a. Communication Skills – builds relationship
 - b. Healthy Thinking Skills for Parents
 - c. Tools for Managing Anxiety with your Teens
3. Peer Counsellor Panel
4. Questions (if time)?

Situations affect each of us differently



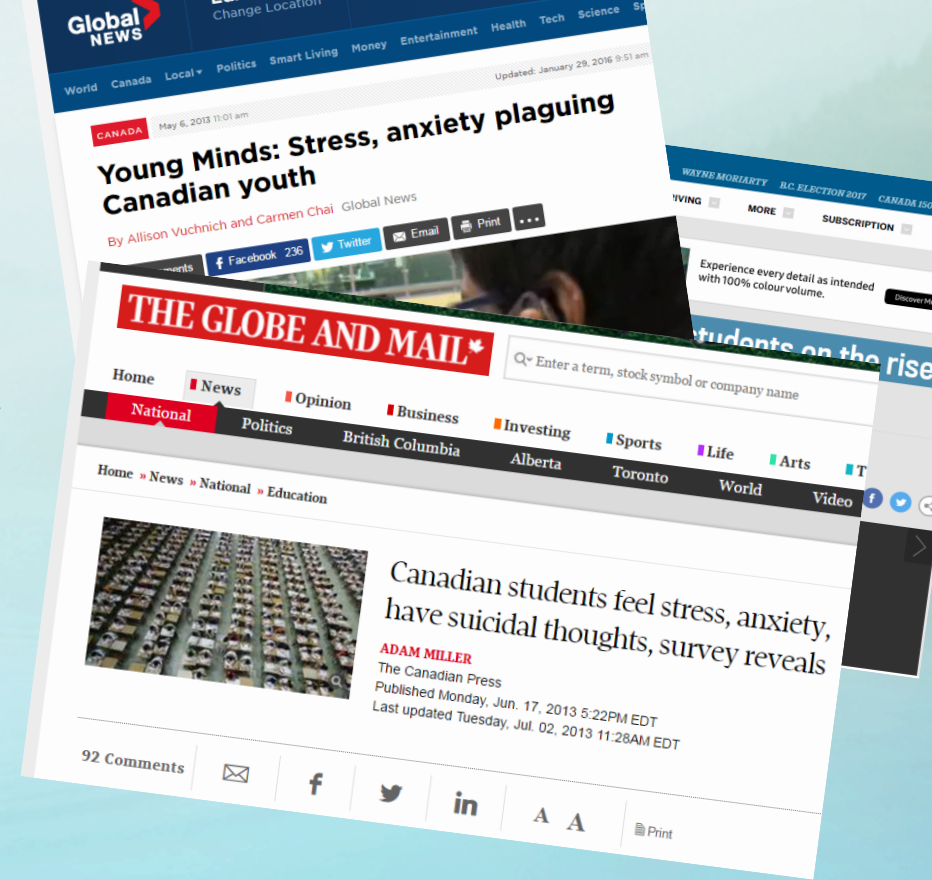
Stress Stats

In a recent survey, Grade 7 students were asked what they identified as the biggest stressors in their lives:

- **“Academic difficulties” = 33.2 %**
- **“conflict with parents/family” = 31.4 percent**
- **“conflict with peers” = 20.7 %**
- **“conflict between parents” = 13.9 %**

The same Grade 7 students were asked how they cope with the stressors in their lives. While adaptive coping strategies were reported (e.g. “listen to music,” “play sports,” “talk to someone”), students also reported an alarming use of maladaptive coping strategies to manage stress:

- **20% of students indicated engaging in “*risky behaviors*” such as drug/alcohol use, unprotected sex, self-harm and “*problematic (excessive) video game use*” to manage stress.**



Over-functioning looks like:

- Trouble setting limits for self
- Perfectionistic
- 100% effort 100% of the time
- Take on too much at the expense of self-care
- Interrupting family/quality time for work/school
- Sacrificing sleep/eating/exercising
- Over commitment

“Just because you can do _____, does it mean you should.”

Under-functioning looks like:

- Not meeting deadlines
- Missing school/work
- Avoidance – lack of social/family network
- Isolation
- Substance misuse
- Excessive sleep/eating/screen time
- Difficulty with time management/organization
- Difficulty with focus, concentration, motivation
- Loss of interest in past activities
- Change/drop in mood/behavior/affect



Strategies: Communication Skills

Active Listening

- Listening with empathy

Requirements:

1. Time – being present with the teen
2. Private space
3. Non judgmental – avoid “should”
4. Body language to reflect active listening
5. Not solution-focused – avoid fixing the problem and listen to the feelings associated with the problem

Effective Communication



What does Active Listening look like?

1. **Reflect their feeling:** “it sounds like you had a really sad day”, “I hear you saying you’re overwhelmed with homework”, “You’re worried about my reaction, I’m not mad”

*naming the feelings teaches them to know what they are feeling and emotionally regulate themselves.

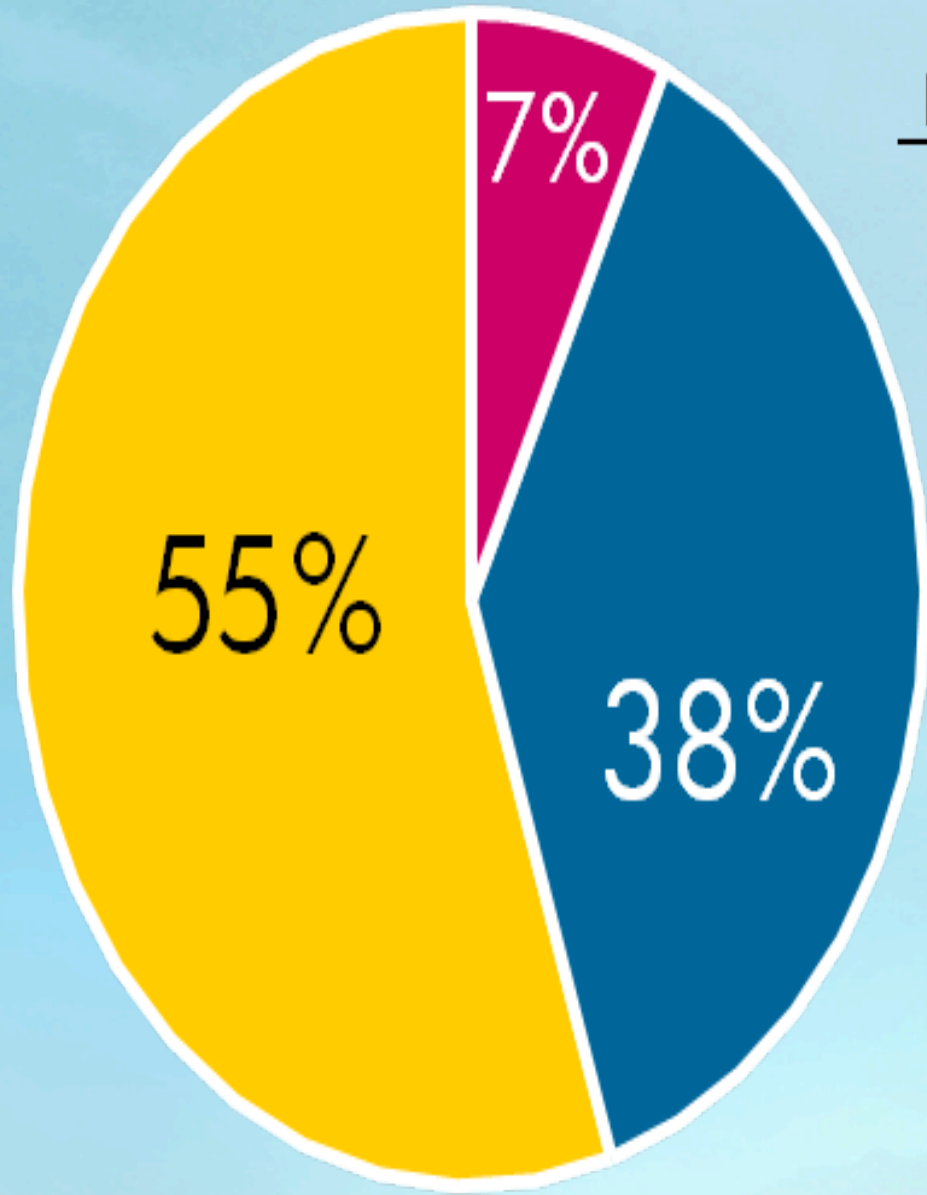
2. **Reflect the feeling AND the content:** “It sounds like you had a really sad day when your friend ditched you”

3. **Clarifying questions:** “I am curious to know more about _____”
“You said _____, do I have that right?” “Tell me more.”

Active Listening

- ✓ **Few questions** but open ended questions “tell me more”, “what was that like for you?” “How did that feel?”
- ✓ **NOT Solution-focused:** do not offer solutions/fixes to the problem – allow the child to do this.
- ✓ **Ask your child what they need to feel better:** “what would you like to do about this”, “What can I do to help?” “What would be helpful to you?”
- ✓ **Step back from judgmental reactions** “peeling the potato reaction”
*turn off the “parent alarm” – this instinctual alarm will prevent a meaningful discussion
- ✓ **Be invested** in listening/being curious even it doesn’t make sense to you – it is about the teen’s feelings
- ✓ **Avoid catastrophizing** – if you make it worse, they won’t come to you
- ✓ **Avoid lecturing** – teens who are upset cannot listen in the moment – you can speak at length after they’ve had time to reflect

Dr. Albert Mehrabian's 7-38-55% Rule



Elements of Personal Communication

- 7% spoken words
- 38% voice, tone
- 55% body language

I Statements

- If you are having trouble with your teen – communicate using “I” statements.
- I Statements avoids blame on the other person (which induces defensiveness) while focusing on the speaker

Instead of saying - “You make me so frustrated trying to get you out of bed”

Say –

“I feel frustrated when I am trying to get you out of bed”

The “I feel ...” is said before “...you...” – this puts the speaker first and less blame on the listener



Teenage Communication

www.kidsthehouse.com



Helping Your Child Avoiding Thinking Traps

- **Catastrophizing** – Thinking that a situation will affect all other situations “If I fail this quiz I’m going to fail the term”
- **Fortune Telling** - Predicting that something bad will happen, without any evidence. "I'm going to fail because my teacher doesn't like me”
- **‘Should’ Statement** - Telling yourself how you “should” or “must” act. "I should be able to do better”
- **Mind Reading** - Jumping to conclusions without any evidence. “I know everyone is talking about me behind my back”
- **Mental Filter** - Focusing only on the negative parts of a situation “I hate school”
- **If It “Feels” True, It Must Be True** - using our feelings as evidence that our thoughts are really true “I am scared by planes therefore planes are scary”

Getting out of a Thinking Trap

1. Try to separate your thoughts from actual events

- What is the situation: What actually happened? Only include the “facts” of the situation.
- What are your thoughts: What are you telling yourself?
- What are your emotions: How do you feel?
- What are your behaviors: How are you reacting and what are you doing to cope?

2. Identify the thinking traps Take a look at the thoughts you’ve listed.

3. Challenge the thinking traps - The best way to break a thinking trap is to look at your thoughts like a scientist and consider the hard facts.

- **Examine the evidence:** Try to find evidence against the thought.
- **Double-standard:** Am I being harder on myself than I am on other people?
- **Survey Method:** Find out whether other people you trust agree with your thoughts.
- **Conduct an experiment:** Test your beliefs in person.

Helpful and Realistic Ways of Thinking

Tip #1: Coping statements: These remind you how you can cope

- “If I get anxious, I will try some calm breathing”
- “I just need to do my best”
- “People cannot tell when I am feeling anxious”
- “This has happened before and I know how to handle it”
- “My anxiety won’t last forever”
- “I can do this”

Tip #2: Positive self-statements

Regularly practise being “kind” to yourself (say positive things about yourself), rather than being overly self-critical.

- “I can do it”
- “I’ve done it before, I can do it again.”
- “I’m strong for challenging myself to face the things that scare me”.
- “I am not weak for having anxiety. Everyone experiences anxiety”



Tip #3: Use a balanced statement to challenge the negative thought

Once you've looked at the evidence or recognized that you've fallen into a thinking trap, come up with a more balanced thought.



“There is a chance that I might not do well in tomorrow’s test, but not performing perfectly on a test or quiz doesn’t mean I won’t get a good mark this term. Even if I don’t get an A or a B, it doesn’t mean I will never pass the course. I have always passed my course, even if I have to go to summer school to do it.”

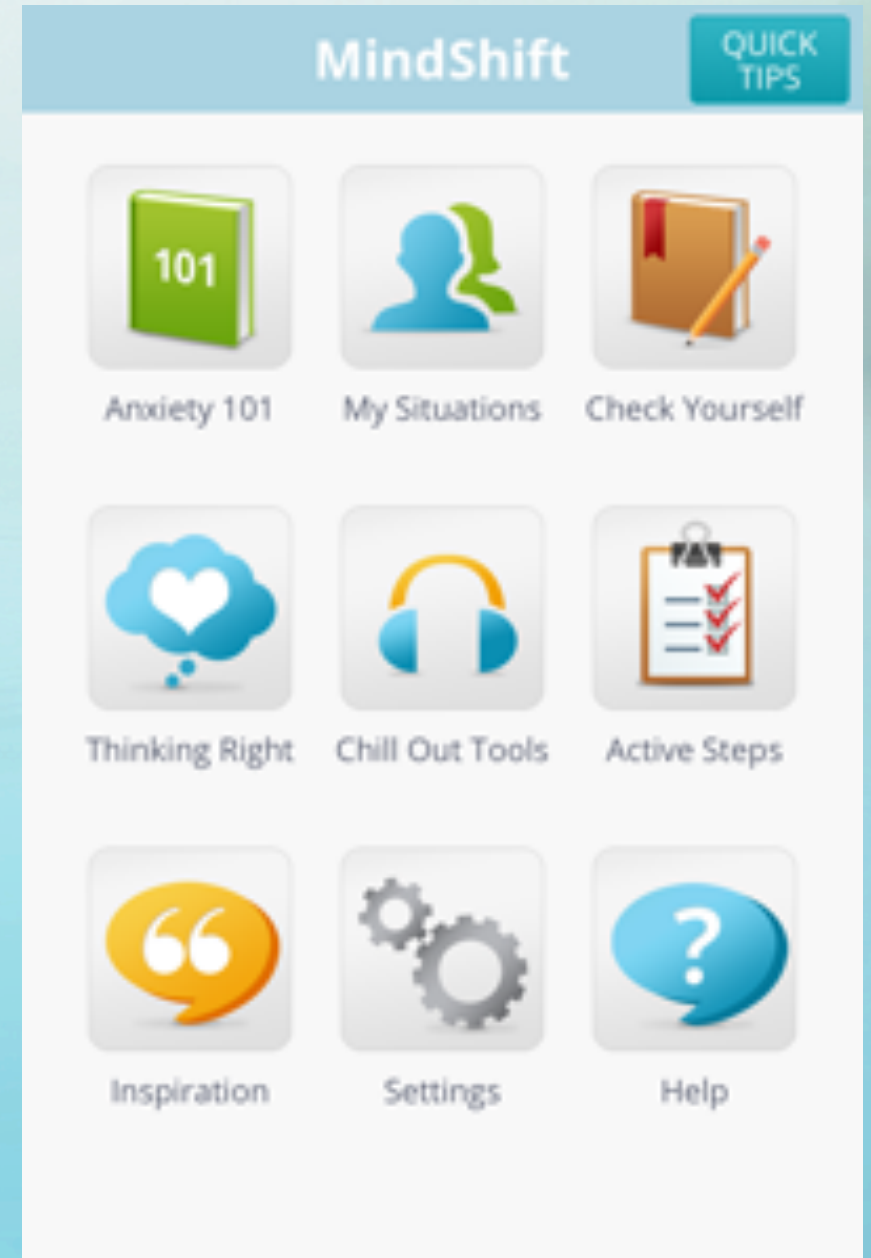
Tools for Managing Anxiety with your Teens

- Model and encourage [healthy living](#) habits, including:
 - regular physical activity
 - a healthy and balanced diet
 - getting a good night's sleep – no electronics in the bedroom
 - stress management and relaxation
 - healthy relationships
- Have regular routines (morning, school, homework, meals, bedtime)
- Give clear expectations, limits, and consequences that are realistic
- Stay calm when the child is anxious – use active listening
- Give praise and reward even for small accomplishments
- Plan for times that may be difficult – family calendar

MindShift is an app designed to help teens and young adults cope with anxiety.

MindShift will help you learn how to relax, develop more helpful ways of thinking, and identify active steps that will help you take charge of your anxiety. This app includes:

- Making Sleep Count
- Riding Out Intense Emotions
- Test Anxiety
- Perfectionism
- Social Anxiety
- Performance Anxiety
- Worry
- Panic
- Conflict



A background image of a misty, mountainous landscape with a lake in the foreground. The mountains are covered in green trees and partially obscured by white fog. The water in the lake is calm and reflects the surrounding environment. The overall color palette is soft and natural, with various shades of green, blue, and white.

**Welcome Gr 12
Peer Counselling
Student Panel**