

“Back to School” Can Trigger Anxiety

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As the school year begins, some children return to the classroom with a variety of fears including talking in front of class, meeting new friends, large group gatherings, attending school, children who bully, and their academic and athletic performance. While it may be typical for most children to have some hesitancy about these situations, other children may experience fears and anxieties beyond what is considered adaptive for their age.

Children who experience that degree of fear or anxiety may have an **anxiety disorder**. Anxiety symptoms are often difficult to detect, due to their “invisible” nature and as a result are not easily recognized by parents, teachers or even peers. Many children who experience anxiety disorders suffer silently. It may not become apparent that a child has an anxiety issue until an area of their life has become severely affected, such as poor school attendance, grades, problems with peers, clinical depression, substance abuse and even suicidal thoughts, behaviors. Early detection and intervention is very important.

Some symptoms of anxiety in children include:



- chronic worry about everyday events such as school.
- physical symptoms such as stomachaches.
- headaches or pain not explained by a medical cause.
- difficulty and distress when being separated from parents.
- panic attacks, which include sweating, chest pain or dizziness when confronted with a fearful event.
- obsessive or repeated thoughts and behaviors, and avoidance of feared situations.

Furthermore, children who have experienced a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, accident or child abuse may have difficulty with repeated imagining of the events. It may become evident in play or drawings, nightmares, avoiding reminders of the event and exaggerated startle response. Sleep and concentration problems are also common with anxiety disorders.

There is **hope** for children who have anxiety issues. Effective interventions have been developed that assist children who experience anxiety by giving them coping skills. Parents assist children in their recovery by encouraging development of coping skills and changing their own pattern of how they respond to their child’s anxiety. Treatment can be very successful when a child and parent are motivated. In some cases, psychotropic medication may be recommended.

New Leaf Resources offers a variety of approaches to assist families who have children with anxiety issues. Psychotherapy focuses on helping children gain coping skills such as relaxation, changing thinking patterns, and facing their fears. Computerized therapy may also be available to help children depending on their age. Art, sand and play therapy are also offered to assist children in expressing their specific fears or working through traumatic situations. Family therapy may be recommended to all family members to help the child cope and learn different ways of relating.



For more information, call
708-895-7310 or
219-226-1810

