

Symptoms of Anxiety

Anxiety in children comes in all shapes and sizes - there is no one size fits all.

It can look like a well-behaved, mild-mannered kid (and will often go unnoticed) or it can look like the defiant, misbehaving child (often getting a diagnosis like ADHD).

Symptoms of anxiety may include:

- Physical feeling of unease (butterflies, sweating, racing heart, breathlessness, achy)
- Difficulty sleeping, restlessness, and/or fatigue
- Fear, panic, nervousness, tension, irritability
- Worry, having a hard time focusing or stopping anxious thoughts.



When students are anxious they can enter the “Fight, Flight, Freeze, Flop, Fawn” state. This is the body’s ingrained way of dealing with a perceived threat. The following chart shows ways fight, flight and freeze might look in the classroom.



Consider behaviour as a form of communication. Students may show their anxiety through:

- Aggression - Explosions, hitting out, running away, lacking resilience, unfair attitude, poor control.
- Perfectionism and avoidance - unrealistic expectations of others and themselves, no risk taking, tear up work, no “good days”.
- Clinginess - seeking connections, not feeling safe
- Meltdowns - different to tantrums

What anxiety might cause for the student

Poor attention / focus

Fidgeting / restlessness

Decreased short term memory

Negative attitude

Issues with executive functioning skills

Poor attendance

Inability to think logically

Selective mutism

If anxiety is causing distress, doesn't match the situation, is disrupting normal activities, and/or continues for a long time, it's a good signal to seek professional support.