



We all worry but we could worry less...

Rady Children's Hospital
Mental Health Awareness Patch

The Facts

We all (children AND adults) experience stress and worries from time to time. Our bodies have a built-in survival instinct from years ago when you had to worry about things such as a tiger jumping out in front of you. If a tiger were to jump out, you should feel scared! Your brain would focus on getting away, your body would sweat, your heart would beat faster and you breath quicker. You might get butterflies in your stomach or feel nauseated. These things were designed to help you run fast which is good if there really is a tiger but not so good if you are needing to go to school to take a test. The times when we feel anxious **are** normal, but they should be temporary. They can occur when you need to give a speech in class or playing a sport you don't think you are good at. But once those things are over, the feelings of nervousness should go away. The activities in this patch are designed to help you decrease anxiety and stress for these temporary periods in your everyday life.

If the feelings of anxiety never go way this can be something else which is called an anxiety disorder. Many children and adults have this disorder, and it can cause issues with your sleep, concentration or diet. It can make you feel bad about yourself, give you stomach aches, cause you to cry often or become very angry. You can find yourself constantly worrying and having anxiety that doesn't ever seem to go away. It these are things that are happening to you, they should not be ignored by you, your parents or your girl scout leader. Please call 988 for more advice if you are having the problems that have been listed in this part of the patch.

The Activities

To complete this patch, all of the * items must be completed for each section (Discover, Connect, Take Action and Reflect).

Discover Activities: All levels must complete both of the starred items.

1. *With your troop/group/family, read one book from the list on page 6. What did you learn? Share what you learned with a parent, teacher or trusted friend.
2. *What makes you anxious? List at least three things that cause you to worry that happen at least every week. Did the worry go away after the activity was done? Did you do anything to help you feel better? The next time this happens try one of the simple things listed in B. below. Does this make you feel better?

A. Things that make me feel anxious:

- 1) _____

- 2) _____
- 3) _____

B. Things to Try:

- 1) Drink a glass of cold water
- 2) Imagine a safe space (think about a place you like to be that is worry free)
- 3) Take a deep breath in, count to 5, exhale for 5, inhale for 5, etc.

Connect Activities:

1. *Complete at least one of the following activities:

(<https://www.happierhuman.com/activities-children-anxiety/>)

A. Make an Anti-Anxiety Box

Take an old lunch box or shoebox or gift bag, etc. Gather together small items for you box that you “connect” to, things that make you feel better. Maybe you have an old toy, picture you have drawn, a friendship bracelet you made in Girl Scouts. Be creative in what you put in your box. The important thing is that when you see these things, you feel less anxious. The next time you have something worrying you, look at the items in your Anti-Anxiety box. Does it make you feel better?

B. Create a fidget toy from items in your House (<https://theinspiredtreehouse.com/child-development-what-is-a-fidget-toy/>)

What is a fidget toy? It is something you can have in your hand that you make a small movement that helps you release nervous energy. While you can buy many fidget toys, most people have items in their home they can use. Examples include:

- Rubber bands/hair ties
- Nuts and bolts to screw/unscrew
- Silly putty
- Stress ball (or any small ball)
- Velcro
- 2-3 Legos
- Smooth stone or marble.

The next time you feel nervous, try using your fidget toy. Does it help?

C. Add Exercise/Yoga to your Day

Exercise is good for your health but it also is also a great way to calm your mind and eliminate worry. The exercise can be something simple like going for a walk or hike outdoors or you could put on music and dance. Yoga is an extra special way to release stress because it helps slow breathing and quiet the mind. You do not need to go to a class, there are videos you can use on your phone. Don’t know where to start? For Daisy-Juniors try: Cosmic Kids (<https://cosmickids.com/watch/>). For Cadettes-Ambassadors try: Yoga with Adriene (<https://yogawithadriene.com/free-yoga-videos/>).

2. *Choose at least one of the following activities:

A. Start a Gratitude Journal

Set aside paper for a gratitude journal. You can buy a journal or notebook or take loose pages and staple them together. What the journal looks like is not important. Place the journal by your bed and each night before you go to sleep write down one good thing that happened to you that day-something

you are thankful or grateful for. These do not have to be big things just something that make you happy. Now write one thing you are looking forward to that will happen the next day. Each night for at least 30 days, write the one thing that has already happened and the one thing to which you look forward. If you don't feel like writing, draw a picture. Is it easier at the end of the 30 days to find something you are thankful for? Is it easier starting a new day knowing you have something you are looking forward to doing?

B. Start a gratitude box or Jar

This is very much like a gratitude journal. At the end of each day, write or draw on a piece of paper something you are grateful for that day. Fold up the paper and put in in the jar each night. If you are having an anxious day, go back and re-read some of the slips of paper to remind you of the wonderful things you have captured on your slips of paper.

C. Color

Coloring is one of the most relaxing activities we can do. Colors help us feel better and it is soothing to work with colors and shapes. You can choose to use a coloring book-and there are books for ALL ages, you could print out black pages you find online or you can create your own patterns on blank pages. Be sure to focus on the patterns and the colors, try to ignore any thoughts that enter in while you are busy making your artful masterpiece.

D. Blow bubbles

For some of the older girls who read this activity, this might seem silly but blowing bubbles is a very nice way to control your breathing. Try to make as large of bubbles as possible and as the bubbles move away from you, think of a worry moving far from you. Maybe you'll even name a bubble and when it pops, the worry can pop with it.

3. *Choose of the following activities from your age level below:

Try at least one of the activities below to see if it helps calm you when you feel overwhelmed.

Daisy/Brownie:

- A. Draw a Worry Monster:** List one thing that makes you worry and then think of it as a silly monster. What would that worry look like if it were a silly creature? Draw the silly monster and name it the thing that makes you worry. Is your picture scary? No? The next time you have that same worry, think about your silly picture.
- B. Have some worry time:** Set a timer for 15 minutes. Think about the thing that worries you the most. During this time ONLY think about the worry. For example, if you are worried about going to school, you could think about being late, forgetting your lunch, someone being mean to you, not being ready for an assignment. If you run out of things to think about, start over thinking about the same things. The next time you have this worry (such as going to school) do you find you worry as much or did you get all of your worrying out ahead of time?
- C. Make a Mind Jar:** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MefBOP8ptA>) Gather a plastic jar, glitter, food color and water. Combine the glitter, the water and the food color in the jar. You might also put in a small toy, stone or marble. When you have a worry, shake the jar which will stir up the glitter. Take the time to watch it settle to the bottom. Are you still as worried or did the worry also settle while you watched the glitter settle to the bottom?

Juniors/Cadettes:

A. Try a Meditation Activity: (<https://www.doyou.com/10-cool-meditations-for-pre-teens-and-teens-67578/>)

- Thought Hunter: Sit still with your eyes closed. Count slowly from 1-10. If a thought comes into your head, go back to 1 and start again until you can get to 10 without letting other thoughts intrude.
- Counting Backwards: sit still with your eyes closed and count backwards from 100 to 1. If you use count, start over.
- Counting your Thoughts: gather 30 small items such as pennies, marbles, stones, paperclips, etc. Pile the items on one side and set a one-minute timer. Once the timer starts, for each thought that passes through your mind, move one of the items from the original pile to a new pile. After the timer rings, look to see how many thoughts occurred in that minute by counting the number of items in the new pile. Now put the items back in the original pile and try again, this time trying to focus on each thought for a longer time in order to reduce the number of new thoughts. When the time goes off, did you have fewer thoughts?
- Silent Walk: Take a 10-minute walk (outside is best but inside can also work), paying attention to each step, each thing you see or smell and how you feel. Try to feel the connection with your surroundings, focusing only on the things around you and not allowing other thoughts to enter your mind. Make all of the other thoughts wait 10 minutes until your walk is completed.
- Sitting Still Together: With a friend, sit back-to-back with your back and head touching. Breathe in and out slowly, trying to match each other's breathing. Sit as still as you can, listen to your collective breathing and to the silence between breaths. Feel the connection to your friend and how you are working together.

B. Find a Quiet Activity:

Try to find 10 minutes each day for a quiet activity that is FUN for you that does not involve technology and do that each day for at least two weeks. You might find some ideas in other sections of this patch but here are a few suggestions. Feel free to come up with your own quiet activity.

- Write a poem or story that is JUST FOR YOU.
- Make something-this could be cooking or baking or using string to make a bracelet or a craft you buy at a store. You could color rocks or make a collage from old magazines. What you make is not important, just that you are CREATING something just for you.
- Pick something you used to like to do and do it again. Maybe you used to like playing with Legos or a special toy. Do that again.
- Have your own dance party (admittedly this does involve technology but only to select the music). Dance AND SING as loudly as you (or your family) will allow.
- Move: bend over to touch your toes, try to jump as high as you can, give yourself a big squeeze, hop from one foot to the other. Move your body like an elephant, crawl like a snake, shake yourself like a wet dog. It doesn't matter what you do, just MOVE.
- Rock in a rocking chair
- Pop bubble wrap or crinkle up tissue paper
- Play a musical instrument

Senior/Ambassador:

A. Try a Mindfulness Activity (<https://life-care-wellness.com/12-ways-to-practice-mindfulness-for-teen-anxiety/>)

Mindfulness means you choose to be in a given moment, free from distractions which is easier said than done. Try a few of these items to see if you can be in the moment:

- Take some deep Breaths: bring awareness to your breath for at least 30 seconds by taking three deep, slow breaths. Focus only on the breathing, try to ignore your surroundings or projects/people around you.
- Take a Slow Walk: go for a slow walk and be sure to pay attention to what you see, hear, smell, touch. Really pay attention to how your body feels. It is not how far you walk that is critical, it is paying attention to the walk that matters.
- Have a Mindful Meal: eat a meal mindfully by focusing on every single bite and how your body feels when you chew and swallow. Take time to taste the different foods and notice the textures of each food.
- Use a Three Senses Exercise: stop for a moment and take note of where you are by asking yourself three questions: 1) What three things can I hear? 2) What three things can I see? And 3) What three things can I physically feel?
- Quit Multitasking: make a list of things you need to do and then do them ONE BY ONE. Complete a full task before moving on to the next.

B. Practice Self-Care

Make a log of how many hours you sleep, what you eat, how often you exercise and how much time you spend on-line. Reach out to an adult you trust and ask them to review this list with you-does the list seem balanced? Make one goal to improve a problem area and stick to it for at least one month. Do you feel better?

C. Use a Guided Meditation before going to bed

Shutting off our minds before we go to sleep is very difficult. This becomes a vicious cycle of not being able to shut off the mind, then not having a good night sleep which creates even more stress the next day. While there are many guided meditations designed to help you relax before you go to sleep-here are a few to try:

- Surrender Meditation: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsxoid4aNdl>)
- Chakra Meditation: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8a1tbwXyAZM>)
- Visualization Meditations: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsxoid4aNdl>)
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z95gPdFC7GM>)

Take Action Activities:

*For take action, pick one of the following items and make a difference.

1. Speak to a counselor or other adult in your school to organize a student meeting where students can talk about things that might be bothering them. Hold your first meeting. How was it?
2. Lead a mindfulness event for your troop, friends or school class. Perhaps teach one of the activities you tried in the Connect #3 section of this Patch.
3. Start an exercise group with a group of friends. What will you decide to do? Walk? Run? Practice Yoga? Play a sport? Invite friends or classmates and meet once a week for at least four weeks. How did you all feel?
4. Pick a topic that you know is bothering you and your friends. Ask that this can be a topic of conversation lead by an expert to your troop, classroom, etc.
5. Make sure books such as the ones on this list are available for other children in your school or local library. Perhaps you can speak to the librarian, your classroom teacher or donate a book from cookie sales.

6. Create your own action project. What will that look like? What will you do to make a difference?

Reflection Activities:

What can you do to remind yourself of this process? *For reflection activities pick one of the following items which allow you to ponder what you have learned.

1. Creating a journal: you can decorate a notebook or fold papers in half to create a small journal. Set a goal for yourself to use one of the techniques that you learned in this badge and keep track of situations that this helped you.
2. Write a story, choreograph a dance or create a drawing: you can express your learning through any kind of artistic medium.
3. When you feel overwhelmed, continue to use one of the activities you tried in the Connect activity section in #2. Try this for at least a month. Did this activity help you to feel less overwhelmed?
4. Based on what you have learned, try something new—your pick. Why did you pick this activity? How does it help you better understand autism or behaviors that go along with it?

Book List

Ages 4-8: (Daisy/Brownies)

- Fraidyzoo by Thyra Heder (Ages 4-8)
- Black Dog by Levi Pinfol (Ages 4-8)
- The Whatifs by Emily Kilgore (Ages 4-8)
- Brave Every Day by Trudy Ludwig (ages 4-8)
- Wemberly Worried by Kevin Henkes (Ages 4-8)

Ages 8-13: (Juniors/Cadettes)

- A Smart Girl's Guide: Worry by Nancy Holyoke (ages 8-12)
- Better with Butter by Victoria Piontek (Ages 9-12)
- Guts by Raine Telgemeier (Ages 9-12)
- The Deepest Breath by Meg Grehan (Ages 10-12)
- The Summer of June (Ages 10-13)

Ages 13+ (Seniors/Ambassadors)

- What to Say Next by Julia Buxbaum (Ages 12+)
- Finding Audrey by Sophia Kinselle (Ages 12+)
- A Quiet Kind of Thunder by Sara Barnard (ages 14+)
- It's Kind of a Funny Story by ned Vizzini (Ages 14+)
- The Teen Girls Anxiety Survival Guide: 10 Ways to Conquer Anxiety and Feel Your Best by Lucie Hemmen (Ages 13+)

- Mindfulness for Teen Worry by Jeffrey Bernstein (Ages 13+)