

The Invisible Backpack: Helping Elementary Students Deal with Stress and Anxiety

By Amy Blankenship

Adults and Anxiety



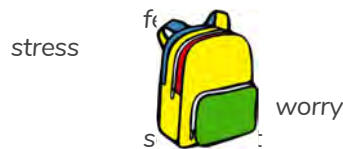
Goals

1. Walk away with an understanding of the current increase in stress and anxiety for kids.
2. Know what anxiety and stress looks like in elementary students.
3. Learn how to help students recognize, self-regulate, and reduce some stress and/or anxiety in their lives.
4. Acquire a toolbox of ideas and strategies to accomplish goal #3.

Stress and Anxiety in Elementary Students

Many students arrive at school daily with an “Invisible Backpack” full of stress and anxiety. Name one type of stress/anxiety you’ve experienced with a student

Stress and anxiety symptoms CAN look different in children than in adults



sadness
hopelessness

Dr. Jeffrey Bernstein writes in *Psychology Today*, “Twenty-five percent of 13- to 18-year-olds have mild to moderate anxiety. The median age of onset is 11 years old. Anxiety is among the earliest of developing pathologies.” [Psychology Today Blog](#)

This presentation investigates how to recognize and address the symptoms of stress

More...

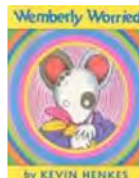
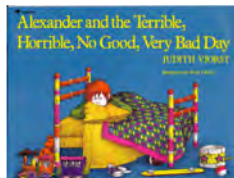
According to the **Child Mind Institute**, symptoms may include: Inattention and restlessness, attendance problems, clinginess with adults, disruptive behavior, trouble answering questions in class, lack of focus, stomach and headaches (frequent trips to the nurse), not turning in homework, and even failure to participate in group work, in addition to others. [Child Mind Institute: Classroom Anxiety](#)

💧 Stress and anxiety symptoms CAN look like behavior issues in the classroom

As the Teacher, How Can I Help?

Books to start classroom conversations with young children:

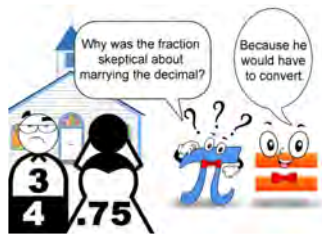
- *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst
- *Stress Can Really Get on Your Nerves* by Trevor Romain and Elizabeth Verdick
- *A Boy and a Turtle* by Lori Lite
- *Wilma Jean the Worry Machine* by Julia Cook
- *Wemberly Worried* by Kevin Henkes



Minimize the Surprises!

Fear of the unknown can cause great anxiety, especially in gifted students. Lisa Van Gemert has a great way to help students keep track of what is next on the learning list!

**3 OUT OF 2
PEOPLE
HAVE
TROUBLE
WITH
FRACTIONS**



More Ideas on Less Surprises!



Turn Stressful Situations into Fun! OST - Review Games

[Jeopardy Math Review - RTong](#)



4th GRADE MATH ENRICHMENT PROJECTS RUBRIC

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| Your projects include all of the components required..... | 40 Points |
| Your projects are neat and organized..... | 30 Points |
| Your projects make mathematical sense..... | 20 Points |
| Projects were completed on time..... | 10 Points |
| Total Possible..... | 100 Points |
| Student Name _____ | |
| Total Points _____ | |
| Grade _____ | |



Stress Buster/Ice Breaker/Warm-Up

Life with the Wright Family - [Activity](#) - [CDC Healthy Schools](#)

Classroom Activities to Bust Stress! - [Classroom Stress Busters](#)

Metacognition and Self-Regulation

Calm Down Activities and Exercises - [Kids Anti-Anxiety Kit](#)

Basics - Eat, Sleep, Exercise and Breathing Activities

Calming [Relaxation Tools from Lisa Van Gemert](#)



Two Other Resources

54321 Technique: I do not have personal experience with this one. It is based on the five senses. Visit the website to learn more: [Coping Skills for Kids 54321](#)

Tapping: This is another one I have not personally done with students. I have seen it used to combat emotional eating in adults. Watch students and teachers in the videos at this link: [Tapping Solution Foundation](#)



USE Your Building Support!

Guidance Counselor - He or she may have resources beyond your reach to support students with stress and anxiety

Principal - Your principal is another great resource! He or she has connections outside of the building that may support your student(s).

District/School Psychologist - He or she is always ready to help you get some answers about what might be troubling a student.

Did you find one resource to use for the student you thought about when we started?

References

- [Lisa Van Gemert - Gifted Guru - online](#)
- [CDC Healthy Schools \(online\)](#)
- [Thechaosandtheclutter.com \(basket\)](#)
- [Healthiersf.org \(online activity list\)](#)
- [Psychology Today Blog \(article\)](#)
- [Child Mind Institute \(article\)](#)
- [Coping Skills for Kids website](#)
- [Tapping Solution Foundation website](#)

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