Parent Session

Stress and Anxiety

in

Twice-Exceptional Children

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PROJECT2EXCEL

University of St. Thomas
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Parent Discussion

**Stress and Anxiety**

**What:** Guided discussion group for parents whose children are participating in PROJECT2EXCEL

**When:** Day, Month, Year
6:30-8:30pm

**Where:**

**Facilitators:**

**Preparation:** Pre-reading assignment attached;

_The Affective Side: Emotional issues of Twice Exceptional Students_, by Jean Strop and David Goldman

_Addressing the Social and Emotional Needs of Twice-Exceptional Students_, by Emily Williams King

**Potential Topics:** Stress

Anxiety

Fear

**Essential Questions:**

1. How can I help my child manage stress?
2. What causes anxiety?
3. What do we do when fears get out of hand?

**Objective:** Establish an environment in which parents of twice-exceptional children can receive and provide support, guidance, and advice through discussion with other parents and trained leaders.

_Stress and Anxiety_
Discussion Rules

1. What’s said in the group stays in the group.
2. There are no wrong ideas.
3. Stay on topic.
4. The facilitator is the guide, not the expert.
Pre-Readings


### Discussion Notes

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<th>Topic</th>
<th>Strategies to try</th>
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<td>From the chapter</td>
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<td>- What do you already do?</td>
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<td>- What do you want to try?</td>
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<td>- Share ideas from the reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
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<tr>
<td>- How does your child deal with stress?</td>
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<td>- How do you deal with it?</td>
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<td>Anxiety</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Does your child feel anxious much of the time?</td>
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<td>- Is his anxiety triggered by something specific?</td>
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<td>Fear</td>
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<td>- Does your child grow out of fears?</td>
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<td>- Are some more lasting?</td>
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<td>- Are her fears your fears?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>- What have you tried?</td>
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<td>- What are some ideas from the discussion you may try?</td>
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<td>- From the reading?</td>
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<td>Miscellaneous</td>
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<td>- Other resources</td>
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<td>- Related topics</td>
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*Stress and Anxiety*
Discussion Directions for the Facilitator

The facilitator of the discussion may use the numbered questions to guide the discussion. Lettered prompts beneath the questions can be used to prompt discussion as needed. More good material for discussion can be found in Rules for the Road.

Parents may use the Discussion Notes form for taking notes.

An activity, Stress is a Fungus, may be offered to the parents to use with their children.

Prior to tackling the questions of the night, the facilitator asks parents to introduce themselves and share what brought them to this discussion group.

The facilitator begins by sharing the following stories with the group:

Eleven-year-old Calvin worries a lot about how he’ll do at school. He also worries about making friends, doing his chores correctly, and getting hurt on his bike. There’s always something he’s worried about. Even though he knows there’s no need to worry so much about these things, he can’t stop himself. He wishes he could stop being so anxious all the time.

Lupe, age twelve, worries about not being liked at school. She worries a lot when she’s at school, but she can’t stop worrying about it even when she’s at home. Just thinking about school makes her feel worse.

Ten-year-old Maria loved her weekly dance class. But when the teacher said there was going to be a dance recital where all the classes would perform onstage, Maria got scared. Dancing in a small class was one thing; performing in front of a whole bunch of kids and parents was another. She told her dad that she wanted to quit dance forever.

From What To Do When You’re Scared and Worried, by James J. Crist

Stress and Anxiety
Discussion Questions

Stress and Anxiety

1. What causes my child stress?
2. Do the same things cause me stress?
3. How does my child cope with stress?
   a. Tries to take control
   b. Shuts down or turns off
   c. Jokes
   d. Cries
4. How do I cope with stress?
   a. Counting
   b. Deep breathing
   c. List making
   d. Exercise
5. What aspects of my life does this stress help or hurt?
6. Is stress "fixable"? Does it need fixing?
7. How can I help my child channel this stress into something positive?
   a. Exercise
   b. Good works in the community
   c. Down time
8. What do I want to model?
9. How can I help my child show himself some compassion?
10. What is the difference between stress and anxiety?
   a. Level of stress
   b. Affecting other parts of life
   c. Generalized anxiety
11. Is my child anxious a lot of the time? About a lot of things?
12. How do you help your child cope with anxiety?
13. What is the difference between anxiety and fear?
14. Does your child have irrational fears? Rational fears?
   a. Monsters under the bed
   b. Spiders
   c. Tornadoes
15. Does your child understand the difference between irrational fear and real threat?
16. How do you handle these fears?
   a. Monster spray
   b. Education about the feared object
   c. Comfort
Stress can give us headaches, make us feel angry, sad, frustrated, or just plain tired. The reasons for feeling stressed out can be really obvious; they can be anything from an upcoming test, a friend moving away, to something big, like someone you care about is sick. But, sometimes stress just sneaks up on us, and we feel angry or frustrated without really knowing why. Sometimes it’s even hard to tell how we feel.

The good news about stress is that we can take control of it and make it work for us. We can’t always make the stressors go away—stressful situations and events are an inevitable part of life. What we can do is change the way we react to stressors.

**Activity – fill in the blanks**

F – Face it. I am feeling stressed out! I know I am stressed because I am _______ (tired, headachy, unfocused).

U – Understand it. I am feeling this way because ____________.

N – Name it. I am _____________ (angry, jealous, sad, afraid)

G – Get a grip. Do I want to do anything differently? I don’t want to feel _________ about this.

U – Use the energy. What change can I make to the situation? To my own reaction to it? I am going to _______ because I want ______________ to happen.

S – Succeed. Do your best and feel good about how you handled things. It wasn’t easy, but I _________!
Stress is a FUNGUS!

Fungi grow and thrive in dark places where no one bothers them. Stress can grow and thrive when it’s hidden away and ignored, too. You can take control of stress by bringing it out into the light and doing something about it! Save the fungi for the pizza!

F – Face it! The first and most important step in controlling stress is knowing that you are stressed out to begin with! Sometimes stress masquerades as anger, sadness, or fatigue (tiredness).

U – Understand it! Why am I feeling this way? What is going on that is making me tired, unable to focus on my work, or snap at my classmates or family? Am I afraid of not doing well on a test or assignment? Is my life changing in some way, small or big?

N – Name it! Name those feelings! Some feeling stress can create or make bigger are; anger, jealousy, fear, tiredness, frenzy (wanting to do a lot of things at once), sadness, frustration, or perseverance (wanting to keep going even when it’s time to stop). Talk it out with someone—a family member or friend might have some valuable insight!

G – Get a grip! Do you want these feelings to control you and your life? What good will it do to let the feelings take over? What good will it do to take control of the feelings and live your life the best way you can?

U – Use the energy! If you decided not to let stress control you, figure out how you will control it! What changes can you make to the stressor (the thing that is causing your stress)? For instance, you can ask your parent for help organizing your room, or you can talk out an argument with a friend. Talking things out is a great stress-buster! Sometimes you can’t change the stressor, like if your family is moving, or if someone is sick. In those situations you can use the energy to change the way you react to the stressor. You can pack your own things for the move, or make a card for a sick friend. Be sure to find someone to talk it through with—chances are they need someone to talk with, too!

S – Succeed! Stress is a part of life. Look to the people in your life that you admire and see how they deal with stress in their lives. Use their strategies and FUNGUS to deal with stress in a productive way, and you will become a role model for others! Just remember that no one is perfect, and no one deals well with all stress all the time. We are human, after all. If stress gets to be too much (and it does for everyone from time to time) talk it out with your parents, your teacher, or another trusted adult.

Created for PROJECT2EXCEL by Carol Malheg

Stress and Anxiety
Further Reading

Books


"...provides a humorous, engaging, and encouraging look at raising gifted children today. Dr. James R. Delisle offers practical, down-to-earth advice that will cause parents to reexamine the ways they perceive and relate to their children. Delisle puts forward 10 tips to parents of gifted children—ideas that reflect attitude more than action and allow for introspection and change, rather than quick, do-it-tonight solutions."

Delisle, J.R. (2002). *When gifted kids don't have all the answers: How to meet their social and emotional needs*. Waco, Texas: Prufrock Press, Inc.

Gifted kids are so much more than test scores and grades. Still, it's sometimes difficult to see past all that achievement and potential to the child, adolescent, or teen who may be filled with anxiety, pressured to be perfect, lonely, alienated, confused, and unsure of what the future might bring. Written for teachers, gifted coordinators, guidance counselors, and other adults working with gifted kids (including parents), this book offers proven, practical suggestions for encouraging social and emotional growth among gifted, talented, and creative children and youth."


"Written with help from hundreds of gifted teenagers, The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide is the ultimate guide to surviving and thriving in a world that doesn't always value, support, or understand high ability. Full of surprising facts, step-by-step strategies, and practical how-tos, and inspiring quotations, featuring insightful essays contributed by gifted young people and adults, The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide gives the gifted young reader the tools needed to understand their giftedness, accept it as an asset, and use it to make the most of who and what they are. Of special value is the section on dealing with a troubled gifted youngster contemplating suicide, how to be "net smart" and have safe, fun online relations, and how to handle teen angst. Incidentally, The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide is also very valuable reading for the parents, teachers, and counselors of gifted kids as well!"—Midwest Book Review


"Being excluded from peers can be confusing, even for the brightest young minds. Now in a revised, updated, and expanded third edition, The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide: For Ages 10 &

Stress and Anxiety

"The teen years are some of the more stressful in people's lives—high school, hormones raging, preparing for the future. Now in a fully revised and informatively updated new edition, "Fighting Invisible Tigers: Stress Management for Teens" is a guide book for teenagers who need to reduce stress in their hectic lives. "Fighting Invisible Tigers" outlines ten techniques that will assist teens in their desire to control their stress, such as breathing and relaxation exercises, time management, dealing with hostile peers/family/friends, and embracing an optimistic outlook. A top pick for community library parenting collections."—Midwest Book Review


For years, I have waited for Michael Piechowski to put together the full picture of what it means to be gifted. In this volume, Mellow Out, he does just that. Not only does Michael reveal the many intensities and sensitivities that gifted children and adults have in abundance, he devotes page after page to comments from gifted individuals who are growing up with these attributes as "original equipment." The end result is a book of magnificent proportions—it is erudite, down-to-Earth, and written with sensitivity that will cause readers to recognize in themselves the inner qualities of giftedness. Mellow Out provides information and comfort in equal proportions.

—JAMES R. DELISLE, Ph.D. Kent State University, author of *Gifted Children Speak Out, Guiding the Social and Emotional Development of Gifted Youth, Gifted Kids' Survival Guide*.


Raising a gifted child is both a joy and a challenge, yet parents of gifted children have few resources for reliable parenting information. The four authors, who have decades of professional experience with gifted children and their families, provide practical guidance in areas such as: Characteristics of gifted children; Peer relations; Sibling issues; Motivation & underachievement; Discipline issues; Intensity & stress; Depression & unhappiness; Educational planning; Parenting concerns; Finding professional help; and much, much more!

**Included Articles**


*Stress and Anxiety*