

Anxiety versus fear

Anxiety can become a problem when our bodies react to normal situations as if they were real dangers. That's why it's important to understand the difference between anxiety and fear.

Example of fear:

I see a bear in the woods → I feel afraid → I RUN!

In this example, **actual danger is present**. The fear assists me in acting quickly to flee the situation.

Example of anxiety:

I have to give a presentation at school → I feel extremely anxious → I tell my mom I don't feel well and stay home.

In this example, **actual danger is not present**. I feel uncomfortable and avoid the situation. This is not only unhelpful, it can create additional problems (e.g., failing the assignment and getting a lower grade in the class).

The anxiety and fear response is a normal adaptive system in the body that tells us when we are in danger or prepares us for upcoming events. This means that dealing with your anxiety never involves eliminating it, but rather managing it.

Helpful resource

One important way to help students manage anxiety is to recognize when they are worried, and to challenge the story their minds are telling them about the situation. When you see a student struggling with anxiety, use this anti-worry card to help them recognize that their worry is just one way of thinking and it can be challenged, and they will be better equipped to deal with it.

My anti-worry card

What am I worried or afraid about? _____

How worried am I?

0	1	2	3
Not at all	A little bit	Worried	A lot!

What has happened when I worried about similar things in the past, and how does that help me get through my current worry? _____

What would I tell a good friend to do in a similar situation? _____

What can I do to help myself not worry so much? _____

Is this something that I should worry about? **Yes** **No**

Why? _____