

ANXIETY AND APP

In this phase of the **Autism Phenome Project (APP)**, one of our aims is to investigate anxiety in adolescents and to understand how it presents in adolescents with autism spectrum disorder and adolescents with typical development. In order to evaluate this, we have several components of the study that assess various dimensions of anxiety, including the adolescent and parent interview with a psychologist.

Navigating anxiety with your child can be tricky and sometimes overwhelming. There are both medication and cognitive-behavioral therapy options for treating adolescents with anxiety. For more information on medication options, speak to your child's pediatrician. Here we provide you with some resources to get started in understanding anxiety and the cognitive behavioral as well as behavioral therapy options for helping a child with significant anxiety.

WHAT IS CBT?

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a problem-solving, goal-directed therapy that examines and treats the relationships between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are maintaining the excessive anxiety and preventing adaptive coping. CBT is an empirically-supported treatment for generalized anxiety disorder, separation anxiety disorder, panic disorder, social anxiety disorder, and phobias. **Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP)** is an empirically supported version of CBT for individuals with obsessive-compulsive disorder. These treatments typically occur on an outpatient basis with weekly sessions with a licensed professional. Activities in between sessions and parental involvement are key components in helping a child learn the skills and generalize them across environments.

There are two empirically-supported, cognitive-behavioral treatment programs that have been specifically designed to address anxiety in children with ASD. These programs are not yet widely available; however, they may be offered in your community now or in the near future.

- **Behavioral Interventions for Anxiety in Children with Autism** (BIACA; Wood, Drahota, Sze, Har, et al., 2009) – BIACA is an individualized CBT manual-based program with a modular treatment algorithm and a high level of parental involvement.
- **Facing Your Fears** (FYF; Reaven, Blakely-Smith, Nichols, & Hepburn, 2011) – FYF is a group CBT manual-based program.

HOW DO I KNOW IF CBT IS A GOOD FIT FOR MY CHILD?

Motivation to Participate – the majority of the work (e.g., exposures, generalization) is done out of the session from week to week. If the child refuses to participate, parent training can occur but waiting until the child is more willing is sometimes necessary.

Any Comorbid Conditions – if your child is not able to attend to the material even with breaks and activities infused or if their language level impacts their ability to understand the material, other interventions might have to be considered first.

Level of Cognitive Functioning – cognitive skills necessary for non-adapted forms of CBT include emotion recognition, self-reflection, and meta-cognition (i.e., thinking about thinking), perspective taking, verbal ability, short-and long-term memory, and causal reasoning.

Parental Involvement – all children need assistance with generalizing the skills learned in session, particularly children with ASD. Parents must be willing to participate in all or parts of the sessions and homework, depending on the child's age and functioning level.

HOW DO I FIND A THERAPIST WHO DOES CBT?

Ask your pediatrician or developmental and behavioral pediatrician for a referral to a therapist who provides CBT to children and adolescents with anxiety disorders, and who has experience working with individuals with autism spectrum disorder.

To search for providers in your area, enter your zip code at <https://therapists.psychologytoday.com>. Through this resource, you can select "Cognitive Behavioral (CBT)" under Treatment Orientation, and filter by insurance, age, autism specialty, etc., as well as read the profiles of potential therapists.

The following list are providers who have identified as being specialized in treating anxiety in individuals with autism:

1. **Erin Engstrom, Ph.D., Megan Tudor, Ph.D., and Breanna Winder-Patel, Ph.D.** are at the MIND Institute in Sacramento. They specialize in cognitive-behavioral therapy for anxiety and obsessive-compulsive and related disorders in children and adolescents with all neurodevelopmental disorders as well as typically developing individuals. Referrals are accepted from physicians to the Anxiety CBT Clinic through the physician referral line at 1-800-482-3284. *This clinic is closed to referrals currently with a plan to open around July 2023 at the earliest. When the clinic opens to referrals, there will be an already existing wait list, so a list of community providers is listed below.*
2. **Kimberly Miller, Ph.D.** is in Midtown Sacramento. She specializes in child and adolescent cognitive-behavioral therapy for those with clinically significant anxiety disorders and/or depression. She also provides assessment, diagnosis, and treatment services for children with ADHD and autism. Website: <https://www.healthymindsacramento.com>. Phone: 916.694.2969.
3. **Elizabeth Solomon-Loyola, Psy.D.** is in San Marcos, CA, but provides video-based therapy state-wide. Dr. Solomon-Loyola provides cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) for anxiety, stress, OCD, peer relationship problems, and problem behavior for youth with and without neurodevelopmental disabilities and their parents. Website: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists/elizabeth-solomon-loyola-folsom-ca/443260> Phone: (916) 542-6621.
4. **Shereen Cohen, Ph.D.** is in Encinitas, CA, but provides video-based therapy statewide. Dr. Cohen specializes in anxiety, OCD, tic disorders, ADHD, depression, and trauma, specifically for adolescents and young adults with autism. Website: <https://www.drshereencohen.com/> Phone: (858) 465-6495.
5. **Danielle Christy, MA, Licensed Educational Psychologist** is in Sacramento. She specializes in cognitive-behavioral therapy for school-aged children with anxiety, ADHD, ASD, and Fragile X Syndrome. She also conducts educational assessments and educational consultations. Website: <https://www.inclusivelyminded.com>. Phone: 530.574.0968.
6. **ASCEND Diagnostic and Support Services** is in Sacramento. ASCEND provides therapy for children and adults with autism and/or intellectual disability who may also have mental health challenges like anxiety, depression, trauma and/or PTSD, and relational issues. They also provide ABA therapy and social skills groups. Website: <https://www.ascendsupportservices.com>. Phone: 916-913-1542.
7. **Margot Frost, LCSW** is in Gold River and offers online therapy. She has a neurodiverse affirming practice specializing in providing therapy to Autistic teens and adults. Website: <http://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists/margot-frost-gold-river-ca/868643>. Phone: (916) 252-4469.
8. **Jennifer Miller MA, LMFT** is in Folsom. She specializes in adolescent, and adult anxiety treatment. She is comfortable with treating anxiety related issues when there are co-occurring diagnostic concerns such as Depression, ADHD, and high functioning Autism. Website: jennifermillermft.com. Phone: 916.693.0413.
9. **Tanda Almont, PsyD** is in Roseville. She specializes in Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) and Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for children with anxiety and/or ADHD and autism. Website: <https://www.monarchcenter.net>. Email: dralmont@monarchcenter.net.
10. **Sarah Jeffryes, LMFT (Head Heart Hands Counseling)** is in Fair Oaks. She provides cognitive behavioral therapy for youth with anxiety. She also offers the Supportive Parenting for Anxious Childhood Emotions (SPACE) evidence-based program for childhood anxiety that is exclusively parent-based intervention. Website: <https://www.headhearhandscounseling.com>. Phone: 916-534-8558.
11. **Rogers Behavioral Health** is throughout California and other select states. Rogers has a unique intensive program focused on treating anxiety, mood, OCD, and related disorders in youth 6-18 with autism. They also offer both outpatient and inpatient treatment for depression. Website: <https://rogersbh.org/what-we-treat/care-kids-autism-spectrum-disorder>. Phone: 800-767-4411.
12. **Dan Davies, Ph.D.** is in Folsom. He specializes in treating anxiety and depression impacting education in neurotypical students as well as those with ADHD and/or Autism. He also provides psychoeducational and diagnostic assessments for ADHD, learning disabilities, and emotional problems in children and adult students. Website: <https://www.dandaviesphd.com>. Phone: (916) 337-3294.

13. **Josina Moak, PsyD.** Is In Roseville. She specializes in cognitive-behavioral therapy for teens and adults with anxiety, ADHD, and autism. She also provides psychological testing to these populations as well. Website: <https://drjosinamoak.com/about/>. Phone: 916-580-5130.
14. **Greenhouse Therapy** with offices in Elk Grove and Sacramento as well as in-home and community therapy options. Greenhouse provides individual, couples, family, and group therapy. They are also specialized in treating mental health conditions (e.g., anxiety, depression) in individuals with neurodevelopmental disorders (e.g., autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability). They provide these services to children, adolescents, and adults. Website: <http://www.greenhousetherapy.net/>. Phone: 916.400.0297.
15. **Judith Hill-Weld, LMFT** is in Nevada City. She specializes in providing cognitive-behavioral therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy, and family systems therapy to individuals ages 5-adult with anxiety in addition to those with developmental disabilities. Website: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists/judith-hill-weld-nevada-city-ca/64663>. Phone: 530-265-9450.
16. **Shabana Soomar, MS, PhD** is in Roseville. She specializes in providing cognitive-behavioral therapy for those with anxiety and autism. Phone: 916.472.5031.
17. **Salatha Helton, LMFT** is in Vacaville. She provides cognitive-behavioral therapy for youth with anxiety and autism. Website: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists/salatha-helton-humanistic-psychological-services-vacaville-ca/420527>. Phone: 916.542.2315.

CBT RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

COPING CAT: CHILD ANXIETY TALES

Coping Cat (ages 6 – 16) is a comprehensive CBT treatment program, performed following a manualized method with a psychologist. The older adolescent (ages 14-17) version is called the CAT Project. Some therapists are able to adapt Coping Cat and CAT Project for adolescents with ASD. Coping Cat provides an online parent program called **Child Anxiety Tales**, with information, tools, and resources for helping your child. This program can be found at http://copingcatparents.com/Child_Anxiety_Tales. Some parents find it helpful to start this online parent educational program while they are waiting for their child to start CBT or in conjunction with their child's CBT program.

BOOKS

ANXIETY AND PHOBIAS

The Resilience Recipe: A Parent's Guide to Raising Fearless Kids in the Age of Anxiety by Muniya Kanna and Philip Kendall

Freeing Your Child from Anxiety, Revised and Updated Edition: Practical Strategies to Overcome Fears, Worries, and Phobias and Be Prepared for Life - from Toddlers to Teens by Tamar Chansky

Helping Your Anxious Teen: Positive Parenting Strategies to Help Your Teen Beat Anxiety, Stress, and Worry by Sheila Achar Josephs

OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER

Freeing Your Child from Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder: A Powerful, Practical Program for Parents of Children and Adolescents by Tamar Chansky

VIDEO

Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) for anxiety in children with neurodevelopmental disorders, a talk given by Dr. Breanna Winder-Patel at the UC Davis MIND Institute's 2015 Summer Institute of Neurodevelopmental Disorders, gives an overview of anxiety in ASD children and details of CBT. A recording of this talk is available at http://www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/mindinstitute/videos/video_summerinstitute.html#2015

WHAT IS AN ALTERNATIVE IF CBT IS NOT THE RIGHT FIT FOR MY CHILD?

Cognitive behavioral therapy may not be the right fit for all children. Instead, the focus may simply be **Behavioral Therapy**. Sticking to a behavioral approach may benefit children with lower cognitive functioning or difficulty following the tasks in a CBT setting. Strategies for addressing anxiety using a behavioral approach include use of social stories, visual schedules, “if-then” boards, and more. Speak with your child’s behavioral therapist to discuss which strategies may benefit your child.

BEHAVIORAL RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

AUTISM SPEAKS TOOLKITS

Autism Speaks provides toolkits for common fears and phobias such as getting blood drawn and going to a dentist or eye doctor. These toolkits are free for download and can be found at <https://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/tool-kits>.

SOCIAL THINKING CURRICULUMS

Superflex: A Superhero Social Thinking Curriculum (www.socialthinking.com) by Stephanie Madrigal and Michelle Garcia Winner – this program is designed to help children develop further awareness of their own thinking and social behaviors and strategies to regulate their behavior.

Zones of Regulation (www.socialthinking.com) by Leah Kuypers – this program is designed to teach children how to regulate their actions, leading to increased control and problem-solving abilities.