

the neurotransmitter serotonin. SSRI medications help to restore the normal balance of serotonin, and therefore help with both depression and anxiety.

Though not every teen who has an anxiety disorder needs medication (in fact, most don't), the right medication can help to reduce symptoms of anxiety, and can be a great relief to someone whose anxiety symptoms are causing tremendous distress. Often when doctors prescribe medication, they begin with a very small dosage, and gradually increase to the dosage that works best. It may take some time to get the dosage that works best for you. And it may take several weeks before the full benefits of a certain medication are felt. As with any medication, it's very important to take it exactly as prescribed and to tell your doctor about any side effects.

In psychotherapy, or talk therapy, a teen talks with a mental health professional about the stresses and anxiety he's feeling. Getting support and sorting through problems by talking them through can be helpful to teens with anxiety.

In a particular type of talk therapy called cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), teens take an active role in "unlearning" some of their fear. CBT helps teens learn new ways to think and act when confronted with anxiety, and to manage and deal with stress so it doesn't get out of hand. In CBT, teens learn how to detect and measure their anxiety, recognize what triggers it, and practice ways to reduce it. They learn what makes their fear worse and what can ease it. Techniques vary, but may include relaxation and breathing exercises or exposure therapy, where a person is gradually exposed what triggers his fear. If it's done with proper support and new coping skills, exposure helps even intense fear fade away.

Don't hesitate to tell your doctor or therapist about what's working and what isn't - you're a member of your treatment team, and your ideas and feelings are important.

### **Dealing With an Anxiety Disorder**

If you have an anxiety disorder, it may be difficult for your friends or family to understand just how you feel. Sometimes people give unrealistic advice - like telling you to just stop worrying. Though they may have the best intentions, they may not understand that it's not that simple. You may have to explain this to them.

Because others may not always understand, sometimes people are reluctant to let loved ones know what they are going through. Some people may be concerned that their fear or behavior may be seen as childish, silly, or weird. But communication is the key. Close friends and family can be part of the solution, and their care and support can be valuable. Let them know what they can do to help.

If you know someone who has an anxiety disorder, be a supportive friend. If she goes to a support group, you might offer to go to one of the meetings with her. Tell your friend you're there to listen if she'd like to talk. Learn as much as you can about the disorder so you can talk with her about it.

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