

Anxiety & Depression in Children & Teenagers

Peggy Stanley, MSW

Signs and symptoms of depression (continued)

- Physical complaints (such as stomachaches, headaches) that don't respond to treatment
- Reduced ability to function during events and activities at home or with friends in school, extracurricular activity and in other hobbies or interests
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- Impaired thinking or concentration
- Thoughts of death or suicide

**Children do not have to have all of these symptoms

Signs and symptoms of depression

- Irritability or anger
- Continuous feelings of sadness and hopelessness
- Social withdrawal
- Increased sensitivity to rejection
- Changes in appetite - either increased or decreased
- Changes in sleep - sleeplessness or excessive sleep
- Vocal outbursts or crying
- Difficulty concentrating
- Fatigue and low energy

What causes depression?

There are a combination of factors that cause depression:

- Physical health
- Life events
- Family history
- Environment genetic vulnerability
- Biochemical disturbance

Depression can have a negative effect on Children (teenagers) (continued)

- Internet addiction - teens may go online to escape their problems - excessive computer usage increases isolation and makes depression worse.
- Reckless behavior - depressed teen may engage in dangerous or high risk behaviors such as reckless driving, out of control drinking and unsafe sex.
- Violence; some depressed teens - usually boys who are the victims of bullying become violent. Self-hatred and a wish to die can erupt into violence and homicidal rage.

Depression can have a negative effect on Children (teenagers)

This can include:

- Problems at school - dropping in grades, poor attendance
- Running away - teenagers will talk about running away or will run away.
- **This is typically a cry for help**
- Drug and Alcohol abuse - Teens may use drugs or alcohol in an attempt to self-medicate their depression. **This actually makes it worse**
- Low self-esteem - Depression can trigger and intensify feelings of ugliness, shame, failure and unworthiness

It is a human reaction and it serves an important biological function. It is an alarm system that is activated whenever we perceive danger or a threat. When the body and mind react, we can feel physical sensations: the stomach is tight, heart beat, difficult breathing and shaky hands and feet. These feelings are called fear (right or right response). They are caused by a rush of adrenaline and other stress hormones that prepare the body to make a quick getaway (or fight back). This happens naturally.

Fear is an element of anxiety and when these emotions get out of hand they can cause serious disturbances in the child's life. All emotions are on a spectrum and generally intense fears or anxieties don't with small fears and worries. When fears or traumas are not resolved they can grow into a more intense, pervasive problem. This is why it is important to know preventative measures and treatments, as well as corrective options.

Preventative

At the youngest ages from (newborn to five) it is important to provide a safe, positive and responsive environment.

Corrective

Effective treatment is a combination of cognitive behavioral therapy and medication.

Childhood Anxiety signs and symptoms

Anxiety can sometimes be easy to spot, for example: overreacting, crying, tantrums, moodiness, irritability and outright refusal to participate in a specific activity such as school. Sometimes children do not always know that it can still be so debilitating and lead to further behavioral, as well as physical problems. Some of the less obvious signs of anxiety can include frequent stomach aches, headaches, trouble sleeping and difficulty concentrating.

What is Anxiety

Anxiety is really just a form of stress. It can be experienced in different ways including: physically and emotionally. Anxiety mainly relates to worrying about what might happen, or worrying about things going wrong or feeling like you are in some kind of danger

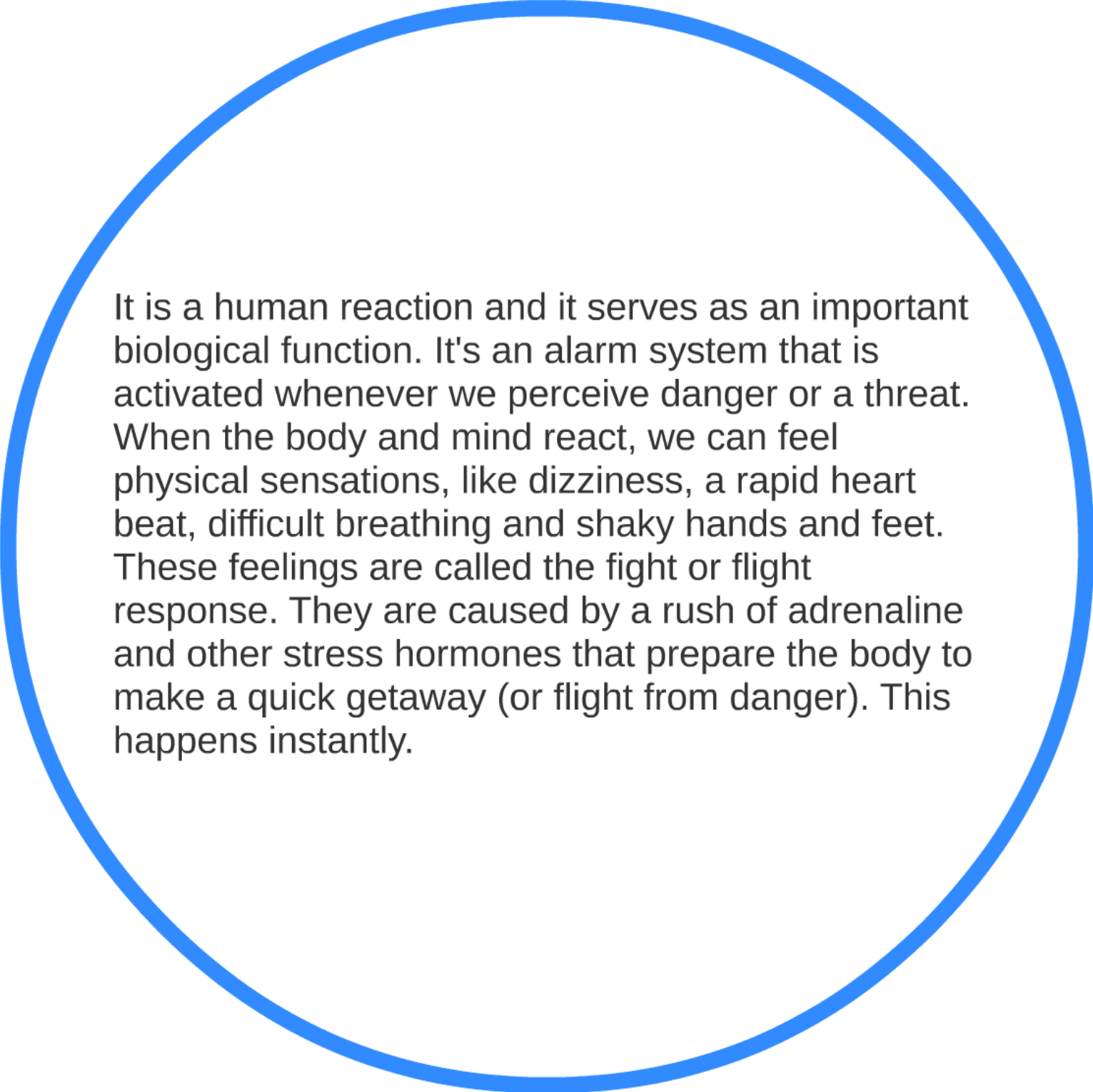


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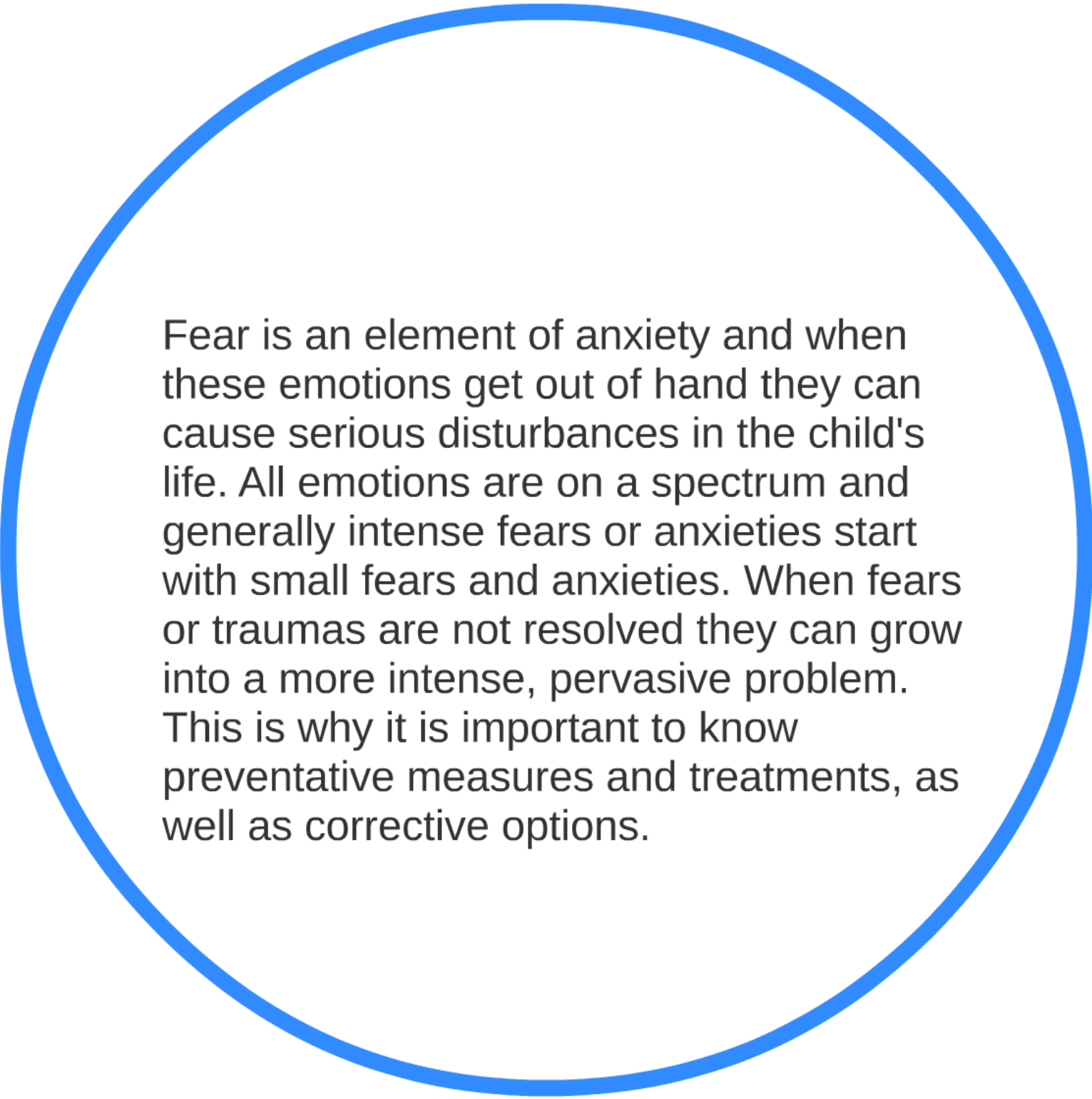
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It is a human reaction and it serves as an important biological function. It's an alarm system that is activated whenever we perceive danger or a threat. When the body and mind react, we can feel physical sensations, like dizziness, a rapid heart beat, difficult breathing and shaky hands and feet. These feelings are called the fight or flight response. They are caused by a rush of adrenaline and other stress hormones that prepare the body to make a quick getaway (or flight from danger). This happens instantly.

Childhood Anxiety signs and symptoms

Anxiety can sometimes be easy to spot, the outward nervousness, nail biting, jitteriness, moodiness, irritability and outright refusal to participate in a specific activity such as school. Sometimes anxiety is not as easy to see but it can still be as debilitating and lead to further behavioral, as well as physical problems. Some of the less distinct signs of anxiety can include frequent stomach aches, headaches, trouble sleeping and difficulty concentrating.



Fear is an element of anxiety and when these emotions get out of hand they can cause serious disturbances in the child's life. All emotions are on a spectrum and generally intense fears or anxieties start with small fears and anxieties. When fears or traumas are not resolved they can grow into a more intense, pervasive problem. This is why it is important to know preventative measures and treatments, as well as corrective options.



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