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Treating Anxiety Disorders in Youth

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Description of Anxiety Disorders

Tolerable levels of anxiety and fear are a part of typical development for young people. Yet, fear and anxiety can become problematic and impede some young people's abilities to function and can even advance to the point of a disorder. Separation anxiety disorder, selective mutism disorder, specific phobia, social anxiety disorder, panic disorder, agoraphobia, and generalized anxiety disorder are categorized under anxiety disorders in the 5th edition of The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013). Anxiety disorders are among the most commonly-diagnosed psychiatric disorders in youth, and the

Relaxation is a technique used within the CBT (and BT) framework that is critical in addressing youth anxiety. Some examples of specific relaxation practices include deep breathing, deep breathing with imagery, and progressive muscle relaxation. Relaxation training is based on the idea that one cannot be simultaneously physically aroused and relaxed (Kendall, 2012). The main focus of relaxation training is to have clients become aware of their apprehension, worry, and anxiety in the moment and learn how to intentionally reduce the unpleasant sensations. Relaxation skills assist youth in enduring anxiety-related conditions, and should be incorporated into the treatment plans of young people who have anxiety. Counselors are encouraged to integrate meditation, exercise, stretching, painting, listening to music, or any other relaxation activity into counseling to help youth reduce their anxiety.

Another effective CBT intervention for young clients experiencing anxiety is affective education. The aim of

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