



A Much Needed e-Book for Teens:

Managing Stress & Anxiety Around School



SIMI PSYCHOLOGICAL GROUP  
Create Real Change

(805) 842-1994  
[info@simipsychologicalgroup.com](mailto:info@simipsychologicalgroup.com)



## SIMI PSYCHOLOGICAL GROUP

Create Real Change

Getting motivated for school can be so hard sometimes. There are so many expectations, responsibilities, and pressure. Not to mention the time school might take away from the things you care about like spending time with friends, extracurriculars, or playing games.

The truth is when you are able to feel good about school, you create more space to feel good about the other things in your life. In this e-book, you will find common topics and stressors related to school that may feel difficult for you to manage. You will also find strategies that have helped lots of students begin to feel better about school.

Here is what you will learn in this e-book

1

### Why is getting myself to school so hard and what can help?

- Start at night
- Start the day of right
- Learn to be kind in your own mind

2

### Common stressors and how do I deal?

- Common school-related stressors
- 6 strategies that help stress

3

### I've been feeling anxious or sad so much of the time. What can I do?

- 4 strategies that help address anxiety, sadness, and frustration.
- How can I challenge my negative thoughts and beliefs about myself?
  1. Understanding the "Cognitive Triangle" (Thoughts-Behaviors-Feelings)
  2. Reframe your thoughts
  3. Change your normal behaviors
  4. Do things you enjoy

4

### 50 Coping Tools You Can Use Anytime

5

### What is Mindfulness and How Can it Help?

# 1 Why is getting myself to school so hard?

A lot of students experience anxiety or dread around going to school and find it difficult to wake up each morning. Whether you are worried about your classes, concerned about who you may talk to or what others may think, or feeling drained, you may find it hard to get yourself through each day. Here are some ways you can feel more prepared and confident with taking on each new school day!

What can I do when I am struggling to get myself to school?

- **Start At Night!** What you do at night has a big impact on how you feel the next day. Finding ways to relax and ease any worries you may be feeling about the next day can play a big role in feeling more ready for school in the morning.



## SOME IDEAS THAT CAN HELP YOU FEEL MORE READY IN THE MORNING:

- **Checklist** to ensure you have completed schoolwork that is due the next day.
- **Pack lunch, backpack, or prepare clothes** you plan to wear the night before. *Less to do in the morning = less stress!*
- **Turn off/put away electronics** an hour before bed & put on night mode in the evening (reduce blue light) (*watching tv, scrolling through social media, browsing the internet, etc all stimulate your brain, making it difficult to fall asleep, which makes you feel less rested the next day and less prepared for the day*).
- Here are some activities that may be helpful **an hour before bed**. Try a few and decide what works best for you.
- **Meditation apps:** Headspace, Calm, Ten Percent Happier Meditation, InsightTimer, Simple Habit
- **Journaling.** There's no wrong way to journal. Here are some ideas for you to try:
  - Journal freely about whatever comes to your mind (*this allows you to express your thoughts, rather than allowing your thoughts to become loud and overwhelming*).
  - Write down something you are proud of yourself for or enjoy about yourself each day
  - Write down something you are thankful for each day.

- **Start The Day Off Right!** The energy that we start the day with can easily follow us around the rest of the day. Are you waking up just in time to throw your clothes on and rush out the door? Well, that's probably going to come with stressed out/anxious feelings. Thinking of a routine that lets you feel in control in the morning can help you feel more in control throughout the day.



#### HERE ARE SOME IDEAS FOR WHAT MAKES A HEALTHY MORNING ROUTINE:

- **Eat** a healthy/well-rounded meal
- **Exercise**
- **Take care** of your hygiene (shower, brushing teeth, fresh clothes, etc.)
- **Mindfulness** (see below)
- **Breathwork/Paced Breathing:** Starfish breathing, etc. (see night time routine for description). *Why does breathwork help?*
  - Our breathing changes when we are anxious, sad, or angry. Focusing on our breathing allows us to reduce these difficult feelings and respond more effectively. Our judgment is also better when we are relaxed and we are able to make decisions that benefit us.

- **Learn To Be Kind In Your Own Mind.** Pay attention to your thoughts: when we are feeling anxious, stressed, sad, or angry, it can be easy to not pay attention to what thoughts are coming with those feelings. Maybe your thoughts are saying *"I stink at this," "everything sucks,"* or other negative thoughts. One way to help with how we are feeling, is to learn to be more positive to ourselves.

#### HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF WHAT THIS CAN LOOK LIKE:

- **Set your intention for today.** For example, saying to yourself, *"I'm going to encourage myself today,"* or *"I'm going to focus on the things I enjoy about the day,"* can help you focus more on these positive things throughout the day.
- **Remind yourself that you are fully capable** of getting through the day and find one thing that you are looking forward to in your day.
  - It can be helpful to recognize **one thing you like about yourself** at the start of each day, as this will help you to feel confident in yourself going into each day.



### Learn to control your stress instead of it controlling you!

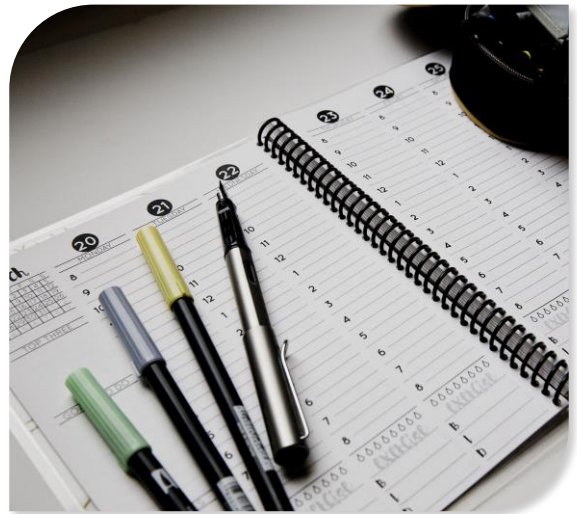
School can be stressful! There's a lot expected of you. There's things to keep track of, due dates, responsibilities, and that's not even including what else you have going on at home or with extracurriculars. It's easy to get overwhelmed, frustrated, and distracted. Below you will find a list of common stressors and some ideas that might help.

#### What are some common stressors at school?

- Exams
- Assignments/Heavy workload
- Time management/procrastination
- Staying organized
- Participation/Presentations
- Difficult classes/subjects
- Transitions (attending a new school, beginning of school year, new class schedule, etc.).
- Social pressures

#### 6 STRATEGIES THAT WILL UNDENIABLY HELP STRESS:

1. **Create a schedule** for yourself or some sort of planner to write down your assignments and a plan for when you are going to work on/complete them. It may be helpful to also schedule in your extra-curricular activities/hobbies and down time. This helps you to manage your time and reduce procrastination. This also helps reduce your stress levels by making your workload more manageable.
2. **Take breaks** while working on assignments. Taking breaks gives your brain a break and allows you to remain focused while doing your work. Oftentimes when you do not take breaks, it becomes easier to zone out and for your attention to be elsewhere, making your schoolwork take longer than it needs to. Taking breaks can also help reduce the chances of you becoming overwhelmed, as they can help you to relax your mind and body.
3. **Use timers** to help yourself stay on track. You can use timers in lots of ways. You may want to allow yourself a certain amount of time to relax when you get home from school and set a timer to remind yourself when to begin schoolwork. It can also be helpful to set a timer reminding yourself to take a break or setting a timer to remind yourself to get back to work when you take a break. It is easy to become sidetracked and forget to complete your work, which can increase your stress level later. Using timers can help you to hold yourself accountable and prevent your work from piling up and becoming overwhelming/stressful.

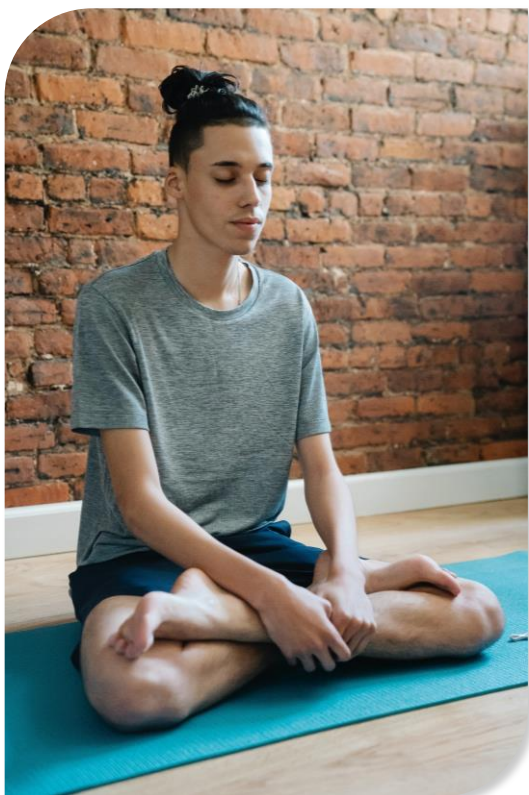


4. **Be nice to yourself.** Remember that there are going to be some subjects that are more difficult than others and everyone has their own strengths. Try not to compare yourself to others and remind yourself of your strengths. Get in the habit of saying one thing each day that you are proud of yourself for or that you recognize you are good at.
5. **Say yes to support.** There are services in which you can receive extra support if your classes become challenging. Talk with your teachers, tutors, counselors, peers, parents, etc. In addition, pay attention to if you are taking on too much, including too many accelerated or AP classes or too many extracurricular activities and think about how you can cut back and make the work load more manageable.
6. **Recognize what's normal.** It is typical to become nervous while presenting and you are not alone with this. It's also common to have worries/concerns about what your peers are thinking about you. Remembering the "spotlight effect" can be helpful. This is the idea that you feel everyone is watching you or the spotlight is on you. The reality is that most people are concerned about themselves and what others think of them (they're probably feeling the spotlight is on them), that they often miss or forget about mistakes that you made or questions or comments you made that you may have been embarrassed about.

### 3

## I've been feeling anxious or sad so much of the time. What can I do?

Sometimes it's hard for us to get through the day because we can't shake off feeling sad, worried, frustrated, or bad about ourselves. Luckily, there's a lot of things we can do to help ourselves start to feel better.



### HERE ARE SOME IDEAS FOR WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU FIND YOUR ANXIETY, SADNESS, OR FRUSTRATION GETTING INTENSE:

- **Practice breathwork or paced breathing & meditation or mindfulness techniques.** This helps build awareness of your body's responses, and helps you learn to feel more in control of your emotions.
- **Challenge and reframe your thought patterns.** Reframing unhelpful thinking patterns can help increase your self-confidence and feel better overall. *(please see below to learn how to challenge & reframe your thinking patterns)*
- **Make a list of things you enjoy doing, as well as healthy coping skills and choose one or two of them to do.** Using healthy coping skills can help reduce your feelings of anxiety, sadness, or anger and help you to think more clearly and work through difficult emotions *(Reference coping skills list below for some ideas to choose from).*
- **Talk with a counselor or seek out a therapist.** Speaking with a counselor or therapist can help you feel you have a safe space to experience and process your emotions and they can help you to identify healthy coping skills that work for you!

## How can I challenge my negative thoughts and beliefs about myself?

Do you ever feel that you're not smart enough, talented enough, attractive enough, etc.? Do you find that you compare yourself to others or worry about what others think about you? Often, we tell ourselves these things and begin to believe that they are true. **Your thoughts are just thoughts-not facts-and if you're not careful, negative thoughts can lead you to start feeling badly about yourself.** It's important for you to challenge these negative thoughts and beliefs that you hold. When you are able to challenge these thoughts, you will begin to recognize that your confidence in yourself will increase and you will begin to feel better overall.



### Thoughts - Feelings - Behavior (Cognitive Triangle)

Your thoughts impact your behaviors, which impact your feelings, which in turn further impact your thoughts, behaviors and feelings. These 3 are all connected to each other. This can lead to a constant cycle of you feeling unhappy, insecure, anxious, etc.

#### THOUGHT-BEHAVIOR-FEELING EXAMPLES

**Thought:** *"I'm not pretty enough"*

**Behavior:** Over focusing on your appearance

**Feeling:** Insecure

**Thought:** *"No one likes me"*

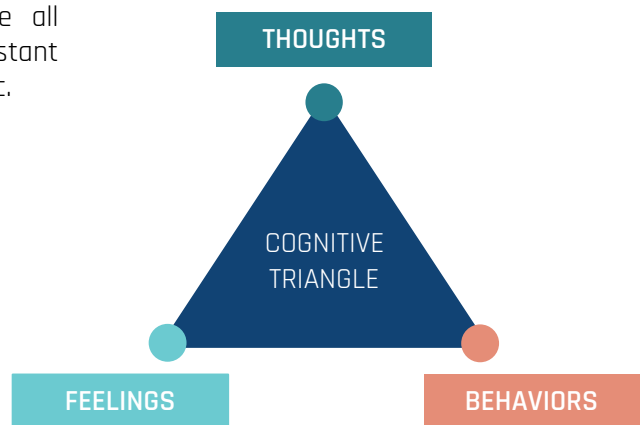
**Behavior:** Avoiding social situations

**Feeling:** Insecure, sad, anxious

**Thought:** *"Nobody likes me. Everyone thinks I'm annoying."*

**Behavior:** Not being able to get out of bed to go to school

**Feeling:** Depressed, lonely, anxious



## Start by reframing your thoughts.

- **Reframing your thoughts**
  - *"I enjoy \_\_\_\_\_ about myself"* (this can be a physical feature or an attribute about yourself that you like)
  - *"I have a few friends who I am really close with and who care about me."*
- **Practice writing down or saying a reframe out loud** when you experience negative thoughts. When you reframe your thoughts, this changes your behaviors and feelings, which allows you to feel better about yourself. It's really helpful to start practicing saying or writing down your positive thoughts before you are feeling sad or overwhelmed. If you are practicing every day, you are much more likely to be able to challenge negative thoughts when they do occur.

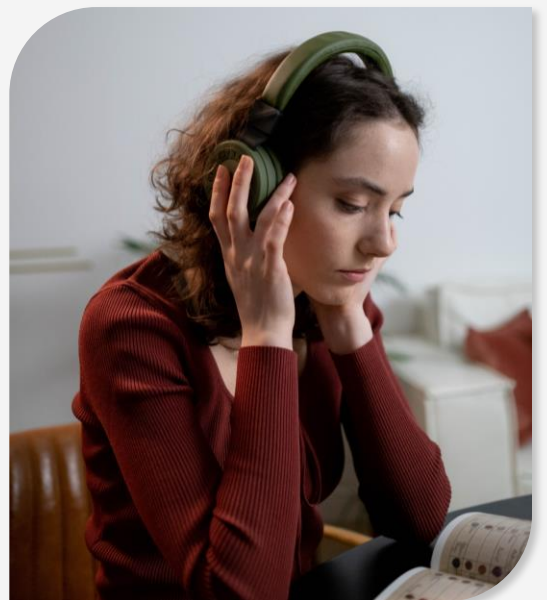


## Change your normal behaviors.

- **Do not over focus on your appearance.** Focusing less on your appearance, rather than more may actually help you to worry less about your appearance and feel better about yourself. (this does not mean to not care at all about your personal hygiene or appearance. It means finding a healthy balance and noticing what happens when you overly focus on your appearance).
- **Get yourself more involved in social events:** when you become more involved in social events, you are more likely to make friends and feel less lonely and begin to believe that people enjoy spending time with you. When you avoid social situations, you increase the likelihood of feeling lonely.

## Do things you enjoy.

- **When we are feeling very sad,** it can be hard to get ourselves to do simple things we enjoy such as taking a walk, listening to music, playing an instrument, drawing a picture, etc.
- **If you are able to encourage yourself** to begin an activity you enjoy even if you're not feeling up to it at first, you are likely to start feeling better during the activity. You can use this strategy to "get yourself going" and carry that better feeling to the next activity you have that day.





It's good to have a few coping skills that work for you. This may take trying a few and seeing what works best.

HERE IS A LIST OF COPING SKILLS TO CHOOSE FROM:

1. Take deep breaths
2. Play a sport
3. Listen to music
4. Write in a journal
5. Write down what your grateful for
6. Write down things you are proud of yourself for or like about yourself
7. Count to 20 slowly
8. Talk to a friend or family member you trust
9. Think of something that makes you happy
10. Imagine yourself in a place you enjoy or doing something you enjoy
11. Pet an animal
12. Aroma therapy
13. Set a healthy sleep schedule
14. Exercise
15. Sing
16. Dance
17. Draw/color/art
18. Eat a healthy snack
19. Meditate
20. Stretch
21. Write a letter to someone
22. Help someone or do something kind
23. Hug someone
24. Squeeze a stress ball
25. Use a fidget toy
26. Grounding techniques
27. Work on a puzzle
28. Count objects around you
29. Hold a stuffed animal
30. Wrap yourself in a comfortable blanket
31. Plant something
32. Take a warm bath
33. Submerge yourself in cold water or splash cold water on your face
34. Hold ice
35. Drink cold water
36. Write a story
37. Read a book
38. Look at pictures that make you happy
39. Sit in nature
40. Listen to something in nature or something soothing
41. Observe 5 things in your environment that you can see
42. Watch something funny or uplifting
43. Relax your muscles
44. Take a break
45. Spend time with friends
46. Say no when you need to
47. Play a game
48. Go on a walk
49. Write a list of pros and cons
50. Allow yourself to cry

**Mindfulness** is practicing tools that help you tune into your body and your senses. It helps you build awareness of your body's responses, which can help you learn to feel more in control of overwhelming feelings.

**HERE ARE SOME MUST TRY EXAMPLES:**

- **Lie down or sit somewhere comfortable and notice how your body responds each time you breathe.** When you breathe your stomach moves up and down. Focus on this or hold your hand on your stomach to feel it move. Your hand will rise and fall with your stomach. Do this 5-10 times. After doing this, when you breathe in focus on how your stomach goes up and as you breathe out focus on something that went well today, something you are proud of yourself for, or something you like about yourself. This can allow you to feel more grounded and in tune with yourself. It can also help you to feel better about yourself, allowing you to sleep better, feel more rested, and feel prepared to take on the next day.
- **Starfish breathing:** Hold your hand out and trace each finger up and down with your other hand. As you trace up your thumb, focus on breathing in and as you trace down your thumb focus on breathing out. Repeat this with each of your other fingers. Continue this twice and pay attention to how your stomach moves as you breathe in and out. The third time you trace your hand while breathing in and out, try to think of all the positive things your hand does for you or all the things you enjoy doing in which you use your hand (*i.e. do you use your hand to give someone a hug/high five, read a book, write, play video games, play a sport, turn on music*).
- **5, 4, 3, 2, 1:** 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, 1 thing you can taste-choose things that are pleasant to you and if you find that focusing on 1 or 2 of your senses is most helpful, you don't need to focus on all of your senses.
  - This can help you to feel more relaxed and less anxious. Oftentimes, we tend to think about multiple things at once and it can become overwhelming. This can help you to focus on your senses and ease any difficult feelings you may be experiencing.

**CLICK BELOW TO SEE A DEMO**



**CLICK BELOW TO SEE A DEMO**



Recognize when it's time to seek more support.

**Simi Psychological Group is here to help.**



While some feelings of anxiety, stress and sadness are normal (especially as a teenager!), when these feelings are too overwhelming or constant, it may be time to get more support.

Finding a therapist to talk to can help you recognize patterns you weren't aware of, help you learn strategies that work best for you, and can help your family members (e.g. parents) figure out what they can do differently to help.

At Simi Psychological Group, we have a team of therapists with years of experience helping students and their families. We work with you and your family to better understand what you may be experiencing and learn the tools that can help you create the changes you desire.



**SIMI PSYCHOLOGICAL GROUP**

Create Real Change

You can contact us at 805-842-1994 or by email at [info@simipsychologicalgroup.com](mailto:info@simipsychologicalgroup.com).  
Learn more about us [here!](#)