



Coping strategies for tweens ages 9-12:

1. **Deep Breathing Exercises:** Teach simple deep-breathing techniques to help them calm down when feeling anxious. For example, practice belly breathing or "balloon breathing" where they imagine inflating and deflating a balloon with their breath.
2. **Mindfulness Activities:** Introduce basic mindfulness exercises that are suitable for their age, such as mindful breathing, body scans, or sensory awareness. Apps or videos designed for kids can make these practices more accessible **(examples of activities are provided below)**
3. **Expressive Arts:** Encourage creative expression through art, drawing, or journaling. Tweens can use these outlets to express their feelings and gain a better understanding of their emotions.
4. **Create a Worry Box:** Have them write down their worries on slips of paper and place them in a designated "worry box." This symbolic act can help them externalize their concerns and feel a sense of control.
5. **Establish a Routine:** Create a predictable daily routine. Knowing what to expect can provide a sense of security and reduce uncertainty, which can be particularly helpful for tweens.
6. **Positive Affirmations:** Introduce the concept of positive self-talk. Help them identify and challenge negative thoughts by replacing them with positive affirmations.

7. **Encourage Physical Activity:** Regular exercise is beneficial for mental health. Encourage tweens to engage in activities they enjoy, whether it's playing sports, riding bikes, or dancing.
8. **Social Support:** Foster positive social connections. Encourage friendships and open communication with family members. Having a support system can provide comfort during challenging times.
9. **Teach Problem-Solving Skills:** Help tweens break down problems into smaller, more manageable parts. Guide them in brainstorming solutions and taking small steps toward resolving challenges.
10. **Limit Exposure to Stressors:** Be mindful of their environment and limit exposure to stressors when possible. This may include monitoring screen time, managing academic pressures, and creating a calm and organized study space.
11. **Educate About Anxiety:** Provide age-appropriate information about anxiety and emotions. Understanding what anxiety is and normalizing their feelings can help tweens cope more effectively.
12. **Set Realistic Goals:** Encourage them to set achievable goals and celebrate their accomplishments. Emphasize the importance of effort and progress rather than perfection.
13. **Use Imaginative Play:** Incorporate imaginative play or storytelling as a way for tweens to explore and process their emotions. This can be especially effective for younger tweens.
14. **Cloud Watching:** Find a comfortable spot outdoors and engage in cloud watching. Encourage the child to imagine their worries floating away with the clouds, promoting a sense of letting go.
15. **Thought Stopping:** Teach the child to recognize and challenge anxious thoughts. When they notice a worry, have them visualize a stop sign and replace the anxious thought with a positive or neutral one.

16. **Music:** Create playlists of calming or uplifting music. Listening to music can have a positive impact on mood and relaxation.

17. **Seek Professional Support:** If anxiety persists or significantly impacts their daily life, consider seeking professional help from a counselor, therapist, or school psychologist who specializes in working with tweens.

It's essential to adapt these strategies based on the individual needs and preferences of each tween. Creating a supportive and understanding environment is key to helping them develop effective coping mechanisms.

Mindfulness and relaxation techniques for Tweens (children ages 9 to 12)

1. **Belly Breathing:** Have the tween lie down and place a small stuffed animal on their belly. Inhale deeply, allowing the belly to rise, and exhale slowly, letting the belly fall.

2. **Mindful Listening:** Play a sound or chime and ask the tween to close their eyes and listen carefully. Have them raise their hand when they can no longer hear the sound. This activity promotes focused attention.

3. **Sensory Exploration:** Engage the tween's senses by having them explore different textures, scents, or tastes. This can be done with objects like textured fabrics, scented oils, or a variety of snacks.

4. **Balloon Visualization:** Have the tween imagine their worries as balloons. With each exhale, visualize releasing these worry balloons into the sky, watching them float away.

5. **Mindful Coloring:** Provide coloring sheets and encourage the tween to color mindfully, paying attention to the colors, strokes, and the act of coloring itself.

6. **Calm Down Corner:** Create a designated space where the tween can go to relax and recharge. Fill it with calming items like soft pillows, stress balls, or fidget toys.
7. **Breath Counting:** Instruct the tween to count their breaths up to a certain number, then start over. This simple technique helps anchor their focus on the breath.
8. **Emotion Cards:** Create cards with different emotions and have the tween pick a card. Ask them to share a time when they felt that emotion and discuss strategies for managing it.
9. **Nature Walk:** Take the tween on a mindful nature walk. Encourage them to observe and appreciate the sights, sounds, and smells of the outdoors.
10. **Lava Lamp Jar:** Create a "lava lamp" jar using water, oil, and food coloring. As the tween shakes the jar, have them focus on the swirling colors and imagine their thoughts settling like the falling "lava."
11. **Starfish Hands:** Teach the tween the "starfish hands" technique. Spread their fingers wide, take a deep breath in, and then slowly exhale, bringing their fingers back together.
12. **Gratitude Jar:** Have the tween write or draw something they're grateful for each day on a slip of paper and add it to a gratitude jar. This fosters a positive mindset.
13. **Yoga for Kids:** Introduce simple yoga poses designed for kids. Make it fun by incorporating storytelling or playing soft music in the background.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mz9Qq7vIUfw>

14. **Positive Affirmations:** Encourage the tween to create positive affirmations that they can repeat to themselves during moments of stress. For example, "I am strong and can handle challenges."

https://youtu.be/Ud_eeFkzH4w?si=baA7RUJRQzrN4_ez

15. **Bubble Wrap Pop:** Give the tween a sheet of bubble wrap and encourage them to pop each bubble mindfully, paying attention to the sensation and sound.

Adapt these techniques based on the tween's preferences and comfort level. Making mindfulness and relaxation practices enjoyable and age-appropriate is key to their effectiveness.