

UNDERSTANDING ANXIETY

LEARNING SUPPORT ACTIVITIES • TEACHER RESOURCE

Anxiety is more than occasional worry or nervousness. Students experiencing anxiety may have difficulty concentrating, participating, completing assignments, or demonstrating what they know. A supportive classroom environment can help students feel safe, engaged, and successful while maintaining high academic expectations.

What Is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a mental health condition that can affect thoughts, emotions, physical well-being, and behavior. It exists on a spectrum, and students may experience anxiety differently depending on the situation.

What You May Notice in an ASL Classroom

- Hesitation to sign in front of others
- Avoiding partner or group activities
- Difficulty making eye contact
- Frequent requests for reassurance
- Trouble concentrating during receptive activities
- Physical signs such as fidgeting, shaking, or appearing overwhelmed

Student Strengths

- Thoughtful and observant
- Caring and empathetic
- Strong attention to detail
- Motivated to do well
- Creative problem-solving

How Teachers Can Help

- Establish predictable classroom routines
- Clearly explain expectations
- Offer opportunities to practice before presenting
- Encourage, but never force participation
- Provide positive, specific feedback
- Allow appropriate accommodations outlined in the student's IEP or Section 504 Plan

Things to Avoid

- Calling on students unexpectedly when it may increase distress
- Comparing students to classmates
- Assuming a quiet student is disengaged
- Publicly discussing a student's anxiety

★ Remember

Supportive teaching reduces barriers while maintaining high expectations. The goal is to help students build confidence and demonstrate learning in ways that allow them to be successful.