

Section: EXTENSION PROJECT REPORT

Abstract: EXT-01

Anxiety and depression among adolescents: an experience report of a humanized intervention

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INTRODUCTION: Because anxiety and depression are highly prevalent, this project aimed to assess factors associated with these conditions among adolescents and help them manage the symptoms, as this age group is the most affected. **EXPERIENCE REPORT:** The project was conducted at an institution with 114 adolescents aged 15 to 17 years and included several activities. The first involved showing a video that encouraged reflection on the effects of anxiety in daily life and created an opportunity for adolescents to share their own insecurities, both through conversation and anonymous slips of paper. After this activity, four techniques—breathing, muscle relaxation, attention, and sensory awareness—were practiced to help participants manage future episodes of anxiety. The adolescents then placed their slips inside balloons and kept the balloons in the air. Participants were gradually removed from the activity to illustrate the importance of sharing thoughts and feelings. Finally, three questionnaires were administered: two validated instruments, the PHQ-9 and GAD-7, and one epidemiologic questionnaire. **DISCUSSION:** The questionnaires showed a high prevalence of anxiety and depressive symptoms among participating adolescents. The main causes of these feelings were comparison with others, academic pressure and university entrance examinations, parental demands, and low self-esteem. On the slips written by the students, some had difficulty responding to and understanding the proposed activity; however, other responses indicated social anxiety, feelings of fear and anxiety, and low self-esteem. Throughout the activities, the adolescents were interested and participatory. They shared their feelings and insecurities and showed strong interest in learning the proposed anxiety-management techniques. The balloon activity ultimately helped them understand the importance of an emotional support network. Contrary to initial expectations, the intervention showed that many adolescents are willing to talk about what troubles them when given the opportunity. This finding highlights the importance of active listening, not only to protect against the development of psychiatric disorders but also to enable early diagnosis and treatment.

KEYWORDS: Anxiety; Depression; Adolescents; Mental health.