

Psychotherapist: 10 Reasons American Teens Are More Anxious Than Ever

In October the *New York Times* asked a question: "[Why Are More American Teenagers Than Ever Suffering From Severe Anxiety?](#)"

Writing at *Psychology Today*, psychotherapist Amy Morin [offers 10 reasons](#):

1. Electronics offer an unhealthy escape.
2. Happiness is all the rage.
3. Parents are giving unrealistic praise.
4. Parents are getting caught up in the rat race.
5. Kids aren't learning emotional skills.
6. Parents view themselves as protectors, rather than guides.
7. Adults don't know to help kids face their fears the right way.
8. Parents are parenting out of guilt and fear.
9. Kids aren't being given enough free time to play.
10. Family hierarchies are out of whack.

Morin offers brief descriptions of each of her enumerations, which I'd encourage you to read. But from a high level, a common theme is conspicuous in her list: Children are being shielded from *reality*.

Now, perhaps this is natural to some degree. Reality, as they say, is a bitch. Or more poetically, in the words of T.S. Eliot, "Humankind cannot bear very much reality."

It might be natural to shield one's children from nature, but to do so excessively is not without unhealthy consequences. As Morin explains, "We've created an environment that fosters anxiety, rather than resilience in young people."

How did this happen? In their book [*Gist: The Essence of Raising Life-Ready Kids*](#), authors Michael W. Anderson, a licensed psychologist, and Timothy D. Johanson, an MD, suggest that many people today misperceive the nature of living.

"The true nature of life has always been that it is difficult," the authors write. "Many in our culture may not believe this truth, and many children are not being taught this reality."

Both parents and schools systems increasingly appear intent on nurturing self-esteem and protecting children from externalities of every kind. The problem is, as a result, many of these young people will not receive vital emotional skills and they will be unequipped to deal with the realities life presents, such as losing, divorce, teasing, rejection, and

death.

These emotionally unequipped folks, Johanson and Anderson say, are easy to spot.

“People who have not internalized this are not hard to identify. These are the ones who complain when normal obstacles and disappointments converge on their lives. They feel as if life is unfair and they proclaim this injustice repeatedly. From the outside looking in, these people seem to be tormented by normalcy.”

One need not look far to see evidence of this phenomenon. The [emotionally fragile](#) millennial, the generation first introduced to these coddling techniques, is an idea so pervasive it has quickly become [a cliché](#).

What is the solution? The Gist authors and Morin seem to agree on a good place to start: Begin to feed young people more *truth*. Let them face obstacles. Let them live.