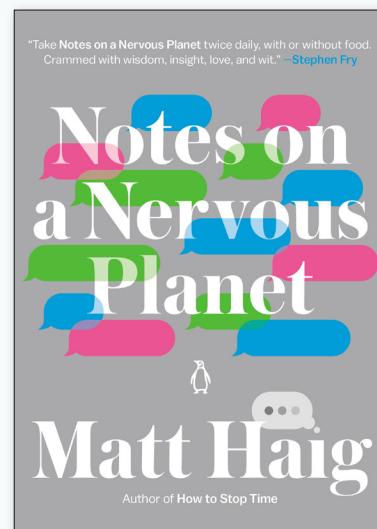
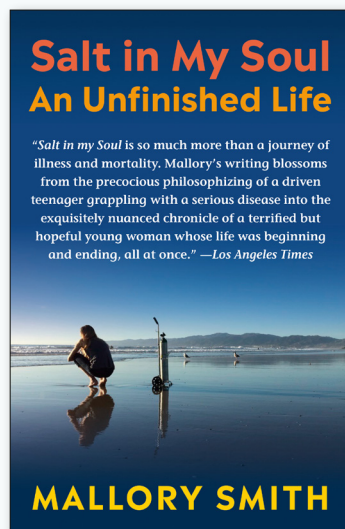
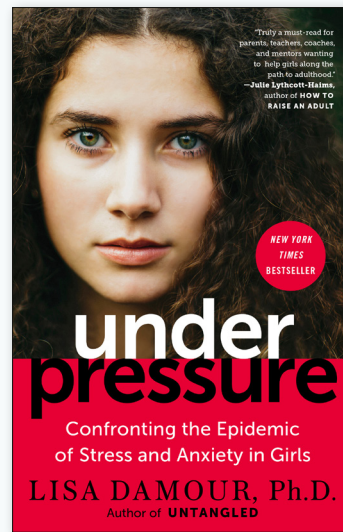
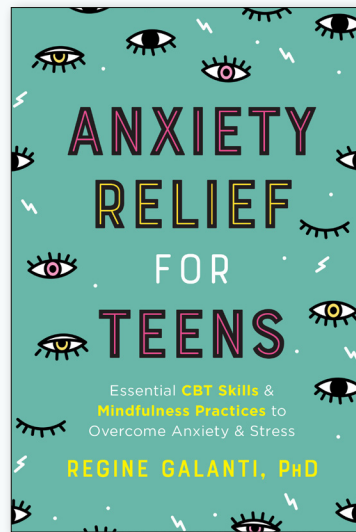


THEMATIC GUIDE

Building Teacher Knowledge Around Anxiety & Mindfulness



The books in this guide will build teacher knowledge around the topics of anxiety, mindfulness, and specific strategies that help children develop self-awareness and school success. These texts are excellent choices for teacher book circles, where educators can connect the research, scenarios, and stories to their own students and classrooms.

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■ INTRODUCTION

According to the 2018 Children’s Mental Health Report released by the Child Mind Institute, anxiety disorder diagnoses in children and teens increased seventeen percent over the previous decade. Due to the recent global pandemic, those numbers have risen even more. Unfortunately, well-intentioned parents and teachers often miss the signs of this invisible illness and children with untreated anxiety risk developing more serious issues that dramatically impact their lives both at school and home. Often misdiagnosed with other problems or labeled “overdramatic,” these students may fall behind at school, suffer from depression, or become susceptible to substance abuse.

What is the teacher’s role in addressing this epidemic of anxiety? In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its catastrophic impact on students and schools, educators are more aware than ever before that their role reaches beyond content and instruction and that integrating social-emotional learning into the curriculum is critical if they want their students to succeed.

The books in this text set build teacher knowledge around the topics of anxiety, mindfulness, and specific strategies that help children develop self-awareness and school success. These texts are excellent choices for teacher book circles, where educators can connect the research, scenarios, and stories to their own students and classrooms. Teachers can choose to read one or any combination of the texts in this set and apply any of the activities in their book circles and classrooms. The goal is to empower educators to recognize student anxiety and promote a calm, supportive classroom culture where students thrive.

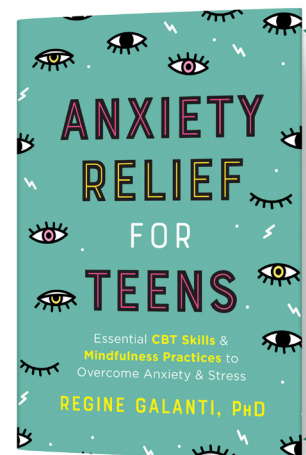
■ ABOUT THE TITLES IN THIS COLLECTION

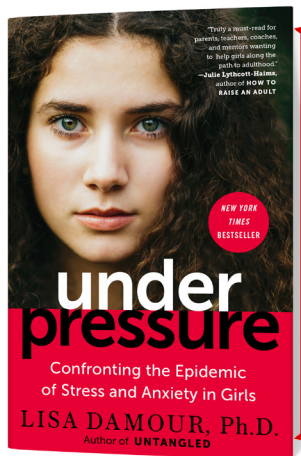
In *Anxiety Relief for Teens: Essential CBT Skills and Mindfulness Practices to Overcome Anxiety and Stress*, an expert psychologist in cognitive behavioral therapy provides impactful science-based strategies for teens that teachers can take and use immediately with their students.

Anxiety Relief for Teens:
Essential CBT Skills and Mindfulness Practices
to Overcome Anxiety and Stress
REGINE GALANTI, Ph.D.

978-0-593-19664-9 | Paperback | Zeitgeist Young Adult | 192 pages | \$17.99

Also available: Audio Download, E-Book





Under Pressure: Confronting the Epidemic of Stress and Anxiety in Girls examines the alarming increase in anxiety in elementary through college-aged girls. Teachers will learn “look-fors” to identify the often invisible signs of student stress.

Under Pressure: Confronting the Epidemic of Stress and Anxiety in Girls
LISA DAMOUR, Ph.D.

978-0-399-18007-1 | Paperback | Ballantine Books | 304 pages | \$17.00

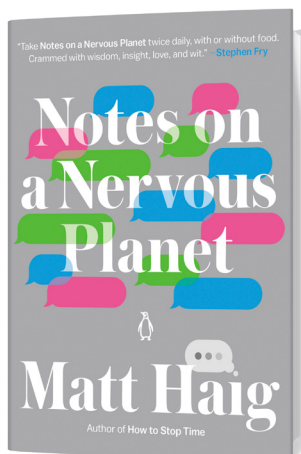
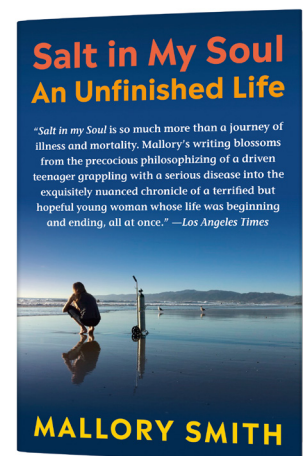
Also available: Audio Download, E-Book

Salt in My Soul: An Unfinished Life chronicles a young girl’s experience living with an invisible-turned-visible illness, the anxiety that accompanies it, and the typical coming-of-age issues experienced by all adolescents and young adults. The memoir sets the stage for vital classroom discussions about disability, mental health, advocacy, and writing for healing.

Salt in My Soul: An Unfinished Life
MALLORY SMITH

978-1-9848-5544-2 | Paperback | Random House Trade Paperbacks | 336 pages | \$17.00

Also available: Audio Download, E-Book



Notes on a Nervous Planet explores timely issues such as the link between social media and the rise in anxiety and panic attacks. Readers will gain a better understanding of what student anxiety looks like and the challenges many of their students face.

Notes on a Nervous Planet
MATT HAIG

978-0-14-313342-1 | Paperback | Penguin Life | 304 pages | \$16.00

Also available: Audio Download, E-Book

■ PREPARING FOR THE TEACHER BOOK STUDY

The following activities help educators prepare for a book study by building knowledge around mindfulness and anxiety.

PRE-READING

Build background knowledge by reading a professional article highlighting the widespread increase in student anxiety and the critical need for mindfulness instruction. Annotate the article with takeaways and classroom connections. Be prepared to discuss annotations in a teacher book circle, professional learning community, or other peer collaboration opportunity.

One tool that works well for reading, annotating, and discussing professional articles is the Four A's Protocol. While reading, note any assumptions the author makes, as well as any agreements and arguments you have with the text. Finally, note any aspirations you have as you connect the reading to your own teaching. Two publications that lay the groundwork for reading and discussing the texts in this guide are listed below.

- “Understanding Anxiety in Children and Teens”:
childmind.org/blog/understanding-anxiety-in-children-and-teens
- “The Epidemic of Anxiety Among Today’s Students”:
nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/epidemic-anxiety-among-todays-students

SELF-INVENTORY

Complete a self-assessment of your knowledge, experience, and feelings around anxiety and mindfulness. One frequently used tool from the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders is “Self-Assessing Social and Emotional Instruction and Competencies” (gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/SelfAssessmentSEL.pdf). Questions center on teachers’ competencies like emotional regulation and social awareness as well as classroom practices such as setting expectations, modeling, and providing feedback. The goal is to build awareness and facilitate goal-setting around student anxiety and other SEL needs. Teachers can quickly score their self-assessment, then engage in reflection and action planning. Two other self-checks for teachers are listed below.

- transformingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/SEL-Integration-Approach-Teacher-Self-Check-Tool_vF2.pdf
- schoolguide.casel.org/resource/teacher-self-assessment-integrating-sel-into-daily-instruction-ost/

■ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHER BOOK CIRCLES

The following section provides teacher study groups with activities and routines for talking about the books in this guide. Groups may choose any number or combination of these practices as they delve into discussion in person, online, or in a hybrid environment.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The texts in this set provide multiple topics for book circle discussions. The following questions connect to one or more of the texts and will serve as excellent discussion starters whether group members read the same or different titles in the set. In addition, group members may formulate their own questions while reading and bring these back to prompt discussion.

1. Both *Notes on a Nervous Planet* and *Salt in My Soul* provide vivid depictions of anxiety and the social stressors that contribute to it. Discuss with the group: What are both Matt Haig and Mallory Smith anxious about? Have we seen our students worry about similar issues, such as violence, technology, and the environment? What do Matt and Mallory suggest for attaining happiness in a hectic world? What helpful lessons and tools do they provide that we might utilize with students?
2. *Under Pressure* discusses the toxic pressures adolescent girls face today, with social media being one of the most significant. Where have we seen this play out with our own students? Discuss the “high cost of social comparison” for today’s young women. Consider the role of “likes,” followers, selfies, comments, and other social media tools. The author asserts educators should offer support rather than judgment. What might this look like? What are specific action steps we as teachers can take?
3. At the opening of *Anxiety Relief for Teens*, the author provides a quiz for teens to identify their anxiety. Take a look at this quiz with yourself as the subject. Do any of these stressors or behaviors resonate with your adolescence or even your adult years? What social and cultural similarities and differences exist between our students’ lives and our own? How do we see these same topics addressed in *Under Pressure*, *Salt in My Soul*, and *Notes on a Nervous Planet*? What suggestions do these texts and our own experiences offer that might bridge the divide between our students and us?
4. Matt Haig, in *Notes on a Nervous Planet*, asserts there is a “war on sleep.” What does he suggest are some of the causes and impacts on our students? What specific advice from *Anxiety Relief for Teens* might we use with our sleep-deprived students? What actions can we take as educators to acknowledge and address this health concern?
5. The authors of *Under Pressure* and *Notes on a Nervous Planet*, as well as Mallory Smith in *Salt in My Soul*, discuss eating disorders as both a symptom and an outcome of anxiety in our students. Very often, these are high-achieving young women like Mallory. What are some of the contributing factors of eating disorders

in our students? How might the “mindful eating” routine suggested in *Anxiety Relief for Teens* address this serious issue? How are we already addressing healthy eating and body image at our school? What more can we do?

6. In *Notes on a Nervous Planet*, Matt Haig asserts that we must start talking openly about mental health and stop conflating illness with weakness. Is mental health still a taboo topic, or have we, as educators, made significant strides? In what ways do depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues “stigmatize” our students? How do gender role expectations and assumptions play into such stigmatization? What can we do in our school to provide a positive culture where individuality is celebrated and mental health is a priority?
7. In *Under Pressure*, Dr. Lisa Damour asserts that “money can buy stress” and that more is not always better. Matt Haig echoes this in *Notes on a Nervous Planet* when he discusses the “diminishing returns” of our instant gratification culture. How is the purchasing power of youth and the accumulation of personal luxuries impacting teens, both those with and without money? What is the connection between money, happiness, and identity when it comes to our students?
8. In *Salt in My Soul*, Mallory Smith finds herself having to self-advocate with teachers for accommodations due to illness. Do we encourage our students to self-advocate when they are feeling anxious, panicked, or overwhelmed? How have we responded in the past when students have expressed their anxiety or asked for accommodations? What is the relationship between academic expectations and students’ emotional lives, and how do we, as educators, contribute to that relationship? How can teachers be proactive about looking for signs of stress and promoting a culture where emotions are validated and addressed?

ROLES, GOALS, AND NORMS

In order to ensure focus, engagement, equity, and respect of diverse viewpoints, we need to set roles, goals, and norms for collaboration. Together as a group, create a list of goals for the book study. This can be accomplished by asking each participant to write down one or two personal goals for the book study, identify patterns and similarities, and then vote on a final list of two to three the group will focus on.

Using the same process, devise a set of group norms in order to establish an environment where each voice is heard and considered. Norms might include “share airtime” and “refer to text when possible.” Some book circles find it helpful to establish roles in order to share accountability and promote engagement. Sample roles might include a facilitator who asks the questions or leads the protocol, a timekeeper who keeps the discussion moving, a scribe who records significant ideas, and a summarizer who synthesizes the discussion and helps the scribe decide what to record. These roles can either remain in place throughout the book study, change at each meeting, or discontinue once the book study runs smoothly.

DISCUSSION PROTOCOLS

In *Under Pressure*, the author discusses the confidence needed to “lean in” rather than hold back around peers. The same can be said of adults in collaborative scenarios such as a book study. In order to promote high-level discussion with equal talk-time, utilize a research-based discussion protocol. Such protocols are simple in structure yet effective for engagement and applicable in the classroom.

The Four A’s Protocol outlined in this guide’s “Building Knowledge” section is one such routine. Using four separate rounds, group members can take turns sharing their annotated author assumptions and reader agreements, arguments, and aspirations. The Four A’s is an excellent activity for the first meeting of a teacher book circle.

Another protocol that works well for peer discussion is “Save the Last Word for Me.” In this routine, participants use note cards to record a quotation or excerpt that made an impression while reading, followed by a brief explanation. One at a time, participants then share their text excerpt but not the explanation. Next, group members take turns discussing the chosen passage as the original participant listens and then shares how the group has changed or extended their original explanation.

In one final discussion protocol, “Text Rendering,” participants highlight one significant word, one significant sentence, and one significant passage in the assigned section of text. Taking turns, group members then share their word and their reasoning. Next, individuals share their sentences, and, in a final round, their passages.

Groups can select one of the protocols to use at each book circle meeting or use a different one each time. The meetings might end by discussing the success of the routines and how they might be applied to students. Additional discussion protocols can be found at nsrfharmony.org/protocols.

MINDFULNESS PRACTICE

Research on anxiety reveals the positive impact of starting class with a mindfulness activity similar to those found in *Anxiety Relief for Teens*. Since teacher stress is a rising concern, teachers can start their book study meetings in the same fashion. Using a simple “check-in” strategy, participants take turns using a word or phrase to reveal how they are arriving at the meeting. For example, teachers may say “enthusiastic,” “collegial,” or “stressed.” In sharing one another’s arrival status, teachers may better empathize and respond to colleagues’ interactions during book circle discussion.

Breathing exercises are another research-based strategy for centering. A volunteer from the book circle might lead colleagues through one minute of mindful breathing before beginning the discussion. Another centering exercise asks participants to close their eyes and focus on what they hear, smell, and feel. Alternatively, participants can be provided a few minutes of quiet to look over their reading notes.

It may be useful for participants to discuss the impact of the mindfulness routine on their focus and engagement during the meeting, as well as the application of the activity to teaching and learning in their classrooms. For more information on mindfulness as a useful tool for teachers, see greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/seven_ways_mindfulness_can_help_teachers.

■ CLASSROOM APPLICATIONS

Effective book circles will empower teachers to integrate personal routines and instructional practices inspired by the readings and discussions. In addition to the mindfulness practices found in the texts and those shared by colleagues throughout the book study, the following classroom strategies aim to address student anxiety and other social emotional learning needs.

MINDFULNESS MINUTE

In *Salt in My Soul*, Mallory Smith wishes “to wake up in the morning and take a deep, full breath.” Due to her cystic fibrosis, she is in a constant battle to breathe. Yet breathing has a metaphorical meaning for Mallory as well, as she constantly strives for balance. She writes, “Sometimes acceptance and ease, rather than force and struggle, are the keys to survival.”

Focus on breathing and balance with students by taking time for a “mindfulness moment.” Prior to the start of class, greet students quietly, encouraging them to put away their digital devices and take their seats in a classroom that is dimmed, peaceful, and quiet. These directions may be posted on chart paper or the whiteboard. Direct students in a slow, purposeful breathing exercise and focus attention on that breathing or on an ambient sound, such as tranquil music or hallway noise. End the mindfulness moment verbally or with a singing bowl and transition to the day’s lesson. The idea is to help students move from the noise and chatter of wherever they came from into a classroom culture where they are ready to learn.

JOURNALING

Journaling is another mindfulness technique suggested in *Anxiety Relief for Teens* and utilized by Mallory Smith in *Salt in My Soul*. Mallory tries to calm her anxiety by considering the things that make her happy, such as driving with the top down, listening to “an amazing song,” laughing, and eating a healthy meal.

Students, too, can address their anxiety by writing in a classroom journal. Post prompts encouraging them to write freely about their worries, their schoolwork, or whatever is on their minds. For example, take Mallory’s lead and ask students, “What makes you happy? Choose one or more specific examples and elaborate.” Afterward, simply start class or provide time for students to share their thinking. In either case, students are more likely to feel calmed and ready to learn.

CLASSROOM VISUALS

In *Anxiety Relief for Teens*, Dr. Regine Galanti says students can “retrain their brains” by monitoring thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Model how to do this with a “train my brain” bulletin board or poster at the front of the classroom. The idea is to provide sentence starters or self-talk stems that encourage a growth mindset. The board can list a series of self-affirmations, or it might consist of “instead of this, try this” phrases. Encourage students to practice these positive self-talk phrases as a class or in partners in order to internalize them for independent use when needed. Provide students

with a portable “train my brain” poster they can keep in their notebooks for use at home and in other classes.

Another positive mindset visual is a “spot the mistakes” bulletin board, which challenges students to look for misconceptions, explain corrected thinking, and accept that mistakes lead to learning. Students can also be encouraged to recognize and post their own mistakes in order to model their thinking and help themselves as well as their peers.

One final classroom visual, a “glitter jar,” is borrowed from Dr. Lisa Damour in *Under Pressure*. Like a snow globe, teachers can use it with students to model how a frenzied brain can slow down and settle into peacefulness.

APPRECIATION, APOLOGY, AHA!

The authors of *Under Pressure* and *Notes on a Nervous Planet* point out that while we are connected to the internet most of the day, we remain disconnected from one another. Ask students to build classroom community and connections through a social emotional closing routine.

At the end of class, ask students to stand and form a large circle. Challenge them to generate an appreciation, an apology, or an “aha!” Quickly go around the circle, asking students to share their “A” aloud. Students might appreciate a classmate’s idea, apologize for lack of preparation, or share an “aha!” around content learning or even something silly. The idea is to promote relationships and shared learning and to ensure all students are given a voice. An example of this activity can be found at tinyurl.com/60SecondStrategy.

An alternative is the snowball battle, where students jot down their thoughts and feelings on a piece of paper, crumple it into a “snowball,” and throw it into the circle. Classmates can listen to and acknowledge each other by picking up one of the snowballs and sharing its contents with the circle, which provides an anonymous sounding board and builds a collaborative classroom culture.

■ RESOURCES

The following resources provide additional information and ideas for addressing student anxiety and integrating mindfulness into teaching and learning.

- “What is the CASEL Framework?” casel.org/sel-framework/
- “CASEL SEL 3 Signature Practices Playbook”: tinyurl.com/CASEL3PracticesPlaybook
- “Helping Students Beat Test Anxiety”: tinyurl.com/OvercomingTestAnxiety
- “Four Ways to Support Teens’ Social-Emotional Development at School”: tinyurl.com/4WaystoSupportStudents
- “Anxiety in Teens is Rising: What’s Going On?”: tinyurl.com/HealthyChildrenArticle

■ BOOKS OF INTEREST

Visit our website, prhsecondaryeducation.com, to browse additional fiction and non-fiction titles about social-emotional topics.

■ ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS GUIDE

Laura Reis Mayer is a high school instructional coach and National Board Certified Teacher in Asheville, North Carolina. She has taught middle school, high school, and college English, speech, drama, and teacher education. As a consultant to various national and regional organizations, she develops and facilitates professional learning on college and career-ready standards, teacher leadership, and National Board Certification. She is the author of twenty other Penguin Random House Teacher’s Guides.

