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Project Director & Author

Dr. Stan Kutcher, M.D., FRCPC
Sun Life Financial Chair in
Adolescent Mental Health,
IWK Health Centre

Contributed in part by

Vanessa Bruce, M.A.
Dr. Selene Etches, M.D., FRCPC

Final Review

Dr. Selene Etches, M.D., FRCPC
Faten Alshazly, BSc., M.A.
Dr. Stan Kutcher, M.D., FRCPC

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TeenMentalHealth Speaks...

Magazine

Dylan's Panic Disorder
Channel: [teenmentalhealth1](#)



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From the desk of Dr. Kutcher

Adolescence is an exciting time of life. There is so much to do, so much to explore, so much to learn. All of this can be at times exhilarating, challenging, scary, painful or whatever. There will be successes and there will be failures. There will be times that we look back on and say “I wish I had not done or said that” and there will be times that we look back on and say “I see that doing or saying that was the right thing to do”.

We can look at this time of life as an opportunity for emotional, social and thinking growth and see many positives. Unfortunately, in my opinion, there is a social tendency to think about the adolescent years in negative terms. And, I for one am getting a little bit tired of hearing these kinds of negative stories. Where are the positive stories?

This does not mean teens don't have their struggles. Nor does it mean that the social, personal, educational challenges faced by teens aren't also faced by adults! Everyone has their challenges. Part of growing through the teen years is learning how to successfully overcome life's challenges.

Woven into these joys and sorrows of adolescence is the reality that some of the most concerning illnesses arise during that time. They include such things as: Depression; Panic Disorder; Schizophrenia; etc. Drug misuse and even drug abuse are other challenges that arise. Unrecognized and untreated they can have negative impacts during teenager-hood and for adulthood to come.

The good news is, we have lots of effective and positive ways to help teens and families who are facing the challenges of mental disorders. This does not mean that the usual ups and downs of teen life will go away.

These Magazines will help you and your families learn about some of the most common medical illnesses of adolescence – mental disorders. I hope that this will help you and your family better understand what these are, how to identify them and what you and your family can do to help.





TRANSITIONS



Available on Amazon.com and the Apple iBookStore. The App is free for download at the Apple App Store & online: teenmentalhealth.org/resources/entries/transitions

? why

mental health matters

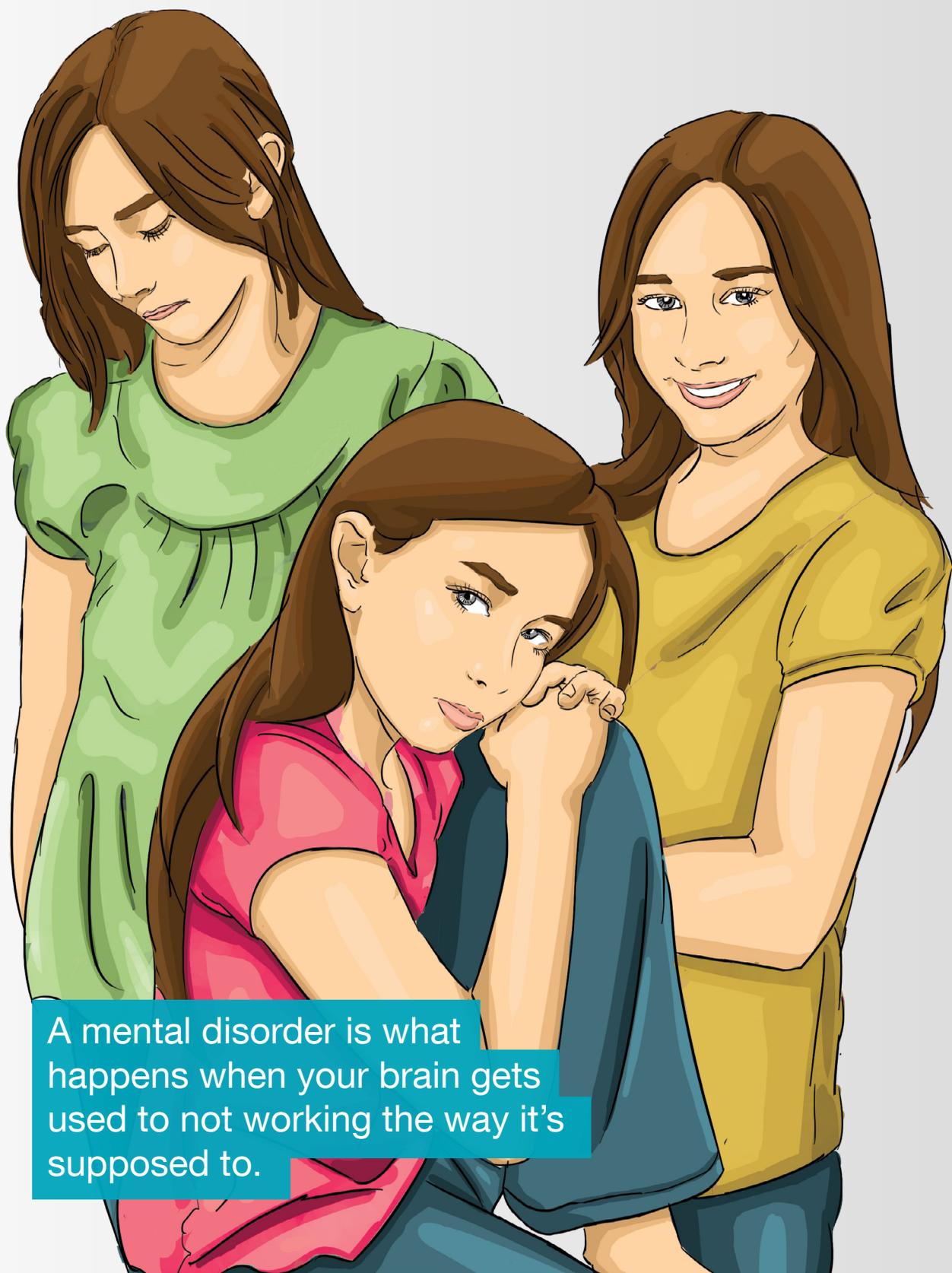
Mental health refers to the health of your brain. It's what is going on inside your head. Your mental health affects every aspect of your life, including your school performance, your physical health, your feelings, your self-esteem, and your relationships with other people. Having good mental health makes it easier for you to cope with stress and live your life the way you want to live it. Looking after your mental health is really important.

Many people experience mental health problems as teenagers. Mental health problems are when your brain is having difficulty working as well as it should. Usually, this happens when you are in a difficult situation, like if your parents are going through a divorce or someone you love dies. When this happens, you may need some extra help from a trusted adult (like a family member, a teacher, or a neighbour) or a counselor. Sometimes, however, our brains can work differently than usual for no apparent reason, causing us problems. For example,

they can make us feel sad all the time or feel anxious when there is no real danger. When this happens, it is considered a mental disorder.

A mental disorder is what happens when your brain gets used to not working the way it's supposed to. We get stuck in a pattern of feeling really down, or really anxious, or really distracted. Sometimes these patterns can even change the way our brain works. Just like how mental health affects all aspects of your life, so do mental disorders. Having a mental disorder can make it harder for you to do well in school, to get along with your friends and family, and to stay physically healthy. It makes it difficult to live your life the way you would like. Some people with mental disorders may end up using drugs and alcohol to cope, and other people may hurt themselves or think suicide is the answer.

Seek help as soon as you notice a problem. There are lots of people who can help you. Early treatment of mental disorders not only helps you right away, but the help you get can last your whole life.



A mental disorder is what happens when your brain gets used to not working the way it's supposed to.



When a person has a mental disorder, one or more of these brain functions are not working properly. And because these brain functions are all interconnected, when one function isn't working properly, the other brain functions will also be affected. In the case of an anxiety disorder, the brain's signaling mechanisms are not working the way they should. This makes people feel like they're in danger, even when they are perfectly safe! Panic Disorder is one type of anxiety disorder, where people experience recurrent panic attacks that seem to come out of nowhere.

? how

the brain works

In order to understand how the brain changes when someone has a mental disorder, we need to know how it usually works. The brain has 6 different but completely linked functions:

1 Thinking
Your brain is in charge of how you store and process information, whether it's figuring out a math problem, remembering to pack your lunch, concentrating during class, or planning what you are going to do this weekend.

2 Feeling
Your brain also controls how you feel at any given point in time and how you express those feelings to other people.

3 Perceiving/Sensing
Your brain is responsible for paying attention to what is going on around you. It does this by interpreting information from your senses - sight, smell, sound, taste, and touch. You see with your brain, not with your eyes!

4 Physical
Your brain controls how your body moves and reacts – from obvious things, like being able to move your hands, to things you don't even think about, like breathing or digesting your food.

5 Behaving
Your brain controls how you interact with the people around you and your environment. It's your brain that tells you what to do or say in different situations.

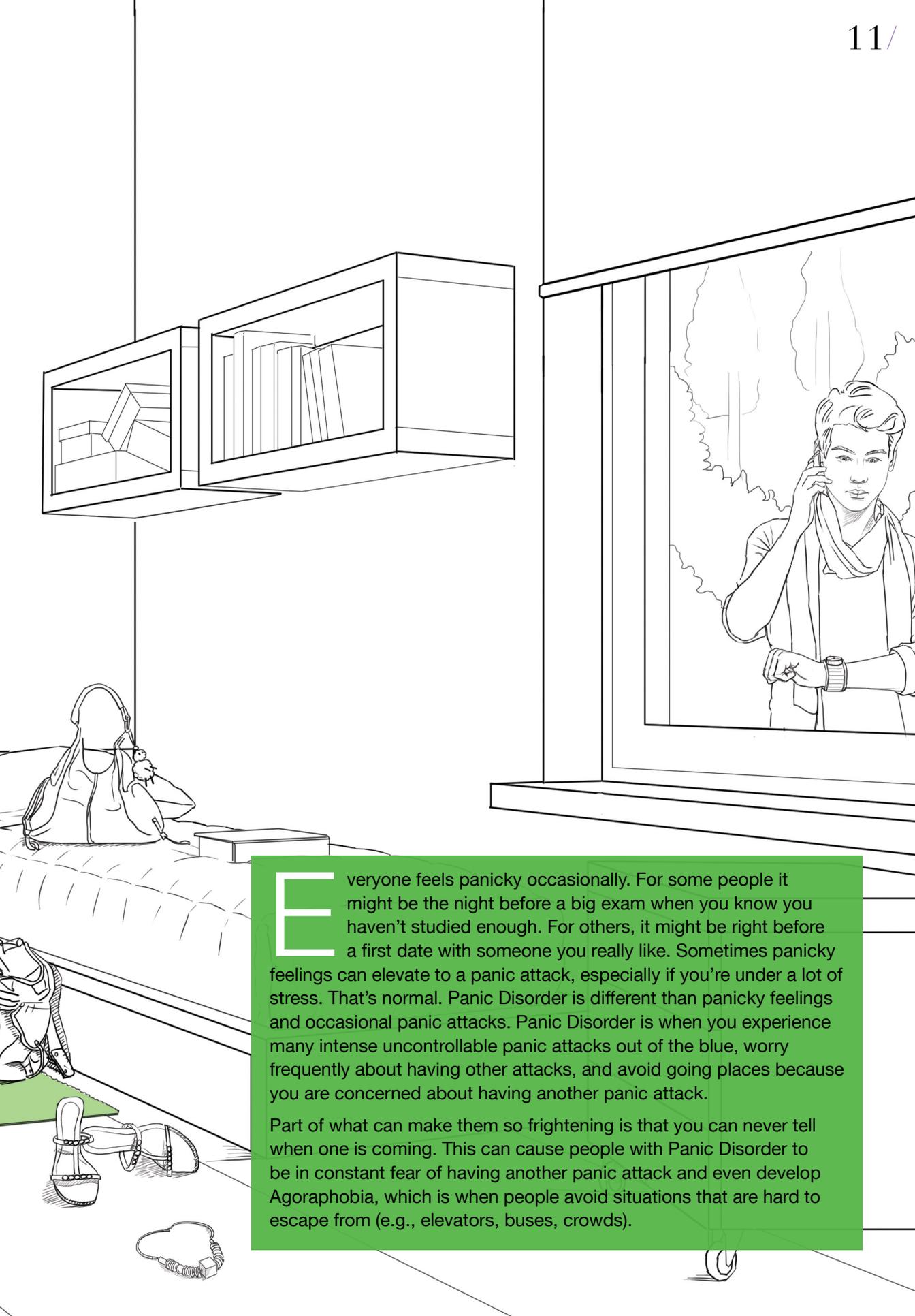
6 Signaling
Your brain also plays an important role in protecting you from danger. It keeps track of the information from your senses in order to alert you that you may be in trouble, like if you touch a hot stove and you immediately pull your hand away. Your brain is what stopped you from being badly burned!

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To learn more about the teenage brain, check out: [teenmentalhealth.org/understanding-mental-health/the-teen-brain](https://www.teenmentalhealth.org/understanding-mental-health/the-teen-brain) and youtu.be/EGdlpaWi3rc

what is Panic Disorder?





Everyone feels panicky occasionally. For some people it might be the night before a big exam when you know you haven't studied enough. For others, it might be right before a first date with someone you really like. Sometimes panicky feelings can elevate to a panic attack, especially if you're under a lot of stress. That's normal. Panic Disorder is different than panicky feelings and occasional panic attacks. Panic Disorder is when you experience many intense uncontrollable panic attacks out of the blue, worry frequently about having other attacks, and avoid going places because you are concerned about having another panic attack.

Part of what can make them so frightening is that you can never tell when one is coming. This can cause people with Panic Disorder to be in constant fear of having another panic attack and even develop Agoraphobia, which is when people avoid situations that are hard to escape from (e.g., elevators, buses, crowds).



how do I know if I'm having a panic attack?

When you have a panic attack, you'll suddenly experience **intense feelings of fear**, as well as some of the following symptoms:

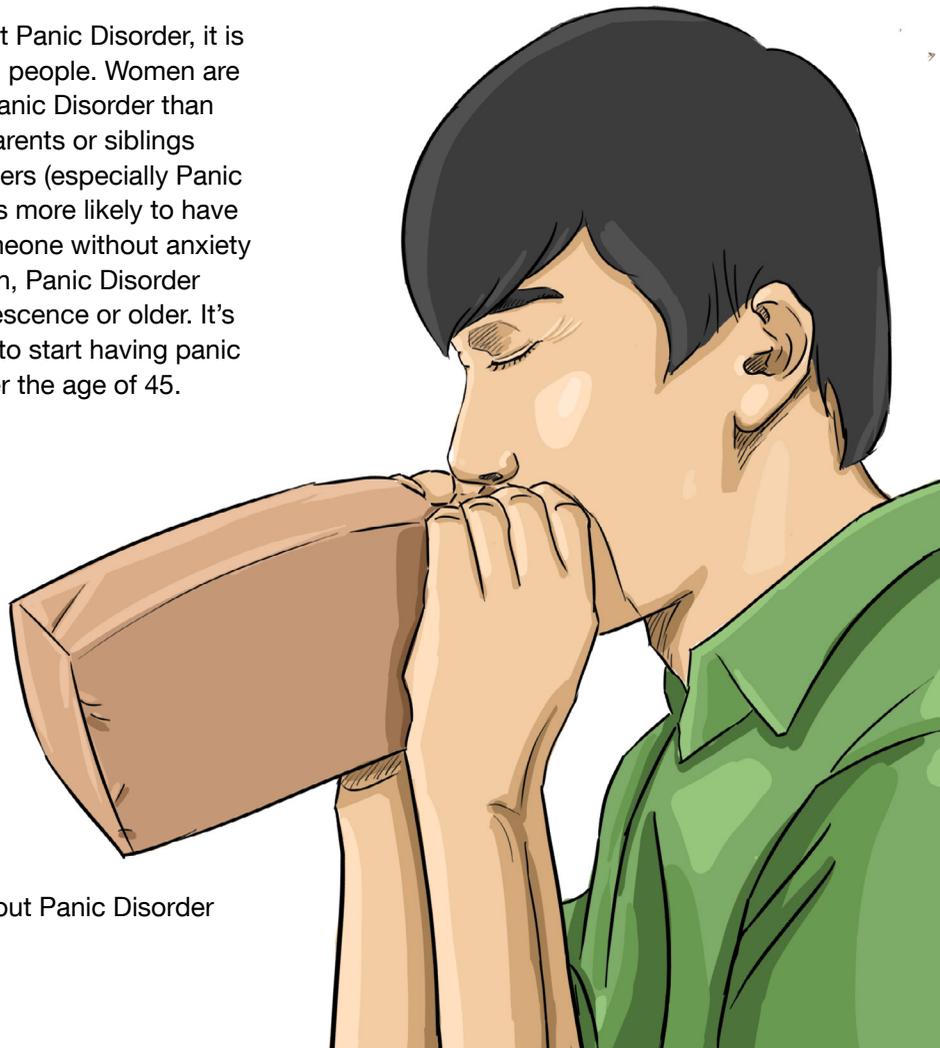
- 1 racing heart
- 2 sweating, chills, or hot flashes
- 3 trembling or shaking
- 4 feeling like you can't breathe or like you're choking
- 5 pain in your chest
- 6 nausea
- 7 feeling dizzy or faint
- 8 feeling like you're not in your own body, like you're watching yourself freak out
- 9 numbness or tingling
- 10 fear that you're going to lose control, go crazy, or even die.

Although these feelings are really frightening, they are at their worst for only about ten minutes (**although it can feel much longer!**).

? who gets Panic Disorder

Approximately 2% of Canadians will develop Panic Disorder between ages 15-24. [Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey, Mental Health and Well-being, 2002]

Although anyone can get Panic Disorder, it is more common in certain people. Women are more likely to develop Panic Disorder than men, and people with parents or siblings who have anxiety disorders (especially Panic Disorder) are many times more likely to have Panic Disorder than someone without anxiety in their family. Most often, Panic Disorder starts either in late adolescence or older. It's pretty rare for someone to start having panic attacks as a child or over the age of 45.



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Check out this video about Panic Disorder
youtu.be/R3S_XYaEPUs



causes Panic Disorder

Research to date suggests that Panic Disorder may be one of the most highly **inherited disorders!**

We don't yet completely understand exactly what causes Panic Disorder but we have some ideas. First, because it's so common for the immediate family members of someone with Panic Disorder to also have Panic Disorder, genes are thought to play a big role. In fact, research to date suggests that Panic Disorder may be one of the most highly inherited disorders! Second, research tells

us that experiencing really stressful events (e.g., major loss) might also play a role in the development of Panic Disorder. Finally, in some people, smoking cigarettes or marijuana seems to trigger the start of Panic Disorder, suggesting that if Panic Disorder or other anxiety disorders run in your family, staying away from those (and other) drugs may be a good idea.



other conditions that might accompany Panic Disorder

1 Agoraphobia

About half of people who have Panic Disorder also develop a disorder called Agoraphobia. Agoraphobia is when people avoid situations that might be hard to escape from because they're afraid they might have a panic attack. Not being able to leave would mean that everyone around would see them have a panic attack. Common situations include being in a crowd or vehicle, or standing in line. Sometimes people with Agoraphobia are able to handle these situations if they have a friend or family member with them.

2 Other Anxiety

Sometimes people with Panic Disorder experience other types of anxiety on top of their panic attacks. Some people experience generalized anxiety that doesn't seem to be related to any specific event or thought. Other people have anxiety about their health – especially if they don't know they have Panic Disorder. Anxiety makes it easy to misinterpret a panic attack as a sign of a life-threatening illness. There are also many other types of Anxiety Disorders that tend to commonly occur in people with Panic Disorders.

3 Depression

Many people with Panic Disorder also experience Major Depressive Disorder (also called Depression). For more information on Depression, check out:

teenmentalhealth.org/for-families-and-teens/depression

? how

is Panic Disorder treated

Panic Disorder is very treatable! Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is the most recommended treatment, followed by medication in certain cases.

1 Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT)

Therapy can help your brain function better. CBT works to help your brain control your panic attacks and anxious feelings. Although we don't always realize it - our thoughts, feelings, and actions are all connected. By changing the way we think, we can also change the way we feel (i.e., panicked/anxious) and the way we act (i.e., avoiding anxiety-provoking situations). Why would we want to change the way we think? Well, our thoughts are not always accurate, like when we think that we're in danger when we're not or that we're being made fun of when we aren't. CBT helps us to examine our thoughts critically and be more realistic. By doing that, we can often change the way we feel!

CBT is usually effective at reducing the symptoms of Panic Disorder. It can be done

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To help make sure you get the best treatment for you, check out:

teenmentalhealth.org/for-families-and-teens/evidence-based-medicine and

teenmentalhealth.org/resources/entries/med-ed-booklet and

teenmentalhealth.org/resources/entries/communicating-with-your-health-care-provider-what-every-parent-should-ask and teenmentalhealth.org/images/uploads/communicating_with_healthcare_providers_student_version.pdf

individually, in groups, or over the internet. Although most treatments last 12-15 sessions (usually with one session per week), some studies have found that CBT can even be effective in as few as five sessions!

2 Medication

Medication can help your brain function better. There are a number of different medications that your doctor might choose to prescribe. Medicines known as Serotonin Specific Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs) are the most commonly used. Your doctor will likely recommend combining medication with CBT.

3 Keeping a diary

Keeping a diary of your panic attacks and sharing it with your doctor or counselor can help you identify possible triggers and determine how well treatment is working. Try this one: teenmentalhealth.org/resources/entries/panic-attack-diary

4 What else can help:

- ▾ Having a good support network of friends and family.

- ▾ Following the Mental Wellness tips on page 18!



having a good support system

For someone with Panic Disorder, having a good support system of trusted people is really important.

- 1 understand the challenges that having a mental disorder creates for you
- 2 notice when you're not acting/feeling like yourself
- 3 be there for you when you need them
- 4 help you cope when you're having a rough time
- 5 encourage you to help you face your fears and resist avoiding situations that cause you anxiety
- 6 listen to you when you need someone to talk to
- 7 give you honest and helpful advice when you need it
- 8 remind you that you're not alone
- 9 hang out with you.

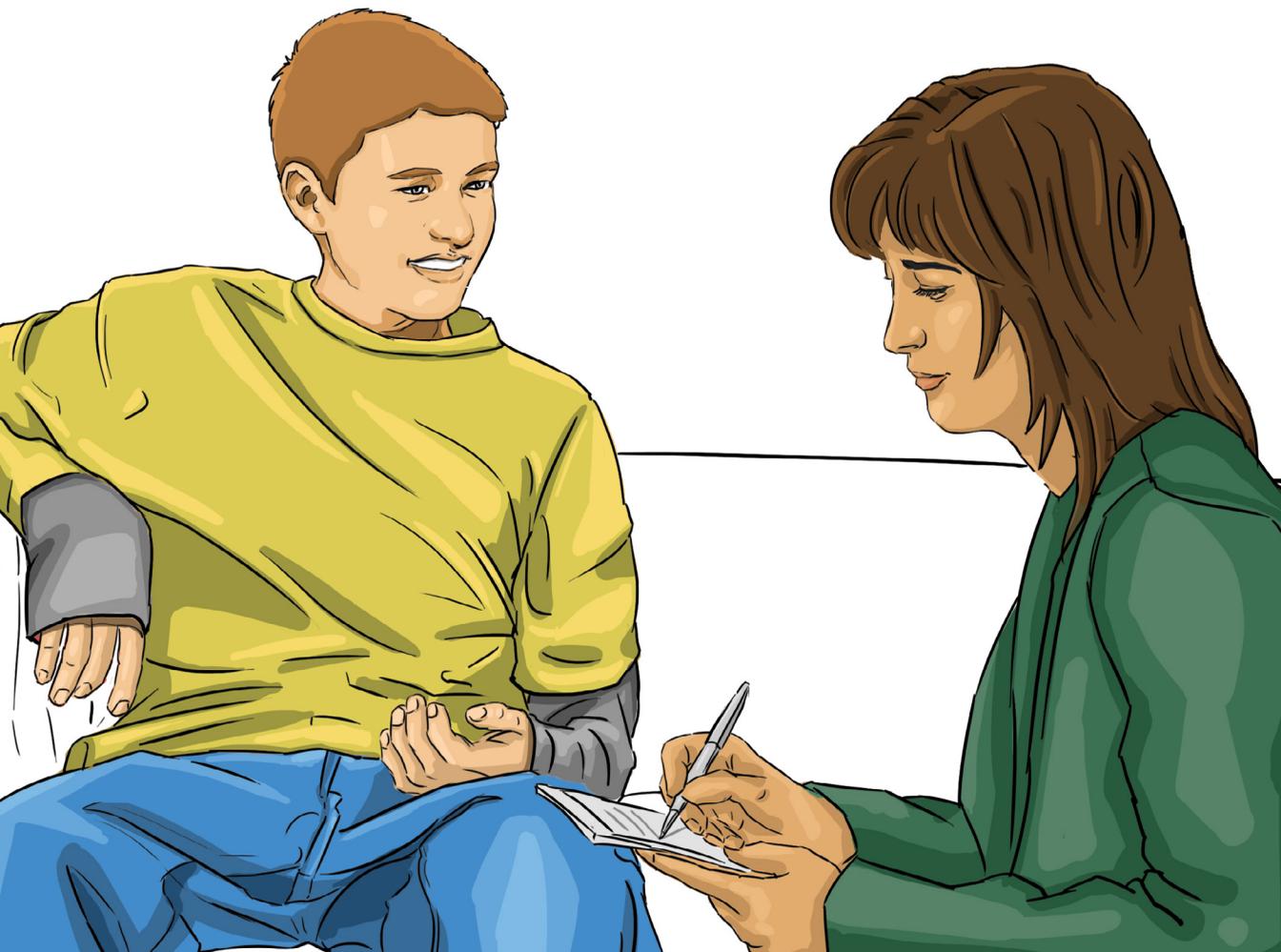


tips

to help increase overall mental health:

- 1 Structure your day.** Give yourself something to do, even if you start small. Having some structure in your day can make a big difference in how you feel. Start with basic daily activities like showering, walking the dog, or making lunch. Keeping a daily diary or schedule can be a big help in keeping your mood stable and preventing you from feeling overwhelmed, especially if you're a visual person. Check out teenmentalhealth.org/resources/entries/taking-charge-of-your-health, a daily diary that can help you get started. This is available as an App on the Apple App Store as well.
- 2 Exercise.** Daily physical activity improves your health and mood, and helps you get rid of stress.
- 3 Sleep.** Getting 8-9 hours of sleep each night will help you feel better the next day.
- 4 Daily relaxation time.** If you feel anxious, try a relaxation technique, like Box Breathing or Hand Relaxation (see page 20). Whenever possible, try to calm yourself down without leaving the situation. If you start thinking of leaving to calm down as an escape, it can make your anxiety worse!
- 5 Limit caffeine.** Caffeine can make your heart race, which can make you feel worse.
- 6 Eat healthy.** Eating a balanced diet gives your body the fuel it needs to help combat stress. Try not to skip meals and go easy on the junk food.
- 7 Get out of the house.** Although it might seem intimidating, force yourself to go out to social places. Try to join a group or club! Every time you go out, it will seem a little less scary.
- 8 Stay away from alcohol and drugs.** Although you may feel better in the short-term, alcohol and drugs will not solve your problems. They'll only give you a false sense of confidence and may make your problems worse in the long run.
- 9 Build healthy relationships.** It's important to have a good support network of people you trust.
- 10 Talk.** Talk to the people in your support network about your feelings and concerns. Sharing your feelings with someone else can feel like a weight is lifted off your chest.
- 11 Stop thinking so much.** Thinking about something over and over can make you feel worse. Try not to let yourself replay negative thoughts and situations in your mind. Distract yourself, if necessary!

If these tips don't help, do NOT get discouraged. Just like learning to play the piano or driving a car, some of these skills require practice and patience. For more help, talk to your school counselor or visit your family doctor. Your family doctor will be able to help you find the treatment that works best for you and can recommend places for you to go if you need more help.





Box Breathing

Box Breathing can help your heart rate return to normal, which helps you to relax. Here's how you do it: If possible, sit and close your eyes. If not, just focus on your breathing.

Step 1: Inhale your breath (preferably through your nose) for 4 seconds.

Step 2: Hold your breath for 4 more seconds. You're not trying to deprive yourself of air; you're just giving the air a few seconds to fill your lungs.

Step 3: Exhale slowly through your mouth for 4 seconds.

Step 4: Pause for 4 seconds (without speaking) before breathing in again.

Repeat this process as many times as you can. Even 30 seconds of deep breathing will help you feel more relaxed and in control.

Hand Relaxation

Hand Relaxation helps to get rid of the tense feelings in your body. Here's how you do it: Clench the muscles in your left hand (make a fist) really tightly for 5 seconds. Then, let go gradually (for about 15 seconds), breathing slowly and concentrating on the feeling in your hand. Then, repeat using your right hand.

With practice, you can get really good at doing Box Breathing or Hand Relaxation techniques. You can do them just about anywhere, without anyone else knowing - on the bus, in class, even when you're hanging out with your friends.

helping coping with Panic Disorder

If someone you care about has Panic Disorder, the best and most important thing you can do is provide support without encouraging him or her to avoid anxiety-provoking situations. In order to support someone else, you also need to look after yourself. Here are a few pointers:



1 Educate yourself

Understanding what Panic Disorder is and how it affects the person you care about will help you to be a less frustrated and more supportive friend.

2 Listen

When you listen to and acknowledge your friend's feelings, it sends your friend the message that you care. Knowing that you have people who care about you is an important part of recovering from a mental disorder.

3 Be patient

Sometimes it can be frustrating when your friend doesn't seem to want to hang out or do anything they used to like to do. Take a deep breath and remember that Panic Disorder is making your friend feel this way. He/she can't just "snap out of it." Getting impatient will only make the situation worse. Stay positive and be patient. Encourage your friend to come out and be social. He/she may feel like it's too frightening or stressful, but will probably feel better afterwards.

4 Have fun together

Your friend needs someone who can have fun, relax, and laugh with him/her. These are all important parts of your friend's mental health (and yours!).

5 Be aware of suicide risk

If your friend talks about death or suicide, don't ignore it or keep it a secret. Talk to a responsible adult whom your friend also trusts (e.g., parent, teacher, coach, counselor). Let your friend know that you care about him/her and his/her life. If your friend is talking about suicide, you must take it seriously.

6 Don't try to change your friend

You don't have to solve all of your friend's problems or turn him/her into a different kind of person. Just be present and supportive.

7 Encourage your friend to seek help

Having a friend he/she can trust, like you, is so important. But someone trying to cope with a mental disorder also needs treatment. Encourage your friend to see a doctor or school counselor to get the help he/she needs. Even if the problems don't seem that bad yet, seeking help early can prevent problems from getting worse.

8 Be Positive

Positive moods can be contagious! It's really easy for someone with a mental disorder to focus only on the negative aspects of his/her life. Sharing your positive mood may help your friend see things from a different perspective.

9 Put yourself first

On an airplane, they tell you to always put your oxygen mask on first in an emergency before you assist someone else. You'll be no help to anyone if you're passed out. The same goes for helping your friend. If you burn yourself out by always putting him or her first, you won't be able to help anyone. It's absolutely okay (and so important) to take time away to take care of yourself.

10 Don't blame yourself

It is not your fault that your friend has Panic Disorder. Many different factors, including his/her genetic background, environment, and life experiences are involved. No one can "make" another person have Panic Disorder.

What to do when someone has a Panic Attack:

- ▶ Remain calm
- ▶ Remind them that they are having a panic attack; they are not dying.
- ▶ Encourage them to breathe deeply.
- ▶ If possible, have them hold their breath for a few seconds at a time.
- ▶ Provide a supportive environment until their symptoms pass.

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For more on Panic Disorder and other mental health problems, check out teenmentalhealth.org/for-families-and-teens/panic-disorder

help

These are places you can find more information about Panic Disorders and get help:

A Family doctor

Talk to your family doctor about your concerns. Your doctor can help you decide on the best treatment plan for you and refer you to a good psychologist, counselor, and/or support group.

B Library

Check your local community or school library for books to help you understand more about depression and how to cope.

C School Counselor or Nurse

Your school counselor or nurse may have helpful resources for you, including books, pamphlets, and contacts in the community.

D Kids help phone

The Kids Help Phone has counselors who answer phone calls and online questions from young people 24/7. You can reach them at 1-800-668-6868 or at www.kidshelpphone.ca

E Health Boards

Many communities have a health board with information on different support groups and other resources. They are often located in community centres, malls, and grocery stores.

F Emergency

If you are feeling suicidal or are in crisis, go to your local hospital's emergency room immediately.

G Phonebook

The yellow pages have lists of local support groups, counselors, and youth health centres, some of which may be helpful for you.

H Internet

The Internet has loads of information about mental illness; just know that not all of it is accurate. In fact, the information on some websites is more wrong than right.

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Teen Mental Health www.teenmentalhealth.org

Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre www.keltymentalhealth.ca

Mind Your Mind www.mindyourmind.ca

National Institute of Mental Health www.nimh.nih.gov

Canadian Mental Health Association www.cmha.ca

Mental Health Foundation www.mentalhealth.org.uk

Anxiety Disorders Association of Canada/Association Canadienne des Troubles Anxieux
www.anxietycanada.ca

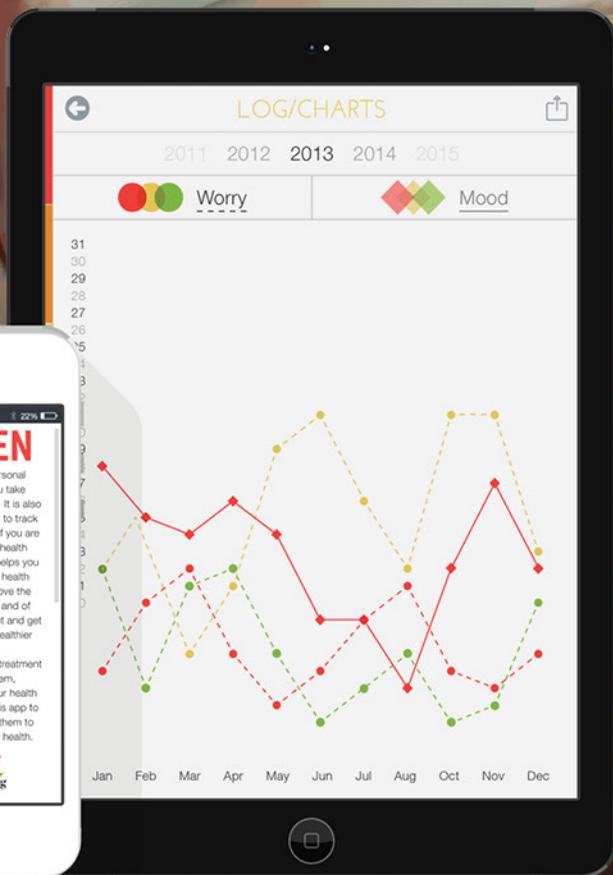
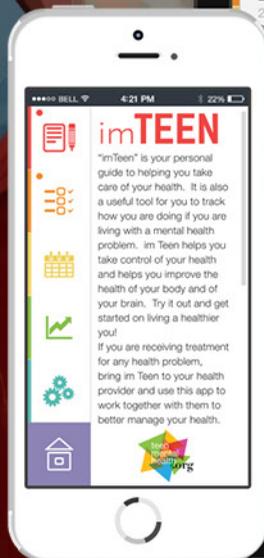
Anxiety Disorders Association of America www.adaa.org

imTEEN

Taking charge of your health



- ASSESSMENT
- CHECKLIST
- CALENDAR
- VISUAL REPORTS



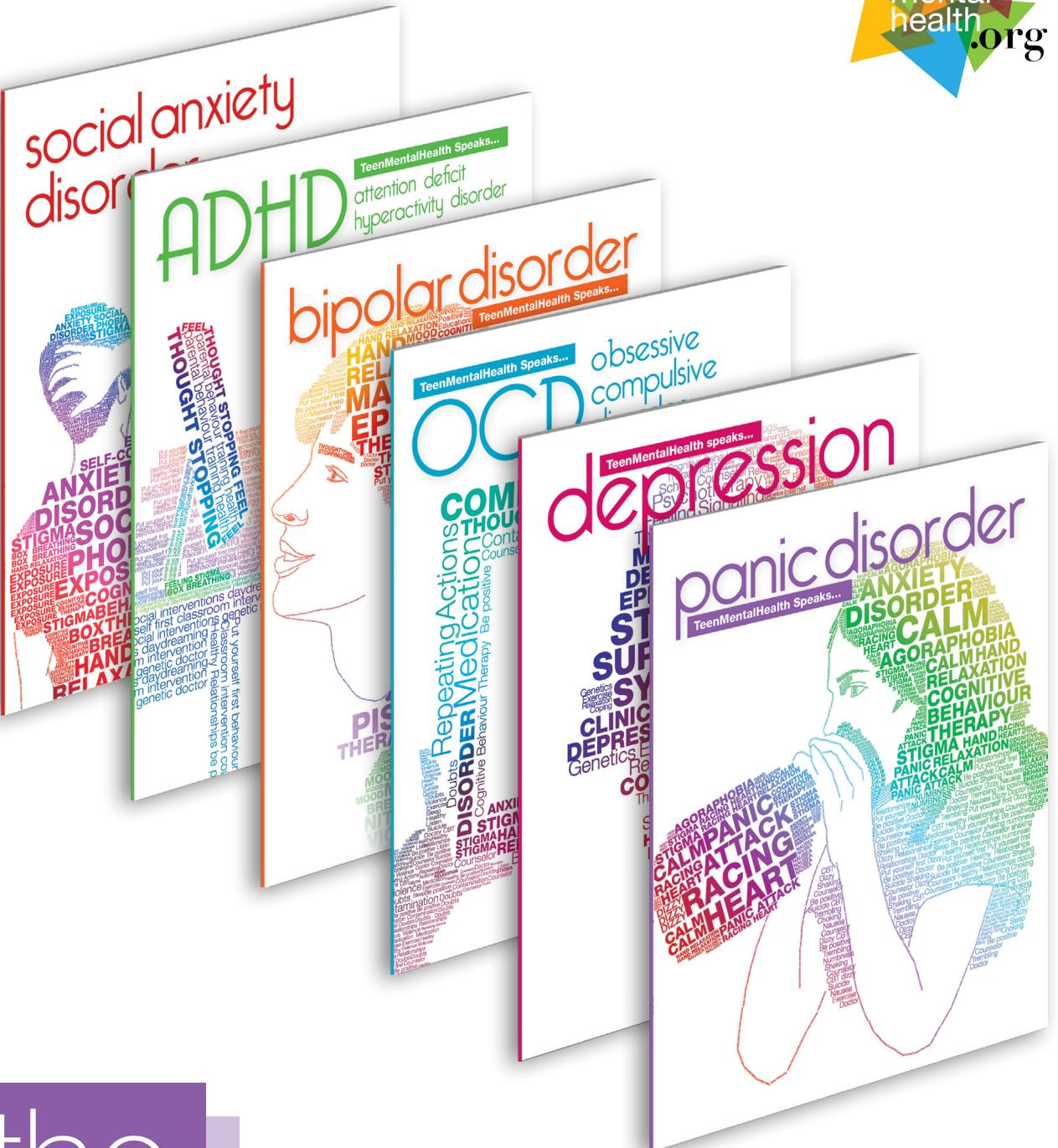


FAMILY PACK

better mental health for you & your family

Support yourself and your family members in better understanding mental disorders and how to deal with them. If you have a mental disorder, are supporting a family member with one or are interested in how you can support a friend and their family, the Family Pack can help.





the
full picture!