

Tips from Lisa Damour – Under Pressure

Some key takeaways from the book

Anxiety – avoidance/retreat feeds anxiety....need to develop the skills to get on with it.

P XVI	Something has changed. Anxiety has always been part of life and art of growing up – but for many it seems to have spun out of control. Girls are my world (Lisa has always worked with girls)...and in the last few years have met many more young woman who are overwhelmed by stress of feel intensely anxious. It hasn't always been that way.
P XVII	Girls suffer more
P XVIII	Evidence tells us we are truly seeing something new. Girls are fearful of disappointing teacher/parents. They worry about how they look...they are the first generation who pose for selfies and then count the number of likes
P XIX	Age of puberty is dropping. Average age is 12 years
P 3	Stress and anxiety aren't all bad
P 4	Healthy stress happens when we take on new challenges
P 5	Girls learn how to manage stress by observing how parents manage it (anxious girls ~ anxious parents)
P 7	Three types of stress – life events, daily hassles and chronic stress
P 11	Stress refers to a feeling of emotional or mental strain or tension, anxiety usually refers to the feeling of fear, dread or panic.
P 12	Need to focus our efforts on helping our girls to keep their tensions and worries under control.
P 12	Anxiety is a gift handed down by evolution to keep humans safe.
P 13	Anxiety works to protect us from the world and ourselves but somehow people think emotional discomfort is a bad thing. But emotional discomfort alerts us to pay attention to
P 13	Say to a girl who has a tricky situation 'I know that something really scary has happened' to acknowledge her worry.
P 15	Most of the time anxiety is a really useful emotion.
P 16	'I'm glad you are worried. That's the right reaction because right now you know you are not ready. As soon as you start studying, your nerves will calm down.'
P 16	When a girl gets anxious, we want her to take that emotion seriously and wonder 'why is my alarm going off? and what is the best way to get it to quiet down?'
P 18	Generalised anxiety disorder – when the anxiety alarm rings persistently. When worries are entirely out of proportion to the perceived threat or if they prevent daily functioning.
P 18	Panic attack – when anxiety comes on like a horrific siren that may blow for no clear reason. Acute bursts of terror/feels as if they are losing their mind/or die. Lasts about 20 minutes. Panic disorder – recurrent, unexpected attacks leading to constant fear of more attacks or causing people to rearrange their lives.
P20	CBT – tailored and systematic approach to treating anxiety
P 27	If a girl says 'I have anxiety'.....natural response is 'well of course you do. That's how you are able to cross streets safely and not get hit by cars'. Anxiety is usually a good thing.
P 30	Anxiety can get us to do things that provide immediate relief – seeking reassurance or compulsively checking on something – but it doesn't help in the long run eg parents messaging during the school day.
P 33	Girl asking to get out of a chemistry test that she hasn't revised for...avoidance doesn't just feed anxiety – it is a two course meal. In the ST it feels good but in LT side stepping fears prevents girls seeing their fears are overblown.
P 35	Tell parents to resist their gut instinct to protect/rescues but to turn their attention towards helping their daughter approach the source of her anxiety.
P 38	Glitter jar
P 41	Girls need to ride out glitter storms
P 42	Play worst case scenario
P 45	A good phrase....'even if it is not something you want, I think it is something you can handle'. Asking a girl how she wants to handle something feels like a vote of confidence.
P 47	'I know you're feeling helpless and I can only guess how miserable that must be'

P 46	'Oh...it must feel awful to even think that'
P 48	Parents – if you are feeling overwhelmed by stress or if you experience high levels of anxiety, make sure you are getting the support you deserve, both for your own sake and your daughter's. Research shows that parents who are very nervous themselves are more likely to have children who become easily afraid and struggle to manage stress.
P 52	Parents know more than any other generation of parents about the details of their own children's lives. We must not assume that having a steady stream of information, especially about the moments when our children are feeling upset or anxious is always a good thing.
P 53	Emotional dumping to parents by text
P 68	Some students are just born shy
P 72	Big friendship groups bring drama...too much compromise needed. Parents say they want their daughter to have 'lots of friends'. Happiest girls are those with one or two solid friendships..that may change over the years. Numbers bring drama.
P 74	We need to accept that it is normal for girls to have difficulty getting along. If we are alarmed by the mere presence of social discord, our girls will feel alarmed by it too. Need to recognise interpersonal discord is a fact of life and take a pragmatic stance towards helping our daughters learn how to navigate effectively.
P 75	Good ideas on dealing with healthy conflict.
P 85	Limiting a young person's access to technology is never a popular decision but making unpopular decisions is an important part of being a parent.
P 85/6	No phone means more face-to-face conversations at home/family, homework time, pursuing hobbies, bedtime, mealtime.
P 87	Nine hours of sleep
P 92/93	Social media – like a furniture shop/highlights 'reel'. We would have used it if it was around..instead hours on the phone after 6pm on the stairs with a long cable! Parents need to have conversations designed to reduce the stressful inadequacies teens feel as they scrutinise their peers 'highlight reels' and anxiously contrive their own.
P 92	It is the teenager's job to worry about how everyone sees her but it is our job to help teenagers take a few steps back from the whole thing.
P 138	Being pushed beyond one's comfort zone is often a good thing and the stress students' encounter at school for the most part happened to be the healthy kind. All growth comes with some discomfort – we send our children to school precisely so that they will be stretched and improved.
P 139	Stress can be good – it enhances creativity, builds relationships and helps people succeed in crunch moments. Stress builds strength mindset – stoicism but stress can harm physical health, mood and self-esteem and lead people to freeze up when stakes are high.
P 140	When students/parents complain about teachers/class mates say 'Yep, I get it. There will always be aspects of school you don't like. But figuring out how to succeed under imperfect conditions is a big part of what you learn how to do at school.'
P 141	It is important to have recovery strategies/to be able to relax.
P 144	Girls don't want to disappoint....staff and parents sometimes adopt passive aggressive tactics of using guilt as a weapon. Regardless of the source their anxiety, a girl's approach to school should not be driven by fear. Girls who are hyper conscientious and slavishly over prepare - they are worried about doing something wrong. Studying soothes their nerves. It is a catch 22 – they get good grades, recognition from parents and teachers and they feel good BUT it is not sustainable and they need to learn more effective ways to study and to enjoy non study time.
P 146	When talking to a girl ask them 'can you walk me through a typical day'
P 201	What is the source of all this stress? Why am I anxious? Stress it turns out arises when our daughters are pushed to operate at the edge of their capacities. It almost always helps girls grow. So long as our daughters know how to restore themselves and aren't faced with demands that far exceed their emotional and intellectual resources, they should come out and recognise that being stretched beyond familiar limits cultivates strength and durability.
P 210	Anxiety is a well-meaning messenger – it alerts that something is not right and for us to stay on our toes. Girls who learn to face their fears find out just how brave they can be.