

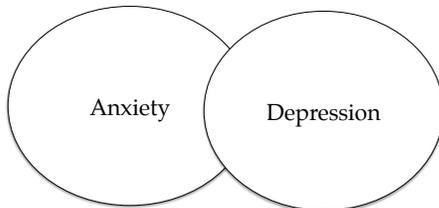
Managing Anxiety At School and Home:
An Umbrella Approach to Managing Worry

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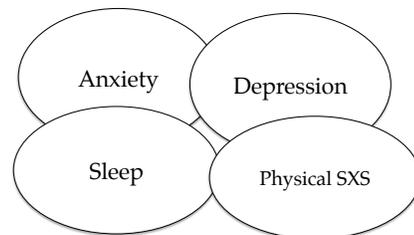
Critical Cognitive Skills:
How can we teach children to:

- *tolerate (and normalize) discomfort*
- *externalize/react differently to thoughts*
- *learn by doing, failing, & succeeding*
- *handle the uncertainty of life*
- *be more flexible (malleability!)*
- *problem solve (vs. ruminate)*

Let's Think Prevention:
Anxiety and Depression
Overlapping Cognitive Patterns:



Overlapping Issues



Overlapping Cognitive Patterns

- Global: *never, always, no one, everyone*
- Catastrophic: *worst case scenario*
- Permanent: *things won't change*

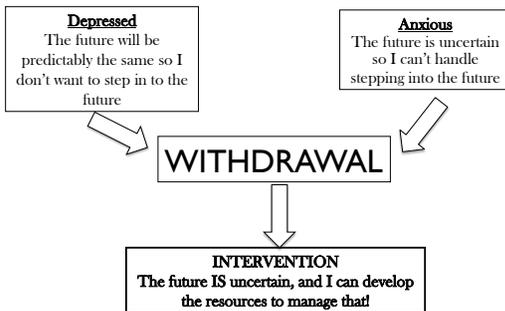
Your words matter!

David Yeager and colleagues asked and answered the question:

How will high school students cope socially when they are told that people have the potential to change “socially relevant traits”?

How to Improve Adolescent Stress Responses
Insights From Integrating Implicit Theories of Personality and Biopsychosocial Models
Psychological Science August 2016 vol. 27 no. 8 1078-1091

Anxious and Depressed Kids: Their relationship to the future



Anxiety Demands TWO Things:

- *Certainty: “I have to know what’s going to happen next... and I want to control it!”*
- *Comfort: “I want to feel safe and comfortable...or else I want out!”*

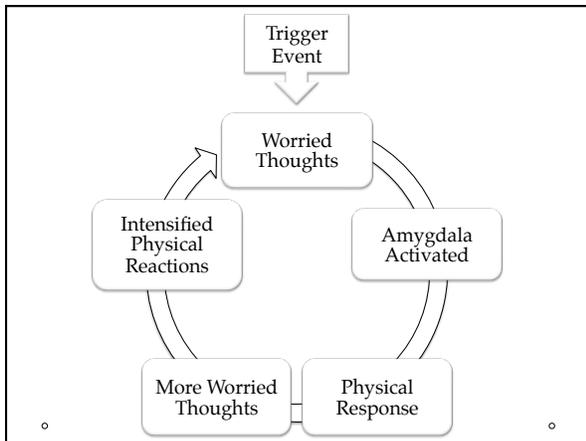
From the NYT article by Jan Hoffman entitled *Teaching Teenagers to Cope With Social Stress*

“At the beginning of the school year, students participated in a reading and writing exercise intended to instill a basic, almost banal message to help them manage tension: People can change.”

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/30/health/teenagers-stress-coping-skills>

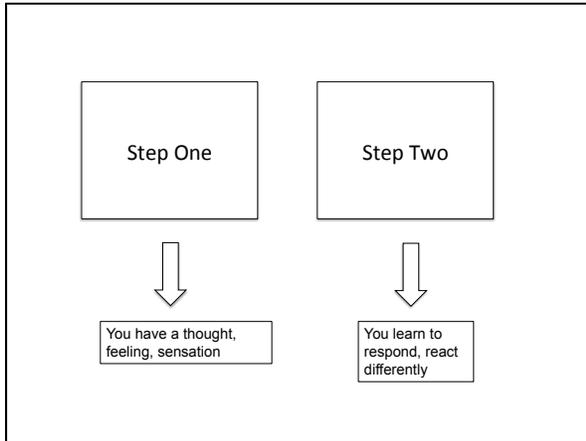
Critical Concepts as we face anxiety...

- **CONTENT** is far less important than **PROCESS**
- We are eliminating **NOTHING**
- We have to teach an **OFFENSIVE** rather than a **DEFENSIVE** position



We are NOT eliminating or avoiding physical symptoms
We are perceiving & managing them through a different lens





The question I want you to ask yourself:

Are you as the clinician...

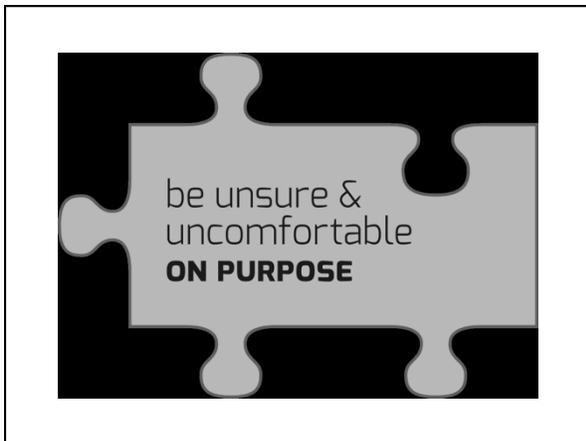
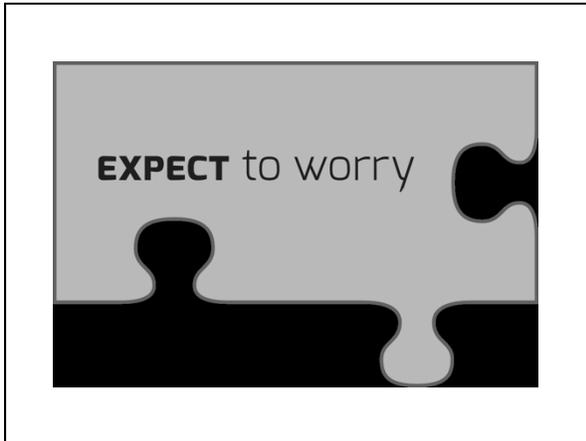
DOING THE DISORDER?

The Content Trap

Content (not good)	Process (good!)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on & talk about how to fix SPECIFIC problem • Reassure about that SPECIFIC problem • Give data, stats, rational information • Go over plans & specifics repeatedly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on HOW worry operates & what it's up to • Cue "worry-managing" strategies • Be general: "That sounds like worry to me..." • Prompt independent, internal reassurance & problem solving

Changing the reaction to the anxiety....

- ***Expect:*** *When does worry show up? What does worry say? What is the consistent theme?*
- ***Externalize:*** *Create distance from your worried thoughts and observe them*
- ***Experiment:*** *Take action, shift your focus, change your reactions...do the OPPOSITE and be on OFFENSE*



Being uncomfortable & uncertain...

- is price you pay for moving into new territory
- in order to grow you need to move into new territory
- handling uncertainty & discomfort will reset alarm system & allow you to do what you want to do

These are messages to try out

- “I’m willing to feel uncomfortable.”
- “I’m willing to feel unsure, & to not know what will happen.”
- “I’m willing to grab onto my courage & do it.”

This stance in action

- “I’m going to play outdoors — & I’m willing to not know if I’ll be stung by a bee.”
- “I’m going to learn to play the guitar — & I’m willing to feel anxious about sounding terrible & being laughed at.”
- “I’m going to go to gym — & I’m willing to not know if it will be loud or kids misbehave .”
- “I’m going to spend the night at my friend’s house — & I’m willing to not know if I’ll get scared & have to come home. & I’m willing to stay up all night.”

CRITICAL ATTITUDINAL SHIFT!

If I’m uncomfortable or unsure or nervous as I’m learning something new, I’m on the right track...

The Cognitive Skills...

How will school (and life) be better when you can:

- Increase Flexibility
- Compartmentalize
- Problem Solve
- Access Internal Resources
- Connect/Disconnect as needed

The Cognitive Skills...

How will school be better if you can:

Increase Flexibility vs Stay Rigid

Compartmentalize vs Globalize

Problem Solve vs React Impulsively /
Emotionally Focused

Access Resources vs Remain Passive

Connect or Disconnect (Depending...)

Evaluate and Manage Emotions

(Instrumental to all of the above)

The Importance of Experiential Learning

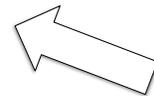
- Talking (alone) may not change neural pathways
- Allows for novelty
- Experiential learning is more memorable, and needed to create powerful reference experiences
- More work and creativity is required, but engagement is greater and progress much quicker

To make worry stronger...

- Talk about the content of the worry
- Analyze and examine
- Search for and discuss the WHY
- Promote calmness as the prerequisite for moving forward

CBT techniques that I don't use:

- What's the worst that could happen?
- Let's examine the likelihood of that happening... what are the odds?
- Scheduling or setting aside "worry time" (sometimes also known as "therapy")



We do this one with kids a LOT!

Information Stuff

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