

Worried About Anxious Students?

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Are The Kids Alright?

- Pre-COVID, anxiety and depression in youth on the rise
- Current data suggests that rates of anxiety and depression have doubled since COVID
- Youth with pre-existing neurodevelopmental disorders experiencing exacerbated symptoms
- Collective trauma
- Prolonged stress

Trauma and Resilience Literature




- Academic engagement
- Self-regulation
- Positive relatedness to others
- Coping skills
- Positive appraisal styles
- Consistency, predictability
- Foster locus of control, agency



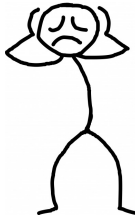

“Social-Emotional Curriculum”

- Woven throughout, not added on – administrators and teachers who learn and practice for themselves and their own families will naturally incorporate
- Coping Skills – teach a variety in a variety of ways, offer and expose, build into routines and structure
- Positive appraisals, cognitive attributions – our language matters
- Problem solving – teach the process, focus on monitoring and flexibility

Classroom/School Culture

- Less focus on individual achievements and “specialists”
- Respect and attend to process/development rather than outcomes
- Reinforce adaptive behaviors and prosocial-emotional skills
 - Response to test scores/grades
 - What does “just try your best” really mean?
 - Support prioritizing through class selection



Stress vs. Anxiety

Stress vs. Anxiety

Normal

- Protective
- Motivating
- Helpful

Disorder

- Irrational
- Interference
- Paralyzing

Types of Anxiety Disorders

- Generalized Anxiety Disorders
- Specific Phobias
- Separation Anxiety
- Selective Mutism
- Social Anxiety Disorder/Social Phobia
- Panic Disorder

Related Conditions and Problems

- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Body Focused Repetitive Behaviors
- Tic Disorders
- School Refusal/Avoidance
- Test Anxiety
- Public Speaking

Interference in School

- Asking for help, assistance, clarification, permission
- Participating in discussion, activities
- Social relationships
- Academic performance
- Work completion
- School attendance
- Behavior

Essentials to Understand

- Anxiety doesn't always look like fear (can look like apathy, non-compliance, aggression, boredom, laziness, perfectionism)
- Escape and avoidance are temptations AND reinforce anxiety
- Skill building, exposure, and manageable/realistic demands and expectations are critical
- Shaping may be necessary



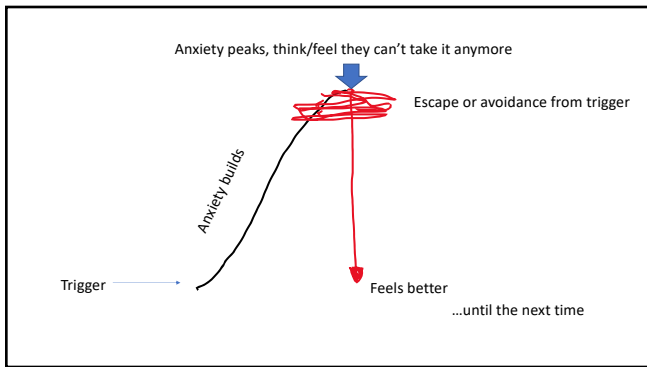
Fight or Flight

- Human's response to stress: protect yourself so you can survive, get ready to fight or run away from the danger
- Or Freeze: Be very still and hope the danger passes you by
- Or Flop?
 - Don't exert much effort in the first place. If you stay in the cave and just reach your arm out a little bit, maybe you can find something??

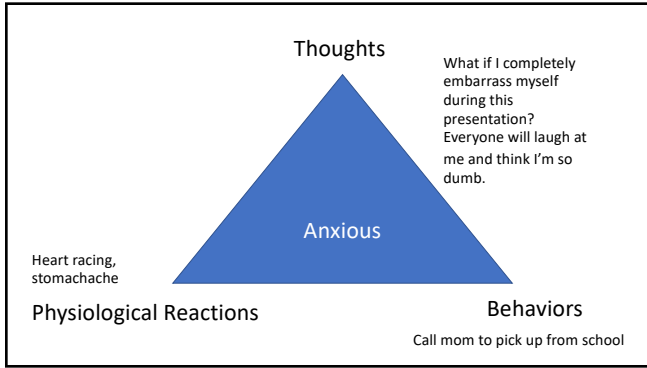
If Worries
and Fears
are Getting
in the Way

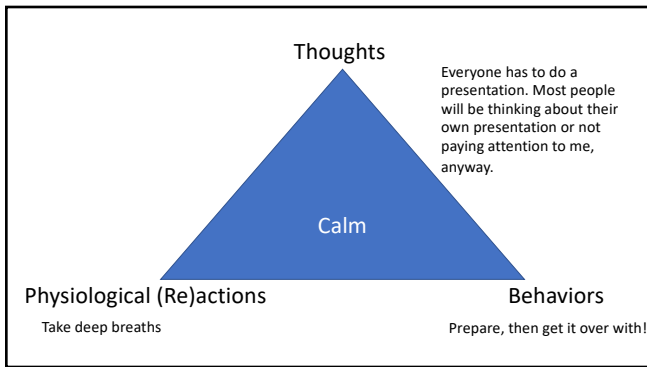
- Their "DANGER ALERT" is too sensitive. Fight, Flight, or Freeze is kicking in when there is no realistic threat.
- This is what happens...












Exposure (In Steps)

- Repeated
- Graduated
 - Individualized
 - Thoughtful
 - What will make this step easier to tolerate?
- Flooding*
- Desensitization



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Tools

To calm

To reset

To tolerate

To communicate



Tools

- Breathing techniques (balloon, 4-7-8, etc)
- Aromatherapy
- Acupressure
- Headphones/music
- Break from classroom
- Movement break
- Fidgets, sensory objects
- Grounding techniques
- Chew gum
- Distractions

Supports

- Preferred seating
- "Buddy"
- Warm-up opportunities
- Previews
- Extra time
- Tests in separate area
- Alternate assignments
- Passes, cards
- "Cheat sheets"
- Codes

- Late to school
- Frequent absences
- Attempts to be sent home

Separation Anxiety

Separation From Parents

- Parents should be educated and involved (i.e., who to drop off)
- Student should be educated and involved (I feel better by the bell...)
- Create plan and prepare (include TOOLS student will use at each step)
- Build in transition (use objects, distractions, rewards)
- Build in resets if needed (objects, controlled check-ins, break)

School Refusal/Avoidance

- Assess/evaluate the function of school refusal (i.e., what does NOT going to school get them OR get them out of?)
- Appreciate (and accept!) all of the "demands" required of the student
 - EF demands, social demands, mental health, academic, self-concept
- Avoid judging or invalidating statements like "it's just so boring" or "it's too long."
- Gain understanding of what is/can be tolerated

School Refusal/Avoidance

- Develop a *realistic* plan with school team, family, and student
- Start with what is actually happening (baseline)
- Think about where you eventually want the student to be (in classes all day every day, participating and learning)
- Decide on a reasonable first step – within student's reach, provide LOTS of support and keep expectations low (maybe even lower than low)
- Invite all to consider potential obstacles/challenges (i.e., don't like to "stand out") and figure out if tools are needed or if it's unrealistic
- Identify the tools/supports for student at each step
- Check in and modify if needed

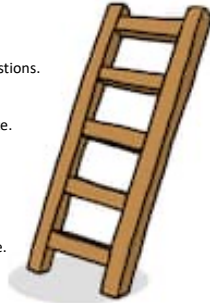
Remain in class, participating as expected for the duration of the period.

Enter class, sit at desk, answer predetermined questions.

Enter class, sit at desk, no expectation to participate.

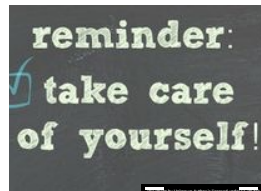
Enter class, work on Chromebook in the back of the classroom.

Enter classroom, check in with teacher. Go to office.



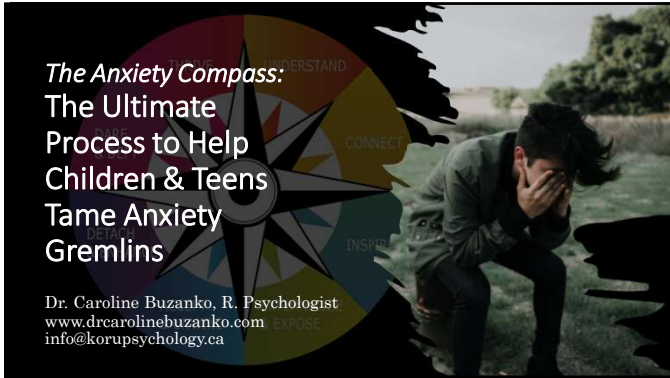
Remember

- It can take time
- You may not see the results of your work, but you may be an important step to progress (or an undoing of a problem)
- Be aware of and manage *your* anxiety related to the student



The Anxiety Compass:
The Ultimate
Process to Help
Children & Teens
Tame Anxiety
Gremlins

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1

Anxiety is the most
common mental
health problem in
kids K-12
- Not something they
outgrow

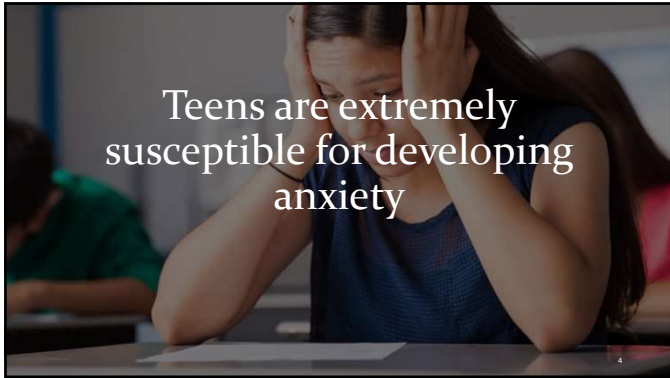


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70% of all
mental health
problems begin
in childhood and
adolescence

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Effortlessly Perfect



Overachieve academically



High expectations in all areas of life



Expectations to be happy



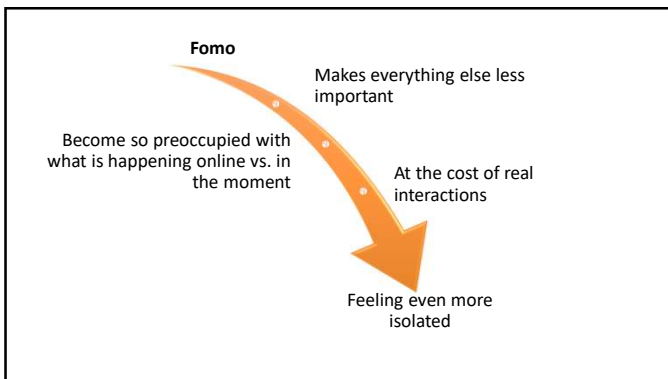
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Self-esteem

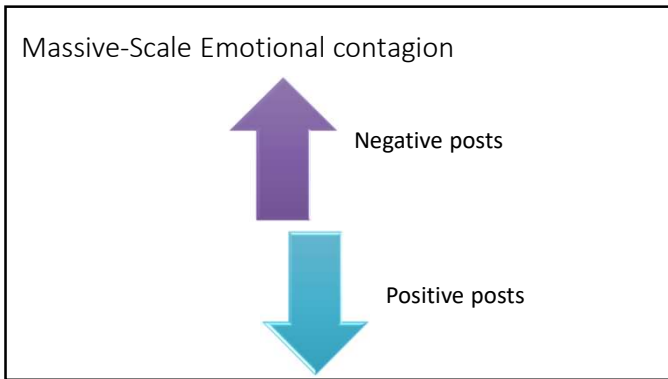
- False messages to avoid rejection
- So happy!
- So beautiful!
- “Likes” worsens self-esteem
 - Others won’t like the “real” them.



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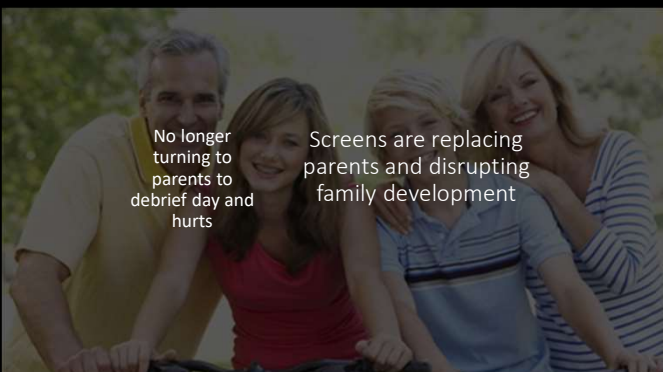


Family Connection
Most important relationship for bonding and overall development

- Discovering:
- Self
- Values
- Personality
- World

Technoference

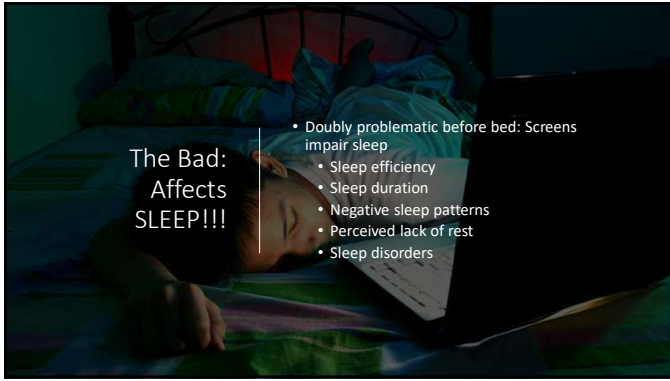
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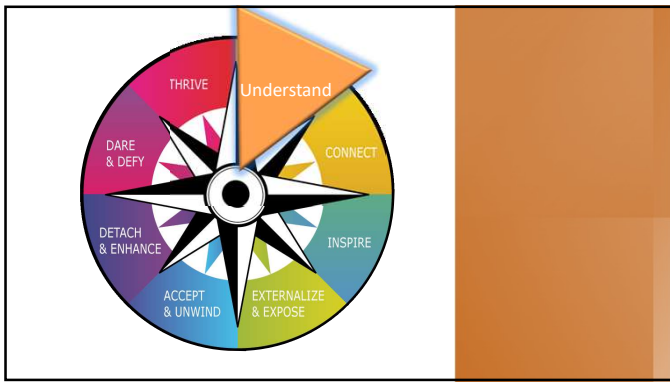
No longer turning to parents to debrief day and hurts

Screens are replacing parents and disrupting family development

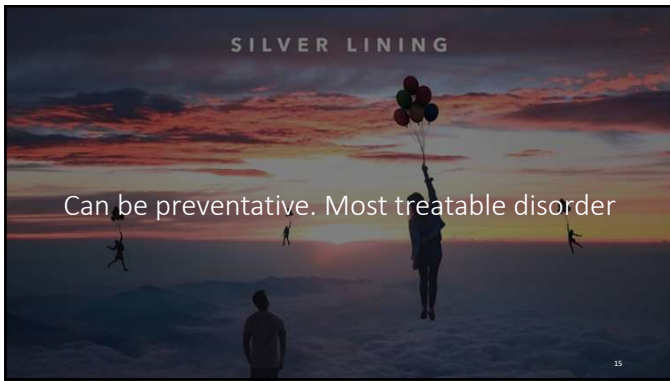
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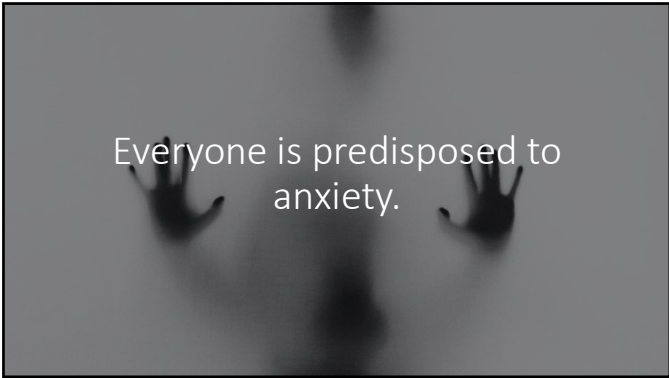
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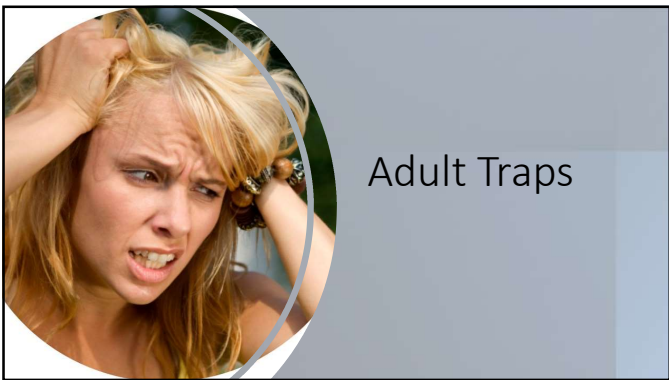
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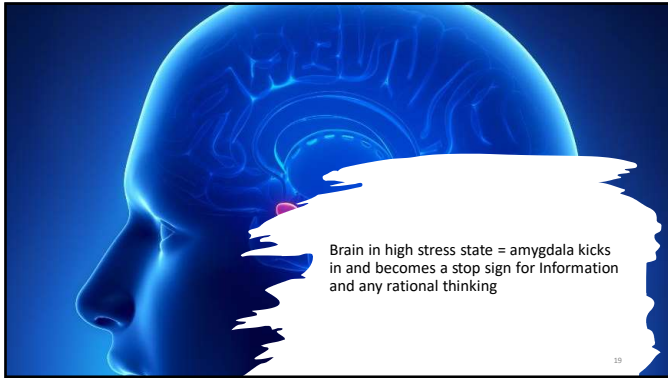
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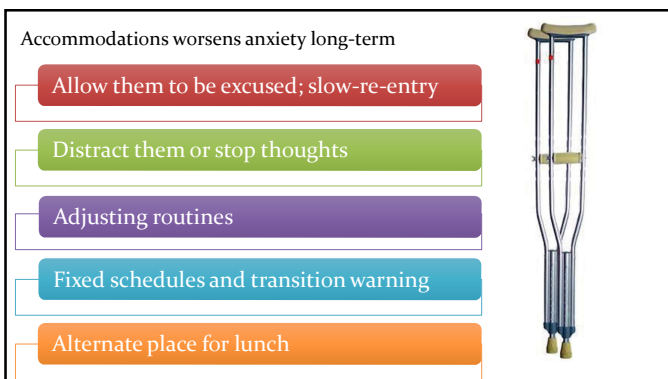
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What are adults doing for the child that they wouldn't be doing if not for anxiety?

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Speaking for your child	Sleeping with your child	Writing excuse notes to get out of anxiety-provoking situations,	Ensuring predictability	Not going places
Only having one babysitter	Participating in rituals	Not throwing away unnecessary items	Not opening windows	Rigid routines
Buying only specific types of food	Driving particular routes	Making unnecessary doctor appointments	Leaving lights on	Checking homework
Accompanying the child to certain parts of the house		Replying to all texts to ease worries		

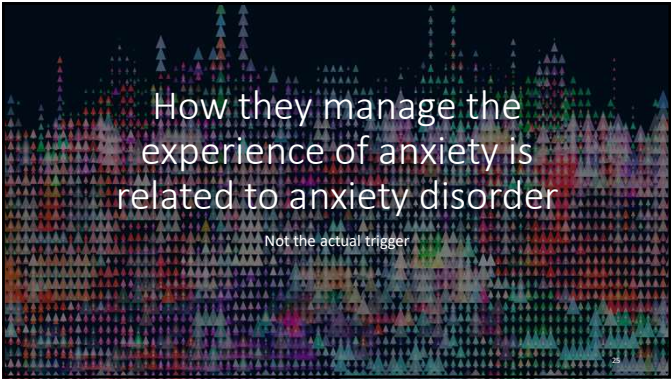
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Avoid traps

- Adults jumping in harms kids:
 - Changes brain development & ingrains anxiety
 - Makes kids vulnerable
 - Confidence and resilience stunted

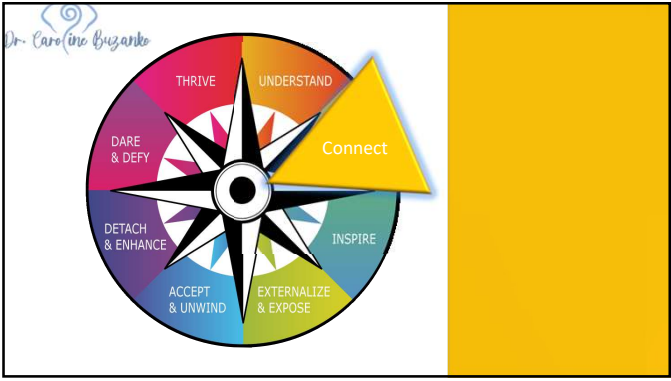
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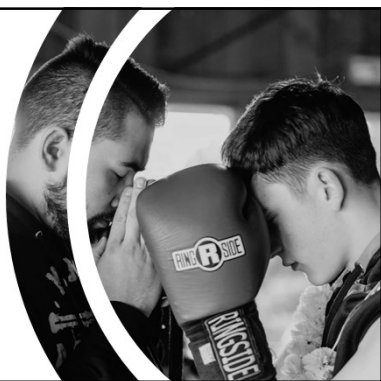


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Emotion Coach



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HOW YOU RESPOND
Makes All The
Difference

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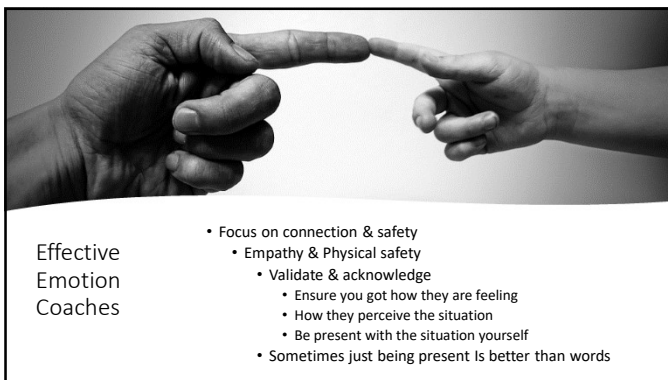
Use mirror neurons

Brain can't tell the difference

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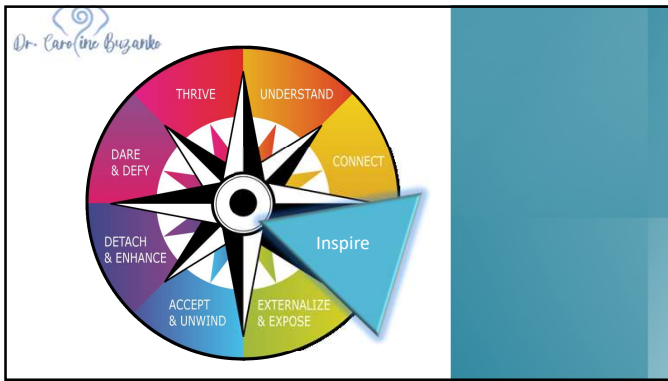
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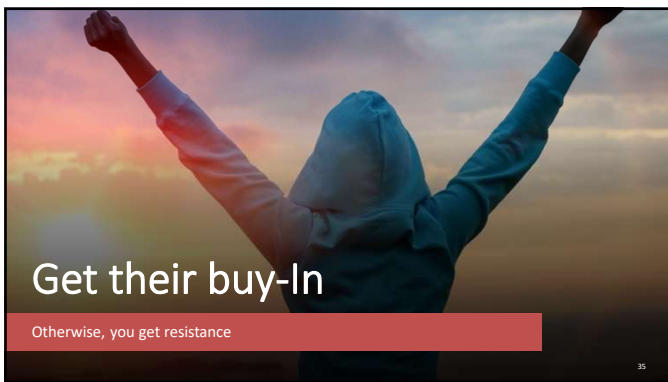
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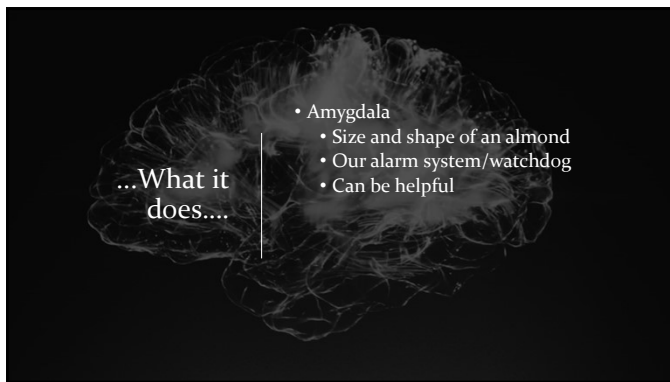
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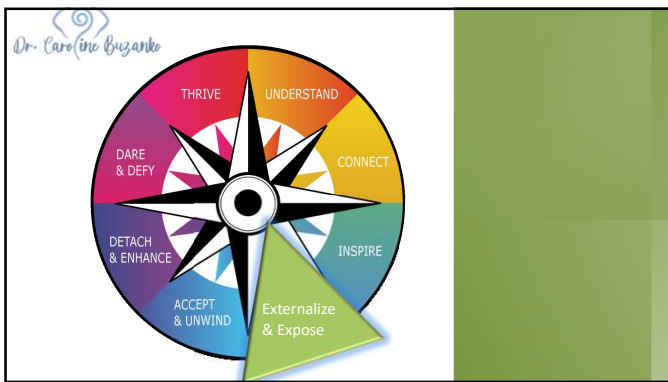
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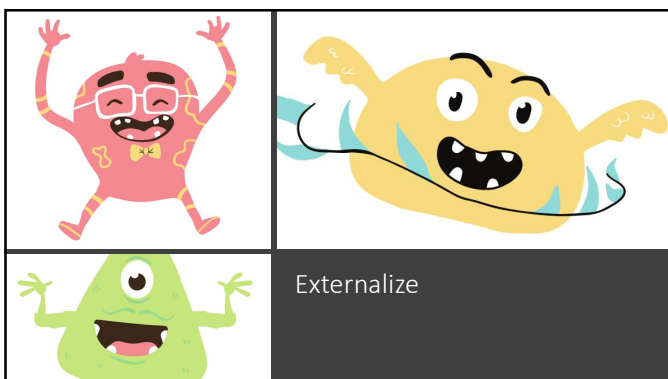
Even when it is a false alarm!

The brain and body cannot tell the difference and will still get ready to fight or run.


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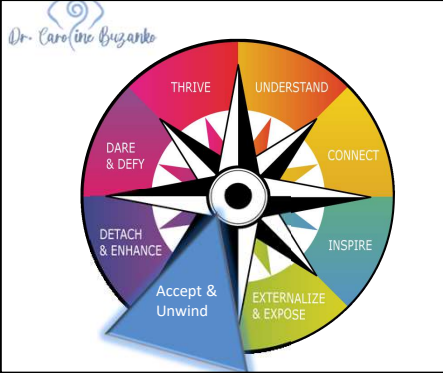
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Expose it


- Remind how anxiety works
 - There's Bob, this is what he likes to tell me.
 - Wow, it is really working hard to make me think the worst today!
 - Yeah, I knew this story would show up. It really doesn't want me to go to my sleepover.
 - This gremlin really knows how to try to stress people out.

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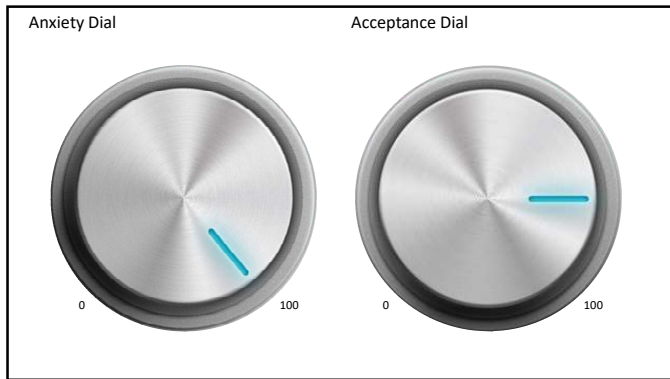


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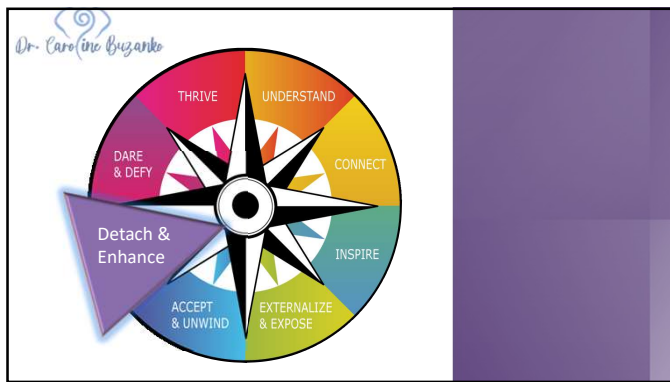
50,000+ Thoughts a Day



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Make fun of worried thoughts

- ✓Sing it
- ✓Draw cartoons
- ✓Mute it
- ✓Say it really fast
- ✓Say it in slow motion
- ✓Mimic it



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Dismiss Worried Thoughts

Dismiss Worried Thoughts		Demand more from worried thoughts	
Roll my eyes	You're so boring!	Is that all you got?	Is that the best you can come up with?
Big deal	So what?	Don't you have something scarier?	Can't you give me more?

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I can't stand up

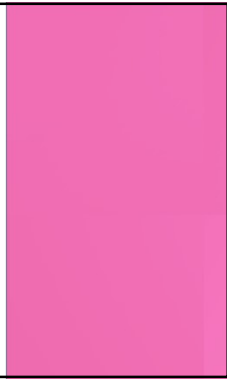
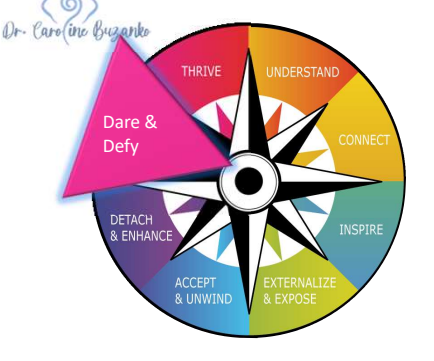
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Avoidant


- I can't unless..., I don't want to, I am sick



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MUST DO THINGS
DIFFERENTLY!

Becomes a disorder when we do what anxiety wants.

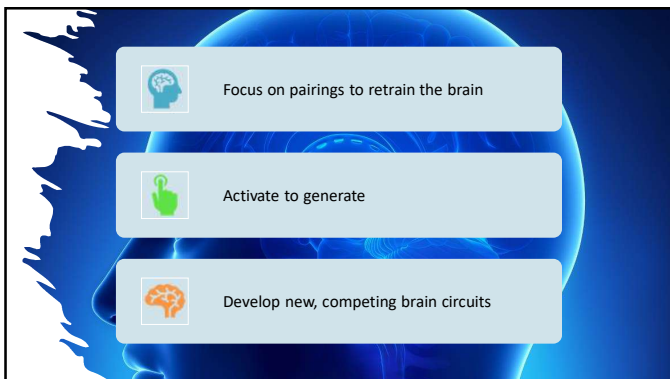
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Getting unstuck



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GOAL: Build Worry Tolerance

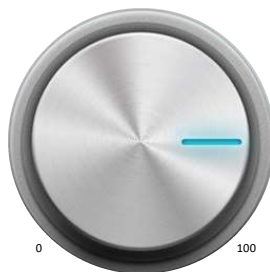
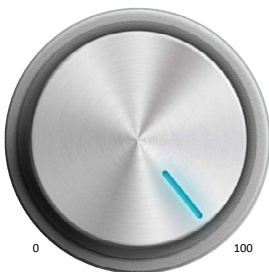
- NOT resist, control, or eliminate anxiety
- Anxiety is still there but I am going to do the opposite anyway



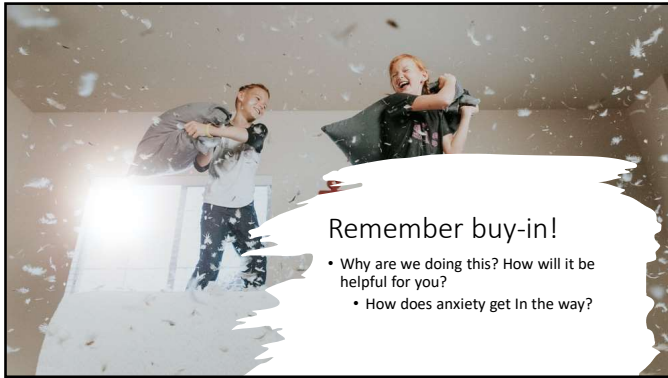
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Anxiety Dial

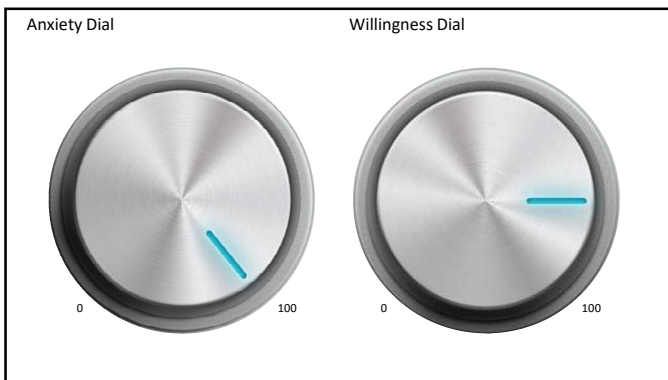
Willingness Dial



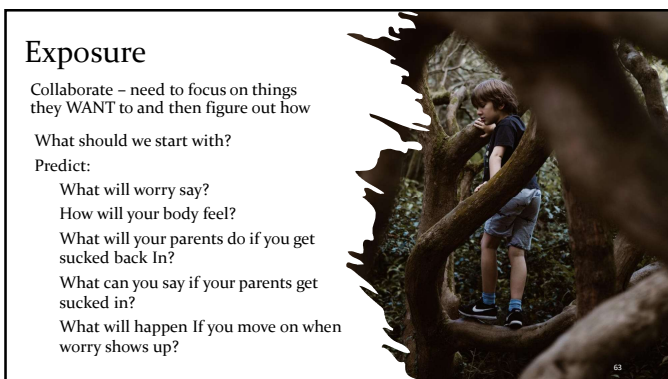
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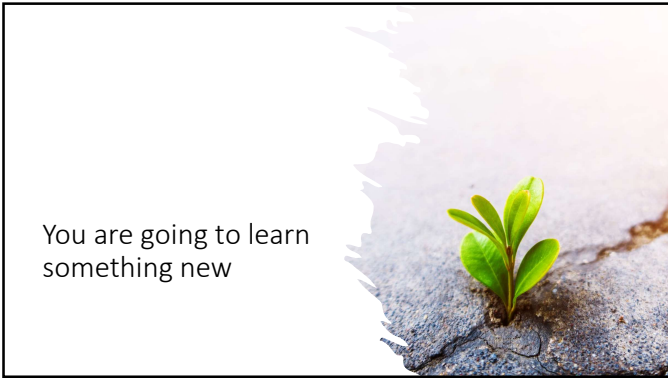
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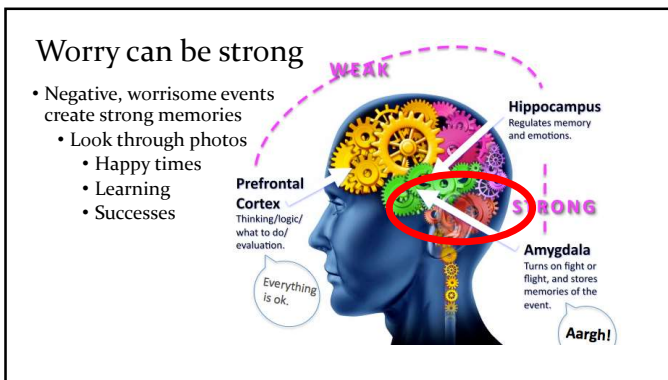
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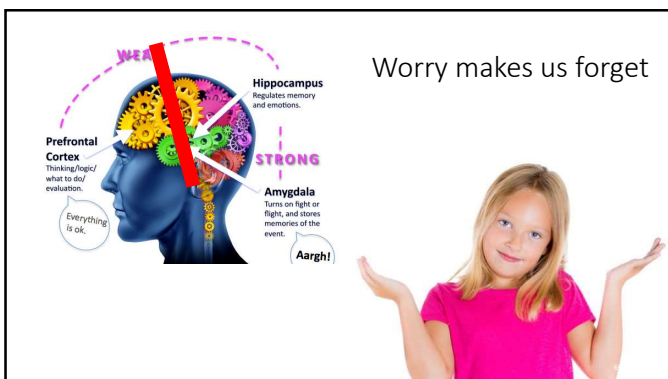
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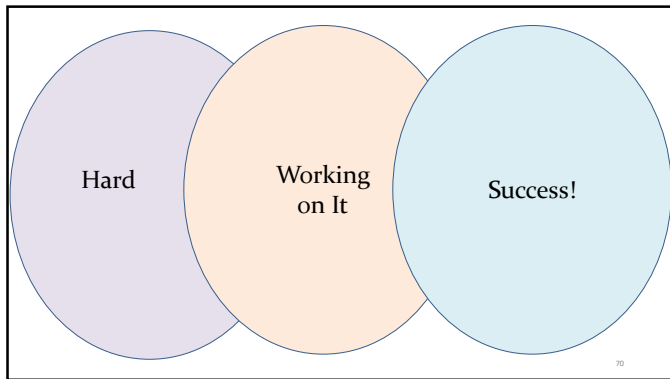
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Strategy:


Wow! You did it!








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Pillars of a Healthy Lifestyle

 Exercise

 Diet

 Sleep

 Social Connection

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Exercise

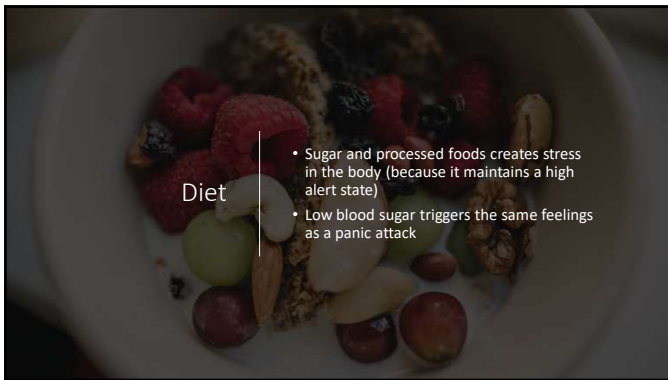
- Kids are not meant to sit all day
- Stretching and yawning can reduce stress
- Exercise boosts serotonin and melatonin
- Tires and relaxes muscles,
- Supports bodily processes for sleep



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Diet

- Sugar and processed foods creates stress in the body (because it maintains a high alert state)
- Low blood sugar triggers the same feelings as a panic attack



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Sleep

- Find best bedtime based on when kids need to wake up
 - Let kids wake up on their own
 - Same bed and wake up times, even on weekends
- Pre-bedtime routine 45 minutes with calming activities
 - No screens!
 - Meals & exercise 3 hours before
- Optimal environment
 - Dark and cool
 - No toys or other activities
- Avoid co-sleeping
- Limit stressful content
- Positive activities through the day



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Minimize Screen time

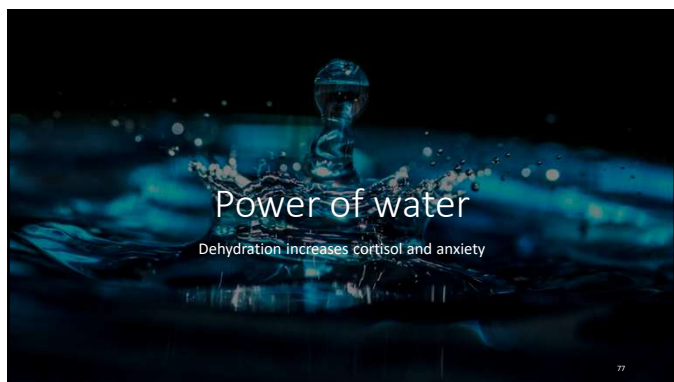
- Exposure to fearful images and stories
- Weaken their ability to use their brain power to overcome anxiety and be present



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Power of water

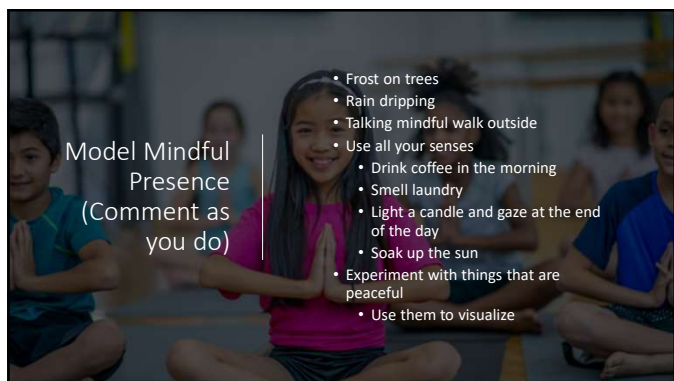
Dehydration increases cortisol and anxiety



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Model Mindful Presence (Comment as you do)

- Frost on trees
- Rain dripping
- Talking mindful walk outside
- Use all your senses
 - Drink coffee in the morning
 - Smell laundry
 - Light a candle and gaze at the end of the day
 - Soak up the sun
- Experiment with things that are peaceful
 - Use them to visualize



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Mindfulness

- Create!
 - Any repetitive action
 - Chewing gum
 - Rolling coins, sorting rainbow loom
- Experiment!
 - Physical activities
 - Music
 - Outdoors
 - Things that are peaceful



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Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Sit/lie comfortably
- Tense/relax cycles (5-10 sec., 10-15 sec.)
- Controlled belly breathing (5 sec., 10 sec.)
- Relaxed state (30 sec.)



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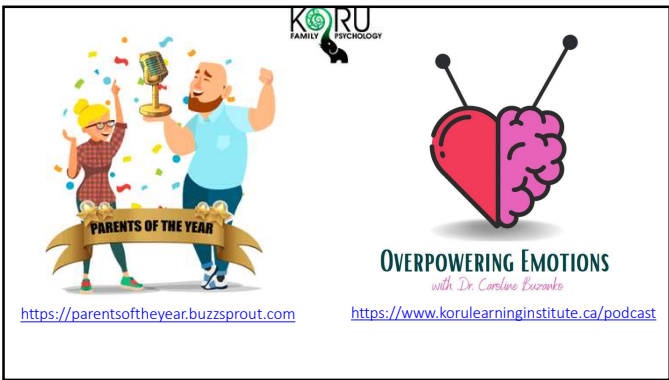


Positive Experiences

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Adolescent Anxiety and Panic

Margaret Wehrenberg, PsyD
630-248-3092
For Jack Hirose
2022

Onset in Teens

- The median age of onset of Anxiety and Panic attacks = 13 years
- Lifetime prevalence of anxiety disorder during adolescence 32%
- Teens have a similar symptom profiles during panic attacks
- Severe panic = significantly more school and family stresses, greater depression, less family support, and more uncued panic attacks.
- 10% in treatment – cause for concern! Anxiety has long- lasting impact on development

Considerations for Diagnosis and Treatment of Panic and Generalized Anxiety (GAD)

- Anxiety is a physical state as well as an emotional and cognitive condition
- Adolescent years, 12-24 years of age, see increasing rates of anxiety and the anxiety is experienced through the lens of:
 - Changing body – hormones and appearance
 - Burgeoning social needs and acquisition of social skills
 - Emotional intensity
 - Rapid brain development and re-wiring

Factors in Anxiety Disorder Development

- Environment stress predisposes to all anxiety disorders
- Physical health – many potential relationships to anxiety
- Neurobiological issues in addition to sleep related:
 - Structural and functional abnormalities in the prefrontal-amygdala circuitry as well as the default mode and salience networks (also cerebellar connections to those circuits).
- Lack of social connectedness correlated with psychological distress
- The anxiety disorders are effectively treated with cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), and serotonin–norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs).

Quarantine-Related Stress Added Anxiety

- School routines are crucial coping mechanisms and school services are critical to psychological wellbeing.
- 35% of adolescents who used mental health services between 2012 and 2015 availed their school's mental health services. Missing services exacerbates the long-term psychological impacts on young people
- Prolonged quarantine, fear of infections, boredom, insufficient personal space, and separation from classmates and teachers causes stress in children and adolescents. (Chronic Stress)

Neurobiological Development – Why So Reactive to Stress and Environment?

- Studies show exaggerated reactivity of the amygdala that diminishes through adolescence into early adulthood
- Conversely, the prefrontal cortex — which plays a central role in the effortful emotion regulation — shows continued development through adolescence
- Cortical/subcortical circuitries that process emotion show late-developing trajectories through adolescence.
- Dynamic neurodevelopmental changes in emotion processing may contribute to the intensity of emotions during adolescence.

Social Development Affects Experience of Anxiety

- Other important factors in adolescents' experience of panic attacks reflect this being a transitional developmental period marked by changes across many domains.
- E.g., Adolescence is a key stage for the development of a sense of identity
- They report panic attacks frequently occurring during periods of high stress, speaking or acting, and tests so it will be important to understand the experience of panic attacks within the school environment

Sleep Quality, Brain Development, and Emotional Distress Are Related

- During early adolescence (12–14 years of age) sleep quality and psychological distress are significantly related.
- Sleep quality and the microstructure of a white matter tract that provides important connectivity between the cortex, thalamus and brain stem, as well as a tract that connects the amygdala and prefrontal cortex (executive functions), were significantly correlated
- Poor sleep impaired benefitting from CBT Therapies
- Sleep latency was also shown to be a significant predictor of worry endured by early adolescents during future stressful situations.

Adolescence and Motivation to Experience Negative Emotions

- Emotion regulation strategies that are maladaptive in children and adults can be highly beneficial to adolescents
- E.g., corumination (excessive discussion of personal problems with friends) increased friendship, but created higher levels of anxiety over time in girls but not boys
- Negative emotions may help them connect with peers, rather than alienating them from the group. Closeness that adolescents feel with friends while "chewing on" negative emotions = potent reason for adolescents' contra-hedonic motivation to experience negative affect.

Emotional Intensity and Regulation

- Responses to antecedents occur at the subjective, physiological, and regulatory levels
- Adolescents make increasingly independent decisions about how to navigate the world based on very limited experience = can feel weighty as decisions can have life-altering consequences for educational and occupational goals.
- Models of adolescent development refer to these concurrent shifts of changing bodies, relationships, and responsibilities as a “pile-up” of emotional stressors

Why Is Anxiety So Intense and Distressing

- Emotionality is heightened in response to real and/or perceived stressors
- The self-regulatory system required to manage these emotions remains largely underdeveloped until early adulthood
- Marked increase in social sensitivity and the importance of peers
- Increased social sensitivity means that peer relationships can be a major source of conflict, rejection, and interpersonal stress because acceptance and rejection by peers is used to guide behaviors, shape self-concept and gauge self-worth
- Positive peer relationships can provide social and emotional support, which are known to protect against the risk of both depression and anxiety (La Greca and Harrison 2005).

Listen for Social Media Contagion

- Levels of anxiety have risen in correlation with social media use: the comparison to others of self or ‘the life I lead can help decrease aloneness, but often hurts self-esteem
- Panic and anxiety are trending on TikTok, be aware of current trends
- Adolescents get contagious anxiety, e.g., “TikTok Tonsils” or tics and other illness trends
- Recording sessions and posting them – not only HIPPA violation but also adolescents unaware of future/current harm from loss of privacy or revealing private information about others
- Check to be sure phones are turned off/not recording

Panic Attacks and Adolescents

- Panic attacks, sudden surges of intense fear, are common in adolescents, occurring in anywhere between 6–63% of adolescents, but not always **panic disorder**
- Symptoms include an accelerated heart rate, sweating, shaking, shortness of breath, chest pain, nausea, dizziness, depersonalization, and cognitions of losing control, 'going crazy', or dying.
- While treatment works, it does not always stick – may be related to how perceptions change over course of adolescent development

Acute Generalized Anxiety

- Currently mislabeled by adolescents as panic
- Ask about symptoms directly. You will hear:
- "My panic lasts for hours" (Panic Attacks are short-lived, but intense and the aftermath may include exhaustion, shakiness, feeling generally anxious)
- Generalized Anxiety **does not achieve the intensity of panic**, but like the aftermath of a panic attack, it can go on for hours, even days, causing pre-occupation/rumination, inattentiveness, and robs people of joy.

Acute Anxiety Reflective of Generalized Anxiety (GAD)

- Adolescents may have trouble articulating this, saying "I feel bad"
- This is often the feeling that something bad is going to happen (doom), unattached to specific situations/problems
- Assess how much time is spent worrying
- Are ruminations centered on specific topics?
- Teach worry as a maladaptive effort to figure it out in order to get rid of anxious sensations

Cognitive Re-appraisal Strengthens Development of Prefrontal Cortex Connectivity

- Adolescents still developing brain regions for cognitive skills needed to manipulate mental images related to anxiety
- Panic attacks may interfere with cognitive, social, and emotional development
- Tailor interventions to the developmental stage by
 - Facilitating autonomy
 - Addressing issues that relate to self-esteem and identity
 - Ensuring appropriate support by family, peers and teachers

Mental Images and Intensity in Adolescence

- Participants described intense bodily sensations as signs that they were out of control, going crazy or potentially dying, and these mental images increased the panic
- They also reported a phenomenon seen in cognitive therapy where there is a dissociation between their rational beliefs and the way it 'feels' during a panic attack
- With limited capacity to describe sensations coupled with intensity of adolescent emotion panic and acute anxiety are felt as dramatic and demanding of immediate response/relief

Understanding of Sensation

- Confusion of sensation with emotion – change the use of the word 'feeling' and use sensation or emotion to differentiate
- The development of reasoning as to the potential negative consequences of emotional sensations is a critical aspect of emotion knowledge and central to cognitive risk for anxiety disorders.
- The process of cognitive-emotional understanding is not a simple linear one – take into account the developmental age of the adolescent

Address the Big Emotions with Education – Learn to Accept Discomfort, Not Fear It

- Explain the nervous system to them – they do not know
- They perceive emotions as on/off
- Educate about arousal and modulation of emotions being physical as well as emotional and link cognition with emotion, providing language and cognitive strengthening
- Goal is to decrease fear of sensation
- Increase understanding of how uncertainty raises anxiety/worry

Brain Development in the 2nd 12 years Relevant to Ability to Modulate Arousal

- Emotional regulation
- Re-wiring the limbic and cortical structures
- Adolescents may not fully have the cognitive skills needed to exert control over mental images – Necessary brain regions are still developing in adolescence
- This will affect CBT choices: first manage physical arousal with breathing and age appropriate calming – mindfulness, yoga, physical activity for stress relief – control over physical process
- Then, focus therapeutic attention on the explanations/interpretations

Panic Attacks Have a Negative Impact on Psychosocial Development

- Withdrawing from social activities may limit opportunities for identity exploration, which could also interfere with developing a sense of identity
- Diminished sense of control using avoidance to deal with panic attacks may interfere with the development of autonomy
- Feeling isolated and disconnected from others could interrupt the key adolescent process of forming peer connections and developing a group identity

Articulate Rewards of Avoidance or Recovery

- Avoidance rewards people with panic and anxiety with negative reinforcement, i.e., relief of pain
- Teach skills to relieve anxiety such as breathing, that are immediately effective and increase self-efficacy
- Identify what is lost with avoidance, specific to the individual
- Identify specific gains to be accomplished with recovery.
- Explain that recovery is effortful, so focus on any positive experiences and fully imagine them

Correcting Disturbing Mental Images

- Mental images – of losing control, going insane or dying - may be a useful target for intervention. Reluctance to disclose mental images stems from fear that they are proof of 'going insane'
- Directly enquire about images, normalizing them, as recognition that they are "odd" is evidence of not being insane.
- Try imagery rescripting, which involves helping a person to transform a distressing image to reduce its power

Problem Solving Skills Decrease GAD

- Anxiety interferes with identifying the specific problem
- Teach planning – repeat the process with situations as they arise
- Focus on generating different ideas for how to solve the problem – increasing cognitive flexibility is key
- Identify when to evaluate the results of the action steps to avoid 're-planning' (worry in disguise)

Treat for 6 Themes That Reflect the Intense Nature of Panic and Anxiety in Adolescence

- Being unable to think (rumination, unable to reason one's way out of 'monkey brain' worrying) and fearing losing control of one's mind as occurs in panic
- Highlight the use of cognition during session – point to times when they think clearly
- Highlight that self-observation reflects their ability more than the fear of losing one's mind
- Consider journaling as a means of strengthening self-awareness but provide a structure for reflection

Fear Panic Will Not End

- While in the attack there may be a disconcerting disconnect in feeling the panic attack would never end versus knowing from experience that it would
- Review reality
- Plan counter-cognitions
- Advance preparation not to panic
- Plan to get through the attack deliberately with breathing, self-talk, decrease of catastrophic thinking

Lack of Control – Fear of Being Out of Control During a Panic Attack

- Are they fearing loss of physical control, emotional outbursts, crying, leaving, aggressiveness?
- Investigate behavior during previous attacks – ask for specific examples of out-of-control behavior and whether negative consequences occurred as a result. Those might be reality-bases for fear of loss of control
- Stress that feeling is NOT reality
- Focus on Belief vs Reality –change beliefs and practice those while calm

Feelings About Having Panic/Anxiety

- If the feeling is embarrassment and shame, explore if they have behaved in ways that they are ashamed of when anxious
- Explore whether they have been teased or bullied for anxious behavior
- Shift identity from "I am an anxious person" to "I have anxiety – it is not me. It is an intrusion into logic and authentic self."
- Assess social skills and train if needed because positive peer relationships are protective against anxiety

Feeling Alone/Different with Anxiety

- Positive utilization of social media – currently anxiety is a big topic on TikTok, so direct them to useful influencers. Increasing numbers of therapists are posting helpful advice
- Share statistics about how many adolescents experience these symptoms so the adolescent feels heard, understood, and then can establish more autonomy about the experience of a panic attack
- Discuss how they react to feeling cut-off and isolated from others – the pandemic exacerbated that and many teens report problems with re-entry
- Instead of withdrawal, plan re-entry in small steps

Trying to Cope by Distracting and Avoiding Affects Self Perception

- Adolescents described negative self-perception as a result of panic attacks, leading to efforts to cope through distraction, avoidance
- Panic and anxiety can lead to withdrawing from social life
- That may interrupt the key adolescent process of forming peer connections and developing a group identity
- Challenge the Belief that Avoidance Helps
- Discuss ways to explore identity safely – gradual participation and establish social exposures that increase in duration or complexity with a focus each time on the success of the social engagement

Finally, Teach to Interrupt Rumination – Usually about a Past or Future Problem/Mistake

- Bring mindfulness technique of “observe and describe” to stay in the moment
- Observe if sensation precedes worry – may journal via an app like Daylio or T2Mood Tracker
- Teach thought stopping and thought replacing
- Teach them to use “Even if I make a mistake, I can fix it” or similar positive counter cognition

Stress Management & Anxiety Regulation Skills

Dr Christine Dargon
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The “3-S” Approach?

- 1. Symptoms
 - What are the symptoms that the person is experiencing and exhibiting?
- 2. Sources
 - What are the sources (family, school, media, society?)
- 3. Solutions
 - Teach Life skills including time management, relaxation, get enough sleep and good sleep
 - Limit media, get the child physically active
 - Structure the environment

Why?

- Media
- Social Media
 - Facebook, “liking”, comparisons, immediate gratification
 - Social Skills and non-verbal communication
- Exposure to more serious issues/ world and social
- Illnesses
- Plus than add biology, personality and stress

3 Ingredients to anxiety being a problem

- 1. Biology
- 2. Personality
- 3. Stress

Cognitive Theory of Anxiety



Behavioral - Environment

- Environment is key:
 - Health issues
 - Major life changes
 - Break up/divorce
 - Death of family member or close friend
 - Seen/been involved in a crime/accident
 - Health or drug issue of a family member

Environmental Factors

- Had the individual been exposed to a traumatic event?
 - Direct experience
 - Threat or perceived threat to life or body
 - Witness an event that involves this aspects with another person
 - Re-experience a traumatic event
 - Has there been a catastrophe or disaster?

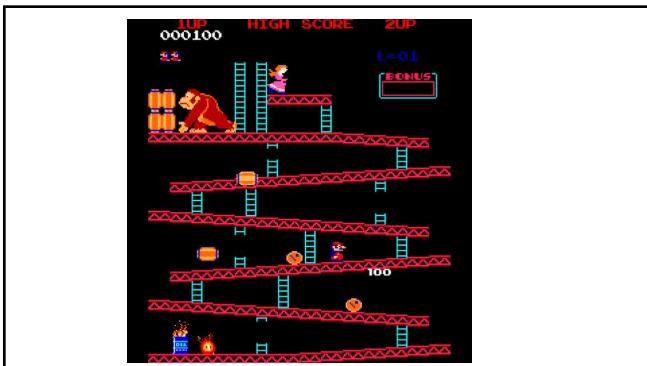
Behavioral – learned anxiety

- Fear and worry can be learned (children):
 - Are the parents anxious?
 - What goes on in the home?
 - What is the child being exposed to?
 - How do parents interact with one another?
 - Arguing?

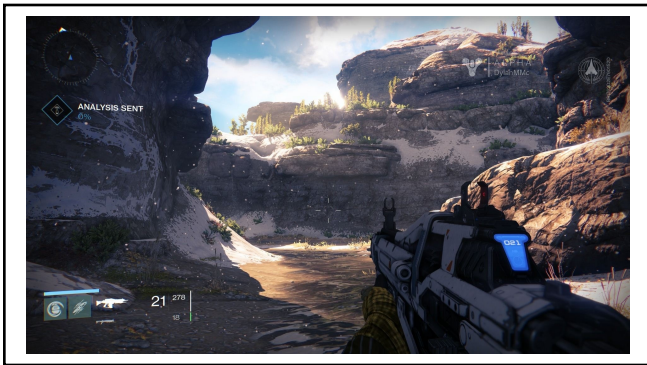




















- Bullying in/out of school
 - <https://www.bullies2buddies.com/>
 - 13 Reasons Why – Netflix
 - What is online? Youtube; Blue Whale Challenge
- “This Web Site provides peer-support only. I understand that I will not receive psychological, medical, or legal advice through my use of this website. I agree that I will not use this Web Site as a substitute for professional services.”

“The **Blue Whale Game** ([Russian](#): Синий кит, [translit.](#) *Siniy kit*), also known as “Blue Whale Challenge”, is a 21st-century [social network phenomenon](#) that is claimed to exist in several countries, beginning in 2016. The game reportedly consists of a series of tasks assigned to players by administrators over a 50-day period, with the final challenge requiring the player to commit [suicide](#).^[17] “Blue Whale” came to prominence in May 2016 through an article in Russian newspaper, [Novaya Gazeta](#), that linked many unrelated child suicides to membership of group “F57” on the [VKontakte](#) social network. A wave of [moral panic](#) swept Russia.^[3] However the piece was later criticised for attempting to make a causal link where none existed, and none of the suicides was found to be as a result of the group activities”

Think of all possible areas and sources!!!



Development

- As we grow up our ability to worry and be anxious increases as our brain develops cognitively.
- As we are able to think more abstractly and in a more detailed fashion than we are able to worry more and even panic. That is why panic is unusual in children (Muris, 2008).

Manifestations of Anxiety

- Children may reenact in their play
- Difficult to ascertain the content of the dreams
- Avoidance of places or people that represent that event
- May see constriction of play
- Socially withdrawn

With Children

- Anxiety disorders affect 13+% (range is 5-17%) of children. This is the most common mental health diagnosis with children.
- Estimates for ever having a diagnosis among children aged 3-17 years, in 2016-19, are given below. ADHD 9.8% (approximately 6.0 million)
- Anxiety 9.4% (approximately 5.8 million)
- Behavior problems 8.9% (approximately 5.5 million)
- Depression 4.4% (approximately 2.7 million)
- Fears and anxiety in children are normal but when children become too afraid such as overly cautious, overcorrecting, too worried etc.. than it is a problem.
- Girls are more frequently diagnosed than boys.

Confusion

- Often mistaken for:
 - ADHD
 - Depression
 - Learning disabilities

Are you an eagle or a chicken?

How do you know if a child is anxious?

- You may visibly see the stress
- Child may show it through anger
- May have few friends
- May take a lot of time to prepare for an event
- Difficulty sleeping
- May avoid places or risks
- Not go over friends' houses
- Consider a lot of "what ifs"
- Complaints of physical ailments such as headaches or stomach aches
- Perfectionism

Anxiety Regulation Skills

- The Yo Re Mi App
- Use Dragon Breaths to Release Tension
- Help children reach calm with mindful breathing; a practice that can benefit us all in tough situations. [Dragon breathing](#) is one of our favorite ways to help children release anxiety and tension, and is a highly effective emotional regulation technique.
- The long exhale from this yogic exercise teaches a crucial self-regulation skill: conscious breathing. The longer the exhale the more we are able to trigger a relaxation response (parasympathetic nervous system). Here's a video to practice it yourself, or play onscreen for kids:

- Allow Children to Take the Lead
- One thing we emphasize in our classes and [teacher trainings](#) is remembering that while it may seem easier, our goal as caregivers and educators is not to help children suppress big feelings. Teaching emotional regulation skills requires social-emotional intelligence on our part, where we allow kids to take the lead and acknowledge feelings, recognize situations, and adapt accordingly.
- When we [encourage individuality in children](#), we help them realize that everyone is unique, as are our feelings, situations, and responses. We also help them build confidence and self-awareness, which are essential to social-emotional learning.

- Take a Mindful Body Scan
- We love to encourage [mindful body scans](#) to help children wind down, ground, and regroup. We use body scanning in Yo Re Mi's in-class enrichment program but it can also be used at home too — maybe even followed by a guided relaxation!
- Tips For A Self-Regulating Body Scan:
 - *Lay on your back to start your body scan (feet fall apart and arms by your side, palms face up)*
 - *Close your eyes and prepare to begin your scan at your toes*
 - *Inhale through your nose and squeeze your toes tightly... then exhale and release them.*
 - *Inhale and squeeze your feet tightly... then exhale and release them.*
 - *Continue up the body, piece by piece, tensing and releasing major muscle groups with each inhale.*

- Release Pent-up Emotion with Camel Pose
- Living in a society where it is more common to hold grudges and repressed emotion than it is to release them, it is no surprise that grown ups struggle with stress, tension, and anxiety. In turn, the children we care for inherit that negative energy.
- One emotional regulation technique we love is practicing heart-opening back bends, like [Camel Pose](#). Not only does this [yoga pose help boost the immune system](#) by releasing pent-up emotion and reducing stress, it also helps us embrace loving kindness, understanding, and [self-love](#).

Yoga



Yoga

- Make it fun and create games
- **Magic Animal Sack.** This is the best tool for teaching yoga to kids under 3 years old; Can be done in a group setting as well. Toddlers cannot easily imagine the animals – they need to see them!

Get a big sack (or even an interesting pillowcase will do) and fill it with all kinds of animal toys or animal beanbags (you can get them very cheap at www.orientaltrading.com). Go around the circle and let each kid in his turn put his hand into your magical sack and take out a toy. Then, of course, do the pose or poses of this animal with the whole group.

After all the toys are out, you can do poses using the toys.

- **Simon Says.** This is a great way to warm up and to bring the focus to the classroom. In a circle, all of the kids need to follow the movements of the therapist exactly. There is no talking. The therapist can lead the kids through a sun dance and other movement flows and even add the sound of deep breath or animal sounds for the students to mirror. You can also let one of the students be the leader.
- Great website:
http://www.rainbowkidsyoga.net/articles/fun_ways.html

- More on Yoga for kids:
- Pick a quiet place to do yoga, and focus on breathing in and out through the nose.
- Hold the poses anywhere from 8 to 15 seconds. Since it takes time to get into the postures, counting should start once you are in the posture.
- Slowly increase the time spent in the poses once you get more proficient with them.
- Try to eat lightly before doing yoga, as many of the poses twist across your internal organs.
- Have FUN together as a family as you learn to find a sense of calm during the cold winter months.
- <http://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-23064/12-kid-friendly-yoga-poses-to-inspire-a-happy-2016.html>

The Pretzel: Sitting tall in a cross-legged position, reach one arm across your body and rest it on your knee. Then stretch your other hand directly behind you. Count slowly to eight before switching sides.



Easy Pose: Simply sit cross-legged with your hands gently placed upon your knees with your palms facing upward. Take several deep breaths in and out of your nose as you begin to quiet and calm your body and mind.



Airplane: Lie on your tummy and gently lift your chest, arms, and legs off the floor.



Cobra: Lie on your stomach with your elbows bent close to your side. Then gently lift up your chest, keeping your legs straight behind you.



Elephant: From a standing position, fold forward and interlace your hands, swinging them side to side like an elephant trunk.



Jack-in-the-Box: Sit with your knees bent into your chest with your arms wrapped around them. Then, point your forehead to your knees and count to 3; next, inhale and lift your head, like a Jack-in-the-box popping up.



Otter: Lie on your belly with your arms out in front of you. Then slowly push up with your hands against the floor, straightening your arms and lifting your head and chest.



Yoga: Stand tall with your feet grounded into the floor. Slowly straighten your arms and lift them over your head, stretching up and making your body into the shape of the letter Y.



Lion: Kneel on your shins with your chest on your thighs. Then, on the count of 3, spring your body forward and roar like a lion!



Oyster: Sit tall with the soles of your feet together. Then slide your arms under your knees, touching your elbows to the floor with ease. Hold on to the sides of your feet as you slowly inhale and exhale through your nose, bringing your head gently toward your toes.



Volcano: Stand tall with your feet slightly apart, bringing your hands into prayer position in front of your heart. Next, inhale and push your hands to the sky, then exhale and move your arms to the side and then back to center, like an exploding volcano.



Eagle: Stand tall and then bend your knees. Bring your right leg over your left one and then cross your right arm under your left. Stay in this position for a count of 8 before switching sides.



More great yoga resources!

- Adapted from an excerpt from [The ABCs of Yoga for Kids](#), written by Teresa Anne Power and illustrated by Kathleen Rietz.
- <https://www.facebook.com/abcsforyogaforkids/photos>
- Also recommend:
- **5 Kid-Friendly Yoga Poses To Help Children Cultivate Patience**
 - <http://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-22827/5-kid-friendly-yoga-poses-to-help-children-cultivate-patience.html>
- **5 Kid-Friendly Yoga Poses To Help Your Child Avoid A Meltdown**
 - <http://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-18351/5-kid-friendly-yoga-poses-to-help-your-child-avoid-a-meltdown.html>

- <http://childhood101.com/2015/04/yoga-for-kids/>
- Calm Down Yoga Routine for kids, perfect for helping children learn to manage big emotions. Complete with free printable poster.
- Youtube.com Cosmic Kids Yoga

- Employ Mutual Regulation with Mindful Language
- Sometimes children aren't able to access self-regulation tools — after all, isn't it even difficult for us adults to consistently self-regulate?
- Their social-emotional learning is still developing, so they need help identifying coping strategies along the way. Co-regulation requires us to maintain a [mindfulness practice](#) of our own so we can be proactive in supporting them.
- When we maintain our own mindfulness practice, we can better replace disciplinary action with [logical consequences](#) and help kids manage their feelings and actions in a safe environment. Try some of these strategies to foster emotional regulation skills:
- Practice non-judgement using [mindful language](#) to help them feel listened to and respected
- Use [fact-based observations](#) when motivating behavior
- Create safe spaces for self-regulation activities (ie. a corner where children can spend time to release tension)

- Use Guided Breathing
- Breathwork and a guided breathing practice are foundational self-regulation strategies. An especially great tool for SEL development and emotional self-regulation, the **breathing ball** helps us focus on our breath by visualizing each inhale and exhale.
- Another great practice is deep breathing. While we may often use this emotional regulation technique for warming up before one of our [musical yoga adventures](#), it is also a useful practice for helping children with autism work through big feelings.

Deep breathing

- Lie down, bend knees and have feet shoulder width apart.
- Scan your body and identify the places that are tense.
- Place one hand on your stomach and one on your chest.
- Inhale slowly, through nose – feel hand on stomach move but not chest.
- Exhale through mouth
- Repeat at least five times prolonging exhale.
- Scan body again so evaluate tension.

- Encourage Partner Yoga Poses
- Partnered activities encourage social-emotional learning by building [teamwork and communication skills](#). Social-emotional learning activities like [partner yoga poses](#) encourage mindful listening and expression, self-awareness, and connection — which all strengthen emotional regulation.
- Leave space for imagination while guiding children to safe partner poses. Maybe your kids might want to start off with energetic [transportation yoga poses](#) (like a Pirate Ship!)

- Use Confidence Boosting Postures
- We are a big fan of mindful affirmations, affirmation yoga, and confidence-boosting yoga poses. Some of our favorite yoga postures to encourage children to try are Warrior Pose variations.
- Warrior 1 and 2 are energizing, strengthening, and confidence-boosting. Equally strengthening, balancing and invigorating, [Warrior 3 then helps us become superheroes!](#)
- Recite this confidence affirmation at home and the classroom (or anywhere!) to promote self-awareness and emotional self-regulation for kids.

• I am **POWERFUL**
 I am **STRONG**
 I **SHINE** my light
 I am **SAFE** and I **BELONG**
 I grow **STRONGER** everyday
 I **RISE** above
 I am **FIERCE** and **DETERMINED**
 I am full of **LOVE**

Behavioral

- Deep Relaxation exercises
 - Tensing muscles and then releasing
 - Deep breathing – diaphragmatic breathing
- Removing safe behaviors:
 - Safe behaviors are the things that the client has done in order to reduce their anxiety. Usually these are avoidant behaviors and can be minor such as distracting oneself or major such as using drugs or alcohol
 - They keep the client from having to truly deal with their anxiety
 - The client must face the anxiety to overcome it

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Engage in deep breathing but you can do this sitting down, standing or lying down.
- Tense parts of the body either individually or in groups. Hold the tension for 5-7 seconds and then relax:
 - Hands, arms
 - Head, face, throat and shoulders
 - Chest, stomach, lower back
 - Buttocks, thighs, calves and feet
- If it helps, tell yourself: "relax", "Let it go", "let go", "it's ok" etc..

In depth Progressive Relaxation

- Get detailed and in depth:
 - Start with wrinkling your forehead
 - Squint your eyes
 - Open mouth wide
 - Clench jaw
 - Make fists
 - Arch back
 - Push heels into surface
 - Curl toes
- Get detailed and even record it so you can do each step by step.
- You can also do all of these at once for a quick relief.

Habit Reversal Training (HRT)

- Developed for specific types of OCD such as skin picking, nail biting etc.. Can be useful for OCD in children:
 - Step 1: Develop an awareness
 - Often not at all aware even doing it
 - Step 2: Learn Relaxation Skills
 - Reduce tension/worry
 - Step 3: Diaphragmatic Breathing
 - Learn to regulate own breath and reduce anxiety
 - Step 4: Muscle Tensing
 - Make fists, tense arms, press elbows into sides
 - If you do this you can not nail bite or pull hair
- Quick alternative – pull down into chair

Mindfulness

- “Paying attention with flexibility, openness and curiosity” (Harris, 2009).
- It is an awareness process and not about thinking. Paying attention to an experience rather than focusing on thoughts.
- Be open and curious.
- Being able to control your focus and direct it towards different aspects of your experience.

Mindfulness Exercise

- There are many varieties but all have the same key components to them:
 - Notice something – pick the thing you want to focus your attention on. This is about noticing your experience.
 - Let go of your thoughts
 - Let your feelings be

Mindfulness exercises

- One Minute Breathing
 - This exercise can be done anywhere at any time, standing up or sitting down. All you have to do is focus on your breath for just one minute. Start by breathing in and out slowly, holding your breath for a count of six once you've inhaled. Then breathe out slowly, letting the breath flow effortlessly out back into the atmosphere.
- Mindful Observation
 - Pick a natural organism within your immediate environment and focus on watching it for a minute or two. This could be a flower or an insect, the clouds or the moon. Don't do anything except notice the thing you are looking at. But really notice it. Look at it as if you are seeing it for the first time.
- Touch Points
 - Think of something that happens every day more than once, something you take for granted, like opening a door for example. At the very moment you touch the door knob to open the door, allow yourself to be completely mindful of where you are, how you feel and what you are doing.
 - <http://www.pocketmindfulness.com/6-mindfulness-exercises-you-can-try-today/>

Jedi Mindfulness



• 1. Define the "Force"

- In the *Star Wars* movies, it becomes clear very quickly that the Force is an awesome power that everyone wants. But what exactly is the Force? When I work with kids, I provide them with my interpretation. The Force is the power we get from any emotion whether it comes from the light side or the dark side. From love, joy, and surprise to anger, sadness, and worry, nothing is "good" or "bad." These emotions are only messengers, and all are part of the Force.
- Very plainly, *The Force = The Power of Emotions*.
- Try this: Ask your child if he or she would like to go through Jedi training. Tell your son or daughter that their mission will be to decode the secret messages being sent by the Force (e.g., their worried thoughts, their angry feelings).

• 2. Wave Hello to the Dark Side

- If your child feels anxious, the way around the discomfort is straight through it. We must teach our children not to deny, avoid, or squash parts of their emotional experience. Long-term avoidance of emotions can actually spark and perpetuate depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. When we choose not to face our worry, we are left much like Darth Vader, enslaved by our pain.
- The alternative to avoidance is acknowledgement. I understand helping your child acknowledge his or her anxious feelings instead of shutting them down is not an easy choice. Sometimes it's easier to just say, "Don't worry so much. Please trust me, it'll be fine."
- As a parent myself, I completely understand this path. Sometimes we don't have the emotional bandwidth to support a child's chronic worry, especially when it seems our love and reassurance are not having a positive effect. Anxious emotions are often big emotions that can be uncomfortable for the entire family.
- All that said, when you parent an anxious child, you seek one thing above almost anything else for your child: inner peace. Toward this goal, acknowledgement is the stepping stone.
- Try this: Next time your children worry, tell them they are Jedi Knight and Jedi. acknowledge the Force (an emotion) when they feel it. They can wave hello to their worry and say, "Hey, worry. I see you're back. I'm a Jedi. I understand you're trying to tell me something."

• 3. Lean into the Dark Side

- Leaning into the dark side takes training because, at first, it can feel messy and uncomfortable. Leaning in means allowing your child the space to physically feel where the Force or worry is flowing on the inside. Allowing discomfort to pass gets us a step closer to decoding the message from our emotion.
- Anxiety activates the sympathetic nervous system, and as such, feelings of worry are often felt in such places as the stomach, chest, and throat. Breathing with visualization can calm the nervous system and begin to kick a child's logical brain back into gear.
- Try this: Obi-Wan instructs Luke to close his eyes and, "Stretch out with your feelings"; Yoda says, "Allow the force to flow through you." When your son or daughter worries, have them close their eyes and ask them where they are feeling the worry or the Force flowing inside of their body.
- Now, ask your children to breathe into the place in their body where they feel the Force. While they take a deep breath, ask them to imagine what the Force actually looks like. What color is it? What consistency is it? Maybe it looks like a dark cloud. Once they have the visual, ask them to breathe the Force out.
- To support your child during this process, you can use phrases like, "I am here, and you are completely safe, my young Jedi. This feeling will pass."

• 4. Put the Light Saber Down

- Our range of feelings (light and dark) creates our emotional consciousness and gives power to the Force. Within this consciousness lie encoded messages. The problem is we usually miss the communication being sent by our emotions such as anger and worry because we are too busy reacting. Swift reactions cover up messages.
- Darth Vader tries to provoke these reactions in his son, Luke. Vader says, "So you have a twin sister? If you will not turn to the dark side, then perhaps she will." Luke feels very angry and even as a full Jedi Knight trained in the art of mindfulness, he does not pause to acknowledge or lean in to his anger. Instead, he reacts right away and begins to battle his father.
- When Luke regains his composure, he realizes that his anger is communicating that he wants to love and protect his family, including his father. Luke then decides the best way to teach his father about the light side is to show him compassion. So he turns his light saber off and tosses it aside.
- Now, this last step may seem way too esoteric for your child to grasp, but I've worked with children for years. Even at a very young age, they are incredibly sophisticated. If we communicate in their language, they get it.
- Try this: Let's teach kids their worry is trying to send them a message, but the message is encoded. As a Jedi, the way to get to the secret message is to be mindful when we feel worried. This means understanding worry has a purpose, acknowledging it, leaning into it, and then making a logical decision on how to proceed.
- <http://blogs.psychcentral.com/stress-better/2016/01/4-jedi-mindfulness-tricks-to-help-an-anxious-child/>

The Floating Technique

- By Dr. Paul Foxman
- Practice Opportunities
 - Face – Don't avoid your anxiety
 - Accept – practice opportunities
 - Float – relax through it
 - Let time pass – it will pass

Martial Arts & Anxiety

- Authentic Kung Fu training is a discipline built on the mind and body connection – mental strength and perseverance.
- While discipline and self-control are important, the mindfulness of martial arts practice forces you to be mentally present. That required presence prohibits the wandering of the mind. Anxiety can't thrive in a mind that is focused on the here and now. A mind that is focused on precise posture, movements, and breathing.
- Martial Arts classes provide the physical outlet delivering several mental health benefits.
- Aerobic exercise stimulates your body to produce endorphins. The feel-good hormone, endorphins lift your mood and energize you.
- The physical outlet of releasing the tension, stress, and anxiety of the day in a class where you can kick, punch, and scream in a safe and supportive environment is invaluable. After class, you'll feel the day's worries have weakened and your outlook will be clearer.

Baby Buddhas Meditation

- From a great book called "Baby Buddhas"
- Sample:
 - The following is a partial printing of the Cleansing Breath Meditation, which teaches children that they can release negative feelings and thoughts and replace them with positive feelings and thoughts.
 - *Breathe in love.*
Breathe out sadness.
Breathe in joy.
Breathe out madness.
Breathe in peace.
Breathe out badness.
All the sadness, madness and badness changes to bright white sparkles of love.
- Baby Buddhas: A Guide for Teaching Meditation to Children Paperback – August 1, 2004 by [Lisa Desmond](#)

There's an App for that!

- Daily Yoga
- Relax Melodies
- Mindful Minute
- Virtual Hope Box (guided meditations)
- Stop, Breathe, Think (Meditations)
- The Worry Box
- End Anxiety
- Relax Meditations
- SAMApp
- Relax Lite
- Stop Panic (audios, articles, cognitive diary etc.)
- Mindshift (coaches through cognitive restructuring, education, tools, tips etc.)
- Calm (breathing app) FREE educator subscription
- Pacifica (improve mood, reduce anxiety, live healthier etc)

More Apps

- Insight Timer (meditations)
- Cognitive Diary CBT Self-Help (cognitive diary; articles)
- CBT Thought Record Diary
- Colorfy – Coloring Book Free
- Mandala Coloring
- Adult coloring book premium
- Anxiety Relief Hypnosis
- Social Anxiety Disorder
- Healing Sounds – Anxiety Relief
- Anxiety Free Hypnosis (Hypnosis, meditation; coaching)
- Headspace
- Smiling Mind (Age specific mindfulness)
- OMG I can Meditate!

Rewards and Children

- Working with children can be very challenging – you can not make them face something that feels bad
 - Reward them with therapy compliant behaviors.
 - No reward or payoff for non therapy related behaviors
 - HOWEVER, in session and at home you do not want any negative consequences or punishment – do not associate negatives with treatment.
 - Still use parent(s) as coach.
