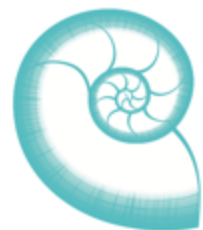


Understanding Anxiety in Children & Teens



Sarah Dew-Reeves, Ph.D.



Nautilus
Behavioral Health

Overview

- Part 1: Background
 - Prevalence
 - Is anxiety ever helpful?
 - Anxiety symptoms
- Part 2: Problematic anxiety
 - When is anxiety a problem?
 - When can problematic anxiety arise for youth?



Overview

- Part 3: Support for anxiety
 - Seeking outside help
 - Supporting your kids
- Part 4: Resources
 - Specific disorders
 - Resources and references



Children and adolescents worry...a LOT

- 90% of typical children between the ages of 2 and 14 have at least 1 specific fear (Child Anxiety Network, 2020)
- Anxiety disorders are the most prevalent emotional/behavioral disorders among children and adolescents (Merikangas et al, 2009)
- Median age of onset is 11 years (Bandelow & Michaelis, 2015)

Children and adolescents worry...a LOT

- About 1 in 3 teens (31.9%) will meet criteria for an anxiety disorder by age 18 (Merikangas et al, 2010)
- 24.9% of teens ages 13-17 have suffered from at least 1 anxiety disorder in the past 12 months (Kessler et al, 2012)
- Less than 60% of youth ages 3-17 with anxiety have received treatment (Ghandour et al, 2019)

Is anxiety *ever* okay?

- It *can* be adaptive and protective
- It is a natural, automatic response
- It is the body's warning system
 - Fight-flight-or-freeze response



Is anxiety *ever* okay?

- It *can* improve performance and attention



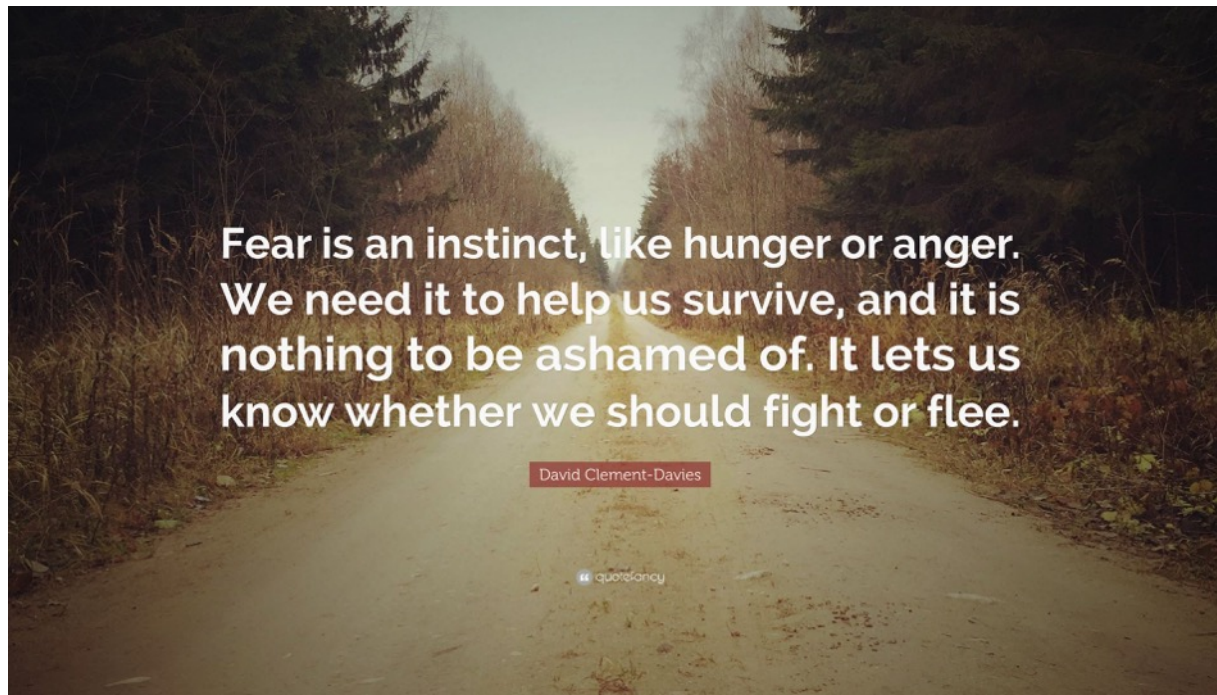
Is anxiety *ever* okay?

- It *can* be fun and enjoyable



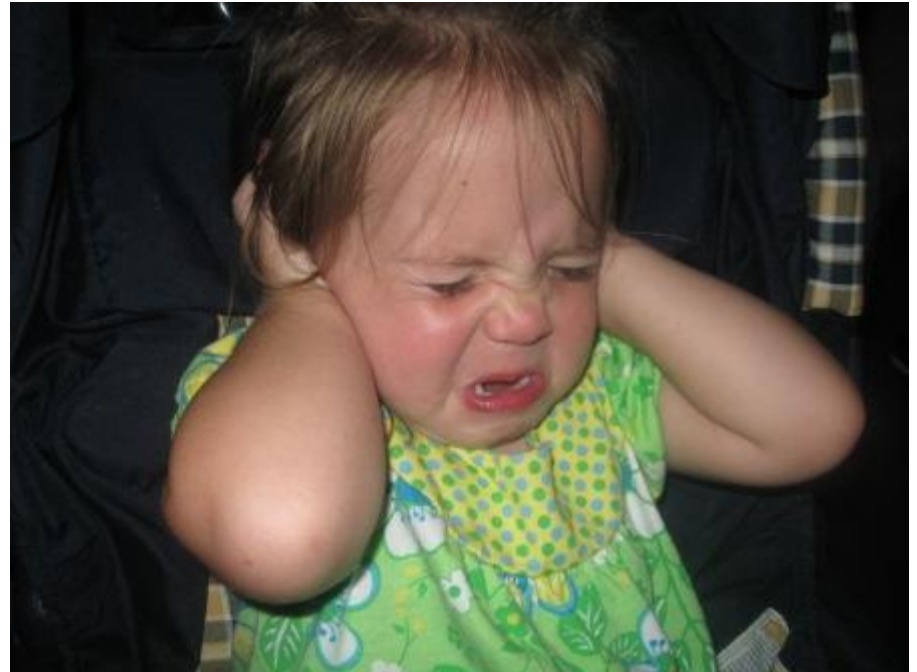
YES! Sometimes, anxiety *is* okay!

- Pincus (2012) differentiated between adaptive and unhelpful anxiety:
 - **Fear** is an adaptive natural emotion that helps us respond to perceived environmental threats



Youth typically fear different things at different points in development

- Infants and Toddlers (0-2 years):
 - Loud noises
 - Strangers
 - Separation from parents
 - Large objects



Youth typically fear different things at different points in development

- Preschoolers (3-6 years):
 - Imaginary figures
 - The dark
 - Noises
 - Sleeping alone
 - Weather

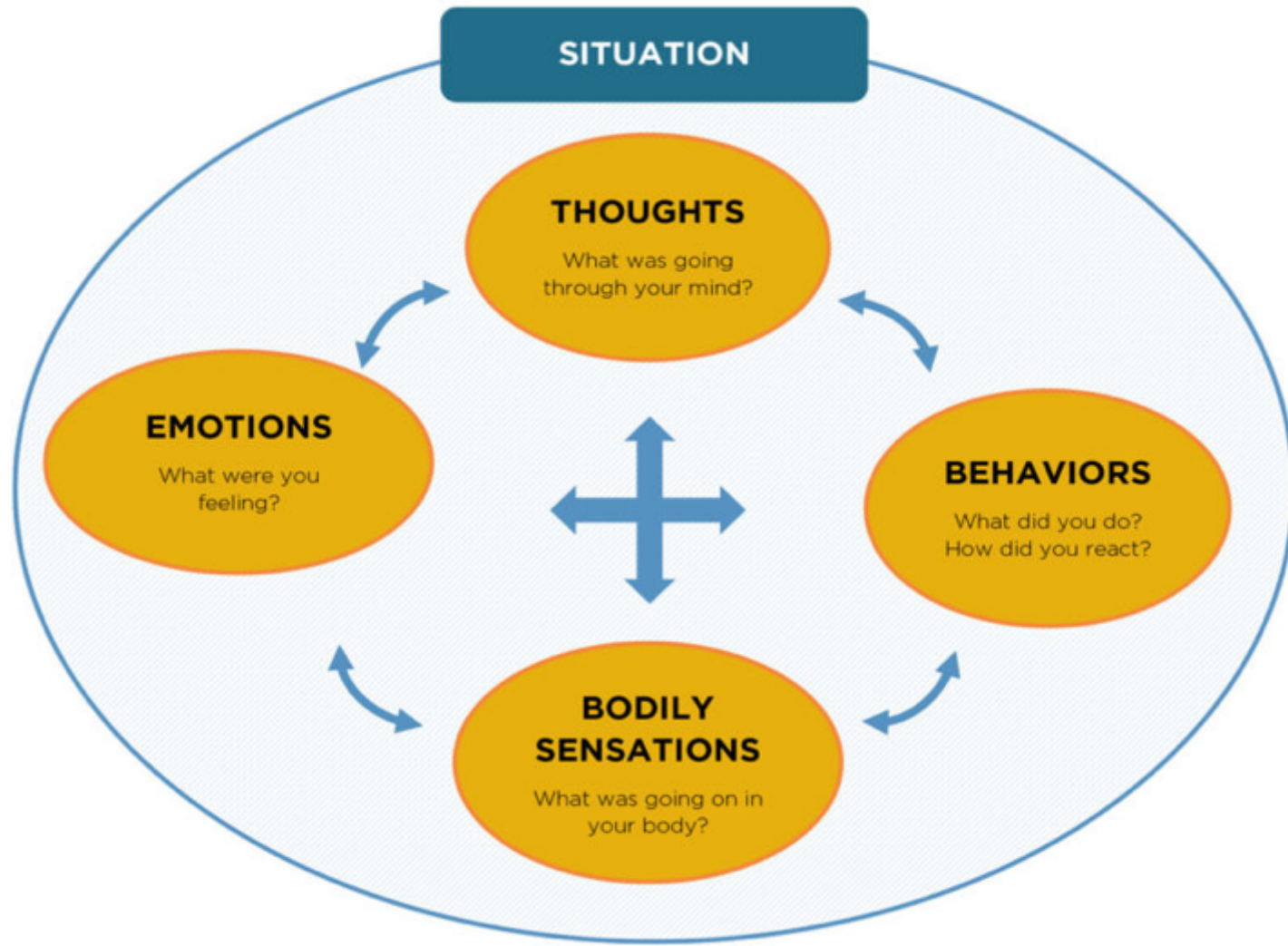


Youth typically fear different things at different points in development

- School-Aged Youth (7-16 years):
 - Physical injury
 - Health
 - School performance
 - Death
 - Severe weather
 - Social relationships



Anxiety symptoms fall into 4 general categories



General symptoms of anxiety

- **Thoughts:**
Expectation of
diffuse and
uncertain
danger



(Natalie Dee)

General symptoms of anxiety

- **Emotions:** Feelings of dread, panic and/or worry



General symptoms of anxiety

- **Bodily Sensations:** Involves the body preparing for threat (i.e., fight-flight-or-freeze)



General symptoms of anxiety

- **Behaviors:** Escape or avoidance

**I'M JUST HERE
TO RUN AWAY
FROM MY ANXIETY**



Cycle of Anxiety



Anxiety can involve symptoms consistent with other “disorders”

- Problems with attention, hyperactivity and/or impulsivity
- Externalizing behaviors
- Substance use



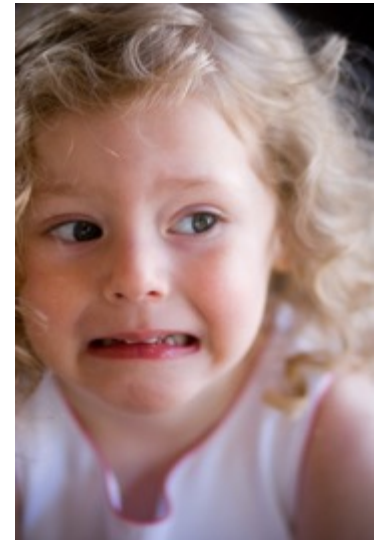
Anxiety can involve symptoms of other “disorders”

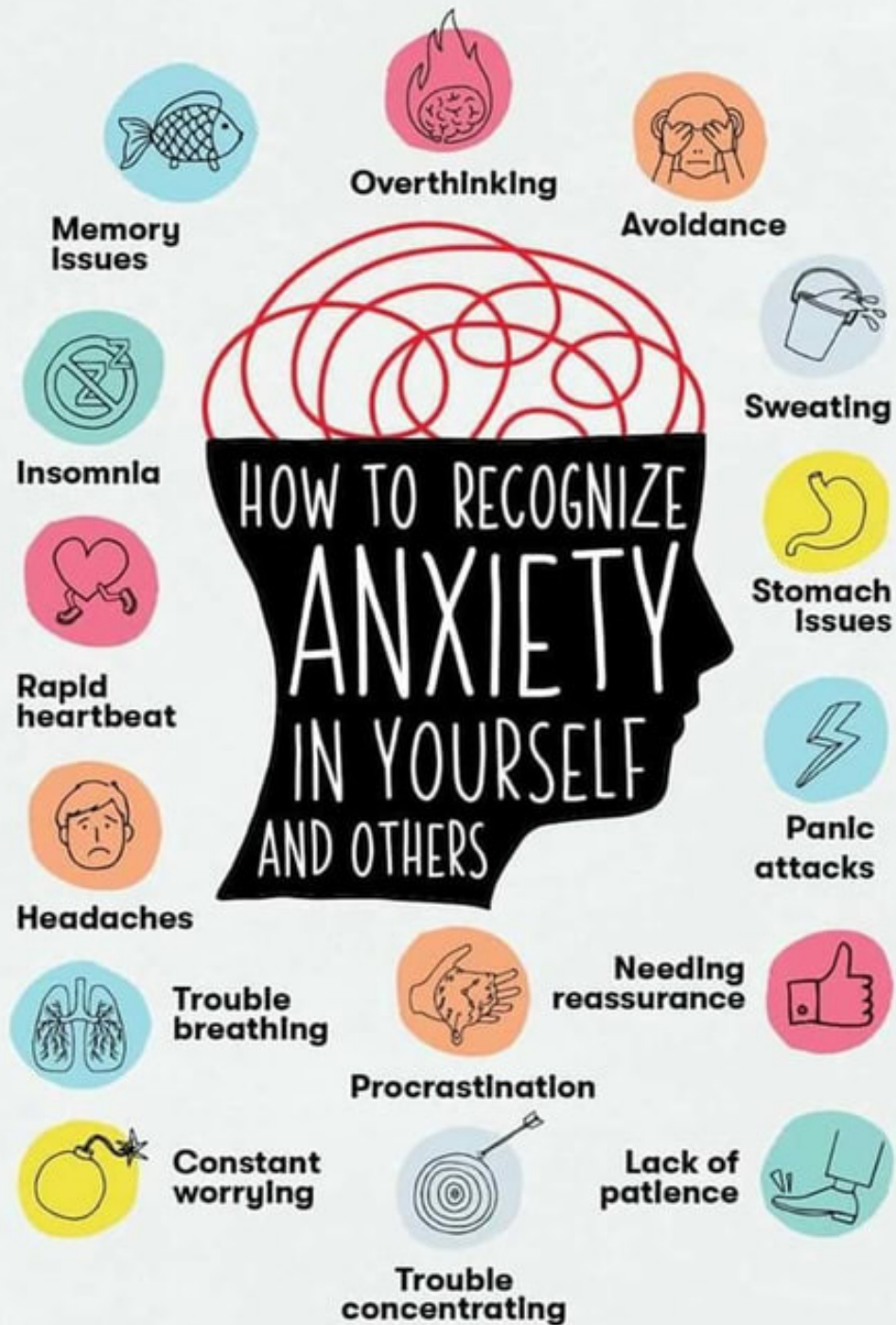
- Dissociative symptoms
- Hypervigilance
- Skin-picking
- Academic impairment
- School refusal



What does anxiety look like in children and adolescents?

- Overt fear/anxiety/worry
- Stuttering or articulation problems
- Tearful
- Inattentive
- Active/fidgety
- Easily frustrated
- Easily overwhelmed (“emotional”)
- Disengaged in class
- Oppositional
- Reassurance seeking
- Socially isolated/withdrawn
- Headaches, stomachaches





Anxiety in youth may involve additional symptoms *not* seen in adults

- Crying
- Tantrums
- Freezing
- Clinging
- *Refusing to speak in social situations*



There is a LOT of overlap between anxiety and...

- Depression
- OCD
- PTSD
- ADHD
- Learning disorder
- Communication disorder
- Autism spectrum disorder
- Tourette's disorder
- Organic/medical condition
- Response to medication/substance



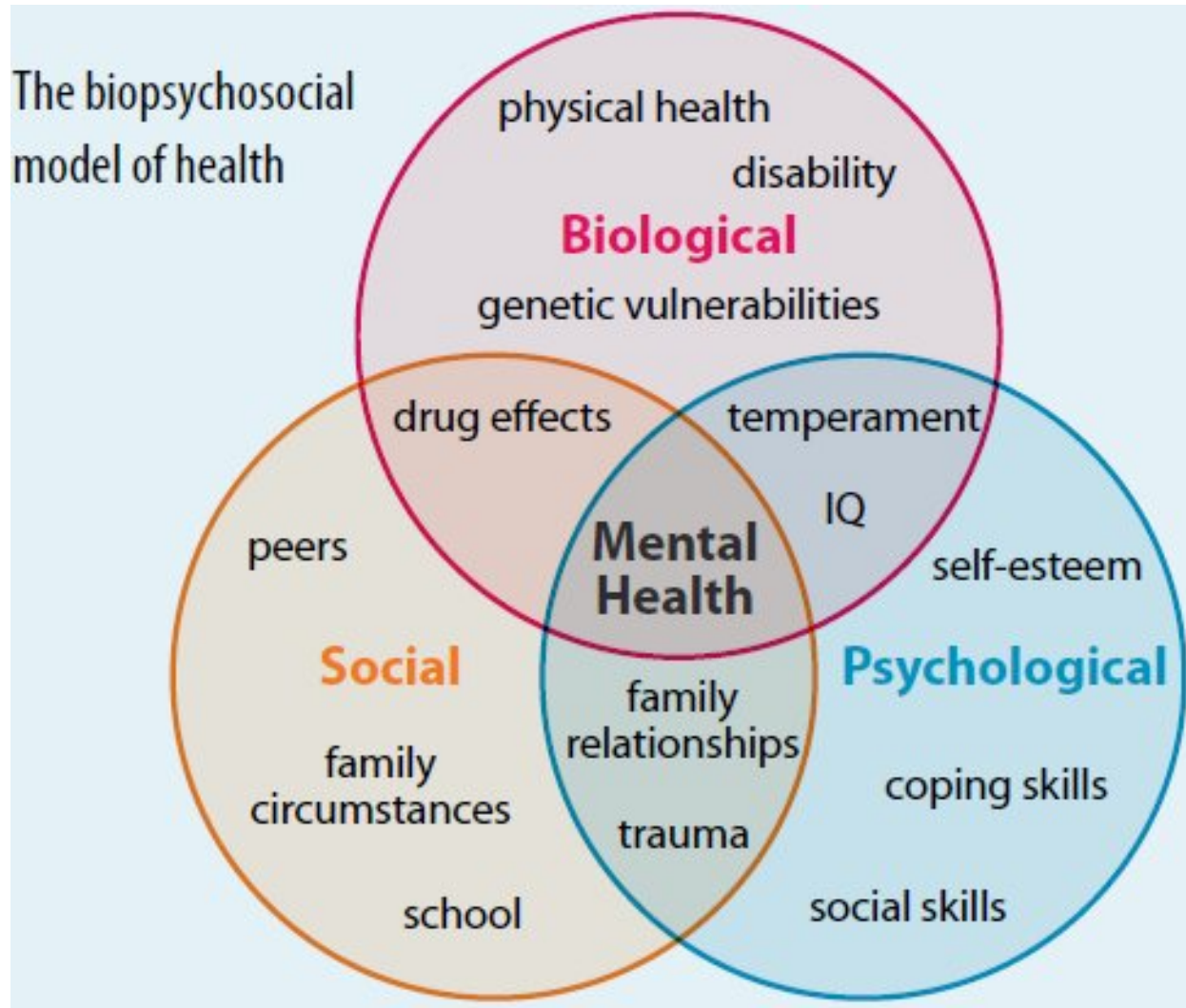
**DIFFERENTIAL
DIAGNOSIS**

A word about medical conditions and anxiety...

- Medical history:
 - Diabetes
 - Asthma
 - Allergies
 - Thyroid
 - Cardiac
 - Medication side effects
 - Substance use (including caffeine)



What increases the likelihood that youth will struggle with anxiety?



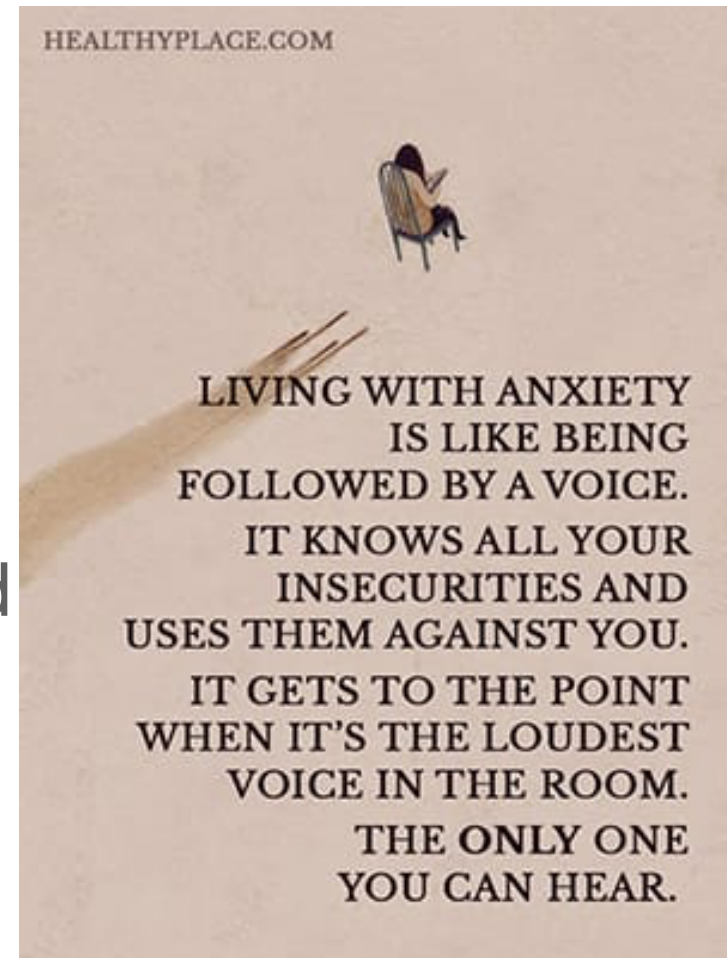
Questions?



- Questions about what we have covered so far?
We will talk about when anxiety is a problem,
when it shows up and what to do about it next!

Anxiety *can* be a problem

- According to Pincus (2012):
 - **Anxiety** is apprehension without apparent cause that can be future-oriented



Phobias *are* a problem

- According to Pincus (2012):
 - **Phobias** are exaggerated, persistent and disturbing fears that result in maladaptive avoidant behavior



In general, anxiety is a problem when it...

- Is excessive
- Is persistent
- Impacts relationships
- Causes *significant* distress
- Disrupts normal development
- **Interferes with daily life**



ANXIETY

A normal reaction to stress or difficult times..

Triggered by a specific stressor.

Has a start and ending point.

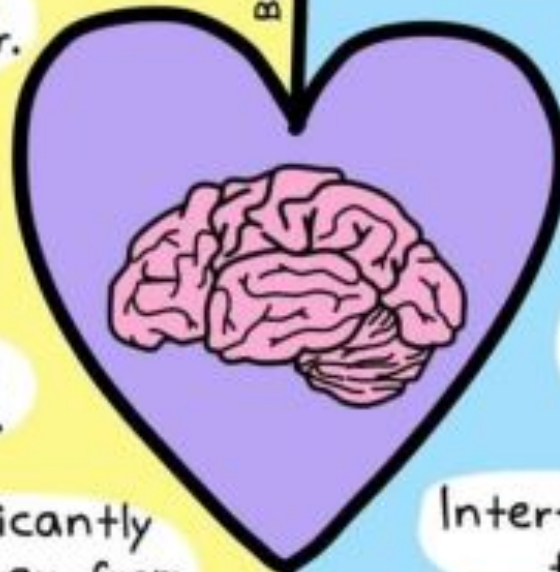
Can be helpful or motivational.

Lessens significantly or disappears away from stressful situations.

Relaxing often helps you feel better.

A response to toxic situations.

Blessing/Manifesting



ANXIETY DISORDERS

Often comes out of nowhere.

Intense or disproportionate emotional response.

Ongoing and lasts weeks or months.

Interferes with day-to-day life.

Physical symptoms like sweating, trembling, lightheadedness, racing heart.

Feels impossible to control or manage.

Anxiety comes in lots of flavors

- Separation Anxiety Disorder
- Selective Mutism
- Specific Phobia
- Social Anxiety Disorder
- Panic Disorder
- Panic Attack
- Agoraphobia
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder



See slides at the end of the presentation for more information!

Anxiety affects male and female youth differently over time

- Prevalence of anxiety disorders is about equal in girls and boys *until* adolescence
 - After puberty, girls are twice as likely as boys to experience some anxiety disorders (Altemus, et al, 2014; Giedd et al, 2008)



Anxiety is more common as children get older

- Diagnosis of anxiety is more likely in adolescence than childhood (Ghandour et al, 2019)



When is anxiety likely to show up for youth?

- Transitions
 - Starting school (ever)
 - Beginning of the school year (each year)
 - After changing schools
 - After changing from virtual to brick-and-mortar



When is anxiety likely to show up for youth?

- Evaluations
 - When students begin computer-based assessment (kindergarten)
 - When students begin FSA testing (3rd grade) and during FSA testing thereafter
 - When students have exams (midterms, finals)



When is anxiety likely to show up for youth?

- Performance
 - Virtual classes
 - Book reports
 - Presentations
 - Speeches
 - Debates
 - Performing arts (class and extracurricular)
 - Athletics (PE and extracurricular)



When is anxiety likely to show up for youth?

- Social
 - Riding the bus
 - Between classes
 - During lunch
 - In the locker room
 - After school
 - On social media
 - Spending time with friends
 - Dating



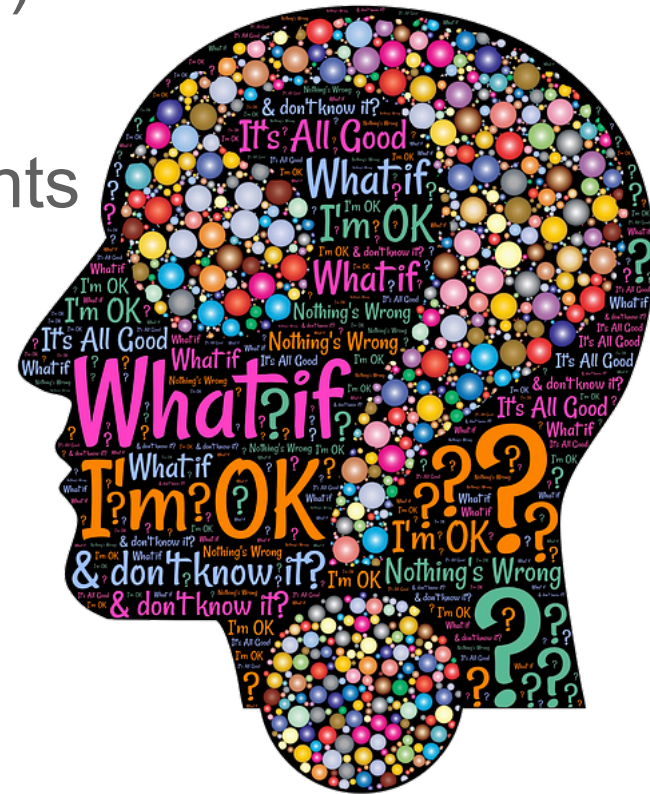
When is anxiety likely to show up for youth?

- As a function of current events
 - Coronavirus/COVID-19
 - School shootings (and other mass shootings)
 - Code Red Drills
 - Social justice, politics, legal and global issues
 - Local events (e.g., severe weather, tragedy)



But wait- there's more! Anxiety can also show up in the context of...

- Health and illness (self or others)
- Novel situations and people
- Major (positive or negative) events
- Future plans
- Employment
- Holidays
- Leisure
- **Just about ANYTHING**



Questions?



- Questions about when anxiety is a problem and the situations in which problematic anxiety may arise? We will cover what to do about it next!

How can I help my child manage anxiety?



- Manage my own anxiety, stress and emotions
- Teach my kids about anxiety, stress and emotions
- Normalize experience of anxiety, stress and emotions
- Empathize with my kids

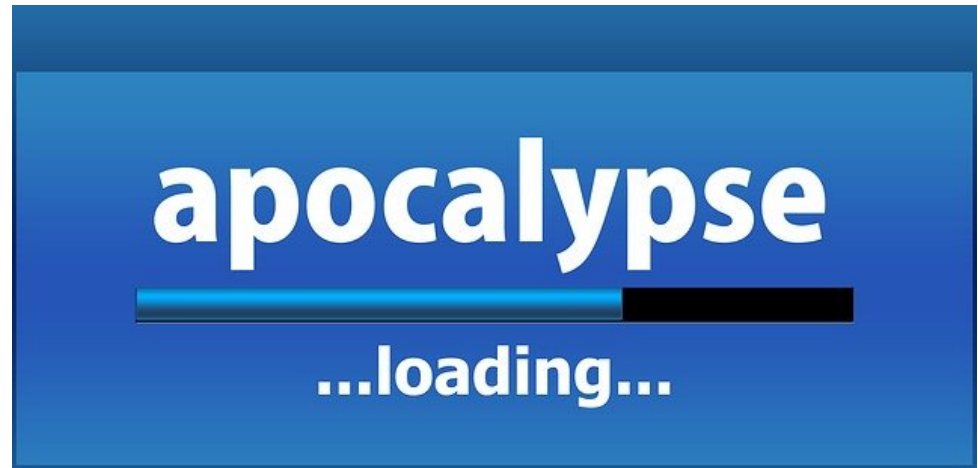
What are some things I can do to minimize my child's anxiety?

- Maintain fairly consistent routines
- Have clear rules, expectations and consequences
- Streamline plans, simplify tasks and instructions



What are some things I can do to minimize my child's anxiety?

- Provide developmentally appropriate preparation
- Routinely discuss emotions and experiences
- Avoid developmentally inappropriate content



What are some things I can do to minimize my child's anxiety?

- Be aware of *your* response to your child's anxiety
- Avoid inadvertently overwhelming your child



What are some things I can do to minimize my child's anxiety?

- Walk the middle ground
 - Do not dismiss your child's worries
 - Be encouraging and supportive
 - Reinforce *progress* outside of comfort zone
 - Avoid reinforcing unhelpful avoidance
 - Avoid forcing your child to do something



What strategies can my kids use to manage their anxiety?

- Mindfulness
- Problem solving
- Relaxation
- Support seeking



The 5-4-3-2-1 Coping Technique

Ease your state of mind in stressful moments.

Acknowledge **5** things that you can see around you.



Acknowledge **4** things that you can touch around you.



Acknowledge **3** things that you can hear around you.

Acknowledge **1** thing that you can taste around you.

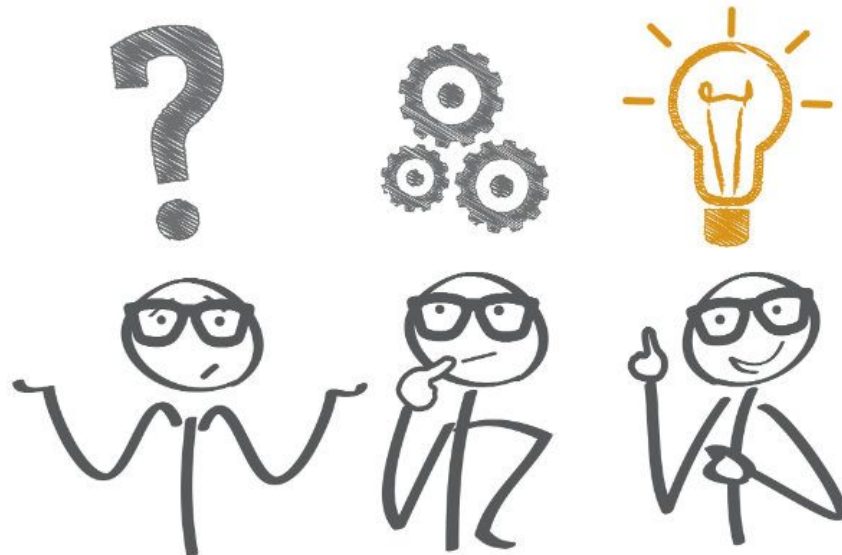


Acknowledge **2** things that you can smell around you.



Problem solving

- Active problem solving
- When do we NEED to worry?
- Leads to acting rather than reacting



USE BELLY BREATHING TO STAY CALM DURING STRESSFUL SITUATIONS.

This Monday, try belly breathing to calm your mind and body.

- Place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly.
- Inhale deeply through your nose for a count of four, making sure your belly is expanding and not your chest. Exhale through your mouth for a count of four.
- Continue this breathing cycle for a few minutes.
- Feel the stress leave your body while your mind becomes calm.



#DeStressMonday

DeStressMonday.org

DESTRESS
MONDAY

When to seek support for your child's anxiety?

- When problems are getting in the way of life!
- When there are concerns for safety!
- When they ask for help!



When to seek support for your child's anxiety?

- When you or other important people in your child's life have serious concerns about them!
- Even if someone *does not* meet criteria for an Anxiety Disorder diagnosis, they may still need support



Clinical assessment of anxiety in children and adolescents

- Parent and child clinical interview
- Self-, parent- and teacher-report questionnaires
- Behavioral observation
- Physiological data
- Medical history



Outpatient treatment of anxiety in children and adolescents

- Therapy
 - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Medication
 - SSRI
 - SNRI
- Combination treatment



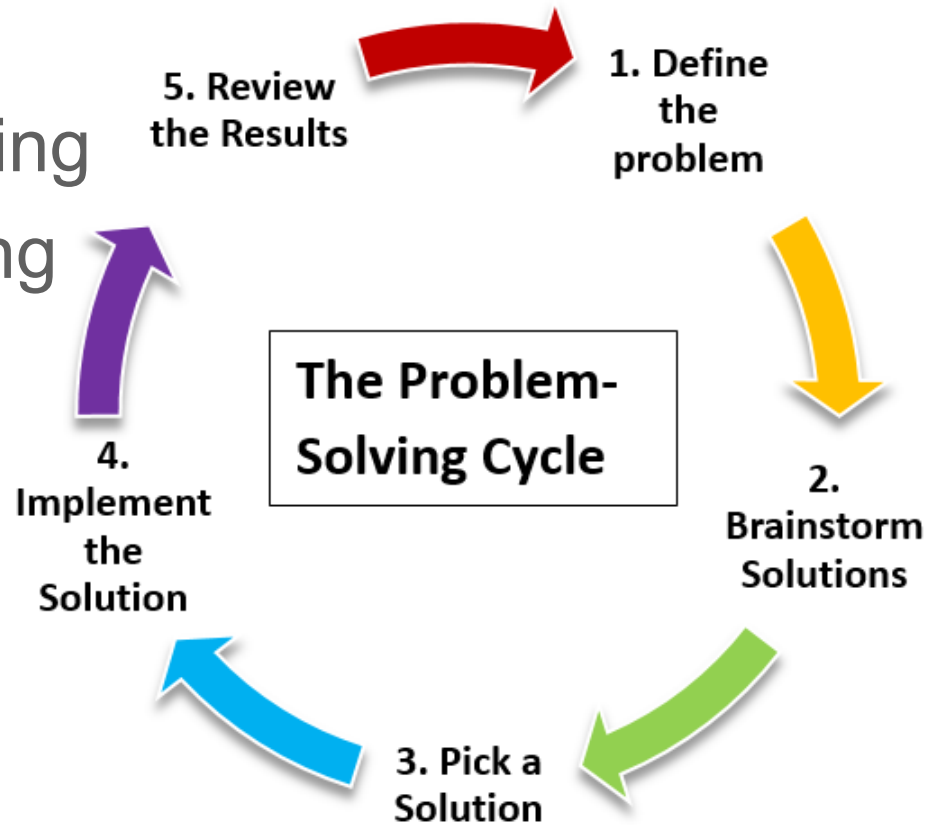
CBT for anxiety

- Psychoeducation
- Cognitive restructuring and challenging



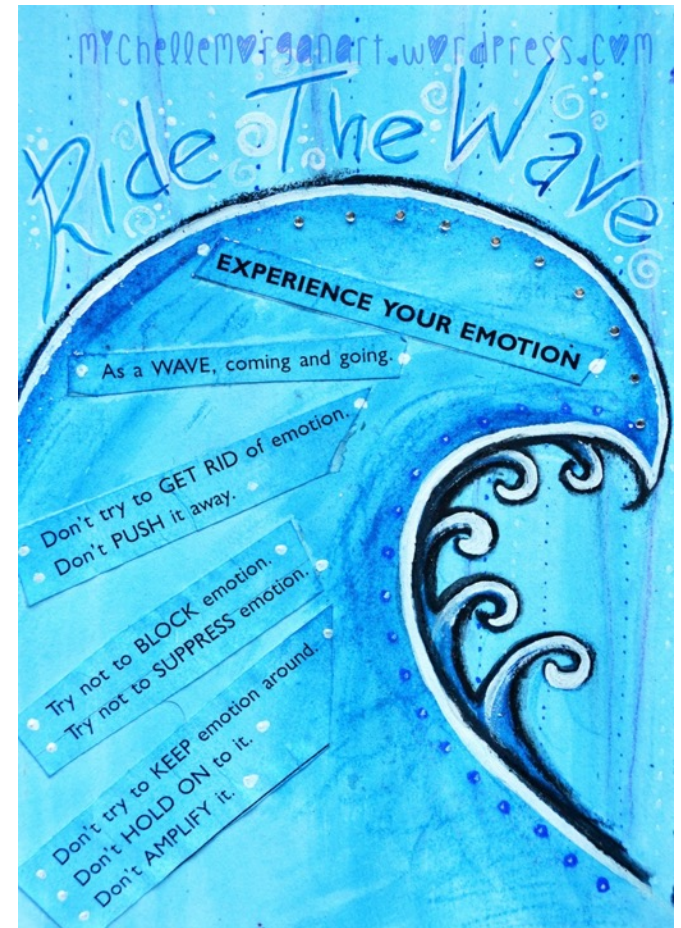
CBT for anxiety

- Problem solving
- Coping skills training
- Social skills training



CBT for anxiety

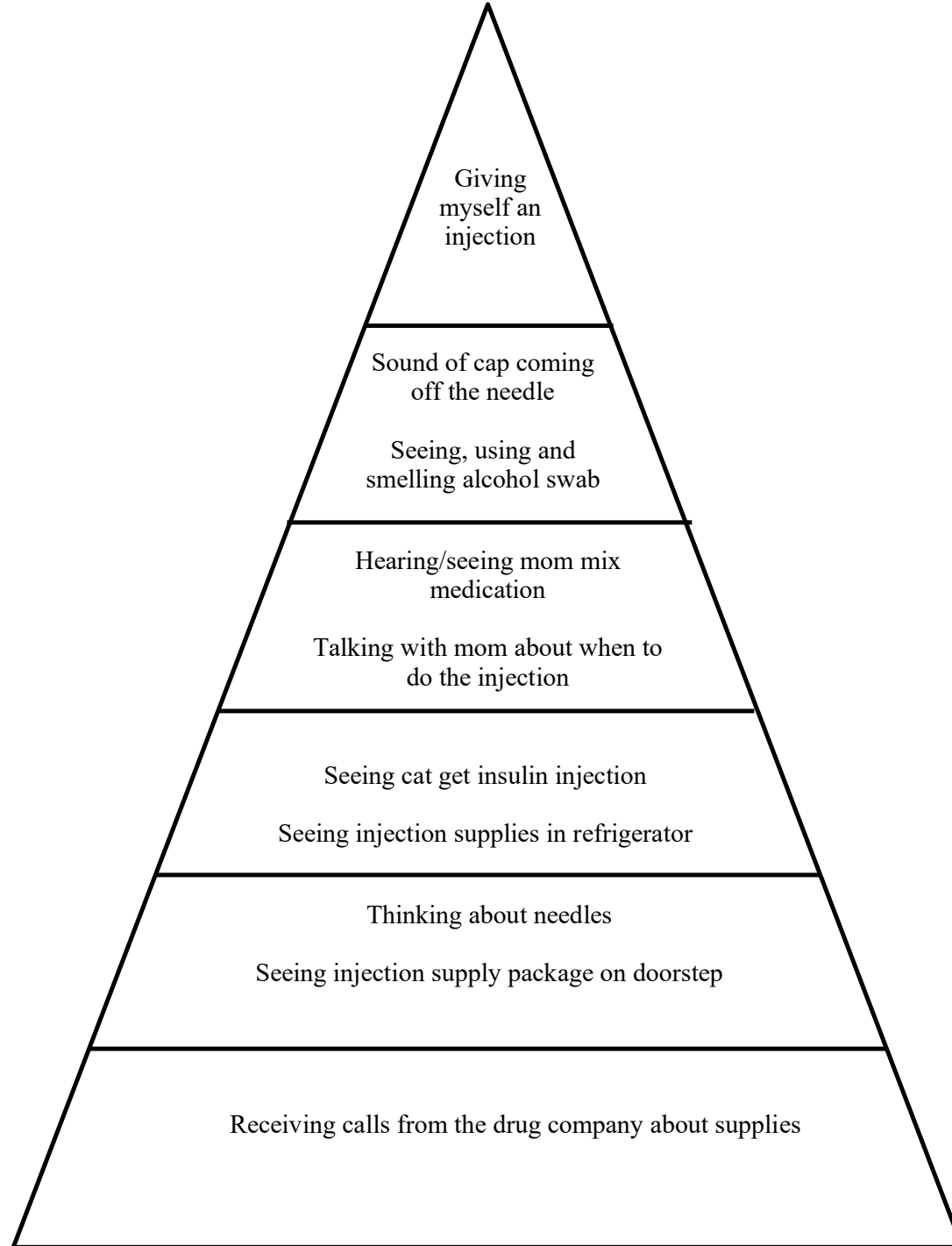
- Mindfulness
- Relaxation



CBT for anxiety

- Graduated exposure
 - Interoceptive
 - Fear hierarchy





CBT for anxiety

- Parenting techniques- communication, coaching and reinforcement

People with no experience of anxiety can say things like...



But finding the courage isn't that easy to do.

It Always Seems Impossible Until It is Done.

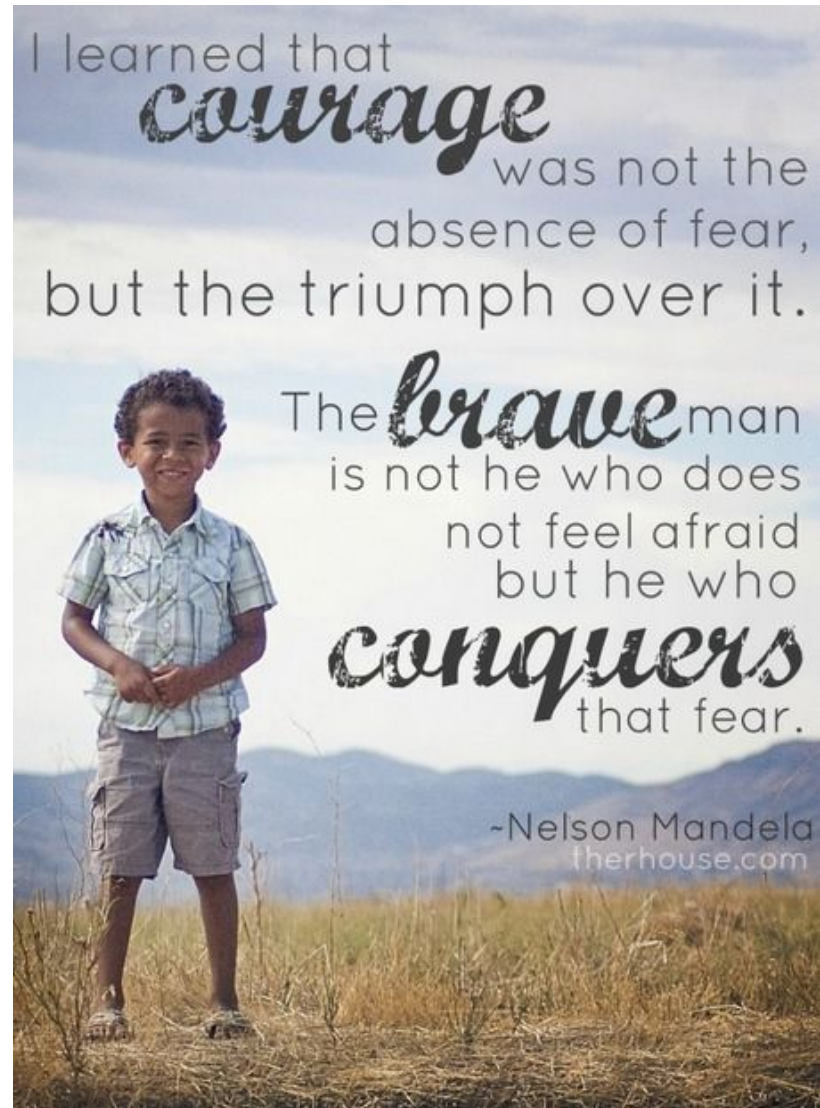
- Nelson Mandela -



I learned that
courage
was not the
absence of fear,
but the triumph over it.

The *brave* man
is not he who does
not feel afraid
but he who
conquers
that fear.

~Nelson Mandela
therhouse.com

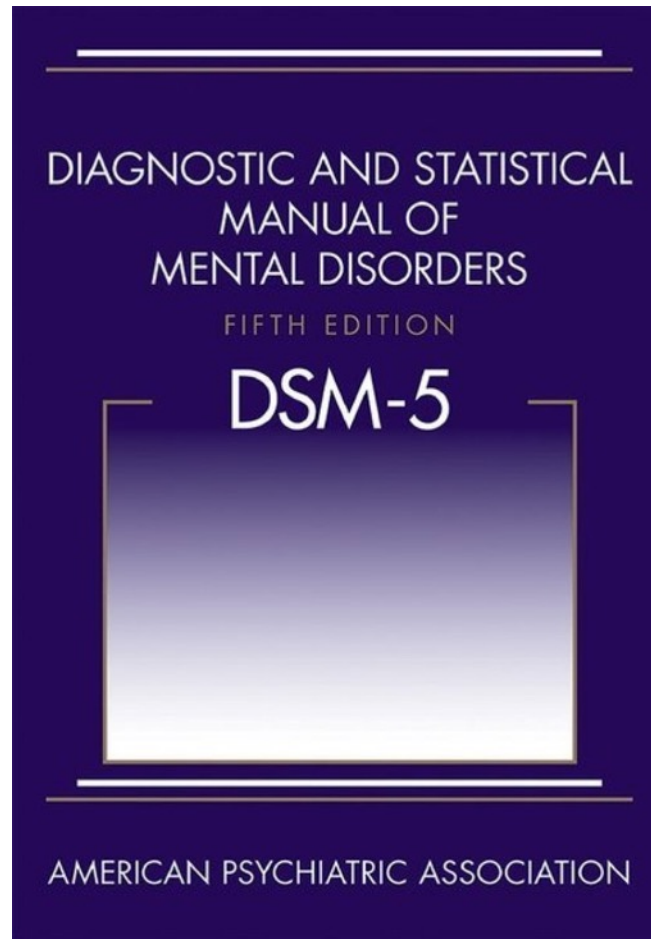


Questions?



- Questions about strategies and treatment? For information about specific disorders and for additional resources, see subsequent slides!

Diagnostic Criteria for Specific Anxiety Disorders



Separation Anxiety Disorder

- Excessive, developmentally inappropriate fear about separating
- Excessive distress and worry about separating
- Excessive worry about attachment figure
- Reluctance/refusal/distress when alone/separated
- Somatic and sleep symptoms
- It *can* occur in teens or adults!



Selective Mutism

- Consistent/persistent failure to speak when expected
- Impacts achievement, functioning and/or communication
- *Not* due to language or communication barrier



Specific Phobia

- Persistent disproportionate fear of specific object or situation
- Object or situation is actively avoided or endured with intense distress



Specific Phobia

- Subtypes include:
 - Animal (dogs, insects)
 - Natural environment (earthquake, tornado)
 - Blood-injection-injury
 - Situational (airplanes, tunnels, elevators)
 - Other (loud sounds or costumed characters)



Social Anxiety Disorder

- Persistent, disproportionate anxiety provoked by exposure to social situations, performance or being observed by others
- Worry about being negatively evaluated
- Social situations are often avoided

Oh, I don't hate you. I'm just extremely uncomfortable in any kind of social situation.



Social Anxiety Disorder

- In children:
 - Must involve peer settings
 - May look like meltdowns, clinging or freezing
- May be restricted to performance



Panic Disorder

- Recurrent unexpected panic attacks
- Worry about having more panic attacks
- Significant behavior change because of panic attacks



Panic Attacks

- Palpitations
- Sweating
- Trembling or shaking
- Shortness of breath
- Choking sensation
- Chest pain
- Nausea or abdominal distress
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Feeling chills or flushed
- Tingling or numbness
- Derealization or depersonalization
- Fear of “going crazy” or losing control
- Fear of dying
- Sudden onset, rapid peak



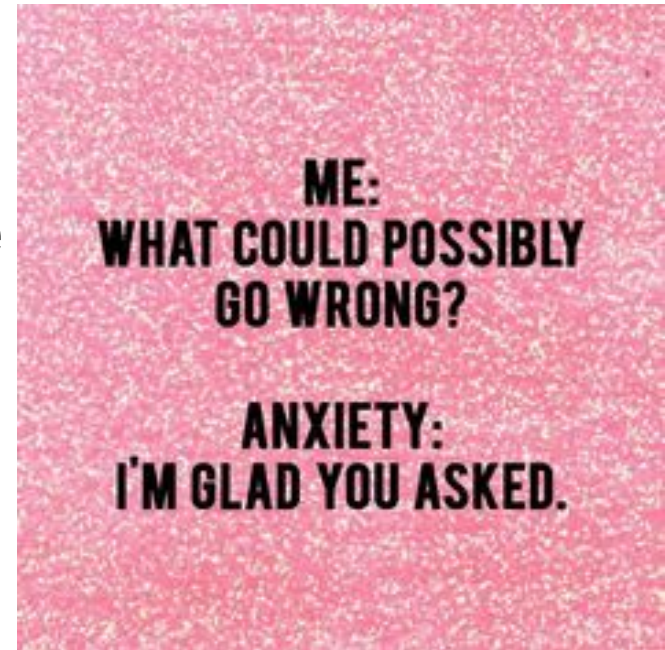
Agoraphobia

- Disproportionate, persistent anxiety about or avoidance of:
 - Using public transportation
 - Being in open spaces
 - Being in enclosed places
 - Standing in line or being in a crowd
 - Being outside of the home
- Situation actively avoided or is endured with significant distress
- May or may not occur in the context of panic attacks



Generalized Anxiety Disorder

- At least 6 months of persistent, excessive anxiety and worry
- Difficult to control worry
- May be characterized by:
 - Restlessness/being on edge
 - Being easily fatigued
 - Difficulty concentrating
 - Irritability
 - Muscle tension
 - Sleep disturbance





Resources and References

General Problem Solving and Coping Resources

- Childhood101: *Teaching feelings and emotions: 30+ best resources to use with kids* page: <https://childhood101.com/managing-big-emotions-best-resources-to-use-with-kids/>
 - 5 Steps for Managing Big Emotions (printable poster)
 - Take 5 Breathing Exercise (instructions and printable poster)
 - 8 Fun Breathing Exercises for Kids (printable deck of cards)
 - Mindfulness for Kids: 9 Apps to Help Them be Calm, Focused and Relaxed (page)
- Coping Skills for Kids store: *Free printables* page: <https://store.copingskillsforkids.com/collections/free-printables>
 - Coping Skills Checklist
 - Deep Breathing Printables
 - Feelings Thermometer

General Problem Solving and Coping Resources

- The Creative School Counselor: *Free Lesson Plans and Google Docs* page: <https://sites.google.com/site/creativeschcounseling/my-forms>
 - Calm Down Techniques Classroom Posters (Belly Breathing and Progressive Muscle Relaxation)
- National Institute of Health: *Stress Catcher: Catch some great coping strategies and skills for managing stress*:
https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/stress-catcher/20-mh-8121-stresscatcher_160279.pdf
- Nezu, A.M., Zazu, C.M. & D'Zurilla, T. (2006). *Solving life's problems: A 5-step guide to enhanced well-being*. Springer, NY, NY.

General Problem Solving and Coping Resources

- Nezu, A.M., Nezu, C.M. & D’Zurilla, T.J. (2012). *Problem-solving therapy: A treatment manual- Instructional materials and patient handouts* supplemental e-book:
<http://www.springerpub.com/media/springer-downloads/Problem-Solving-Therapy-Supplement.pdf>
 - Stop, Slow Down, Think, & Act: p 9, 41-44
 - Planful Problem Solving: p 61-64
 - Positive Self-Statements: p 15
 - Deep Breathing: p 45-46
 - Mindful Meditation: p 47-49
 - Deep Muscle Relaxation: p 50-53
- PBS Kids: *Practice mindfulness with belly breathing*:
<https://www.pbs.org/parents/crafts-and-experiments/practice-mindfulness-with-belly-breathing>

General Problem Solving and Coping Resources

- Vanderbilt Kennedy Center and Autism Treatment Network: *Taking the work out of blood work: A parent's guide- Muscle tensing (progressive muscle relaxation)* page: <https://vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/asdbloodwork/parent/muscletensing.php>
- Very Special Needs: *Free PDF poster 5 4 3 2 1 grounding exercise for kids*: <https://veryspecialtales.com/5-4-3-2-1-grounding-exercise-pdf-kids/>
- Yogapeutics: *4 fun ways kids can hack their nervous systems for less stress and more success* page: https://www.yogapeutics.com/blog/4-fun-ways-kids-can-hack-their-nervous-systems-for-less-stress-more-success?utm_content=buffer445d9&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer

General Youth Anxiety Resources

- Anxiety and Depression Association of America Downloadable Brochures: <https://adaa.org/about-adaa/request-publications>
- American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry: Anxiety Disorder Resource Center page:
https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Resource_Center/s/Anxiety_Disorder_Resource_Center/Home.aspx
- Pincus (2012). *Growing up brave: Expert strategies for helping your child overcome fear, stress and anxiety*. Little, Brown and Company: NY, NY.

School-Related Anxiety Resources

- Anxiety in the Classroom: Resources for School Personnel page:
<https://anxietyintheclassroom.org/school-system/resources-for-school-personnel/>
- Anxiety in the Classroom: Profession-Specific Resources page:
<https://anxietyintheclassroom.org/school-system/profession-specific-resources/>
- Child Mind Institute: Teachers Guide to Anxiety in the Classroom:
<https://childmind.org/guide/a-teachers-guide-to-anxiety-in-the-classroom/>

School-Related Anxiety Resources

- KidsHealth: Anxiety Disorders Factsheet for Schools:
<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/anxiety-factsheet.html>
- Rogers Behavioral Health: Anxiety in Schools Podcast Series:
<https://rogersbh.org/student-anxiety>
- WorryWiseKids.org Sample Accommodations for Anxious Children page: <https://adaa.org/finding-help/coronavirus-anxiety-helpful-resources#Articles,%20Community%20Partner%20Posts%20and%20Resources>

Anxiety Related to Current Events Resources

- National Child Traumatic Stress Network: e-Book: Addressing race and trauma in the classroom: A resource for educators:
https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/addressing_race_and_trauma_in_the_classroom_educators.pdf
- National Institute of Health e-Book: Helping children and adolescents cope with disasters and other traumatic events:
https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/helping-children-and-adolescents-cope-with-disasters-and-other-traumatic-events/19-mh-8066-helpingchildrenwithdisasters-508_158447.pdf
- Anxiety and Depression Association of America: Coronavirus Anxiety- Helpful Expert Tips and Resources page:
<https://adaa.org/finding-help/coronavirus-anxiety-helpful-resources#Articles,%20Community%20Partner%20Posts%20and%20Resources>

References

- Altemus, M., Sarvaiya, N. & Epperson, C.N. (2008). Sex differences in anxiety and depression clinical perspectives. *Frontiers in Neuroendocrinology*, 35, 320-330.
- Bandelow, B. & Michaelis, S. (2015). Epidemiology of anxiety disorders in the 21st century. *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience*, 17, 327-335.
- Child Anxiety Network (2020). *Fears, phobias and anxiety*. Retrieved from http://www.childanxiety.net/Fears_Phobias_Anxiety.htm
- Ghandour, R.M., Sherman, L.J., Vladutiu, C.J., et al (2019). Prevalence and treatment of depression, anxiety, and conduct problems in US children. *Journal of Pediatrics*, 206, 256-267.

References

- Giedd, J.N., Keshavan, M., Paus, T. (2008). Why do many psychiatric disorders emerge during adolescence? *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 9, 947-957.
- Kessler, R.C., Avenevoli, S., Costello, E.J., et al (2012). Prevalence, persistence, and sociodemographic correlates of DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication Adolescent Supplement. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 69, 372-380.
- Merikangas, K.R., He, J.P., Burstein, M., et al (2010). Lifetime prevalence of mental disorders in U.S. adolescents: Results from the National Comorbidity Survey Replication--Adolescent Supplement (NCS-A). *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 49, 980-989.

References

- Merikangas, K.R., Nakamura, E.F. & Kessler, R.C. (2009). Epidemiology of mental disorders in children and adolescents. *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience*, 11, 7-20.
- Pincus (2012). *Growing up brave: Expert strategies for helping your child overcome fear, stress and anxiety*. Little, Brown and Company: NY, NY.
- Vita, V.R. (2013). The biopsychosocial model. Retrieved from <https://vitavr.wordpress.com/2013/10/20/the-biopsychosocial-model/>