



Supporting Students  
with Anxiety  
Related Symptoms



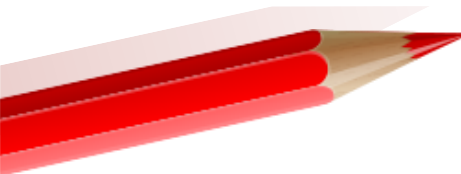

Strategies for  
Parents and  
Caregivers



Marlena Jenkins, M.S., BCaBA

# Training Agenda

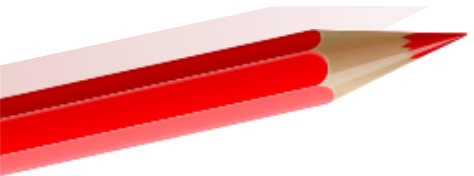


- Overview of anxiety
  - Overview of related disorders
  - Anxiety related symptoms across childhood and adolescence
  - Strategies
  - Requesting Help
  - Time for Questions
- 
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# What is Anxiety?



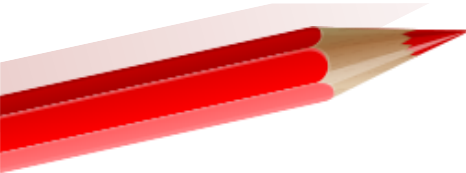

- A feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome.
- The desire to do something, typically accompanied by unease.



# Anxiety-related Data



## Children in America ages 3yr-17yr:

- 9.4% (5.8 million) have diagnosed anxiety
  - With behavior problems, more than 36.6% also have diagnosed anxiety
  - Only 6 in 10 teenagers (59.3%) receive treatment
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# Anxiety in all Forms

- Separation Anxiety
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Fears and Phobias
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
- Panic Disorder
- Social Anxiety Disorder
- Selective Mutism



# Milestones and Anxiety

[SeparateAnxiety-AnxietyCanada](#)

## Childhood:

- Separation, generalized and social anxiety
- Selective mutism
- Phobias

## Teenage years:

- Phobias
- Generalized and social anxiety
- Panic disorders

# Cycle of Anxiety/Avoidance

## Anxiety

You start to develop symptoms once you've come into contact with an anxiety provoking trigger. You just want to get away from those feelings.

## Avoidance

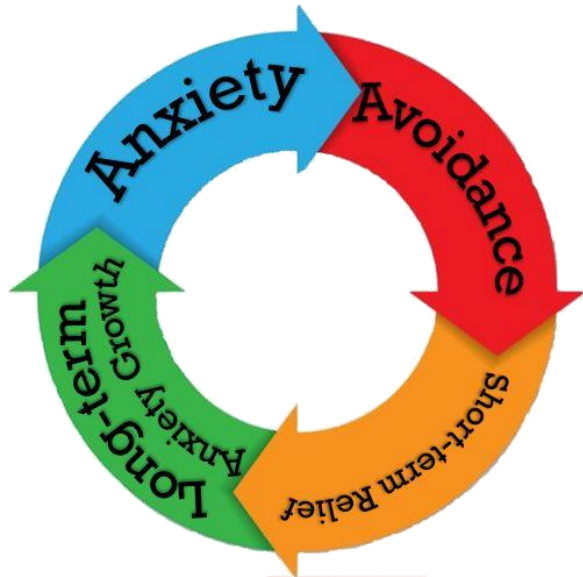
The feelings become too overwhelming. You tend to want to avoid the situation all together in an effort to remove those feelings.

## Short term relief from anxiety

You've made the decision to not to contact the anxiety provoking trigger (the fear) and the feelings go away. Avoiding the trigger feels good, but there are consequences, some of which can be long term.

## Long term anxiety growth

You have avoided the anxiety provoking situation, your negative feelings have gone away, but in the long term, the anxiety grows and becomes more difficult to avoid in the future.



# Anxiety & Autism Spectrum Disorder

## Behavioral Concerns

- Observable changes in the frequency or intensity of problem behaviors
- Observance of new behaviors
- Perseverations on triggers or perceived triggers

## Language-based Concerns

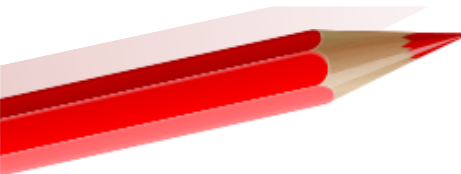

- Signs of social withdrawal not linked to/influenced by ASD
- Unexplainable pain or physical discomfort
- Language delays exacerbated by triggers



# Anxiety & Attention



Increased levels of:

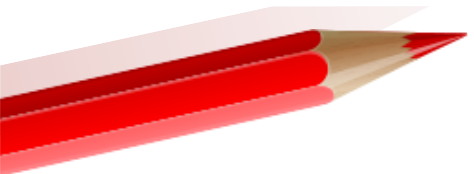
- Hyperactivity, fidgeting or lethargy
  - Disorganization
  - Delays in processing or response time
  - Difficulties utilizing previously taught coping strategies
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# Anxiety & Academics




## Concerns for:

- Task avoidance related to difficult subject area(s)
- Class/Activity participation withdrawal
- Perseveration over:
  - Assignments
  - Errors
  - Service delivery



Can be exacerbated or triggered by difficulties with academics, changes in schedules, long term projects that require sustained attention and focus



# Should I Be Concerned?

- Worry that intensifies and/or lasts for months; causes physical distress
- Refusal to go to school or participate in activities (preferred/nonpreferred)
- Changes in mood: gloomy/pessimistic, irritable, angry
- Asking for a lot of reassurances; insatiable need for reassurance
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Excessively self-critical
- Suicidal ideation
  - Self-harm
- Fears significantly interfere with family, educational, work, daily life

*Consult with your medical provider early and often*

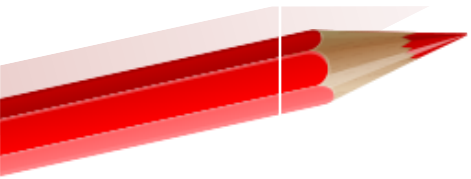


# Let's Reframe It



**Scenario:** Fourth grade ELA class where students are often called on to read passages or portions of passages aloud. The student has been taught the “Pass Please” skill but is beginning to get nervous when thinking about being called on to read by the teacher.

Anxious Thought	Evidence that thought is TRUE	Evidence that thought is FALSE	New Thought
The teacher is going to call on me to read aloud.	In school, teachers and support staff call on students from time to time to read or speak aloud.	<p>There are several students in the class. The teacher may not get to me.</p> <p>The teacher may skip me because they know I struggle with public speaking.</p>	Even if the teacher calls on me, I can say, “Pass Please” and the teacher will give me a heads up that I will be called on at another time. This will allow me to prepare ahead of time.

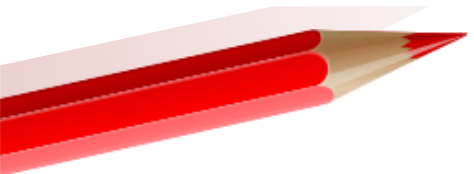


# Let's Challenge It



Rethinking Thinking – Trevor Maber (TED ED):  
[LadderofInference](#)

- Do I know for sure the event will happen?
- What evidence do I have the event will happen?
- How likely is it really?
- Has the event ever happened before?
- Even if the event happens, can I live through it?
- What is the worst possible outcome? (Rate how bad it is)
- Could I cope? Do I have the coping mechanisms, or do I need help?
- Do I know anyone else who has been in this situation? What did they do? How did it turn out for them?
- Have I been able to cope with the event in the past?



# Coping from the Inside-Out

- Slow breathing
- Deep abdominal breathing
- Body scanning
- Guided imagery breathing





# 4 - 7 - 8 Breathing

- Sit/Stand up tall-no slouching...you want air to flow easily
- Inhale for 4 seconds
- Hold it for 7 seconds
- Breath out slowly for 8 seconds
- Repeat as many times as you want/need to achieve a relaxed state

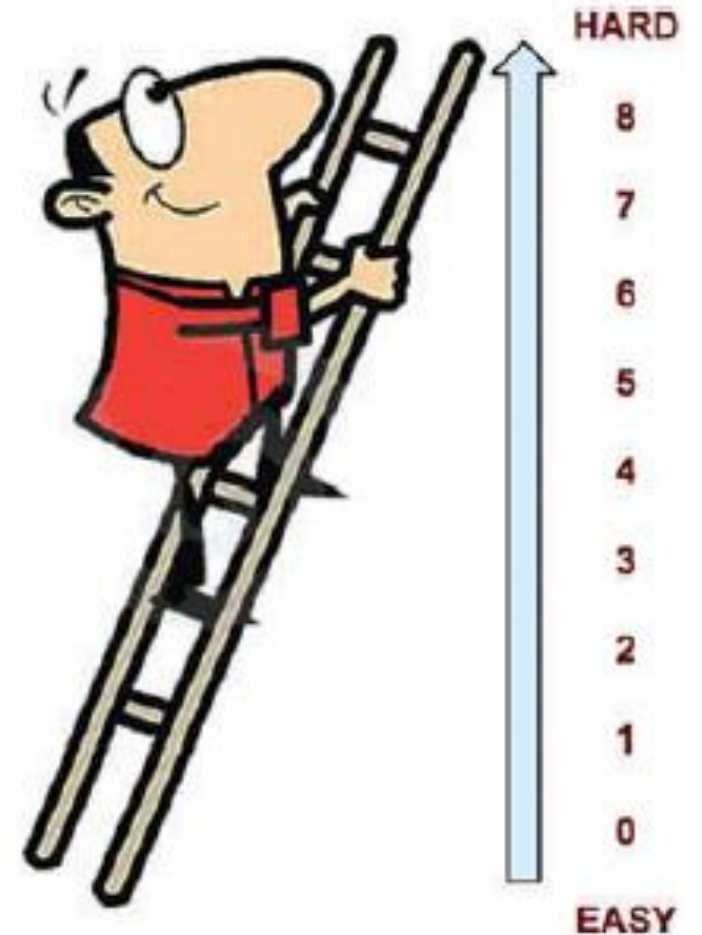


[4-7-8 Breathing Exercise by GoZen - YouTube](#)

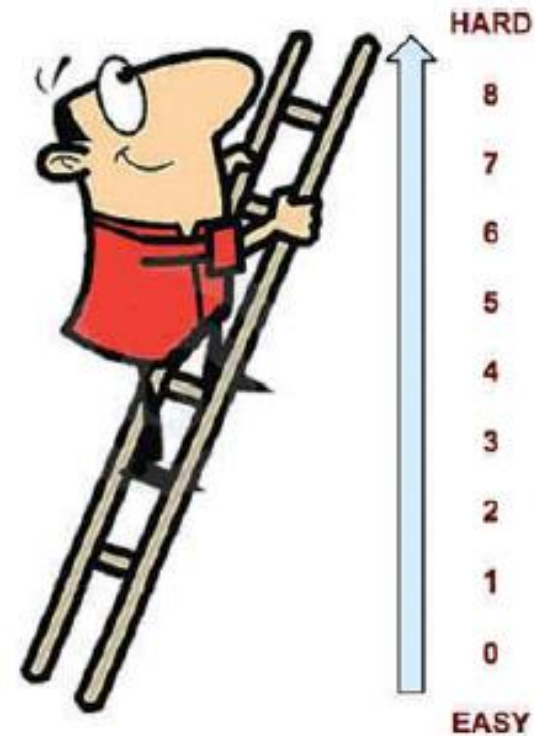


# Let's Climb the Ladder

- Draw/print a picture of a ladder
- Draw/write something that you would like to overcome or conquer
- List in small steps what behaviors you need to overcome the situation/event
- Place the steps on the ladder in order starting at the bottom step
- Reward yourself at each step and at the end
  - Take (emotional, physiological) temperature along way
  - Earn Bravery Dollars along the way
  - Use labeled praise



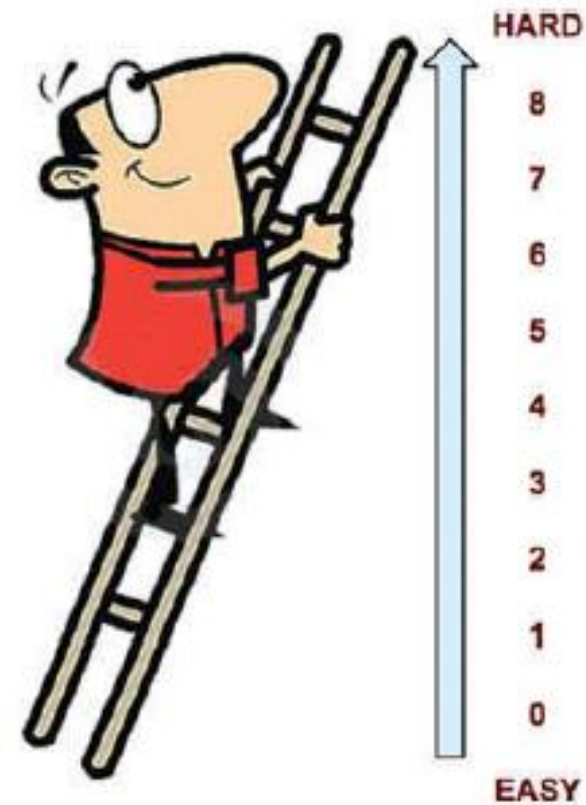
# - Let's Practice - Going to School



- [Hardest Skill] I left for school on time with no reminders and entered the school building all by myself without fussing. I changed my worry thoughts and noticed that I can still go to school even when I am anxious about it.
- I did the 3<sup>rd</sup> skill on my bravery ladder and got to school on time.
- I did the 4<sup>th</sup> skill on my bravery ladder, but this time I walked into school by myself and not with my parents.
- I accomplished all the things on my morning routine with 1 or fewer than 1 reminders and got into the car without any fussing or fighting.
- I was able to change my worry thoughts when I felt anxious this morning and then did 2 things on my morning routine with only 1 reminder.
- I woke up on time and did 1 the thing on my morning routine with only 1 reminder from my parents.
- [Easiest Skill] I woke up on time this morning.



## - Let's Practice - Social Situations in School

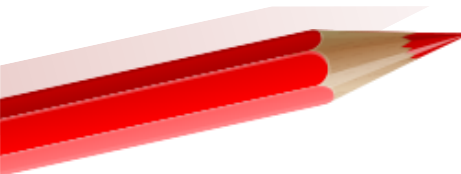


- [Hardest Skill] I went to the lunchroom and sat at a table with some kids I know and joined in on the conversation.
- I went to the lunchroom and sat at a table with some kids I know.
- I said, “hi” to a kid in my class who I usually don’t talk to, even though he didn’t speak to me first.
- I started a conversation with someone in my class.
- I tried to speak up more loudly when I answered a question in class.
- (Without preparation) I answered a question in class when the teacher called on me.
- (With preparation) I answered a question in class when the teacher called on me.



# Coping Cards



- Palm-sized, colorful cards that have pre-printed positive self-statements or pictures that have been designed specifically for children. Children can read the statements/view pictures on the cards anytime and can store them easily in a backpack or pocket for quick, easy reminders of their ability to cope with whatever comes their way.
  - Appropriate for children between the ages of approximately 5-14 years, Coping Cards are a great tool for boosting a child's confidence in their ability to cope with stress and anxiety.
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*Donna Pincus, Ph.D., The Child Anxiety Network, 2001*



# Coping Cards Examples



Resist urges to avoid anxiety-provoking situations

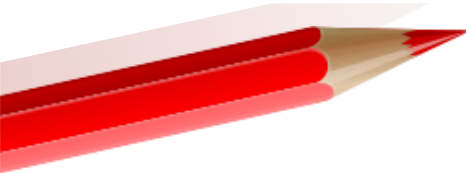
Avoidance may seem like an effective short-term strategy, but it maintains and worsens my anxiety over time.

**MAKE A DRAWING**

**54321 Grounding Technique**

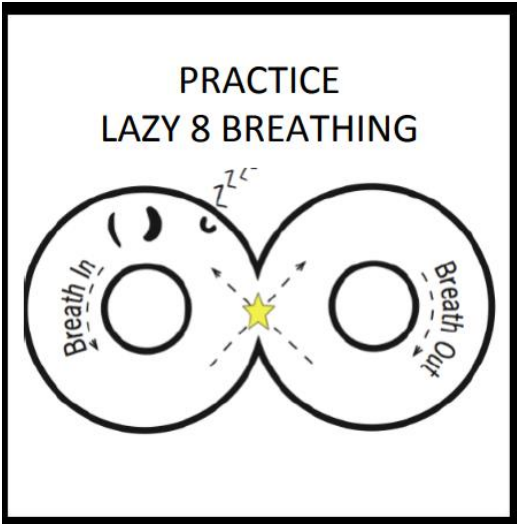
Look around, identify & name:

- 5 things I see
- 4 things I physically feel
- 3 things I hear
- 2 things you smell
- 1 thing you taste



Use a healthy coping strategy:

- go for a walk
- write in a journal
- spend time coloring
- meditate
- listen to music



# Talking Map

	Home	School					Grandma's House	Gymnastics	Soccer	Store
		Main Classroom	Gym	Art	Music	Science				
Mom										
Dad										
Aunt Susie										
Grandma										
Siblings										
Teachers										
Peers										
Store Clerks										
Strangers										

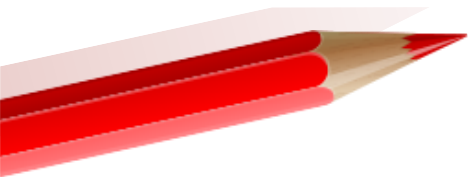
Our goal is to fill this Talking Map with as many X's as possible. An X represents the child's ability to verbalize to this person, in this setting and/or activity.



# What Do We Do Now?



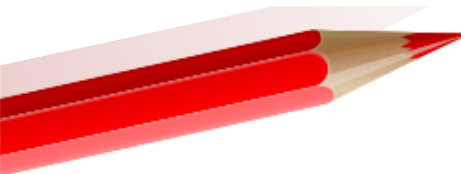
- **Ask questions** about the observed behaviors and collect data
  - Is the description both observable and measurable?
  - How frequent are the behaviors occurring?
  - Are the symptoms impacting the student's learning and school-based relationships?
- **Peer Modeling** (select a peer with similar characteristics)
  - Arrange for frequent learning opportunities in a controlled setting and taper off over time
  - Use pivoting technique in the natural environment (Good to use with siblings too)






# Coaching Kids Through

## Do This

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- Validate the student's feelings
  - It's okay to allow your student to experience anxiety-provoking situations
  - Encourage your student to “BE BRAVE!” and/or to “BEAT THE WORRY MONSTER!”

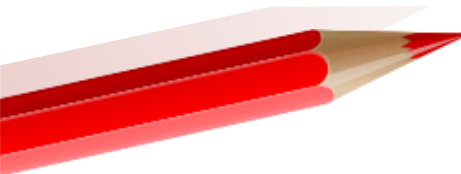

## Avoid This

- Alter the environment to avoid anxiety-provoking situations
  - Minimize your student's feelings or tell them how they should feel instead
  - Try to remove your student from the anxious situation without adding in teaching
- 



# Regroup and Reset



- Reflective journaling
    - Writing, drawing or audio recording
  - Buddy check time (using peer model)
  - Self-evaluation (rating scale)
    - How well did I use the pre-taught coping skills?
    - How was this time compared to than the last time?
  - Gratitude journal
    - Words of appreciation put negative thoughts in perspective
  - A quiet time
    - Some instances of panic can be so physically and mentally exhausting that a little rest is needed
      - Monitor for escape or avoidance-maintained behaviors
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# Quick Journal



## How I Feel

I feel: \_\_\_\_\_

Happy	Mad	Sad	Glad
Worried	Excited	Bored	Scared
Annoyed	Upset	Sick	Nervous

I feel this way because:

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This is what I did about it:

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Something else I could have done is:

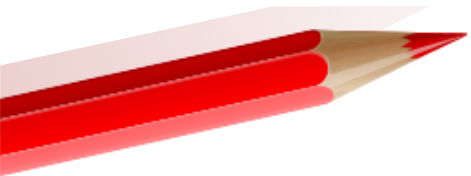
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Ask for help	Take deep breaths	Walk away
Do something else	Tell an adult	Talk to a friend

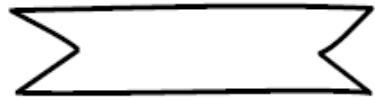


# Praise the Process



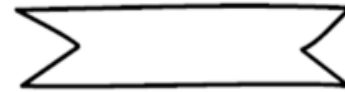
I APPRECIATE THE WAY YOU

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ 



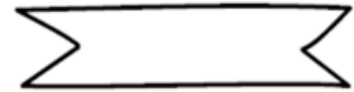
I AM IMPRESSED HOW YOU

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ 



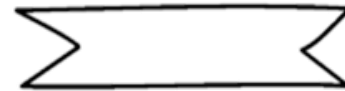
I NOTICED THAT YOU

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ 



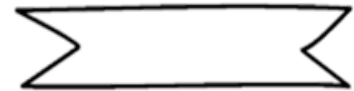
I CAN COUNT ON YOU TO

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ 



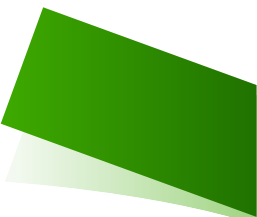
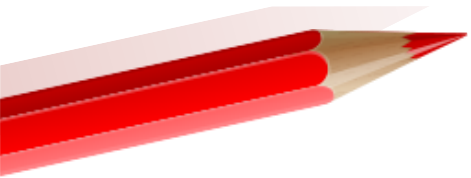
I AM PROUD THAT YOU

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ 



I LOVE THE WAY THAT YOU

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ 



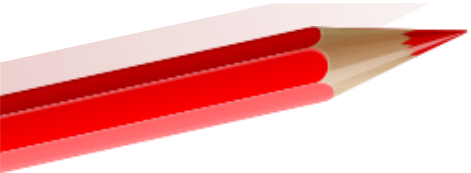

# It Takes a Village



## Select an accountability partner

- Someone the child/teen is comfortable talking with openly
  - Discuss strengths and weaknesses
  - Assist with advocating on behalf of the child/teen
  - Available to talk through ideas, troubleshoot and provide feedback on progress/regression

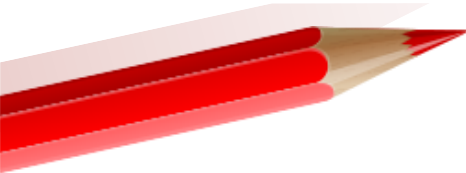
## Responsibilities:

- Help to redirect the child/teen back to the task at hand
  - Verbal and tangible reinforcement to the child/teen
  - Someone who is easily accessible
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# Fill Your Parental Toolbox



## Tools for Success:

- Develop a plan
  - Stabilize your emotional state
  - Plan your escape
  - Give yourself to debrief and regroup
  - Avoid making things about you
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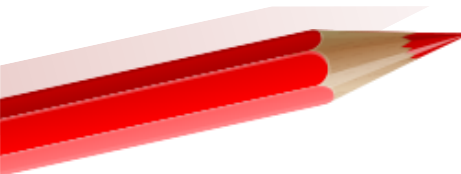

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lulxSzYJeEw>

Dr. Tina Payne Bryson, Internal States and Unpredictability



# Resources



- [www.childanxiety.net](http://www.childanxiety.net) Child Anxiety Network
  - [www.thechaosandtheclutter.com](http://www.thechaosandtheclutter.com): Book Themed Sensory Bottle Activity
  - [www.gozen.com](http://www.gozen.com): 4-7-8 Breathing
  - <https://biasbehavioral.com/>: BIAS Behavioral
  - <https://www.thepathway2success.com/>: Pathway 2 Success
  - [www.biglifejournal.com](http://www.biglifejournal.com): Big Life Journal: Weekly emails with parenting tips; trainings, journals
  - Coping Cards and Gratitude Journals
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# Recommended Reading



*The Power of Showing Up: How Parental Presence Shapes Who Our Kids Become and How Their Brains Get Wired Hardcover.* Siegel and Bryson (2020)

*No Drama Discipline.* Siegel and Bryson (2016)

*The Whole Brain Child.* Siegel and Bryson (2012)

*Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk: A Book Series.* Faber and Mazlish (2012)

*Growing Up Brave: Expert Strategies for Helping Your Child Overcome Fear, Stress, and Anxiety.* Pincus (2012)



Children's Fears: Developmental or Disorder?: What Educators Should Know

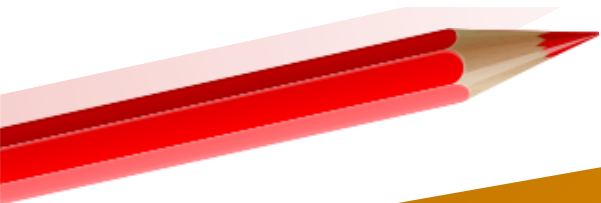
[https://www.sbbh.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/fears\\_matthews.pdf](https://www.sbbh.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/fears_matthews.pdf)

*How to Help a Child with Anxiety: 6 Tips for Parents*

<https://www.merakilane.com/how-to-help-a-child-with-anxiety-6-tips-for-parents>







Thank  
You!



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