

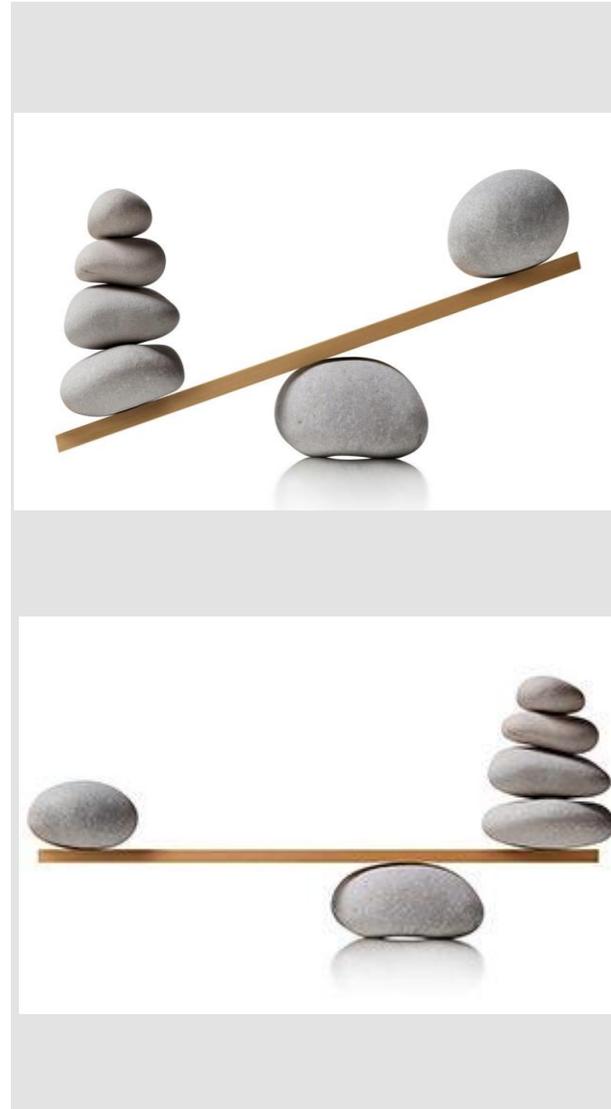
Understanding and Managing Anxiety

Karen Schwartz, DSW, LCSW School Social Worker, East Side, Mt. Bethel, Timber Ridge Elementary, Dodgen Middle, and Walton High School

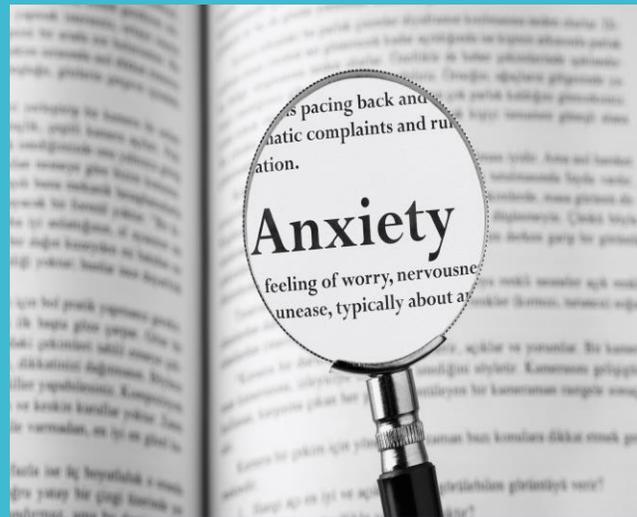
Erin Holcomb, NCC, LPC, CPCS, Art It Out Therapy Center

March 23, 2021

[Click here](#) for a video recording of this presentation

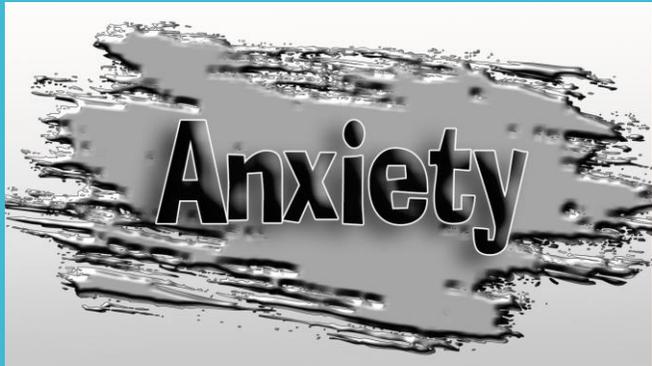


Agenda



- Definition of Anxiety
- Understanding what anxiety is and how it manifests in children
- How to help children and adolescents cope with anxious feelings
- Resources/Q & A (via chat time permitting)

What is Anxiety?



“A feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome.”

Often times accompanied by:

- A perception of danger
- A feeling of lack of control over one's environment
- A feeling that the amount of tasks to be completed are greater than the perceived ability to accomplish them

When does Anxiety become disordered?

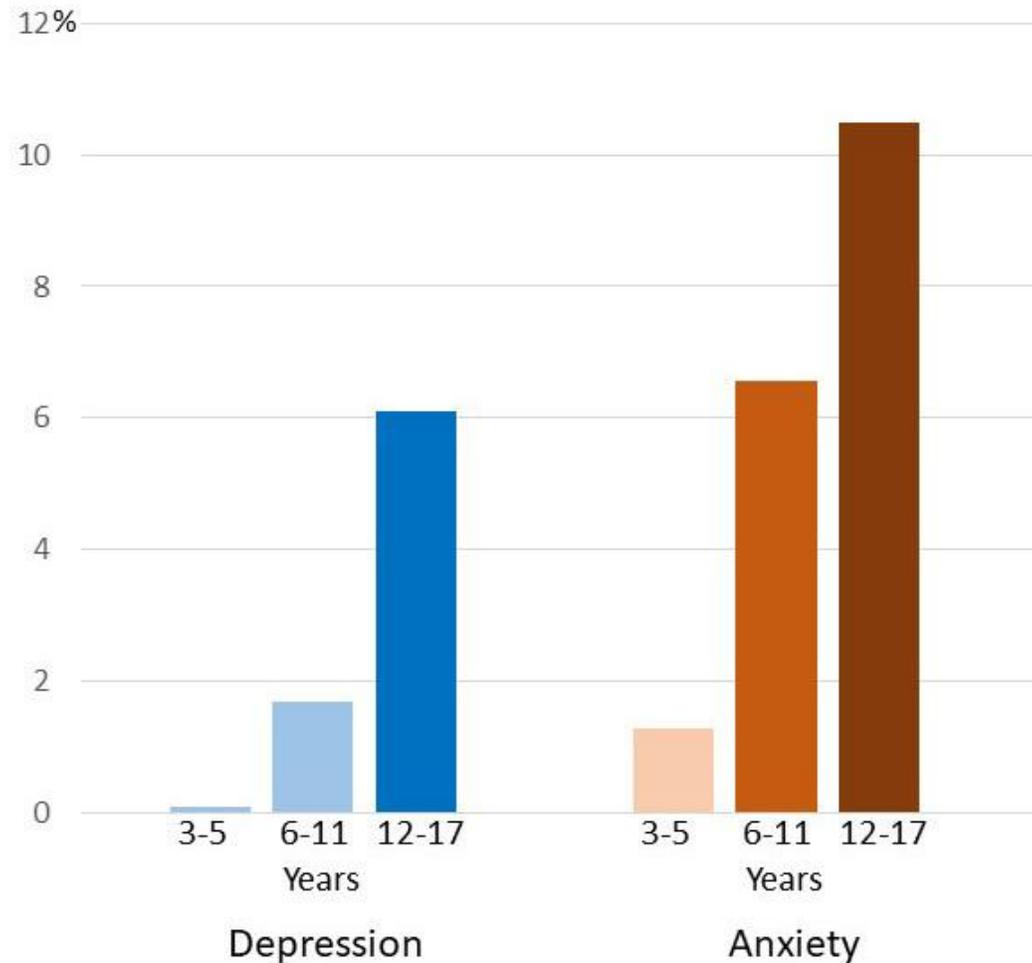


- Not all anxiety is bad
 - Fear has a protective function, in moderate amounts, it can improve performance (strength, speed, stamina, motivation)
- When the anxiety is strong, lasts a long time, and begins to impede a child from being able to perform daily activities, that is cause for concern.

7.1% of children aged 3-17 years have diagnosed anxiety



“Prevalence of Anxiety & Depression in Children” from the CDC



Angst Video
Clip





What are our
children
worried most
about?

Children are experiencing far more stress and anxiety than in previous generations

- Family issues/challenges/stressors
- Environmental dangers/Media exposure
- Digital World/Social Media/Social Comparison
- Peer Relationships
- School performance
- Hormonal Changes
- Children are especially vulnerable to these stressors since they have less control over their lives



What are our children worried most about?

When parents and children are asked why they are so anxious, given these choices...

- A. Social Media
 - B. School Stress
 - C. Pressure from parents
 - D. Genetics
 - E. Overscheduling
-
- When parents are asked, they report B
 - When students are asked, they report C

Social media



When we compare ourselves to others, we are comparing our insides to their outsides

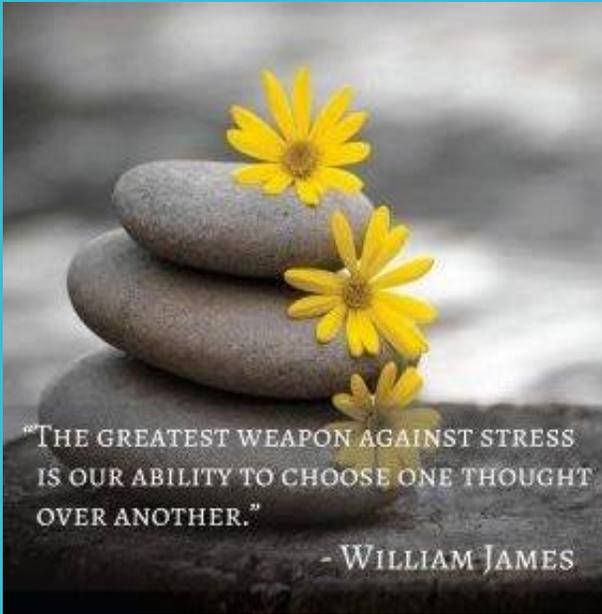


What does Anxiety look like?



Thoughts	Feelings	Behavior
Thinking that danger is everywhere	Heart pounding	Avoiding situations, people, or things (e.g., flying, social situations, memories, body sensations)
Thinking that a thing or situation is very dangerous when it is not	Numbness	Clinging to safe people or refusing to leave them
Worrying way too much about bad things happening	Irritability or anger	Outbursts when faced with separation or feared situations
Constant thoughts or images of bad things happening	Restlessness	Repetitive rituals
Predicting negative outcomes	Sweaty	Checking things over and over again
A lot of "what if" thoughts	Muscle tension	Seeking a lot of reassurance
Thinking you can't face your fear	Nausea or stomach aches	Depending on someone or something else to get you through difficult times
Being overly critical of yourself or perfectionistic	Difficulty focusing or concentrating	Being unable to fall asleep or waking up frequently throughout the night
	Jumpiness	Over-preparing, rehearsing, or researching things in advance to prevent a bad outcome
	Trouble breathing or feeling short of breath	Not letting anyone help you with things
	Chest tightness	
	Feeling like throat is closing up	
	Headaches	
	Dizziness or lightheadedness	
	Trembling or shaking	
	Heart fluttering	

Identifying Negative Thinking Patterns



Make a mountain out of a molehill



All-or-nothing thinking



"completely good"



"completely bad"

Personalization "this is my fault"



jumping to conclusion:
Mind reading and fortune telling



Identifying Negative Thinking Patterns (cont'd)

Labeling and overgeneralizing



Mental filter: only paying attention to certain type of evidence.



Emotional reasoning:
assuming that because we feel a certain way what we think must be true



Examples: Signs of Stress in students

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



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

Red Flag:

Your child has been complaining of bad pains in her head and neck. You take her to the doctor to have her checked, but nothing seems to be wrong.

Red Flag:

She's stopped wanting to go to her afterschool dance class. In fact, she's stopped wanting to go anywhere after school and just wants to come home and stay.

Red Flag:

You asked what homework your son has and he says "none." You find out two days later he had a math test and failed it.

The Issue:

When the mind is overwhelmed, it can affect the body. Complaints included body pain, tiredness, headaches and stomachaches

The Issue:

After a day at school, an overwhelmed child may retreat to a place where she can avoid more challenges.

The Issue:

A child can become so overwhelmed that the "check out." He may lie to avoid facing the challenge.

Protective Factors



- Attachment/Affection
- How we pay attention – mindfulness
- Positive thinking style
- Support networks (extended family, community and friendships)
- Health factors (mental health, sleep, daily physical activity, healthy eating)

Think of Protective Factors as layers - the more layers you have, the more support and strategies available. i.e., sleep, nutrition, exercise, mental health, & relationship support gives 5 different opportunities to build strength.

Protective Factor: Attachment/ Affection



- Dr. Daniel Siegel co-author of *Parenting from the Inside Out* and *The Whole Brain Child* often refers to the four S's of attachment in which a child feels *safe, soothed, seen, and secure*.
- To form a secure attachment, it's necessary for parents to create a compassionate environment and *to have the ability to regulate their own emotions and reactions*.
- They're able to empathize with the child's experience and *remain present* or “be there” for the child.
- As adults, studies show that those who reported receiving more affection in childhood displayed less depression and anxiety are more compassionate overall.

Protective Factor: Paying Attention

"MINDFULNESS MEANS PAYING ATTENTION
IN A PARTICULAR WAY;
ON PURPOSE,
IN THE PRESENT MOMENT, AND
NONJUDGMENTALLY."

-JON KABAT-ZINN



- Spending both quantity and quality time
- Paying attention means more than being physically present. It means learning how to:
 - Listen to your kids
 - Talk with them
 - Respond to their actions.
- Good, quality attention will improve the quality of your family's life

We can train ourselves to slow down, to pause more, to give space for 'being' instead of always 'doing'



Protective Factor:
Positive Thinking/
Challenging
Negative Thoughts

5 Steps to Untwisting Your Thinking

- Step 1: Identify the problem situation
- Step 2: Identify the automatic thought
- Step 3: Decide if you are falling into a “thinking trap” /negative patterns
- Step 4: Ask yourself some tough questions:
 - 1. Is there another way to look at this?
 - 2. What would I tell a friend in this situation?
 - 3. How would (role model) handle this situation?
 - 4. What is the evidence for this thought being true?
 - 5. What is the evidence against this thought?
 - 6. Even if this is true, what is the worst thing that can happen?
 - 7. What is the most likely thing to happen?
 - 8. If my thought did come true, how would I cope?
 - 9. What steps can I take right now to respond in the best way possible to this situation? What help do I need?
 - 10. What would happen if I didn't believe this anymore? How might things change for the better?

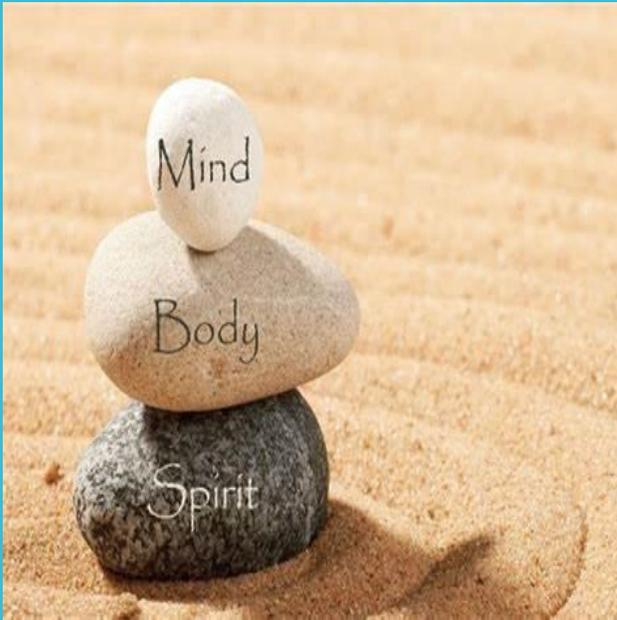
Protective Factor: Support Networks



Develop a support network for your child

- Positive Friends
- Trusted Adults
- Mentors
- Community
- Family

Protective Factor: Health

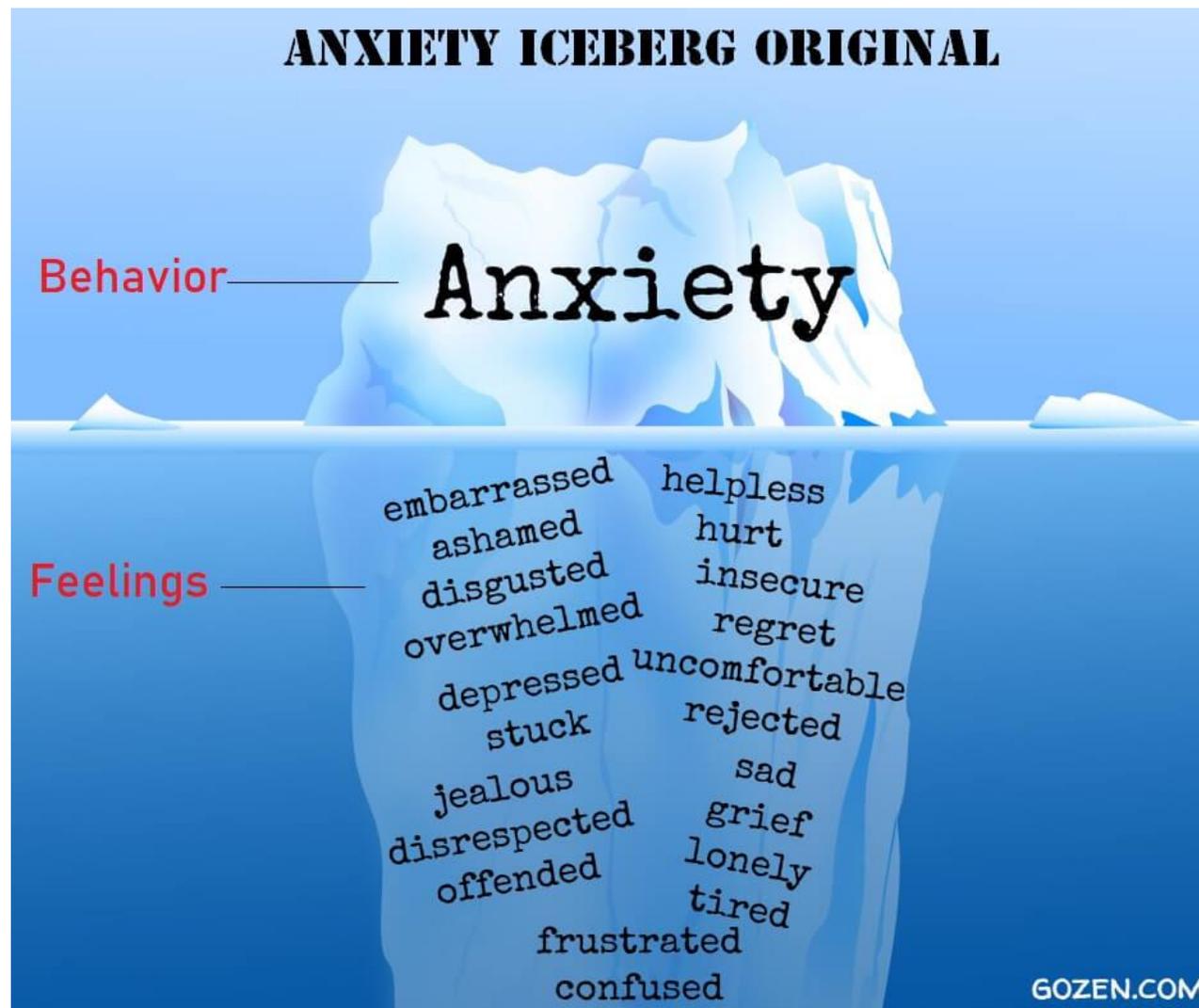


Less	More
Junk Food	Real Food
Sitting	Walking
Late Nights	Rest
TV Watching	Reading
Frowning	Smiling
Talking	Listening
Complaining	Encouraging
Negativity	Gratitude
Arguing	Understanding
Worrying	Praying
Taking	Giving

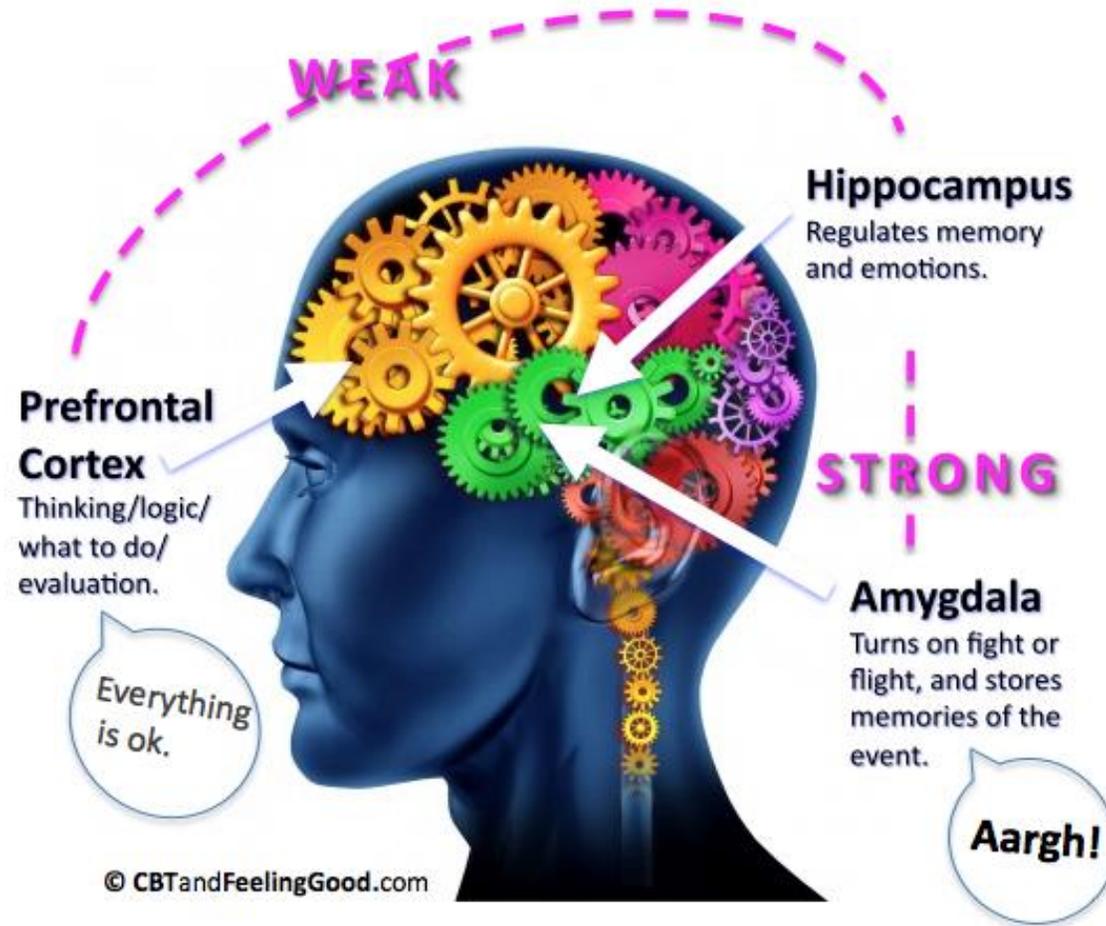
PatriciaSpirt.com



Sometimes
Words Cannot
Describe “What
is Wrong”



Ground Yourself & Calm your Nervous System



Dan Siegel: “Flipping Your Lid:” A Scientific Explanation

<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2198tz>

Mindfulness

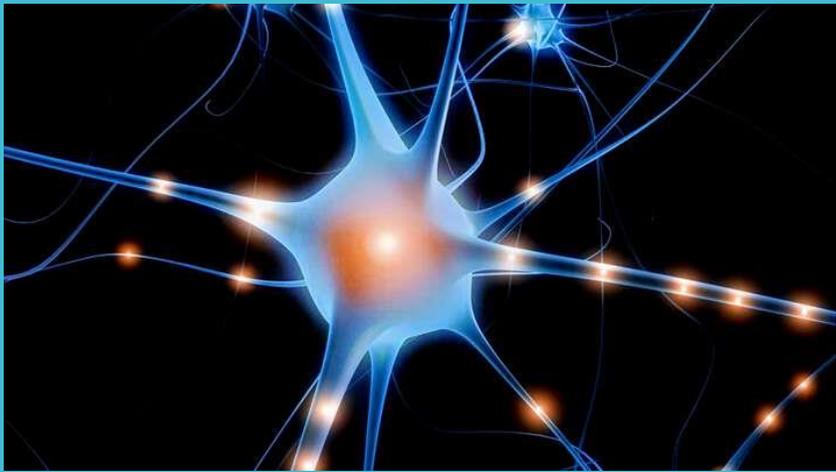
Mindfulness allows us to interrupt automatic, reflexive fight, flight, or freeze reactions—reactions that can lead to anxiety, fear, foreboding, and worry.

Allows your prefrontal cortex to calm your amygdala when it overreacts

- Focus on the present
- Non-judgement
- Being instead of doing



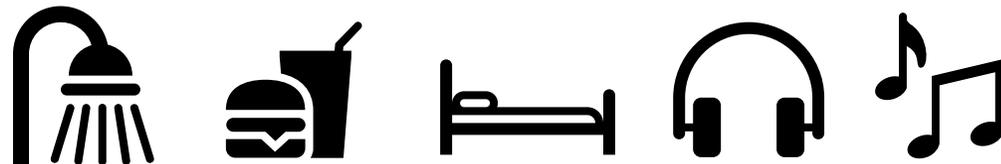
Neuroplasticity & Mindfulness



Grounding Techniques

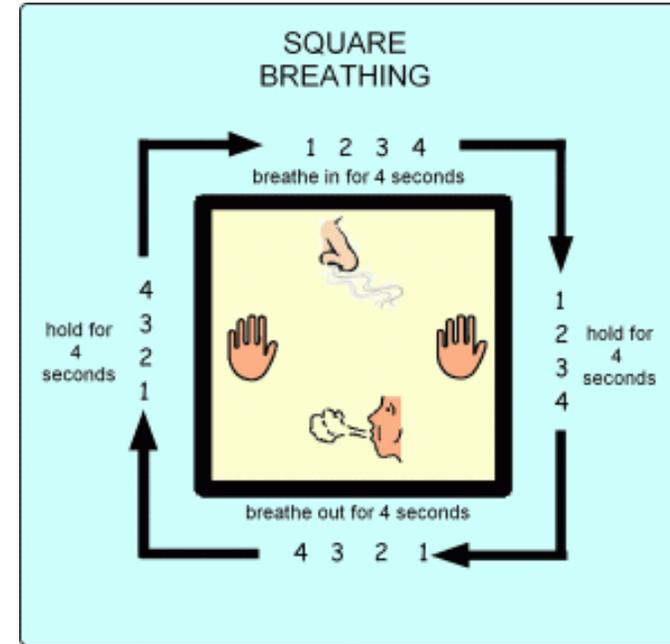


- Splash water on your face or place a cool wet cloth on your face.
- Pay purposeful attention as you hold a cold (non-alcoholic) beverage in your hands. Feel the coldness, and the wetness on the outside. Note the taste as you drink. You can also do this exercise with a warm beverage.
- Find a “grounding object” to hold, look at, listen to, and/or smell. This could be a soft object such as a pillow or stuffed animal, a smooth stone you found on the beach, a picture of a beautiful scene or loved one, and/or any other object that represents safety or comfort.
- Listen to music. Pay close attention and listen for something new or different.



Breathing

According to the Mayo Clinic, practicing Square Breathing has been shown to calm the automatic nervous system (ANS); improve sleep; and reduce feelings of stress and anxiety



Color, Draw, or Paint

www.supercoloring.com

www.printmandala.com



Coping Checklist



Coping Skills Checklist

1. Check off the ones you do now
2. Circle the ones you want to try
3. Cross off the ones that don't work

RELAXATION SKILLS

- Deep breathing using a pinwheel
- Deep breathing with bubbles
- Deep breathing with a stuffed animal
- Deep breathing using a feather
- Take a mindful walk
- Yoga
- Imagine your favorite place
- Think of your favorite things
- Picture the people you care about
- Say the alphabet slowly
- Remember the words to a song you love
- Run water over your hands
- Carry a small object
- Touch things around you
- Move
- Make a fist then release it
- Positive self-talk
- Take a shower or bath
- Take a drink of water
- Counting
- Block out noises
- Take a break
- Calming Jar
-
-
-
-
-
-

DISTRACTION SKILLS

- Write a story
- Crossword Puzzles
- Sudoku
- Bake or Cook
- Volunteer/Community Service
- Random Acts of Kindness
- Read
- Clean
- Play with a pet
- Play a board game
- Play video games
- Screen time
- Play with a friend
- Start a garden
- Creative thinking
- Make up your own game
- Plan a fun event
- Start a new hobby
- Do a crafting project
- Your favorite things
- Be silly and laugh
-
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-

Coping Skills Checklist

1. Check off the ones you do now
2. Circle the ones you want to try
3. Cross off the ones that don't work

MOVEMENT SKILLS

- Squeeze something
- Use a stress ball
- Shred paper
- Bubble wrap
- Use a sand tray
- Jacob's ladder
- Hold a small stone
- Shuffle cards
- Make something
- Use a fidget
- Walk
- Exercise
- Dance
- Punch a safe surface
- Play at the park
- Make an obstacle course
- Swing on a swing
- Jump on a trampoline
- Jump rope
- Scooter
- Go swimming
- Stretches
- Tumbling
- Gymnastics
- Yoga
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PROCESSING SKILLS

- Write in a journal
- Write songs
- Write poetry
- Write music
- Draw
- Talk to someone you trust
- Create a playlist
- Write what's bothering you and throw it away
- Write a letter to someone
- Use "I statements"
- Make a worry box
-
-
-

SENSORY SKILLS

- Use a weighted blanket
- Sit in a bean bag
- Wrap up in a soft blanket
- Eat a crunchy snack
- Use a body sock
- Crawl through a tunnel
- Sip a drink through a straw
- Do wall push ups
- Turn upside down
- Stretch on an exercise ball
- Play with water beads
- Use mermaid fabric
-
-
-

What is within Their Control?



Shift the Focus to Positivity

- Positive Words/Affirmations:
 - “I can” Statements
 - “I am” Statements
 - Operating with a Growth Mindset – the power of “yet”
 - Praise for effort and not outcome

[Carol Dweck ~ A Study on Praise and Mindsets – YouTube](#)

[Mindset: The New Psychology of Success: Dweck, Carol S.: 9780345472328: Amazon.com: Books](#)

[Mindsets for Parents: Strategies to Encourage Growth Mindsets in Kids: Ricci, Mary Cay, Lee, Margaret: 9781618215246: Amazon.com: Books](#)

- Gratitude: students who participated in gratitude letter writing study demonstrated increased positive behavior, improved sleep, reduced stress, & increased ability to handle negative emotions such as guilt

http://soulpancake.com/portfolio_page/science-of-happiness/



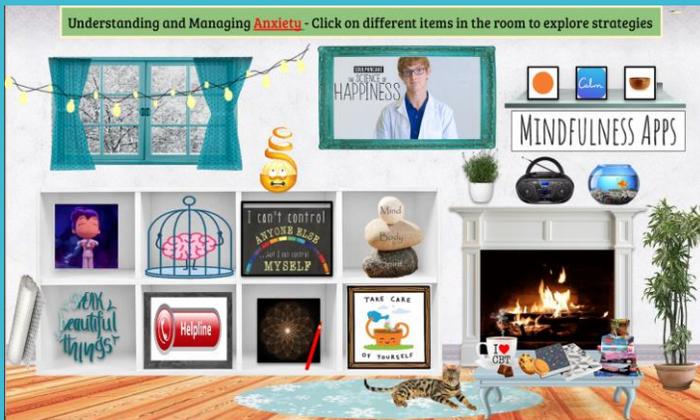
I am strong
I am kind
I am beautiful
I am smart
I am important
I am fearless
I am amazing

Increase Communication about Anxiety



- Ask open-ended questions, without assumptions or judgement
- Ask “What do you need from me?”
- Let them know that you are open to talking and are willing to give them space and wait until they are ready to talk
- Come up with a plan for the anxious times

Apps, Podcasts & Media



Apps

- Calm
- Headspace
- Relax Melodies
- Smiling Mind
- Mindshift
- Hear and Now
- Aura
- Colorfy
- Woebot
- Virtual Hope Box



[There's an App for that! 7 Mindfulness Based Apps for Kids](https://www.artitout.com) (artitout.com)

<https://www.artitout.com/blog>

Podcasts

- Like You
- Peace Out
- Be Calm on Ahway Island
- Kids Mindfulness Meditation



Media

[Big Life Journal for Kids](#)

Growth mindset conversation cards
Podcast
Journals, Free Pintables

[Headspace Guide to Meditation | Netflix Official Site](#)

Techniques and mindfulness meditations

[Managing Anxiety Resource Room - Google Slides](#)

Bitmoji Classroom with resources

What if We Need More Help?



- Treatment works!
 - Success rates for anxiety disorders with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) range from 60% to 90%
 - However, low utilization rates (18% compared with 79% for ADHD)

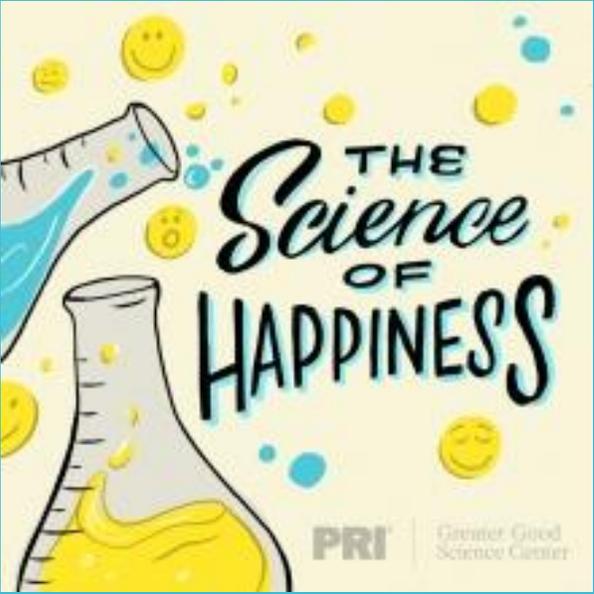
How do we know
when we need
more help?



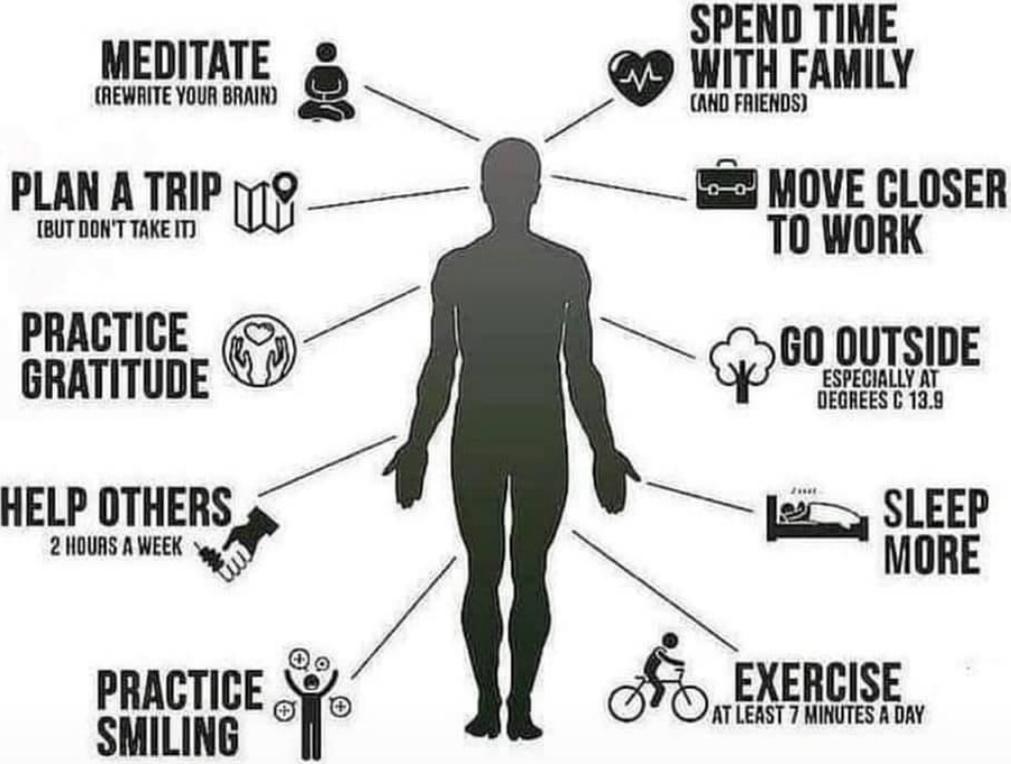
The Rule of 3

- There are 3 areas of a child's life: **school**, **family**, & **friends**
- If there is just 1 area affected, you can read a book, talk to another person, use strategies such as apps and mindfulness at home
- If there are 2 areas affected, leaving only 1 area supporting a child, therapy may be indicated.

Happiness Takes Work!

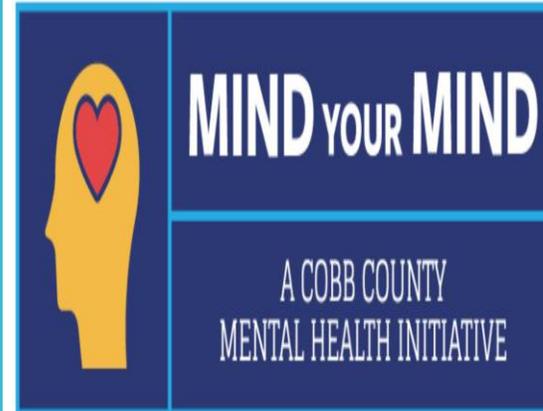


10 SCIENTIFIC WAYS TO BE HAPPY





COMMUNITY RESOURCES



Clip 1: Anxiety 101 ~

<https://vimeo.com/325095674/9d1fa7976d>

Clip 2: Distraction ~

<https://vimeo.com/325095875/dd1dca0889>

Clip 3: Avoidance ~

<https://vimeo.com/325096232/9933521bac>

Clip 4: Phelps ~

<https://vimeo.com/325096415/667d48dcab>

You may also follow Cobb Collaborative for additional information on trainings and screenings related to mental health. Upcoming virtual events:

March 24: Mindful Self Compassion (12~1pm)

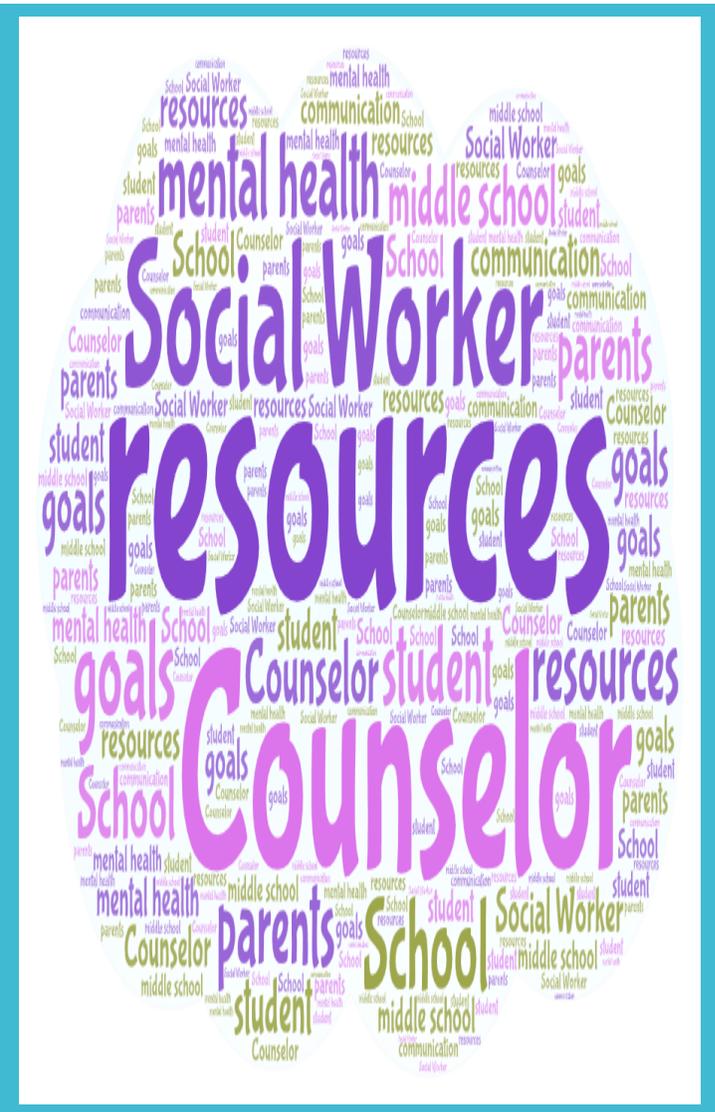
March 25: Top 5 Time Sucks (12~1pm)

March 29: No Silence. No Stigma. No Shame. No Suicide (11:30 am~1pm)

www.cobbcollaborative.com/events

Parenting, Coping Skills Guides, and Helpful Tips

[Parenting | Strong4Life](#)



Dodgen Middle School

Counselor Connection

One Team, One Goal, Student Success



6th grade: Unique Acquino

7th grade: Tonia Gatlin

8th grade: Kaley Hammonds

School Social Work



Dr. Karen Schwartz, LCSW, School Social Worker



**Keep
Calm**

and

**Thank you
for coming**