

Livermore Learns: Anxiety in Youth-Signs, Interventions, and Resources

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- Overview of Presentation

1

Overview of
Anxiety-Signs and
Symptoms

2

Mental Health
Impacts of Stress on
Youths

3

Interventions and
Resources

4

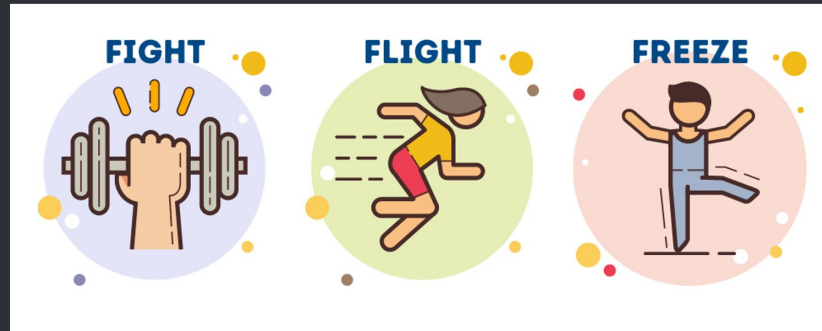
Questions

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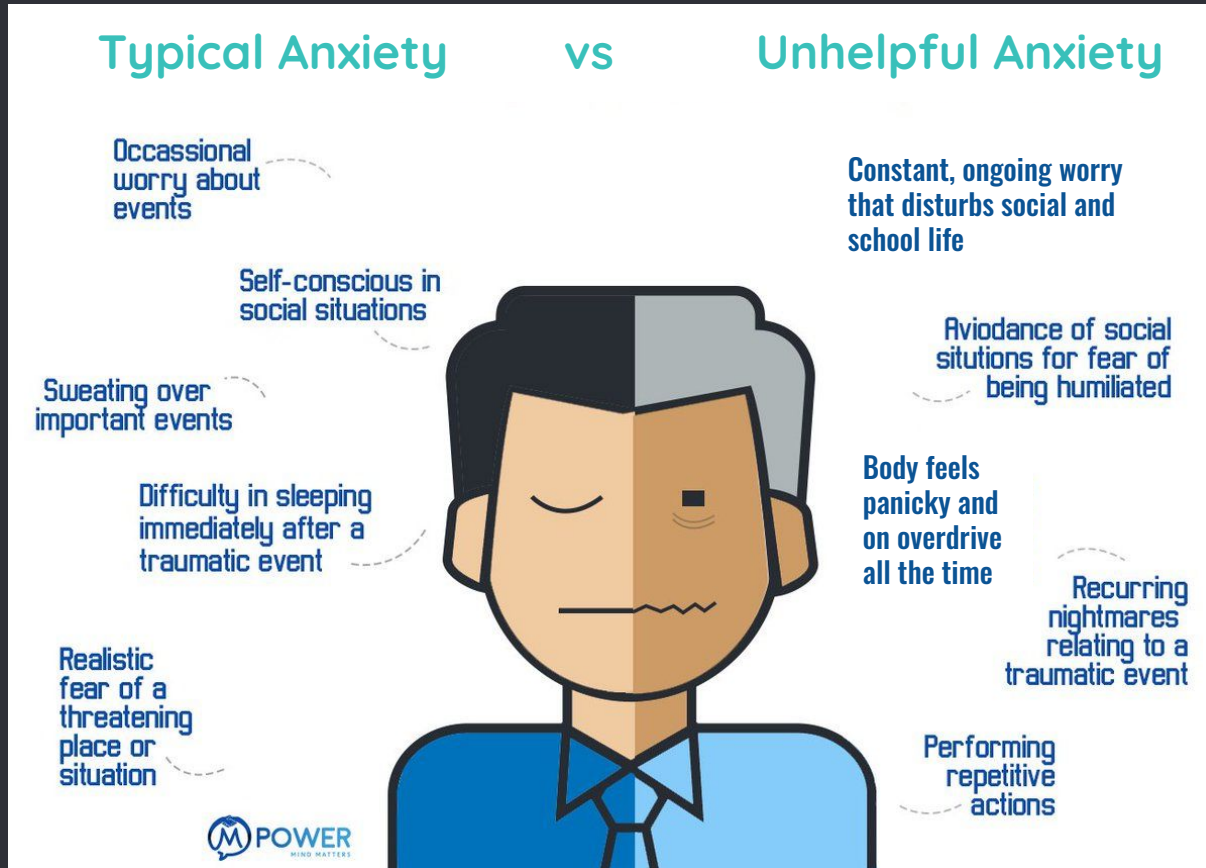
Overview of Anxiety-Signs and Symptoms

● What is Anxiety?

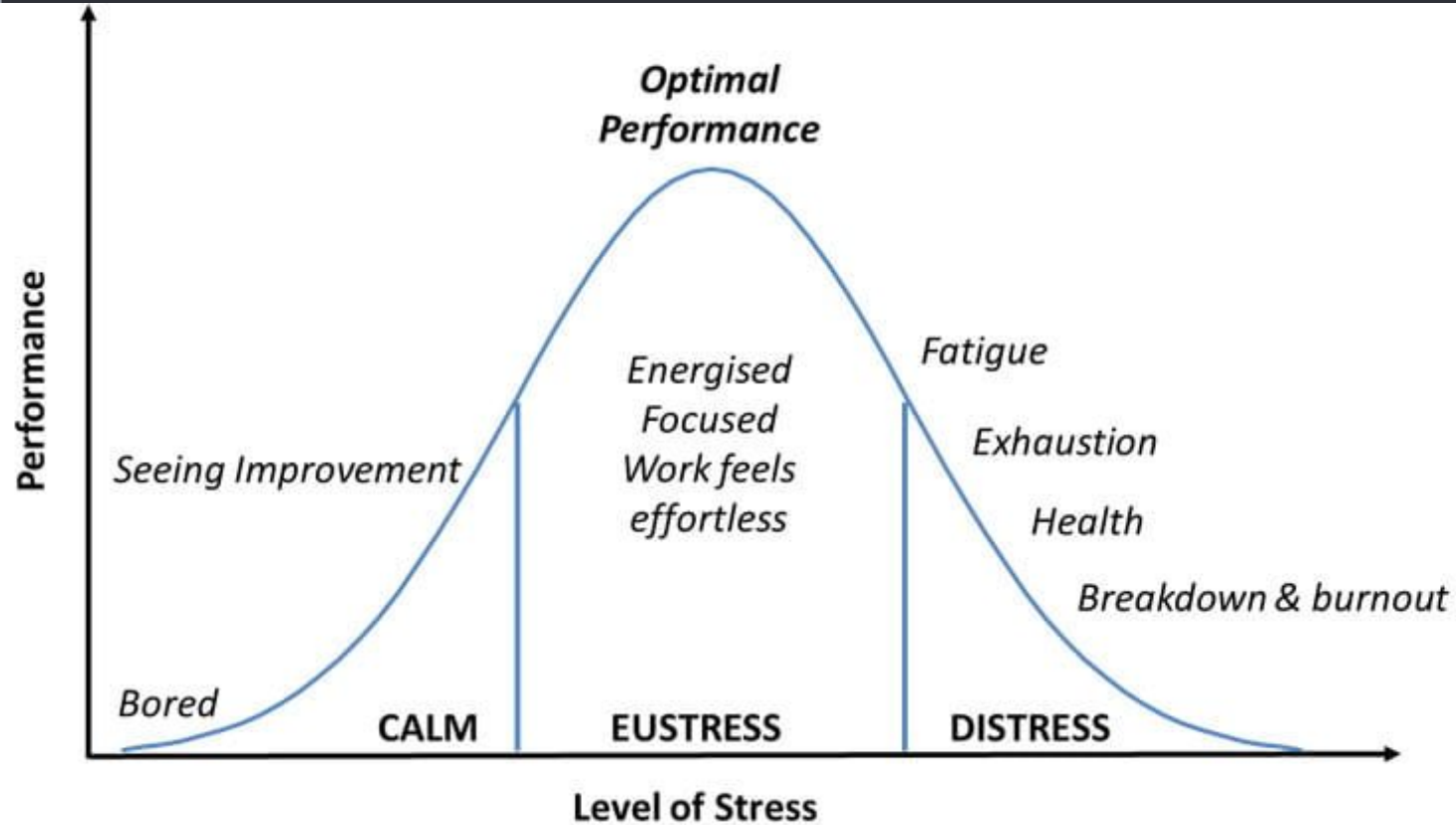
- Fear- Response to an immediate threat
 - Fear triggers “fight or flight”
- Anxiety is the body’s natural response to something that we see as dangerous/scary/threatening
 - Apprehension about a future threat that prepares the body by going into defense mode



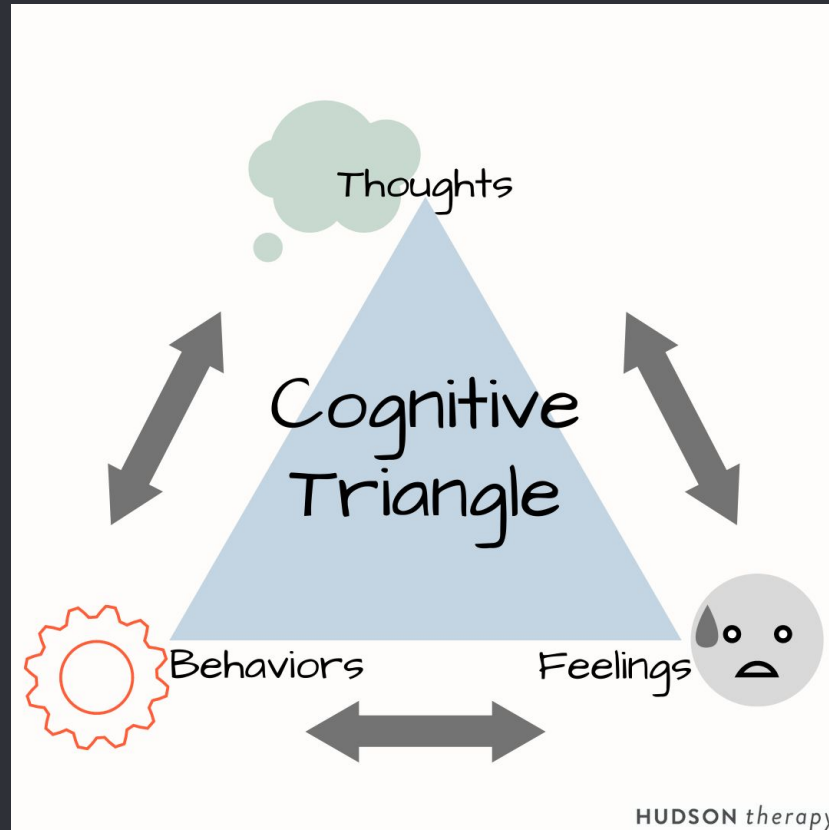
● What is Anxiety?



- Yerkes-Dodson Law (of Stress)



- What is Anxiety?



- What Causes Anxiety?

Brain Chemistry

**Financial
Instability**

**Learned
Behaviors**

**Deployment,
Separation, or
Divorce**

Grief/Loss

**Medical/Physical
Conditions**

Family Instability

Genetics

**Traumatic
experiences**

- What Causes Anxiety?

- Common causes in School Settings:

Bullying

**Learning and
Performance**

**Societal
Pressures**

**Peer
Relationships**

**Test Taking
Anxiety**

**Separation
Anxiety**

**Comparison to
Others**

**Pleasing Others
(esp Adults)**

Personality Type

● Anxieties Encountered by Children and Teens

Toddler to middle childhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Difficulty separating from givers•Sleeping alone•Nightmares and bedwetting (monsters, heightened imagination)•Fear of new people and things
Middle childhood to late childhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Anxiety around transition- new schools, new friends etc.•Anxious to please friends•Some but fewer nightmares- able to distinguish between reality and imagination.•Fears of getting lost, kidnapped, trapped, burglars, dentists, injury, heights.
Late childhood to adolescence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Anxiety around social exclusion, being embarrassed, public speaking, dating, academic, their future.•Difficulties with emotional regulation around trusted caregivers.

● Symptoms of Anxiety

○ Physical Symptoms

- Jittery
- Rapid heartbeat
- Tense muscles
- Shortness of breath
- Tiredness
- Sweaty or cold hands
- Difficulty sleeping
- Restlessness

Emotional Symptoms

- Feeling afraid
- Excessive worry
- Inner tension
- Easily irritated
- Thinking something bad will happen

● Symptoms of Anxiety

Children With Anxiety May...



Appear more clingy than normal



Be restless and fidgety



Complain of stomachaches



Display changes in eating and sleeping habits



Express negative thoughts or worries



Get upset or angry more quickly



Have bouts of unexplained crying



Struggle to concentrate

Symptoms of Anxiety

Physical symptoms of teen anxiety



RACING
HEARTBEAT
— and —
RAPID
BREATHING



MUSCLE TENSIONS
FLEXING
MUSCLES
throughout
your body



TREMBLING
HANDS
— or —
LEGS



UNCONTROLLABLE
URGE
TO CRY

Mental Symptoms of teen Anxiety



PEOPLE
— and —
ACTIVITIES
they used to enjoy



FEELING
— of —
HEIGHTENED
DEPRESSION



DRASTIC
CHANGES
— in —
DIET OR SLEEP
patterns



UNNATURAL
DIFFICULTY
concentrating on
SIMPLE TASKS

Statistics

Anxiety in Adolescents: Facts and Figures

1 in 3



Nearly one in three adolescents (**31.9%**) will meet criteria for an **anxiety disorder** by the age of 18.

Specific Phobias are the most common type of anxiety disorders, followed by **Social Anxiety**.

2:1



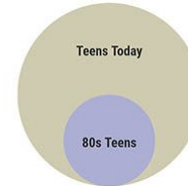
● Boys ● Girls

Anxiety and panic disorders change from equal female-male prevalence to a **2:1 female-male prevalence** after puberty.

Did You Know?

Anxiety disorders are the **most common** mental health disorders of childhood and adolescence.

2x



High school students today have more anxiety symptoms and are **twice as likely** to see a mental health professional as teens in the 1980s.

Social, political, and environmental causes are likely implicated in the increase of anxiety prevalence.

Sources:

- <https://childmind.org/report/2017-childrens-mental-health-report/anxiety-depression-adolescence/>
- <https://www.anxiety.org/what-is-anxiety#prevention-and-coping-with-anxiety>

Asheville Academy for Girls is a therapeutic boarding school for girls ages 10-14 that struggle with a variety of social and emotional issues.

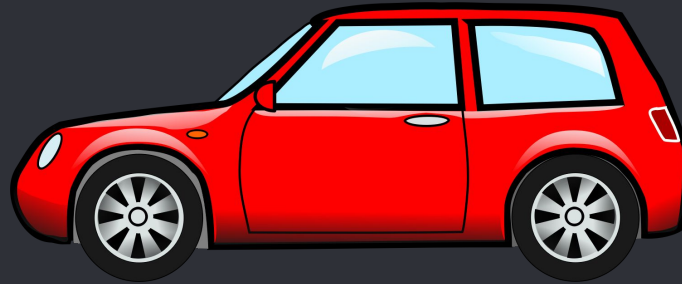
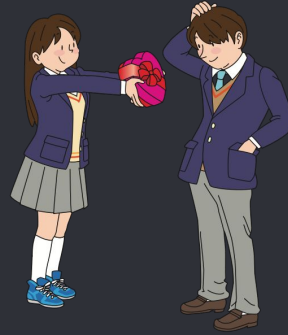
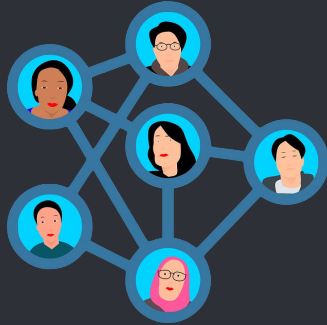
Learn more at ashevilleacademy.com or call us at (800) 264-8709.



2

Mental Health Impacts of Stress on Youths

Teen Life = Excitement/Stress




Covid-19

“American Psychological Association (APA) reports 81% of Gen Z teens (ages 13–17) have experienced more intense stress during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

- Increased stress due homework (13.2%)
 - Social isolation or lack of social interactions (8.5%)
 - Lack of support for mental wellbeing (12.3%)
-

- Stress in the Body

○ Hypothalamus → signals through nervous system → kidneys
adrenaline & cortisol



Some stress is healthy...

● Stages of Stress

- Fight or flight
 - Damage control
 - Recovery
 - Adaptation
 - Burnout
- Alarm response
 - Cortisol floods our system to help respond to stage 1 w/o serious damage
 - After initial rush, bodies begin to reset - exhaustion and fatigue
 - If ignore stage 3, - “level of stress is here to stay - need to adjust” - irritability, overwhelm, fatigue, etc.
 - Result of long-term unresolved stress - may lead to health complications



● Impacts of Stress

- Irritability
- Anger
- Sadness
- Tears
- Loss of control
- Memory & concentration problems

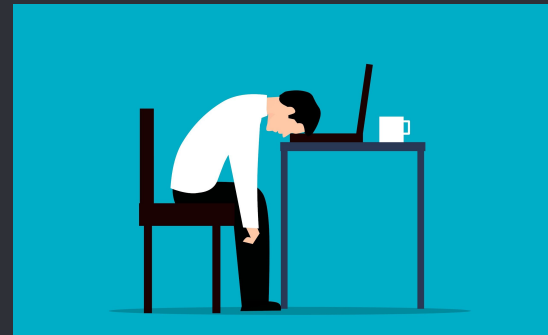
- Headaches
- Fatigue & exhaustion
- Digestive issues
- Overeating or not eating enough
- Difficulty sleeping



- Impacts of Stress

○ Chronic stress → anxiety and/or depression

- Depression & anxiety also cause stress
- Self-medicating → substance/medication induced anxiety or depression



Stress vs. Anxiety

STRESS

- Anger
- Prompted by circumstance
- Digestive issues
- Racing thoughts
- Ends when stressful situation (trigger) ends

- Fatigue
- Insomnia
- Irritability
- Muscle tension
- Elevated blood pressure
- Difficulty concentrating
- Increased heart rate
- Excessive worry
- Headaches
- Chest pain

ANXIETY DISORDER

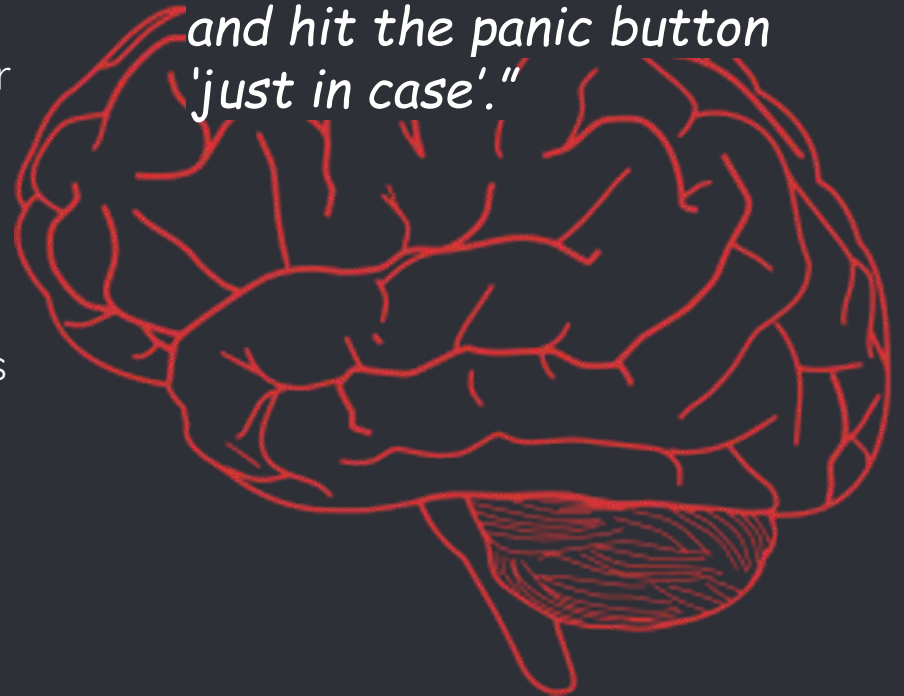
- Ongoing dread
- Shortness of breath
- Possible panic attack
- Continuous, regardless of circumstances
- Intense worry (with/without external trigger)
- Poop urge
- Cough
- Itching
- Hives
- Gas

Amygdala

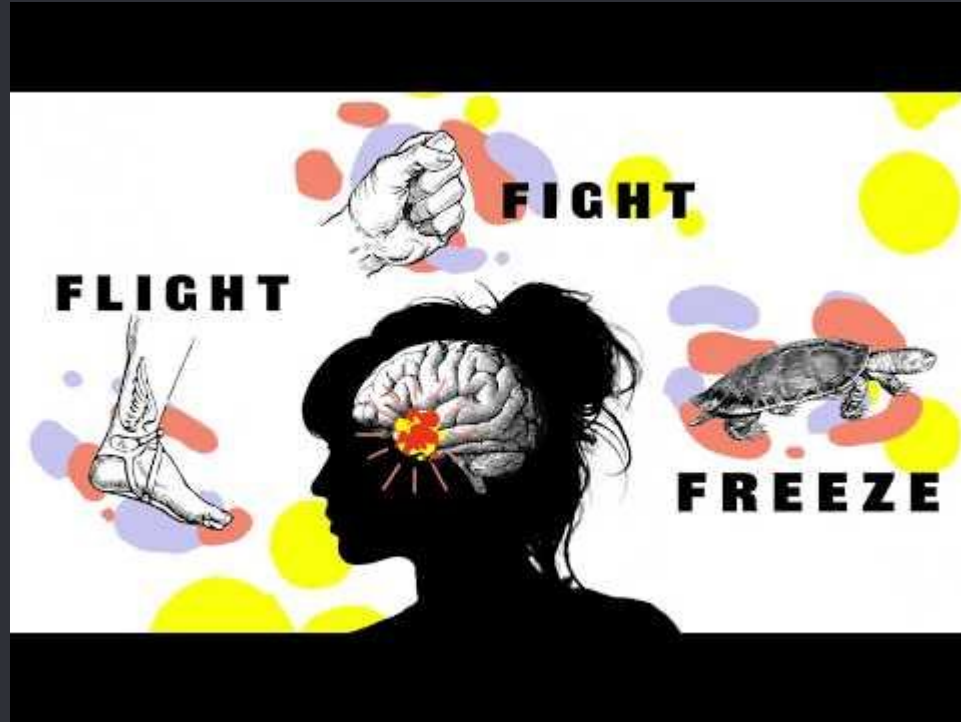
What does it do?

- When danger is perceived (real or imaginary) -> prepares body to fight, flee, freeze or fawn for survival
- “Lizard brain function”
- Amygdala damage - higher levels of cortisol

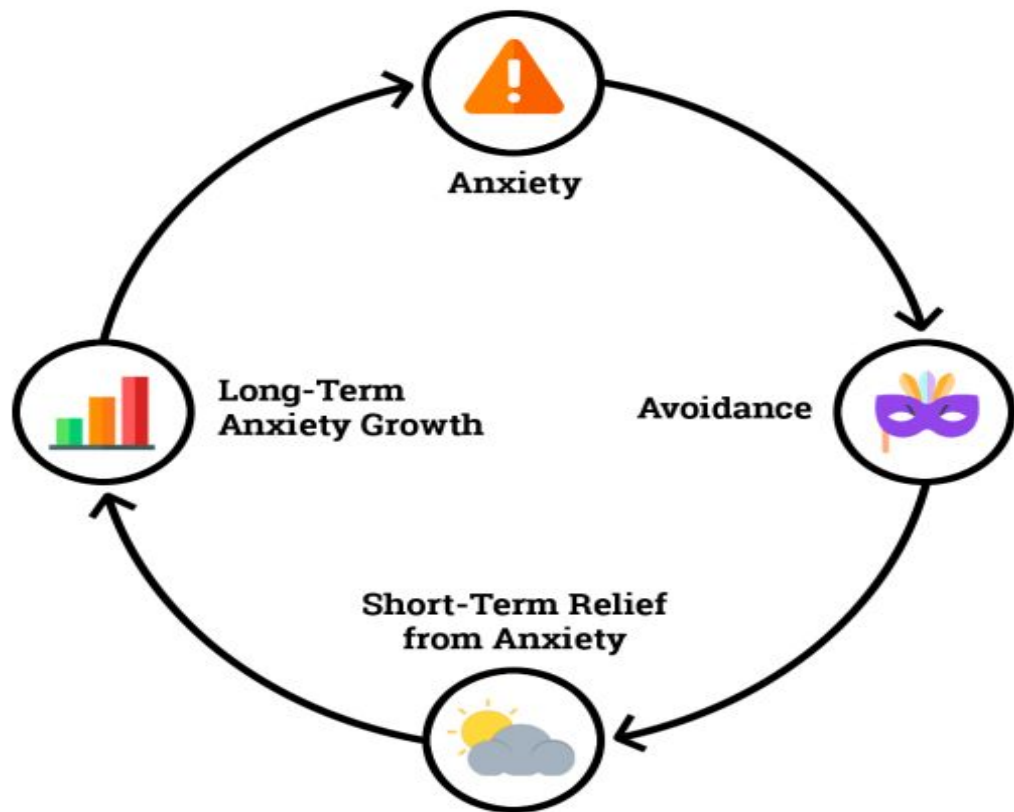
“An anxious brain is a strong, healthy brain that is a little overprotective. It is more likely to sense threat and hit the panic button 'just in case'.”



Anxiety in the Brain



The Cycle of Anxiety



Anxiety

An anxiety-producing situation leads to uncomfortable symptoms such as worry, fear, a racing heart, sweating, or a feeling of being overwhelmed.

Avoidance

Uncomfortable symptoms are controlled by avoiding the anxiety-producing situation. Examples of avoidance include:

- Skipping class to avoid giving a presentation
- Using drugs or alcohol to numb feelings
- Procrastinating on challenging tasks

Short-Term Relief from Anxiety

Avoidance of the anxiety-producing situation gives an immediate sense of relief. The symptoms of anxiety lessen, but only temporarily.

Long-Term Anxiety Growth

The fear that initially led to avoidance worsens, and the brain learns that when the anxiety-producing situation is avoided, the symptoms go away. As a result, the symptoms of anxiety will be worse the next time, and avoidance is more likely.

- Cycle of Stress, Anxiety, Depression...

- - ↓ Concentration & motivation
 - Avoidance
 - ↓ School work, exercise, quality time, relationships, overall self-care

How can we help ..?

3

Interventions and Resources

- Parenting strategies

- 1. Don't try to eliminate anxiety
 - a. Anxiety is a useful emotion!
 - b. It's about tolerating discomfort and distinguishing helpful vs. unhelpful anxiety
- 2. Don't give into avoidance instead encourage brave behavior
- 3. Express positive and realistic expectations
- 4. Don't reinforce your child's fears

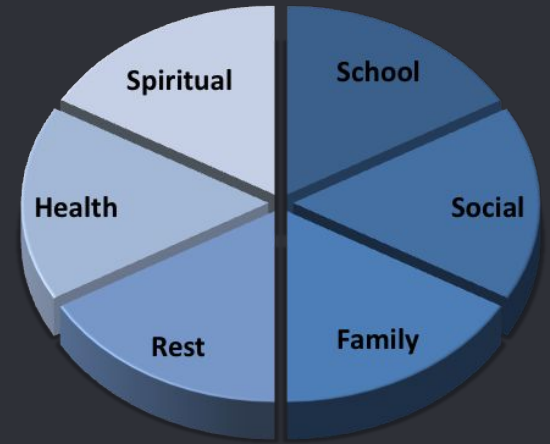
- Parenting strategies cont.

“Data shows that the greatest source of childhood and adolescent stress is not school work, extracurricular activities, or peer pressure, but parental stress.” (Saltzman, 2020)

1. Parent self-care
 - a. Mindful mornings may be less efficient, but they're more pleasurable
2. Try to keep the anticipatory period short
3. Talk about anxiety
 - a. Communicate understanding and validate their feelings

- Other strategies

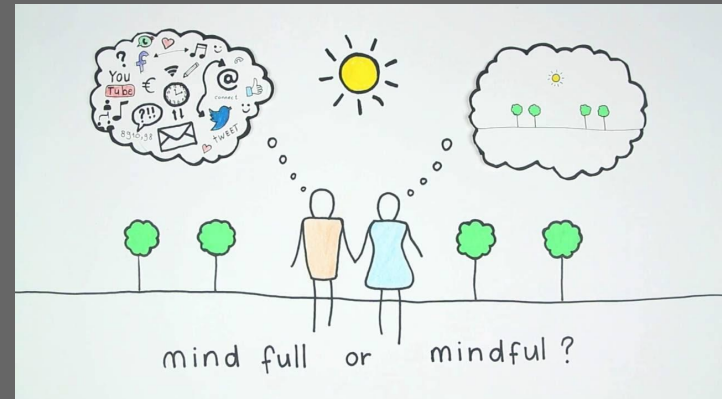
- 1. Problem solving skills
 - a. Stop - breathe - think
- 2. Balanced lifestyle
 - a. Responsibilities & Leisure
- 3. Time management



Mindfulness

Encourage children/teens to unplug from technology or other distractions and become more aware of the present

1. Mindful daily activities: walking, eating, coloring
2. Five senses exercise (54321)
3. Body scan
4. Journaling



Relaxation Skills

These are skills that can be taught and learned!

1. Simply sit and breathe
 - a. Balloon
 - b. Flower and birthday candle
 - c. Lazy 8

 2. Soothing activities: nature activities, use the senses (smell, sight, sounds etc)
-



Thank You!

ANY QUESTIONS?