

# Fostering Student Success

## Helping Students Manage Stress and Anxiety

Katherine Nguyen Williams, PhD



**Transforming  
Mental Health**

## The Modern Child

The science of raising children

Katherine Nguyen Williams Ph.D.

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### 5 Tips for Talking to Children About Mass Shootings

Research explains how to help children cope after hearing about mass shootings.



### The Refugee Child: An American Story

Throughout history, most Americans have not supported refugee resettlement stateside. Studies tell us why we should or shouldn't listen to them.



### How to Talk to Children About Spade and Bourdain Suicides

Anthony Bourdain's mother said, "He is absolutely the last person in the world I would have ever dreamed would do something like this." How can we tell if our children are at risk?

## The Modern Child

The science of raising children



**Katherine Nguyen Williams, Ph.D.**, is the Director of Strategic Development and Clinical Innovations at Rady Children's Hospital–San Diego and Associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at UC San Diego.

## Books by Katherine Nguyen Williams

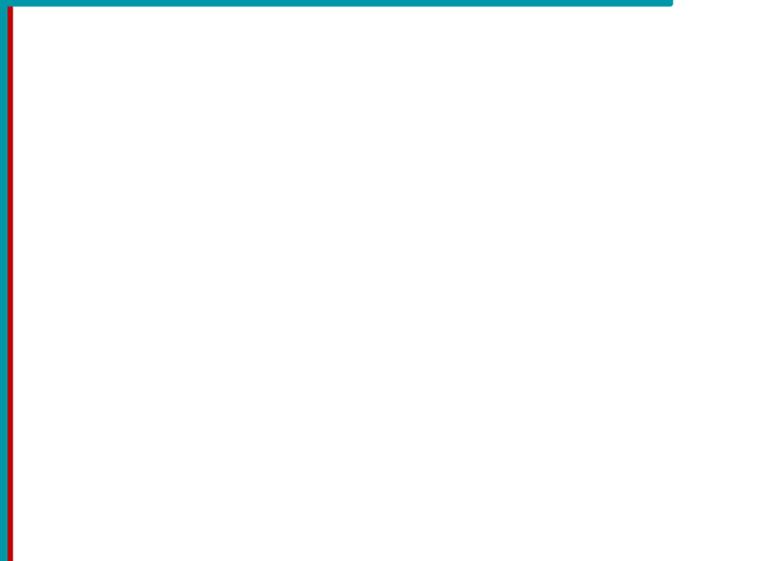
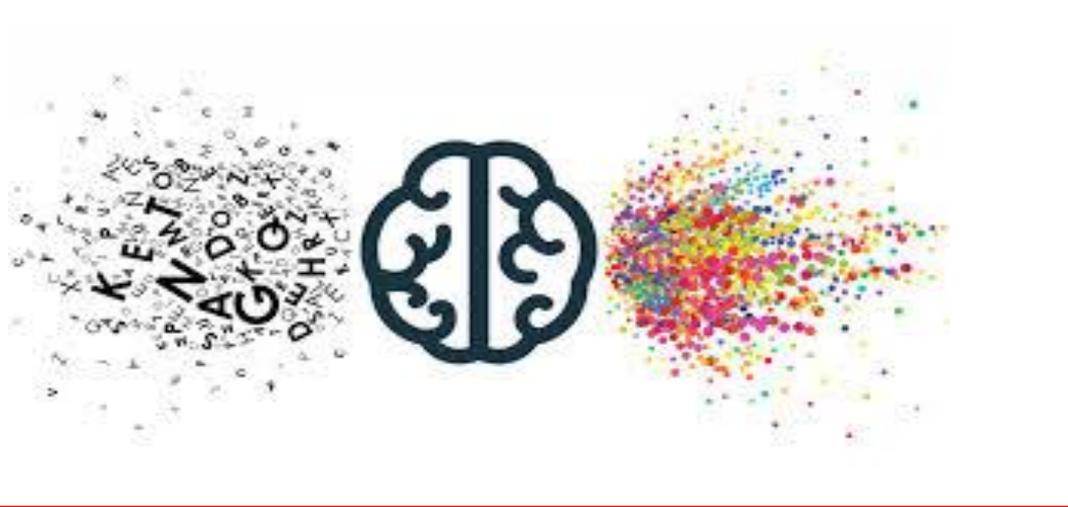


**Modular CBT for Children and Adolescents with Depression: A Clinician's Guide to Individualized Treatment**











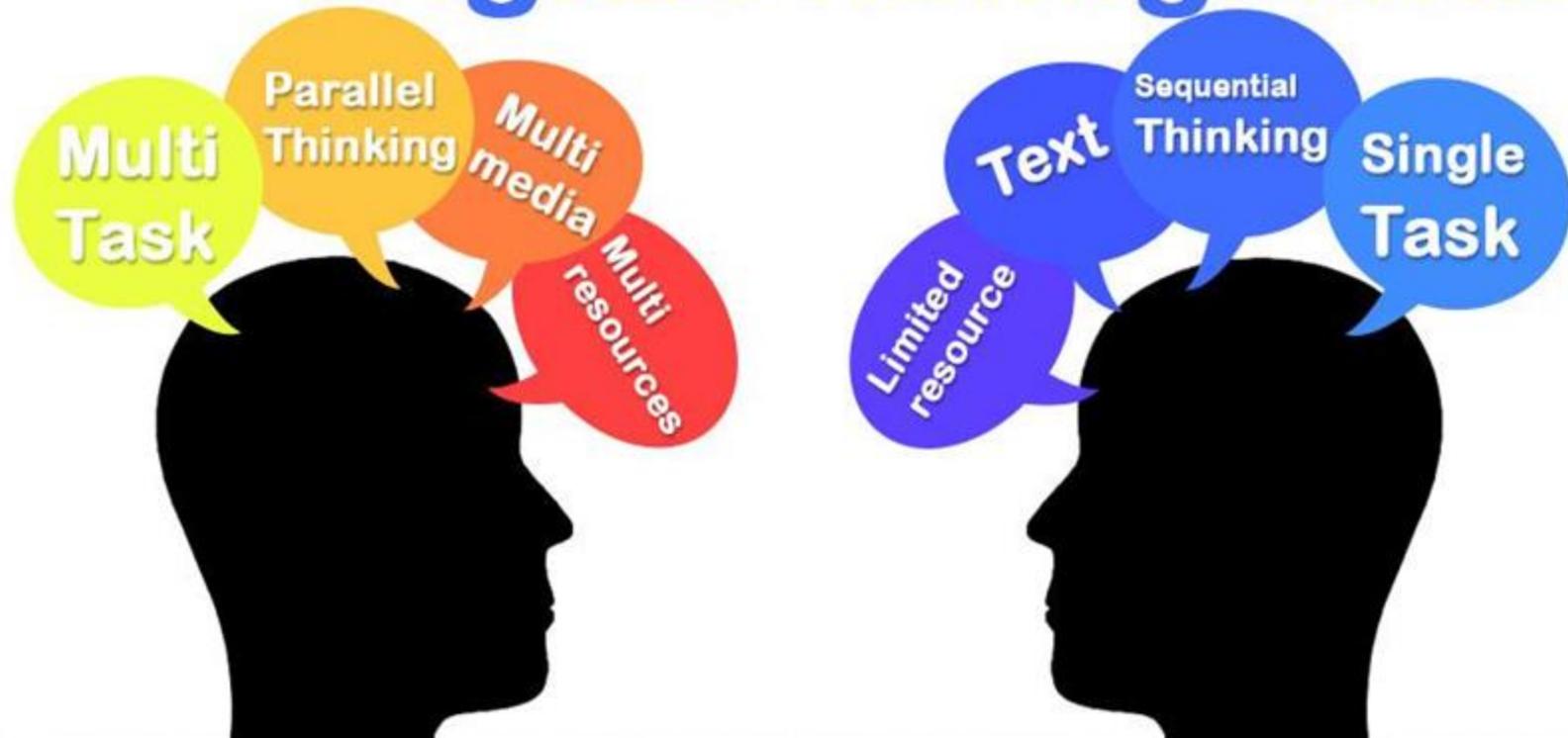
**GENERATION Z:  
CONNECTED FROM BIRTH.**

**Born mid-1990s to 2010.**



# Digital Native

# Digital Immigrants



# TOXIC CHILDHOOD

HOW THE MODERN WORLD IS DAMAGING OUR CHILDREN AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT

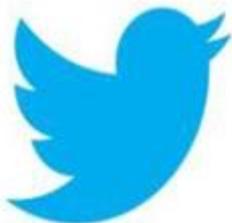


SUE

© www.suepalmer.c

5 ways to HELP KIDS deal with





Vine



Pinterest



# Raising Children in this Modern, Digital Age

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- Anxiety is normal, adaptive, and crucial to our survival
- In modern age, too many false alarms
- Anxiety disorders is the most common disorder in US
- At least 20-25% of children under age 18 have significant mental health problems
- 75% of those don't get help
- Anxiety rates increasing post-pandemic



# Anxiety & Suicide Risk

**Supporting diverse populations, especially those at increased risk for SI/attempt**

LGBTQIA+ students

BIPOC students

**Students with trauma histories**

**Anxiety, academic pressures, and suicide?**

Role of increased pressures

Pandemic-related risk factors

# How You Can Help

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## ACES study - emphasis on proactive/prevention

At least one caring adult

Unique role of teachers

## Academic pressures

“It’s OK to make mistakes” aka growth mindset

## Red Flags

It’s OK to ask

**How can you tell if  
your student is  
feeling anxious?**

# CHILD ANXIETY IS THE MOST COMMON CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH CONCERN

(Merikangas, 2010)



# Student Anxiety: What to Watch for

## Physical and Emotional Indicators of Anxiety

Possible physical indicators of anxiety

Possible emotional indicators of anxiety

Difficulty breathing

Perfectionism

Shaking

Expressing constant fears

Dizziness

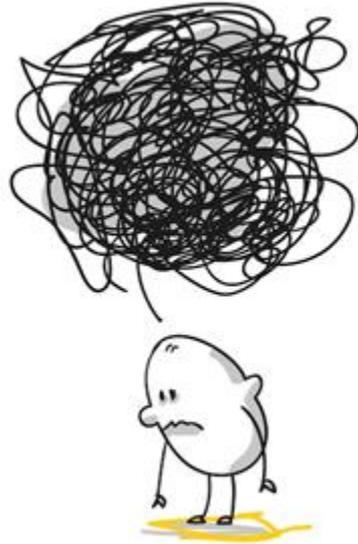
Attempting to not participate in school

Becoming fatigued quickly

Frequent stomachaches or headaches

# Anxiety

Predominant characteristic is *excessive* worrying that is difficult to control and out of proportion to triggering event



# Types of Anxiety

- **Generalized Anxiety Disorder**
  - Pervasive worries about a variety of topics
  - Includes irritability, muscle tension, difficulty sleeping
- **Social Anxiety**
  - Fear of being judged by others/negatively evaluated by others
  - Can result in school avoidance or avoidance of extracurriculars (sports, church, tutoring, etc)
  - Can result in avoidance of preferred events (sports, birthday parties, etc)
- **Separation Anxiety Disorder**
  - Fear of leaving parents or harm being caused to parents
  - Associated with fear of going anywhere without parents and child asking for parents to come with them
- **Panic Disorder**
  - Recurrent, unexpected panic attacks
  - Fear of recurring panic attacks
- **Other**
  - Agoraphobia, OCD, Specific Phobia, Selective Mutism, PTSD
  - Other Specified Anxiety Disorders

**I THOUGHT YOU WERE NEVER  
EVER EVER EVER COMING  
HOME EVER**



**SO I PANICKED**

# IDEA and 504

Anxiety disorders are critically [underdiagnosed and untreated](#), but those who have diagnoses may have their needs covered by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or the Section 504 civil rights law.

If covered by IDEA, they will be considered special needs students and given [Individualized Education Programs \(IEPs\)](#). Section 504 doesn't typically require any special education services but allows them a [504 plan](#). Both types of plans provide specific, actionable steps to take when a student is experiencing anxiety.

# No IEP or 504? You Can Still Help

- Establish Norms
- Proactively Lower Stress
- Build Relationships with Students
- Create a Growth Mindset, Not a Fear of Failure
- Help Students Feel Safe
- Watch Out for Negative Interactions
- Talk to Other Teachers
- Include Administrators and the Counseling Team
- Put a Stop to Bullying

# Anxious child in the classroom?

## How to Respond

- Immediate Response
- Long-Term Response
- Proactive Response

# What works for children with anxiety?

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
  - Relaxation Training
  - Facing Your Fears (Exposures)
  - Cognitive Therapy



# Relaxation Training



# Relaxation Toolkit

- Paced deep breathing
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Mindful walking
- Mindfulness exercises (ABC game, color game, 5-4-3-2-1)
- Mandala coloring
- Sensory stimulation (fidget toys, stress balls, squishy, fidget spinner)
- Music meditation
- Visualization exercises
  - Can be real or imagined
  - Can visualize defeating anxiety monster



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjxEPRo8llc>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDKyRpW-Yuc&t=78s>



# Relaxation Toolkit



# Mindfulness

## Activity

# Facing your Fear (Exposures)

Why did the chicken cross the road?

My therapist  
says I should do  
more things that  
scare me.



©TFeder

# Exposures

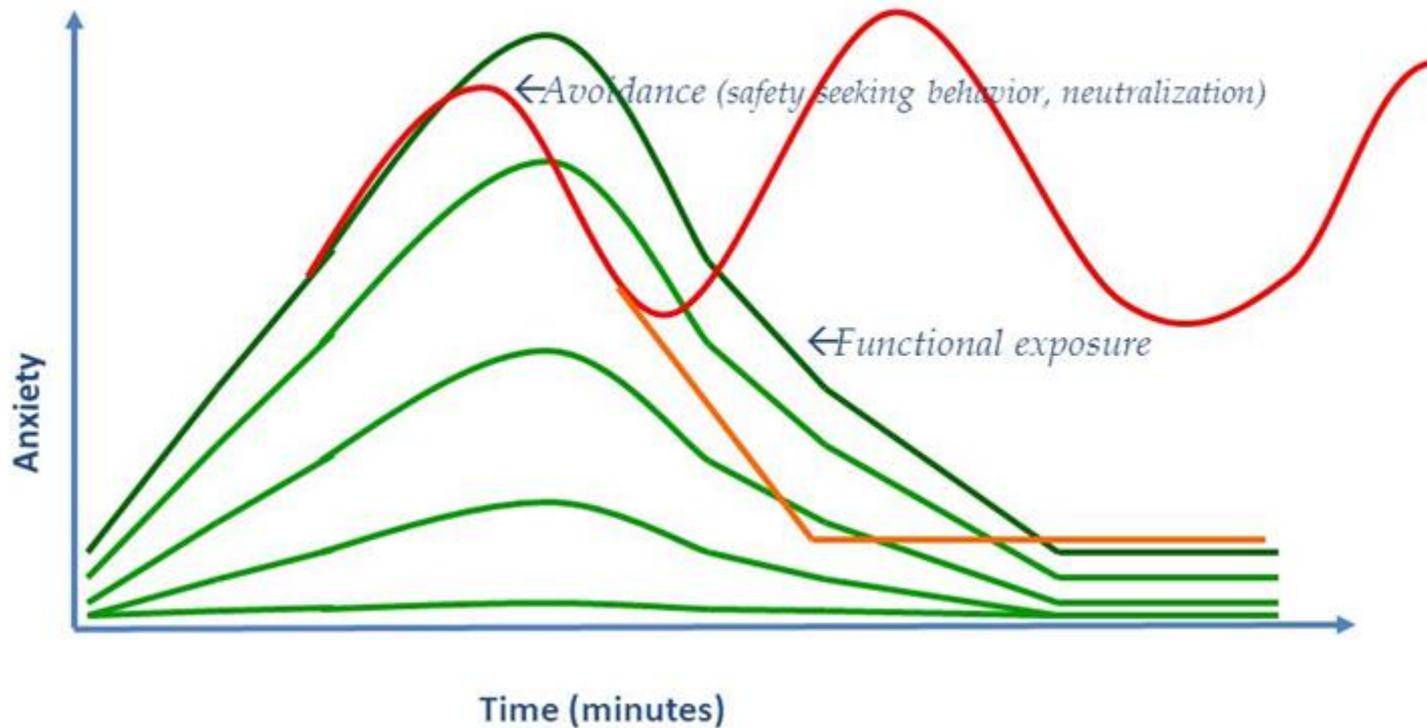
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- Focuses on the behavioral piece of CBT
- Exposing ourselves to our fear helps us to desensitize from something that is scary
- Brain can essentially relearn that feared triggers are non-threatening with repeated exposures
- Avoiding anxiety triggers ultimately worsens anxiety symptoms

**What was it like when you first  
learned how to drive?**



# The Process of Exposure



# Facing Your Fears to Exposure Therapy

- Parents, teachers, school counselors, nurses
  - Great preventative strategy to use now
  - School plays a huge role here - avoid allowing avoidance
  - Encourage student to do things that are scary
- Therapists
  - Considered gold standard treatment for anxiety
  - Fear hierarchy
  - Can be helpful to start with less feared situations and work your way up
  - If you do start therapy, critical to finish therapy

<b>Step</b>	<b>Situation</b>	<b>Fear Rating</b>
12.	<i>Petting a larger dog off leash</i>	10
11.	<i>Petting a larger dog on a leash</i>	9
10.	<i>Holding a puppy</i>	9
9.	<i>Petting a puppy that someone is holding</i>	8
8.	<i>Standing beside, but not touching, a dog on a leash</i>	7
7.	<i>Standing 4 feet away from a dog on a leash</i>	6
6.	<i>Standing 8 feet away from a dog on a leash</i>	5
5.	<i>Standing across the street from a dog on a leash</i>	4
4.	<i>Looking at a dog across a park through binoculars</i>	3
3.	<i>Looking at a dog through a window</i>	3
2.	<i>Watching a film with dogs in it</i>	2
1.	<i>Looking at photos of dogs</i>	2

# Common School-Related Exposures to Encourage Students

- Volunteer to go first for class presentations
- Participate in class, even if you aren't sure if the answer is right
- Participate in class with the wrong answer on purpose
- Arrive 5 minutes late to class
- Ask a new peer for their phone number/social media, or what class period they have next
- Join a club
- Pick somebody they don't know well for next class group project

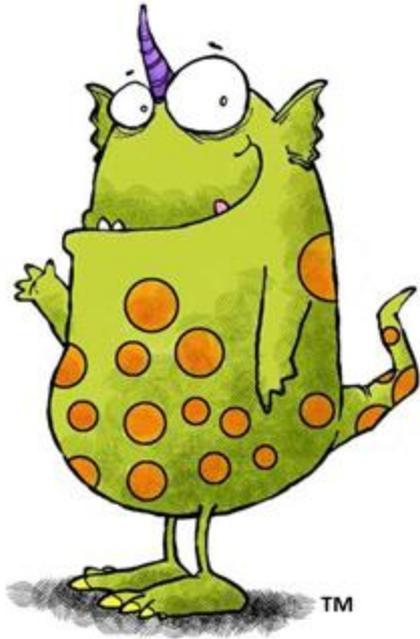
# Change Your Thoughts to Reduce Your Anxiety

ANXIETY GIRL!

able to jump to the worst conclusion  
in a single bound!



# Superhero Visualization



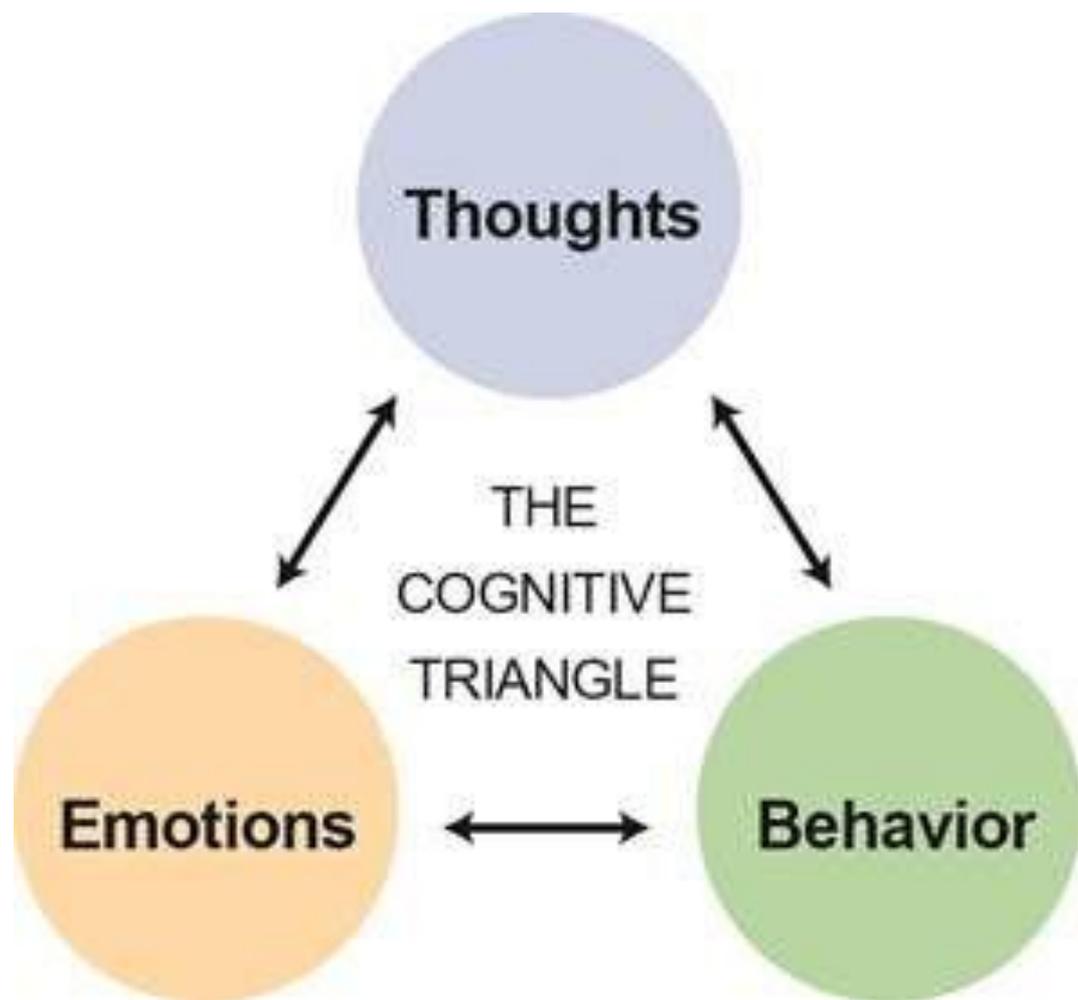
# Superhero Visualization

- Helps to externalize the anxiety
- Put a name on the monster
- Picture yourself as a superhero
- Empowers the child/teen
- Tell your student to “be brave” and “stand up against the monster”
- Monster metaphor can help give your child strength to face their fear

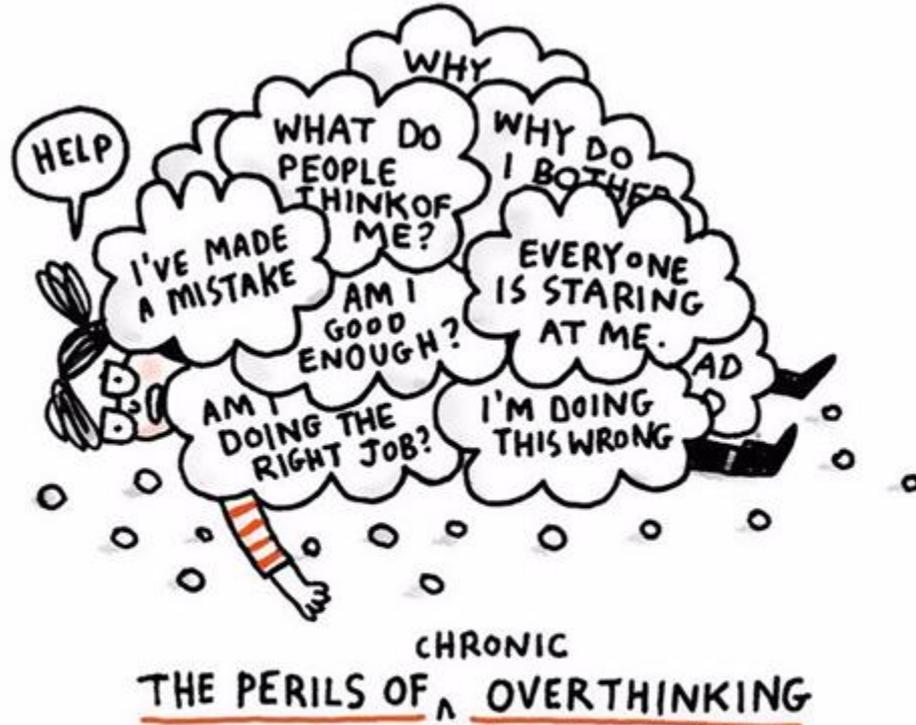


WORRIER POSE

Gemma CORRELL



# Cognitive Therapy



# Changing our Thoughts

- Based on idea that thoughts are an underlying critical role in anxiety symptoms
- Unhelpful thoughts → anxious emotions
- Anxious emotions → unhelpful actions
- If we can change our thoughts, we can change our feelings, and then change what we do

## Unhelpful Thinking Styles

### All or nothing thinking



Sometimes called 'black and white thinking'

*If I'm not perfect I have failed*

*Either I do it right or not at all*

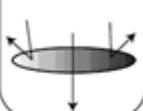
### Over-generalising

**"everything is always rubbish"**

**"nothing good ever happens"**

Seeing a pattern based upon a single event, or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw

### Mental filter



Only paying attention to certain types of evidence.

*Noticing our failures but not seeing our successes*

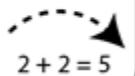
### Disqualifying the positive



Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done for some reason or another

*That doesn't count*

### Jumping to conclusions



There are two key types of jumping to conclusions:

- **Mind reading** (imagining we know what others are thinking)
- **Fortune telling** (predicting the future)

### Magnification (catastrophising) & minimisation



Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophising), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important

### Emotional reasoning



Assuming that because we feel a certain way what we think must be true.

*I feel embarrassed so I must be an idiot*

**should**  
**must**

Using critical words like 'should', 'must', or 'ought' can make us feel guilty, or like we have already failed

If we apply 'shoulds' to other people the result is often frustration

### Labelling



Assigning labels to ourselves or other people

*I'm a loser  
I'm completely useless  
They're such an idiot*

### Personalisation

**"this is my fault"**

Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn't completely your fault. Conversely, blaming other people for something that was your fault.

# Changing our Thoughts

Situation  
**See a dog**



Thoughts  
*That dog will bite me!*



Feelings  
**Afraid**



Behaviours  
**Run away**

Situation  
**See a dog**



Thoughts  
*What a nice dog!*



Feelings  
**Happy**



Behaviours  
**Pet the dog**

**Let's Practice...**

# Different Types of Anxiety

## 1) Generalized Anxiety

- a) “If I don’t pass my test tomorrow, I’m going to fail the class. If I fail the class, I’m not going to get into a good college and I will become homeless.”
- b) “I have studied as much as I can for the test. There is a chance I will pass the test. Even if I fail the test, it doesn’t necessarily mean I’ll fail the class.”

## 2) Social Anxiety

- a) “I’m going to make a mistake during my presentation and the whole class will make fun of me.”
- b) “People might not even notice if I make a mistake. Nobody expects my presentation to be perfect.”

## a) Separation Anxiety

- a) “I have left Mom many times before and she has always been OK.”
- b) “If I leave Mom, something bad will happen to her.”

## 1) Panic

- a) “I don’t know for sure if I will or will not have a panic attack on the airplane. Even if I do have a panic attack, I know it won’t kill me and I can tolerate it using my skills.”
- b) “I can’t go on the airplane. If I get stuck on the airplane, I will have a panic attack, and I won’t be able to get the help I need.”

# 1. Generalized Anxiety

1. "If I don't pass my test tomorrow, I'm going to fail the class. If I fail the class, I'm not going to get into a good college and I will become homeless."
2. "I have studied as much as I can for the test. There is a chance I will pass the test. Even if I fail the test, it doesn't necessarily mean I'll fail the class."

## 2. Social Anxiety

1. "I'm going to make a mistake during my presentation and the whole class will make fun of me."
2. "People might not even notice if I make a mistake. Nobody expects my presentation to be perfect."

## 3. Separation Anxiety

1. "I have left Mom many times before and she has always been OK."
2. "If I leave Mom, something bad will happen to her."

## 4. Panic

1. "I don't know for sure if I will or will not have a panic attack on the airplane. Even if I do have a panic attack, I know it won't kill me and I can tolerate it using my skills."
2. "I can't go on the airplane. If I get stuck on the airplane, I will have a panic attack, and I won't be able to get the help I need."

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# Putting Thoughts on Trial



In this exercise, you will put a thought on trial by acting as a defense attorney, prosecutor, and judge, to determine the accuracy of the thought.

**Prosecution and Defense:** Gather evidence in support of, and against, your thought. Evidence can only be used if it's a verifiable fact. No interpretations, guesses, or opinions!

**Judge:** Come to a verdict regarding your thought. Is the thought accurate and fair? Are there other thoughts that could explain the facts?

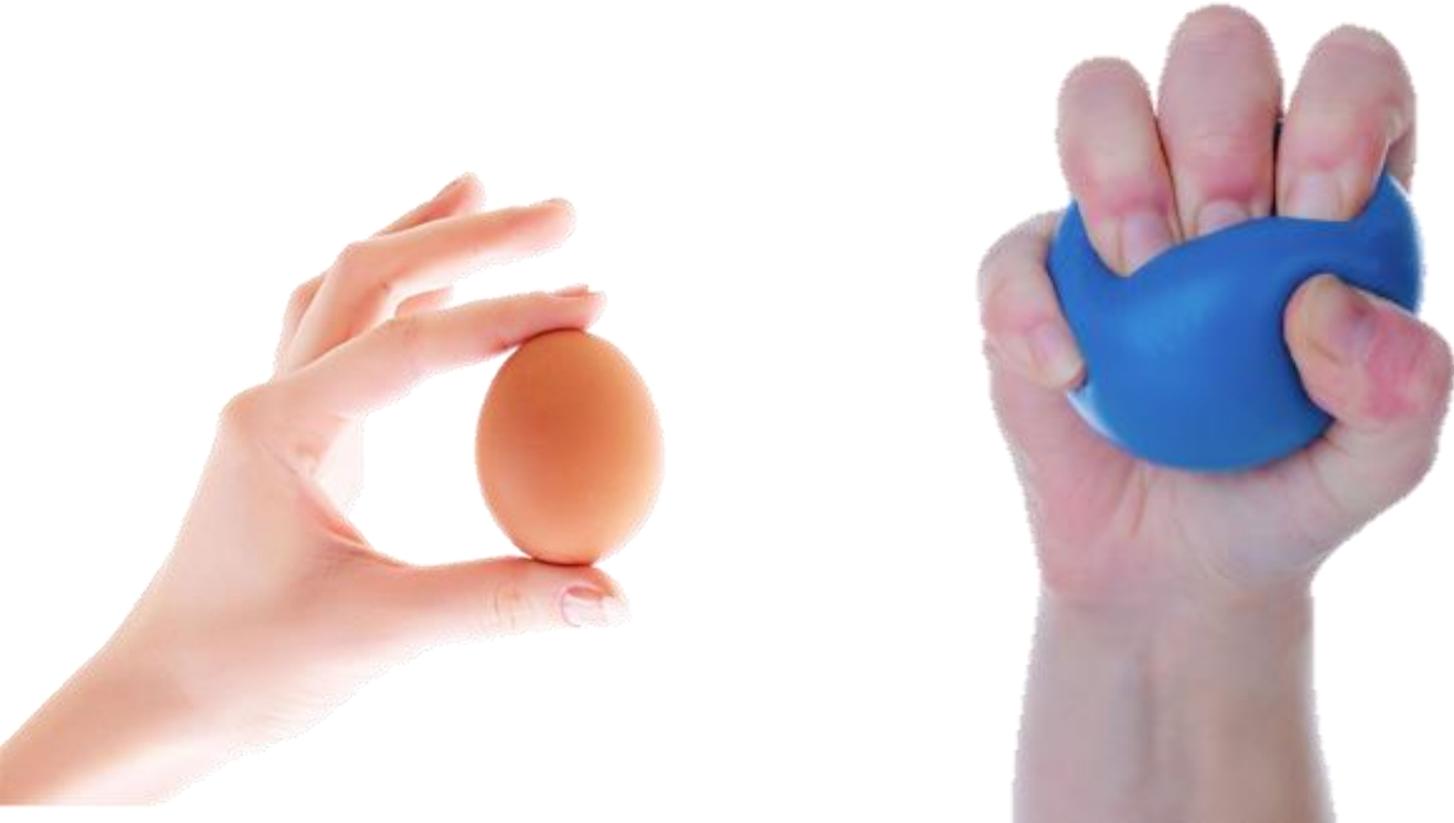
 <b>The Thought</b>

 <b>The Defense</b> <i>evidence for the thought</i>

 <b>The Prosecution</b> <i>evidence against the thought</i>

 <b>The Judge's Verdict</b>

# Resiliency During the Pandemic



# Resilience

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The different abilities of *anticipating, reducing the impact of, coping with, and recovering from the effects of adversity.*

Resilience is not just the immediate ability to respond to negative events, but rather, a process of positive adaptation before, during, and after adversity

# What is Resilience?

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A set of flexible cognitive, behavioral, and emotional responses to acute or chronic adversities which can be unusual or commonplace

**These responses *can be learned.***

# Resilience is the Ability to “Roll with the Punches”

## What it is:

- Although you encounter stress, adversity, trauma, or tragedy, you keep functioning both psychologically and physically
- You can go on with daily tasks, remain generally optimistic, and go on with your life

## What it's not:

- Resiliency doesn't mean you ignore your feelings; when adversity strikes, you still experience anger, grief, or pain
- Being resilient doesn't mean being stoic or doing it alone

# Resiliency and Mental Health

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*Resiliency helps youth thrive:*

- It enables youth to develop a reservoir of internal resources that they can draw on when they need it
- Resiliency may protect youth against developing a mental illness related to stress or trauma
- Resiliency can help youth (with an existing mental illness) cope better

# How Can We Develop Resilience?

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Likely that some people may be more biologically predisposed toward being resilient; but psychological and environmental factors can contribute to its development.

The good news is that resilience is not a binary quality that people either have or do not have – it involves thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors that can be learned and developed.

# In Summary, What You Can Do:

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- Be **patient**, calm and reassuring
- Be **positive** about their ability to manage the situation (with support)
- Help your student succeed by doing “**small steps**”
- **Reward and praise** your child’s efforts as well as successes
- Be a **model** for your student – manage your own anxieties
- Help your student “avoid avoidance” with planned **gradual exposure** to things they fear
- Teach your student **positive self-talk**

# Resiliency and COVID

- **Staying connected with your community in the pandemic world**
  - Drive by birthday parties
  - Trunk get together
  - Backyard camping
  - Netflix Watch Party
- **Social distancing is not emotional distancing**
- **How to navigate the world opening back up during a pandemic**
- **Natural for there to be some feelings of valid apprehension, for both children and adults**
- **Modeling for our children healthy coping responses**

# Treatment of Anxiety

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If your student is having significant problems with school, missing a lot of school, or having other problems functioning, they should be referred for professional help.

Anxiety disorders can be treated!

Gold-standard, evidence-based treatment is cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) in groups or individually

In CBT, children learn relaxation and stress management plus

- Gradual exposure to things that make them anxious, to decrease the fear
- Coping strategies to reduce anxiety

**CBT is first-choice treatment, but medication may be needed in severe situations**

**Medications: Child & adolescent psychiatrist**

# Resources for School Staff

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**Anxiety and Depression Association of America:** ADAA focuses on education about, treatment of, and finding cures for anxiety, depression, and related disorders. They have a wealth of information for people with these disorders, mental health professionals, family members, and educators.

**Education Week:** This publication offers a variety of articles about student anxiety. Education Week has a limit on how many pieces you can read, so if it proves valuable to you, see if your school has an account or will pay for you to have a membership.

**National Association of School Psychologists:** NASP provides resources, professional development, and policy information for school psychologists and educators who are dealing with mental health in the classroom—including anxiety.

**Rogers Behavioral Health:** Rogers Behavioral Health has information specifically regarding students with school anxiety, including a podcast series and actionable steps teachers can take to help anxious kids.

**Understood:** This website strives to ensure people with disabilities of all sorts thrive. They provide anxiety-related resources, including information about recognizing symptoms of anxiety, how-to guides, and information about the legalities surrounding IEPs and 504s.



## Parent Resource Videos

The Society of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology and Florida International University's Center for Children and Families are proud to offer video resources for parents to help navigate through the field of child and adolescent mental health.

This site directs parents to brief videos of interviews with experts in specific problems experienced by families and children. These videos are intended to provide useful information to parents and caregivers about mental health issues experienced by children and adolescents.

[Click here](#) to find our online video resources for parents located on the FIU website.

### Quick Links



Forum



Student Resources



Award Opportunities



Ways to Get Involved

# Q&A



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