



Anxiety – Moving Forward

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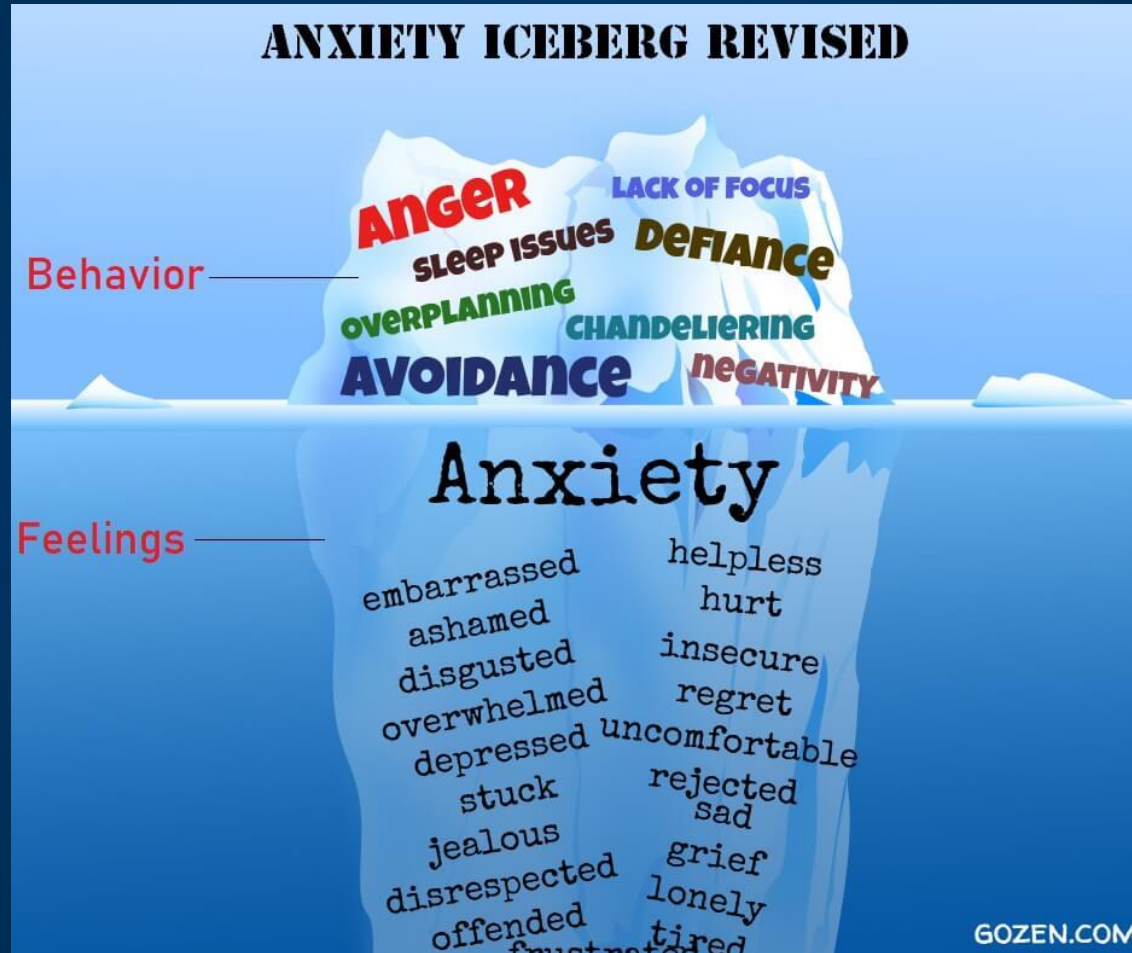


Anxiety

- Occasional anxiety is an expected part of life
- Anxiety is the number 1 Mental Health problem in the United States
 - An estimated 1 in 8-10 youth have a diagnosable anxiety disorder
 - Anxiety is most common reason that parents bring youth to therapy
- Common anxiety provoking situations include: test taking, presentations, large individual or group projects, or before making an important decision
- Anxiety disorders involve more than temporary worry or fear
 - For a person with an anxiety disorder, the anxiety does not go away and can get worse over time
- The symptoms can interfere with daily activities such as: job performance, school work, and relationships
- Anxiety & Depression together are common



Surface vs Below Surface





Anxiety is here to stay

- Anxiety can be both normal and problematic
- Anxiety responses help us with real threats
- Perceived threats are when anxiety can be problematic
- Brain does not decipher between “real” and “perceived” threats
 - “real” threat – dog gets loose and chases us
 - “perceived” threat – math test



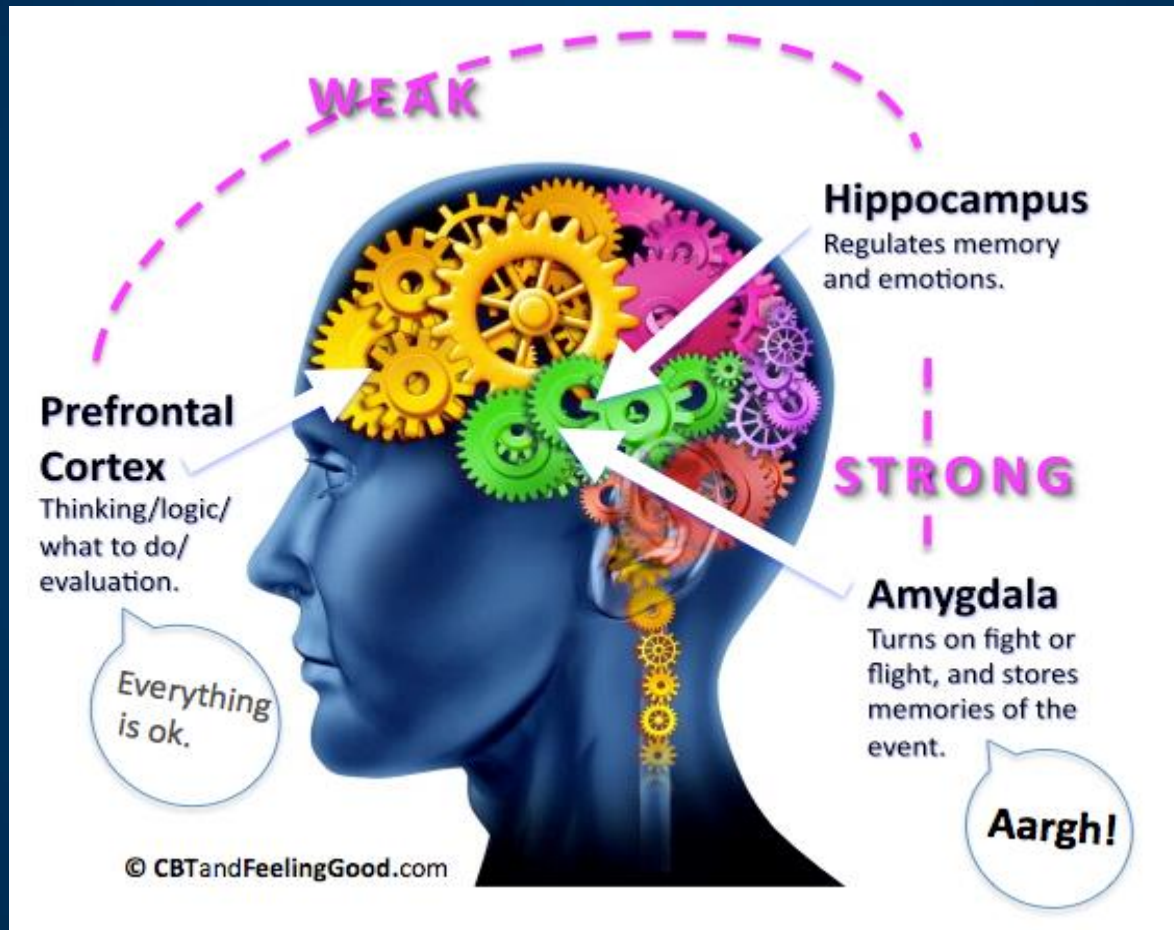
Brain's Response to Anxiety

- Brain receives notice of a crisis
 - Increase in blood sugar levels and heart rate, muscles tense, etc

- The “alarm” sounds and brain flips
 - The “alarm” – a.k.a. The Amygdala
 - Amygdala reacts to “real” and “perceived” threats
 - Amygdala protects us from threats and regulates our emotional state
 - Amygdala sets off the Fight-Fight-Freeze response



Our Brain in Action





Physical Responses

- Heart beat may increase, beat irregularly
- Stomach may feel tied in knots
- Hands, arms, or legs may shake
- Difficulty catching breath
- May feel pain or tightness in chest
- Jaw, neck, or shoulders may feel tight / stiff
- Dry mouth
- Headache



Physical Responses (cont...)

- Experience of physical responses can become upsetting – especially when there is no “real” threat and not aware of trigger
- The upsetting nature of physical responses can lead to avoidance
 - Avoidance works but may also interfere with daily life (school, social activities)
 - When avoidance interferes with daily life, anxiety and at times depression begin to surface



Anxiety Responses

- Anxiety is always going to be part of our life
- Need to learn how to keep anxiety at a comfortable distance
- Anxiety exists due the need to know “WHY?”
 - Uncertainty about the future
 - Uncertainty about a past occurrence
- Anxiety responses are the way we seek out certainty and comfort



Youth and Anxiety Responses

- Common anxiety responses in youth are:
 - Clinging to a parent / caregiver
 - Refusal to try new activities
 - Ask reassurance to “WHAT IF” questions
 - Feel sick & complain of aches, pains, nausea
 - Avoid school
 - Act shy, don’t talk in class or around others
 - Worry about future or past events
 - “I will look stupid”
 - “Did I make my friend mad?”



More Youth Anxiety Responses...

THE STRESS RESPONSE IN KIDS

FIGHT

Yelling, Screaming,
Using Mean Words

Hitting, Kicking, Biting,
Throwing, Punching

Blaming, Deflecting
Responsibility, Defensive

Demanding,
Controlling

"Oppositional",
"Defiant", "Noncompliant"

Moving Towards What
Feels Threatening

Irritable, Angry,
Furious, Offended
Aggressive

FLIGHT

Wanting to Escape,
Running Away

Unfocused, Hard
to Pay Attention

Fidgeting, Restlessness,
Hyperactive

Preoccupied, Busy with
Everything But the Thing

Procrastinating, Avoidant,
Ignores the Situation

Moving Away From What
Feel Threatening

Anxious, Panicked
Scared, Worried,
Overwhelmed

FREEZE

Shutting Down,
Mind Goes Blank

Urge to Hide,
Isolates Self

Verbally Unresponsive,
Says, "I don't know" a lot

Difficulty with
Completing Tasks

Zoned Out,
Daydreaming

Unable to Move,
Feeling Stuck

Depressed, Numb,
Bored/Apathetic,
Helpless



Avoidance

- Allowing avoidance and continued engagement in the anxiety responses
 - Gives the impression it is ok
 - Will allow the avoidance to continue
- Uncertainty and discomfort are a part of living
- Allowing avoidance or stepping in to “fix” the problem, does not give chance to practice problem solving skills
- Avoidance decreases symptoms & allows to feel safe – keeps a rigid mindset
 - It has to be this way
 - I NEED to know
 - Nothing is going to change
 - Yes, but...



Take Action

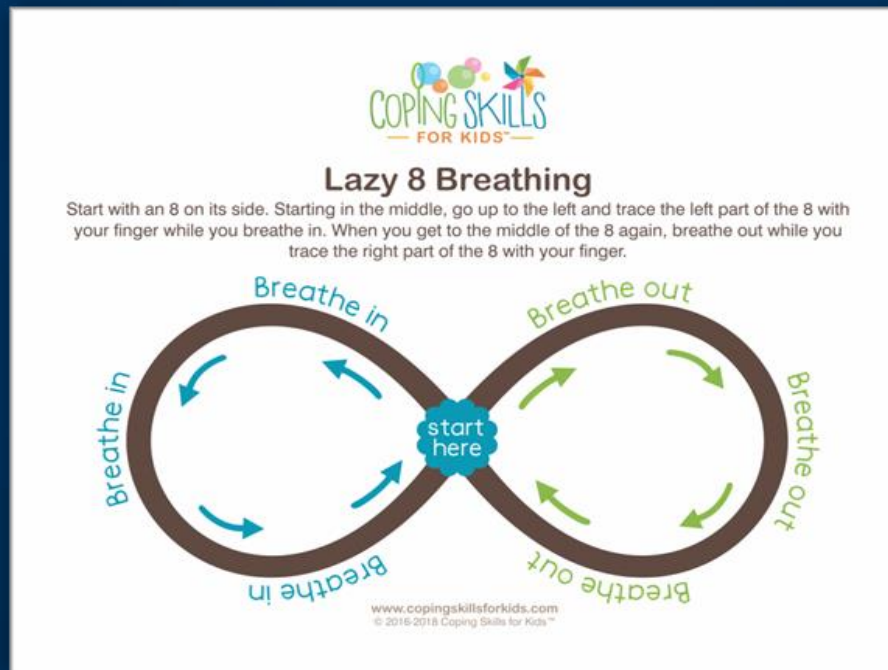
- Recognizing that anxiety will be around allows us to use strategies to tolerate the anxiety symptoms

- Promote Growth Mindset
 - I can adapt
 - I can't know
 - I'll get use to this
 - Change can be difficult at first
 - I'll see what happens



Strategies to Move Past Anxiety

- Breathe – helps to calm our brain
 - Calming Breath
 - Lazy 8 Breathing





More strategies...

■ Grounding Techniques

- Tense and Release
- Count the Colors
- Drink Water
- 5 Senses

GROUNDING WITH YOUR FIVE SENSES

<i>What are</i> 5 THINGS YOU CAN SEE		<i>Where</i> SUN PICTURE ON THE WALL PEOPLE WALKING
4 THINGS YOU CAN FEEL		WIND BLOWING FEET ON THE FLOOR PENCIL IN HAND
3 THINGS YOU CAN HEAR		BIRDS CHIRPING CLOCK TICKING CAR HORNS
2 THINGS YOU CAN SMELL		FOOD FROM THE CAFETERIA LAUNDRY DETERGENT ON CLOTHES FRESH CUT GRASS
1 THING YOU CAN TASTE		MINT Breakfast TOOTHPASTE



More strategies...

- Make external connections (teacher, coach)
- What I know (facts) vs. What I don't know
- Expect to worry – “when” not “if”
- Talk to worry – draw a picture and name it
 - Don't tell it to go away forever b/c that is not possible
 - Just mute it & move forward
- Set a goal and steps to reach goal
 - Pay attention to the progress at each step – missing this may lead to anxiety responses and avoidance



More strategies...

- Change worry words
 - always, never, no one, nothing, can't, everyone, impossible
- Identify when you were able to mute anxiety and move forward
- Wall of Flexibility
 - Write words on a post-it note that show growth/flexibility
- Identify Positives in the day
- Identify unexpected events of the day and what you did



Some Take Aways

- Can't stop worries from entering our mind
- Anxiety will always be around – we need it at times
- Overthink because we (our anxiety) seek certainty
- Just because we think it doesn't make it true
- Build a toolbox of strategies – one strategy may not be enough
- Need to practice different ways to move past worry/anxiety

- ***A good way for us to help the youth in our lives is for us as adults to put these ideas into practice.***



St. Luke's YESS! Program





St. Luke's YESS! Program

- The St. Luke's YESS Program is a school-based therapy program that provides year-round integrated mental health treatment for K-12 students in schools throughout the Lehigh Valley
- The YESS! Program helps students overcome behavioral, emotional, or social problems that interfere with success at school or home
- All services are provided in school with minimal interruption to the school day



YESS! Program Services

- Individual Therapy
- Family Counseling
- Risk assessments, as needed
- Specialized training and support services for parents and teachers
- Collaborations with other community providers
- Linkage to a psychiatrist or advanced practitioner for psychiatric assessment and medication management
- Psychiatric assessments as needed
- Linkage to psychiatric medication management
- Linkage to psychiatrist or advanced practitioner either face to face or via tele-psychiatry
- Interpreter services available



YESS! Program Common Issues

- Aggression
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Isolation
- Poor social skills
- Stress
- Trauma
- Truancy



YESS! Program Staff

- St. Luke's School-Based Therapists are master's level credentialed to provide services based on their degree in social work, counseling or psychology
- These professionals' partner with school counselors, teachers, administrators, and parents to develop individualized treatment plans and behavioral health interventions for students
- Our medical doctors and advanced practitioners are certified and credentialed to provide services within the scope of practice for psychiatrists and nurse practitioners or physician assistants



Referrals to the YESS! Program

- Who can make referrals?
 - Students, teachers, counselors, principals, community healthcare providers or parents
- How do I make referrals?
 - Contact your school's guidance office
 - Or email BHReferral@sluhn.org



Questions





Bibliography

❖ Books

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2. Halloran, J. (2018). *Coping Skills For Kids Workbook: Over 75 Coping Strategies to Help Kids Deal with Stress, Anxiety, and Anger*. PESI Publishing & Media, Eau Claire, WI.

3. Huebner, D. (2006). *What to Do When You Worry Too Much: A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Anxiety*. Magination Press, Washington D.C.

4. Murray, L. (2017). *No Worries! An Activity Book for Young People Who Sometimes Feel Anxious or Stressed*. Studio Press Books, London.

5. Willard, C. (2014). *Mindfulness for Teen Anxiety: A Workbook for Overcoming Anxiety at Home, at School & Everywhere Else*. New Harbinger Publications, Inc., Oakland, CA.

❖ Websites

1. Child Mind Institute: Miller, Caroline. How Anxiety Affects Teenagers. <https://childmind.org/article/signs-of-anxiety-in-teenagers/>

2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Children's Mental Health. <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/data.html>