

# Relate Counseling Center School Services

*4/14/2023*



# Agenda

- Introductions
- Overview of Relate Counseling Center
- Trends
- Anxiety, Depression, Executive Functioning
- Behaviors and The Brain
- Impacts
- When to Seek Help
- How to Respond
- Resources



# Introductions

# Overview of Relate Counseling Center

# A little bit about Relate

- We are a 501c3 non-profit community mental health clinic
- Serving the Western Twin Cities community for 51+ years
- 2 office locations: Minnetonka and Eden Prairie
- Staff of 125
- Served 14,000+ individual and families in 2022
- Services offered:
  - Outpatient therapy
  - Co-located therapy in schools and local food shelves
  - Early childhood therapy
  - Chemical health prevention
  - Groups



## Minnetonka location



5125 County Road 101  
Minnetonka, MN 55345

## Eden Prairie location



7700 Equitable Drive  
Eden Prairie, MN 55344

# Co-located services

- Psychotherapy that takes place in a different location
- Co-located school services:
  - allows for increased accessibility to services and removes barriers
  - provide increased opportunities for collaboration and meeting kids in environment they are familiar with
- Relate serves 7 districts, EC/K- 12<sup>th</sup> grade





# School services funding

- Health insurance
- School-Linked Mental Health Grant funding through the state
- Money from districts/collaboratives
- No income guidelines for financial assistance





# Students served

- Over 600 students last school year
- Students facing barriers including cost, transportation, scheduling, etc. (who wouldn't be able to access therapy via office)
- Range of issues including anxiety, depression, trauma, grief and loss, family stressors and more



# Summer supports / offerings

## Camp Emoji

- Learn about, manage, identify emotions
- Learn about and practice executive functioning skills

## High school drop-in support

- 4 drop-in opportunities for mental wellness

## Consult

- Licensed therapist available to Community Ed staff

## Art Group (potentially)

- Therapeutic group using art therapy techniques



# School-based EC services

## Where do they take place?

- Minnetonka, Wayzata, Mound, Carver County, St. Louis Park, Hopkins
- Also take place in our offices

## DC:0-5 assessment

- Considers mental health symptoms and diagnoses in the context of a child's relationships and development
- Diagnoses relationships rather than individuals

## Early childhood therapy

- Emphasis on caregiver involvement
- Helping adults to help children
- Parenting support
- Dyadic intervention



# Evidence-based EC services

## Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)

- Short-term, behavior management program designed for children experiencing emotional and/or behavioral difficulties, and their caregivers
- Utilizes live coaching to teach caregivers to manage challenging child behaviors, while increasing positive behaviors
- Ages 2.5 to 6

## Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP)

- Relationship-based intervention focused on supporting children/families impacted by traumatic experiences
- Seeks to strengthen relationships between children and their caregivers to enhance emotional, behavioral, and relational functioning
- Ages birth to 6



# Chemical health services

## Direct services for students, including those:

- Cited for substance use, possession or impairment
- Violated school chemical use policies
- Have questions or concerns about their substance use
- Have concerns about friends/family using substances
- Are returning from treatment or other programming

## Services for families seeking support

- Education and a safe place to process and ask questions
- Resources
- Follow-up referrals, as needed

## In the classroom

- Education on vaping and other types of substance use

## Groups

- Support groups for students returning from treatment or affected by substance use



# School groups and parent support

## Parenting newsletter and Facebook Live events

- Topics have including: parenting during COVID, the mind-body connection, depression and suicide, substance use

## Groups in schools and office

- Mindful Kids
- High school support group
- Middle school support group
- Parent supports



# Trends



# Recent changes and 2022 Trends Report

(American Psychological  
Association)

## COVID-19 Pandemic

- 2 years of crisis mode
- Unpredictability
- Online learning

## Impacts on mental health

- Increase in need for mh supports
- 24 % increase in mh-related emergency room visits for 5-11 between March and October 2020
- Long wait for outpatient care
- School psychologists in short supply (4,000 out of 100,00 are child/adolescent clinicians)



# Anxiety

# Symptoms, signs, observations

## Mood, internal

- Worries (specific or general)
- Irritability
- Difficulty concentrating
- Racing thoughts
- Strong desire to get away or avoid something
- Clinginess
- Avoiding participation in class
- Disruptive behavior (fight or flight response to avoid anxiety provoking activity)
- Perfectionism (including failure to start or complete tasks)
- Negative self talk



# Symptoms, signs, observations

## Physical, external

- Racing heart
- Sweaty
- Muscle tension
- Fidgeting/wringing hands
- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Stomach aches
- Head aches
- Needing to go to nurse or bathroom frequently



# Depression

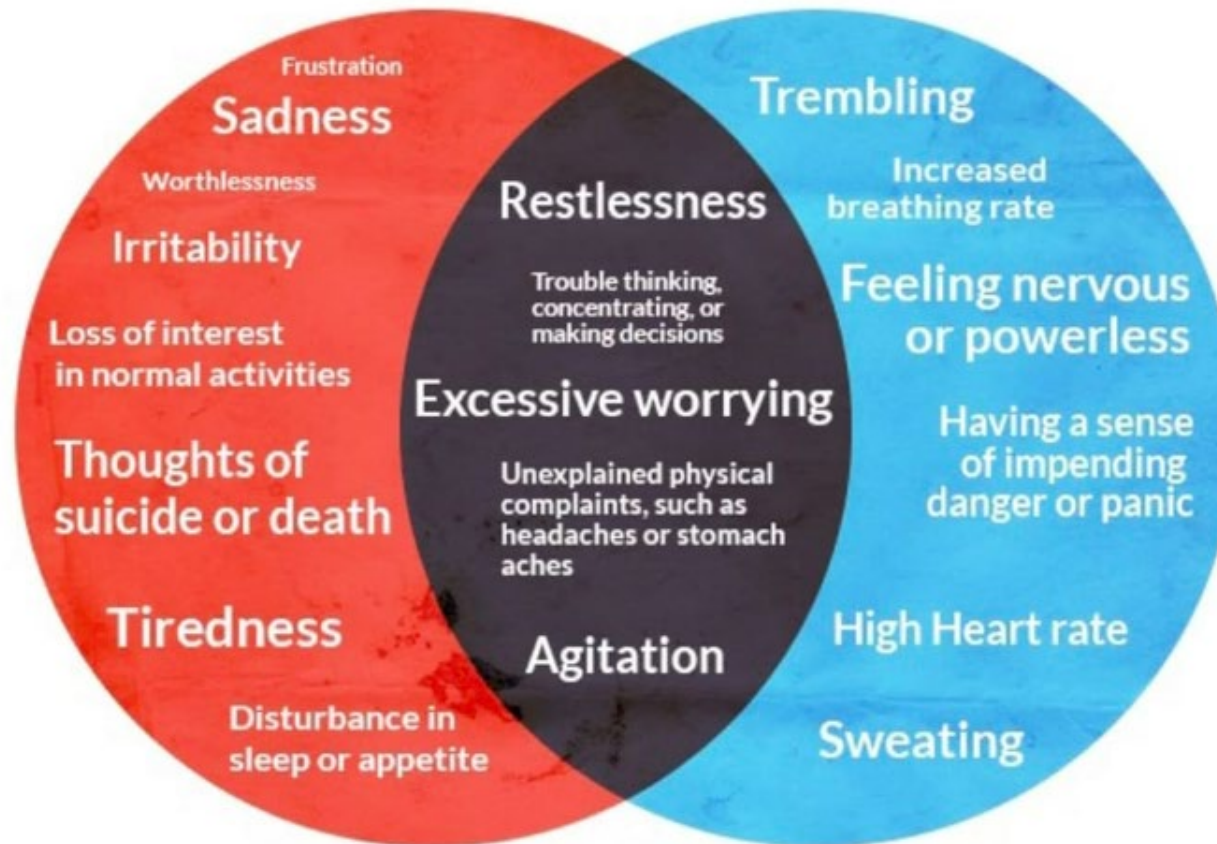
# Symptoms, signs, observations

- Flat affect (cultural)
- Irritability
- Anhedonia/loss of interest
- Apathy/difficulty making decisions (even between two preferred activities)
- Crying
- Poor concentration
- Tired/low energy
- Withdrawal
- Low self esteem
- Negative outlook
- Suicidal ideation (verbal, in writing or drawings)
- Self harm (future training)



# Depression

# Anxiety





# Executive functioning

# Symptoms, signs, observations

- Difficulty sustaining attention
- Makes careless mistakes
- Forgetful (even of things they just heard)
- Easily distracted
- Loses train of thought
- Difficulty organizing tasks
- Poor time management
- Difficulty starting tasks
- Excessive talking
- Fidgeting
- Difficulty staying quiet/frequent blurting
- Acts without thinking
- “On the go”
- Panic/disruptive behavior when routines or rules change
- Difficulty with transitions
- Poor emotion regulation
- Poor self-monitoring
- Difficulty understanding different view points
- Difficulty with social relationships



# Other signs

- Sensitivity to sensory input
- Negative self talk
  - Hyper-focus on the negative
  - Out to get me attitude
- Hormonal changes related to puberty



# Behaviors

## Behavior is communication

### Behavior

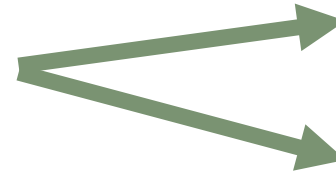
### What's being communicated

Child says something mean



They may be feeling insecure or left out

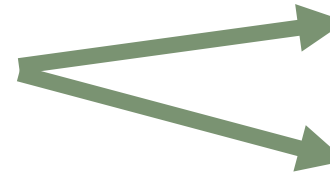
Child doesn't follow directions



They thought something was unfair

They can't organize tasks or are easily distracted

Child runs away during a class transition



They struggle with transitions

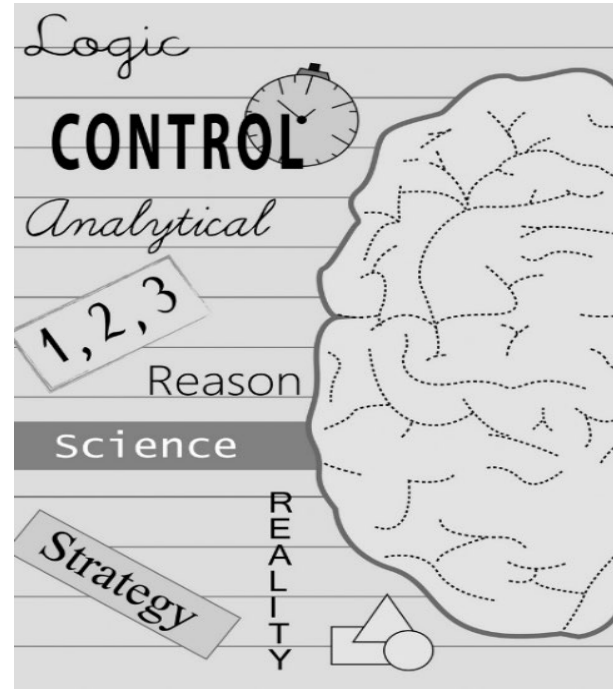
They are anxious about the next activity



# The Brain

# Left vs Right Brain

## Left Brain



## Right Brain



- Logical
- Likes order
- Likes words, lists
- Literal

Body based

Holistic, nonverbal

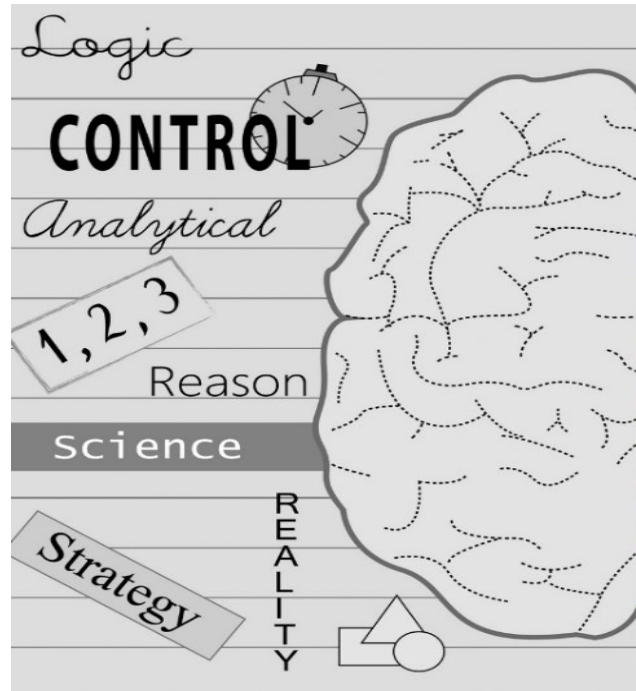
Cares about meaning,  
experience

Emotional



# Left vs Right Brain

## Left Brain



Response:

“Let’s pause and try to solve the problem”

## Right Brain



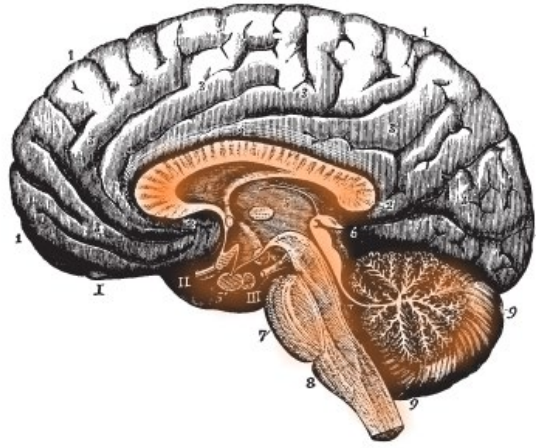
Response:

“This is the worst thing ever!”





# Upstairs vs Downstairs Brain



## Downstairs Brain

- It's job is to keep you safe
- Responsible for basic functions:
  - Breathing
  - Watching for danger
  - Automatic reactions
  - Strong emotions
- All reaction with no thinking
- Well developed at birth



# Upstairs vs Downstairs Brain

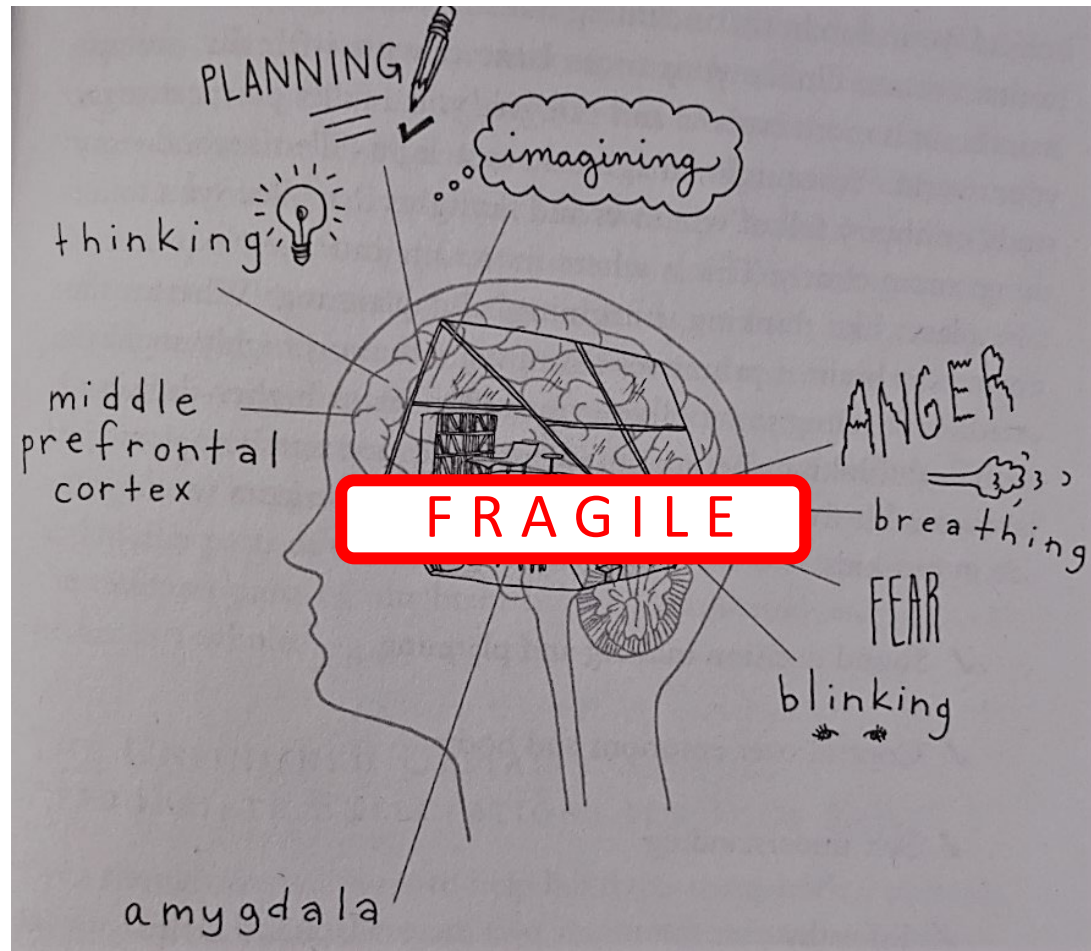


## Upstairs Brain

- It's job is to help you think
- Responsible for:
  - Thinking
  - Making decisions
  - Executive functioning
- Under construction and not fully developed until mid to late 20's



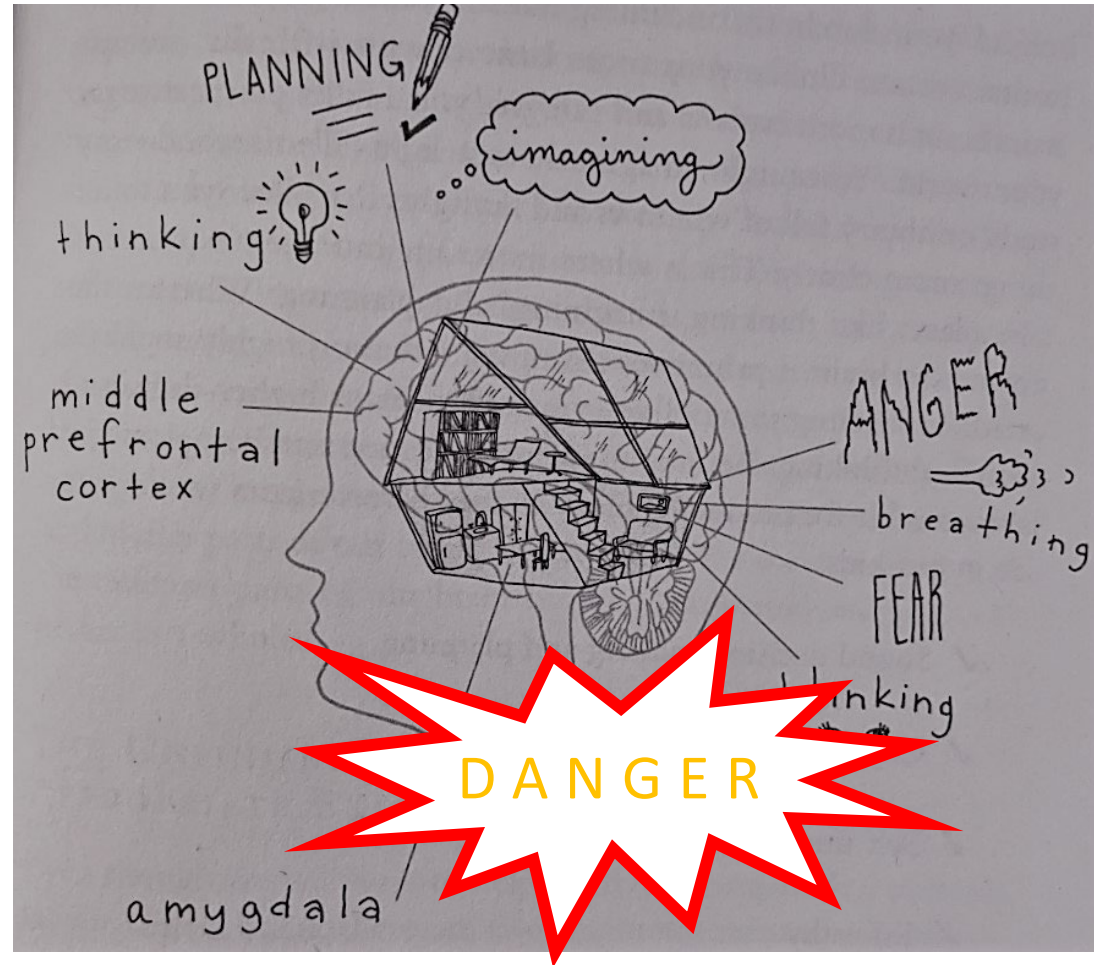
# Upstairs vs Downstairs Brain



Because the upstairs brain is under development, the connection between the downstairs and upstairs brain is inconsistent



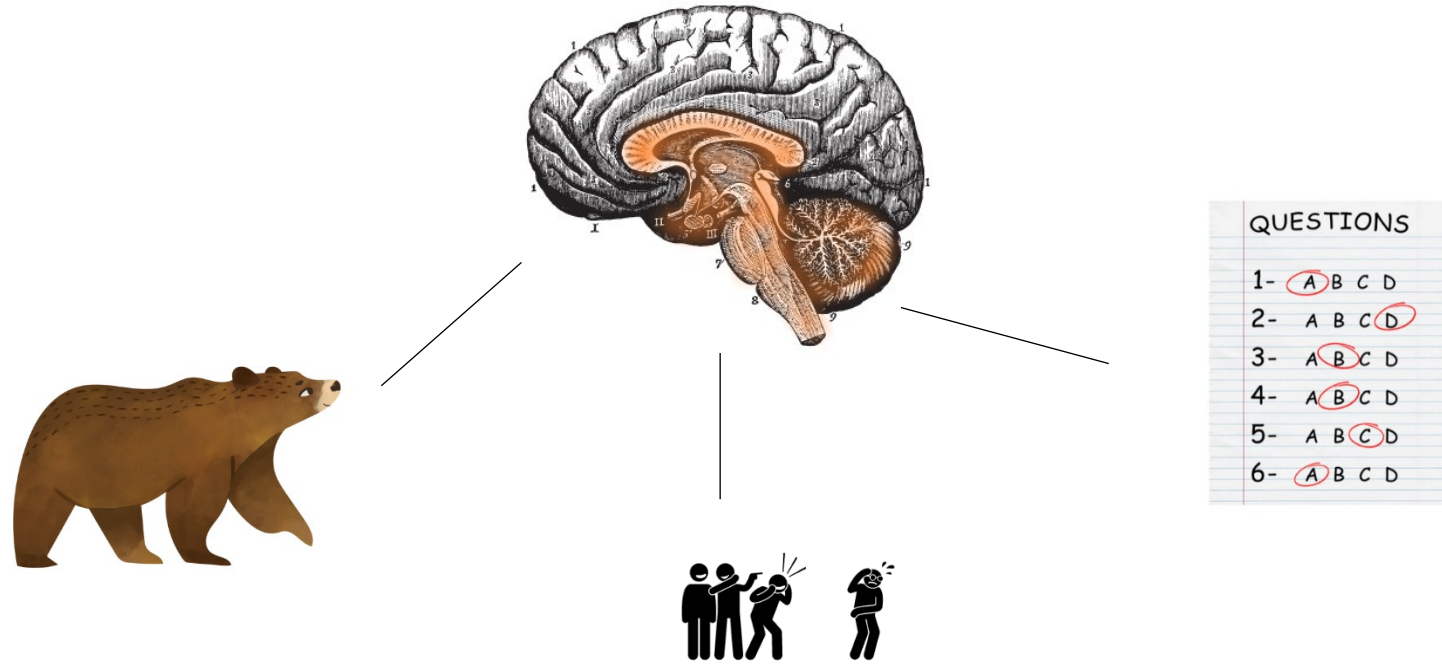
# Upstairs vs Downstairs Brain



When the downstairs brain perceives a threat, it does not communicate with the upstairs brain



# Upstairs vs Downstairs Brain



- The downstairs brain may react the same way to a hard question on a test and a bear in the classroom
- Kids with mental health struggles may have a harder time with communication between the upstairs and downstairs brain



Why do we lose  
**CONTROL**  
of our  
emotions?



# Impacts



# Impact on Functioning

- When functioning is impacted
  - Social
  - Relational
  - Educational
- When kids aren't feeling well emotionally, they have a harder time engaging in the classroom (sometimes they can't engage)



# You are not their therapist

- Your job is not to fix their problems
- You are not alone
- If you are feeling dysregulated, chances are the kids are too
- Talk to your school's social worker
  - Social worker's role is to complement the child's functioning as it relates to the classroom setting
- Talk to teachers about your concerns and signs you see at home or in the classroom
- Connect to a therapist
  - School-based or outpatient



# How to Respond

# Ways to respond

- Connect to redirect
  - You look really upset right now
  - You're mad because you wanted to keep coloring
- Respond calmly
- Allow for flexibility
  - fidgeting, standing instead of sitting
- Praise behaviors you want to see
  - Reinforcement is more effective than punishment
- Identify and name the behavioral expectations
- Identify alternative behaviors
- Use breaks
- Stay consistent



# Calming



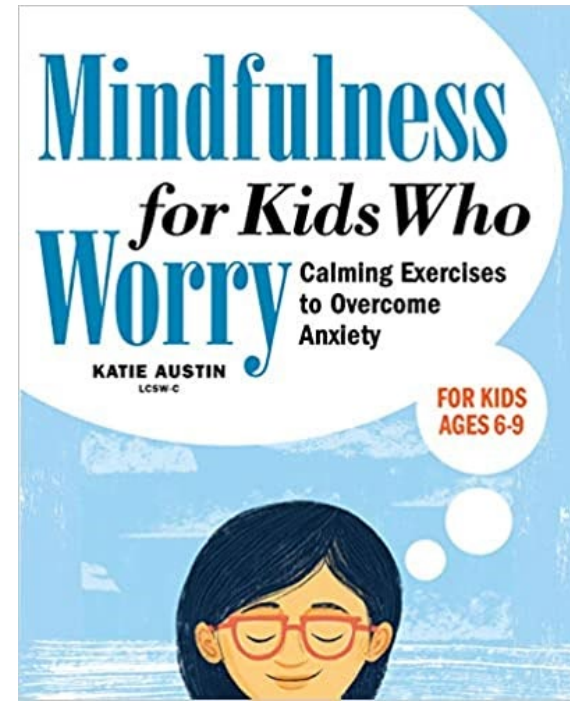
[Calm down Kit](#) from Whole Hearted School  
Counseling on Teachers Pay Teachers

## Create a calm down corner

- Fidgets are tools, not toys
- Develop rules and expectations for using the calm down corner
- Model using it (but not as punishment)
- Create a coping skills list together as a class



# Mindfulness



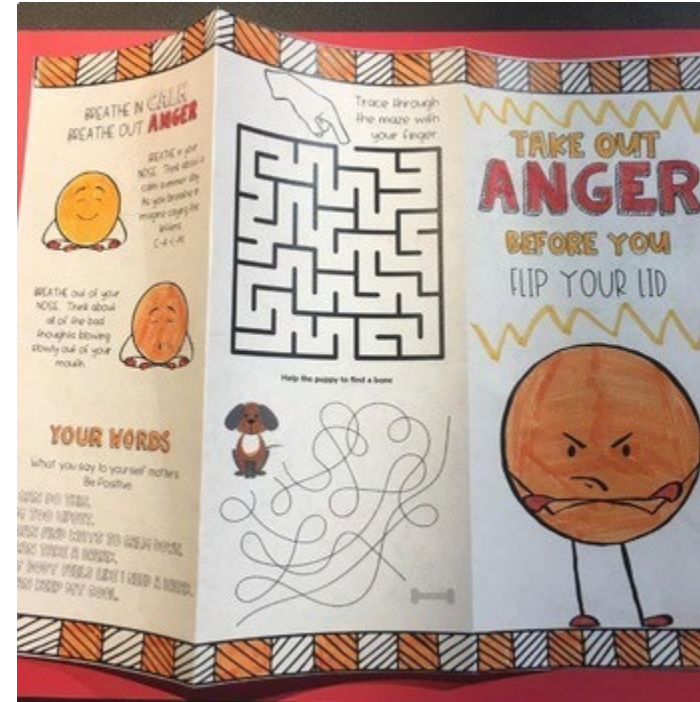
[Mindfulness for Kids Who Worry](#)

## Practice mindfulness regularly

- Mindfulness Monday
- Take 2 minutes to practice mindfulness when you or the class is dysregulated
  - Turn lights off to reduce sensory input
  - Progressive muscle relaxation
  - Guided imagery
- Mindfulness as extra credit
- Build up in time



# Self- awareness



[Social Emotional Brochures](#) The Counseling  
Teacher Brandy on Teachers Pay Teachers

Build mental health check ins into every day

- Class or home check ins (scale of 1-5, how are you feeling right now)
- Take deep breaths together



# When to Seek Help



# Roadmap



# School refusal

Let's explore together, but remember...

- Behavior is communicating something
  - Is this left or right brain presenting?
- Is this up or downstairs brain responding?

DOESN'T LIKE SCHOOL

Are there any issues with peers?

Are there transition challenges?

Are there any academic concerns?

Can you engage in  
a physical activity  
in the gym before  
class?

WANTS TO BE AT HOME

What are they engaging in at home?

What is different about home vs  
school?

Reward  
based?

BOTH?

What is the child's experience like  
at home vs school?



# Resources

# Useful resources

- The 5 Love Languages of Children
- [Book: Mindfulness for kids who worry](#)
- [Siegel, D., & Payne Bryson, T. \(2011\) \*The Whole Brain Child\*. Bantam Books.](#)
- Balanced and Barefoot



**Thank you!**