

Don't Stress!!

***Helping Teens (And Their Parents)
Work Through Middle School Stress
And Anxiety***

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CENTER FOR ANXIETY AND BEHAVIORAL CHANGE

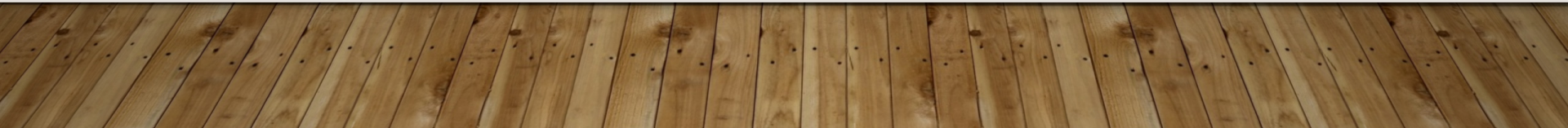
PLYE MIDDLE SCHOOL NOVEMBER 21, 2019

PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

- Anxiety and the role of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors
- The basics of behavioral change and anxiety reduction
- Tips for parents on promoting a less stressful environment that will carry through middle school into high school

WHAT IS FEAR?

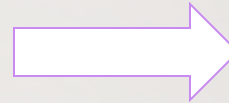
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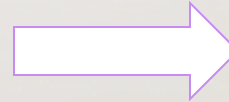
WHAT IS FEAR?



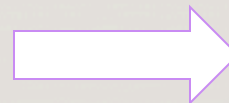
Fight, flight or freeze!



Increased
Heart Rate



Rapid
Breathing



Tunnel vision

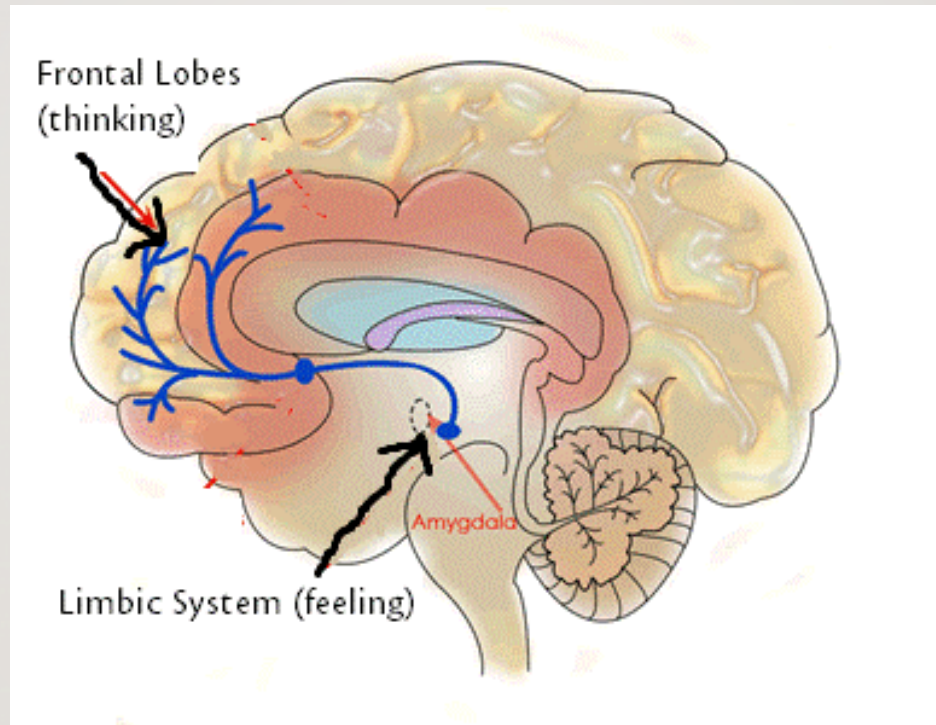
WHAT IS ANXIETY?



- What's different?

BIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

“STAY FRONTAL, DON’T GO LIMBIC”



HOW ANXIETY AFFECTS THE LEARNING PROCESS

- Working memory has a limited capacity
- Intrusive thoughts compete for limited resources
- Threat cues are prioritized in cognition
- Fatigue occurs more quickly
- Anxiety can sometimes look like inattention



WHAT IS CAUSING *YOUR* CHILDREN ANXIETY?



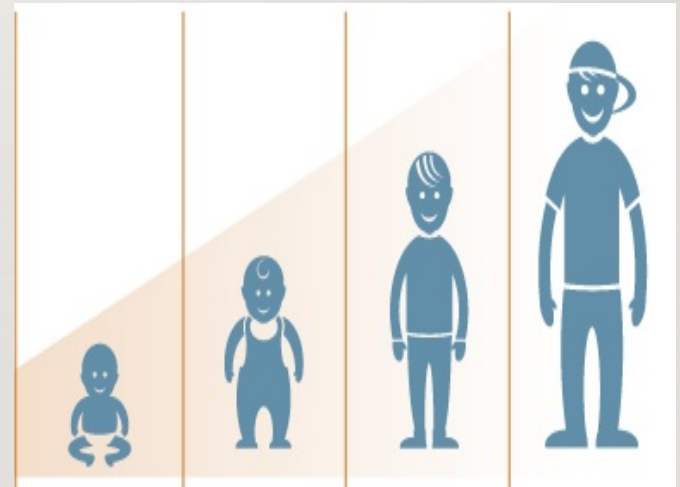
ANXIETY ACROSS DEVELOPMENT

☞ Middle School

- ☞ Changes in demands for academics
- ☞ Social changes, acceptance
- ☞ Bullying

☞ High School

- ☞ College pressure
- ☞ Social pressure
- ☞ Time management



TYPICAL VERSUS PROBLEMATIC ANXIETY

What to look for? Deterioration in functioning (school, social, family, physical):

- Persistent aches and pains
- Sleep difficulty
- School work deterioration
- High rate of absenteeism
- Social isolation
- Disengagement from previously enjoyed activities

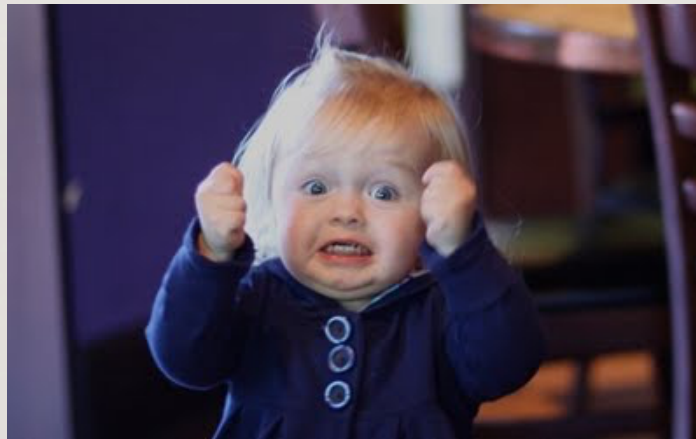


PREVALENCE OF ANXIETY DISORDERS

- **40 million** U.S. *adults* suffer from an anxiety disorder
 - 75% experience 1st episode of anxiety by age 22
- **1 in every 6** *college students* have been diagnosed with or treated for anxiety within the past year (American College Health Association, annual national survey)
- **30%** of *teens* ages 13-18 will an anxiety disorder
 - 8% will have a “severe” anxiety disorder
- Mean age of *onset* is **11**— earliest of all mental health conditions
- Only **18 %** of youth receive treatment

THE GOOD NEWS...

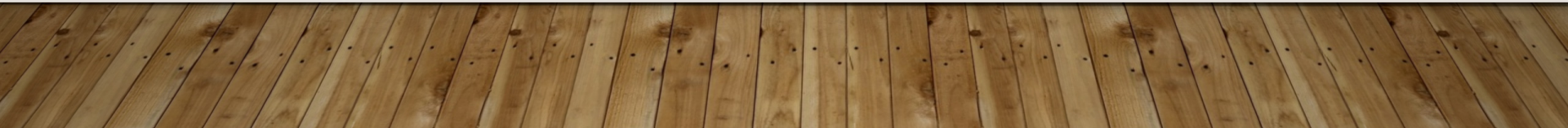
Coping strategies can help!



EVEN BETTER NEWS...

Your children are already coping!
You are already supporting them!

What strategies you currently use to
support your children?

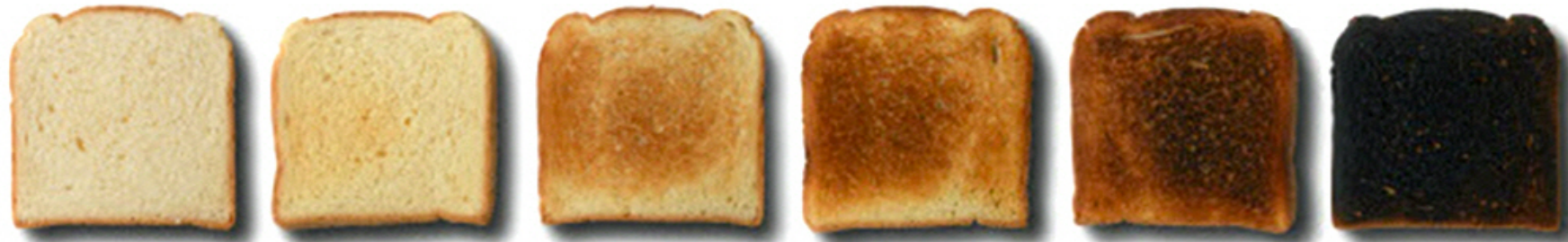


COMMON PARENT STRATEGIES

- Give space
- Validate feelings
- Problem solve
- Ask open-ended questions
- Share personal experiences
- Humor
- Prompts for deep breathing
- Encouraging exercise
- Listen nonjudgmentally
- Sitting side-by-side
- Discuss preferred topics

RECOGNIZE SIGNS OF ANXIETY

How can you tell you child is getting crispy?

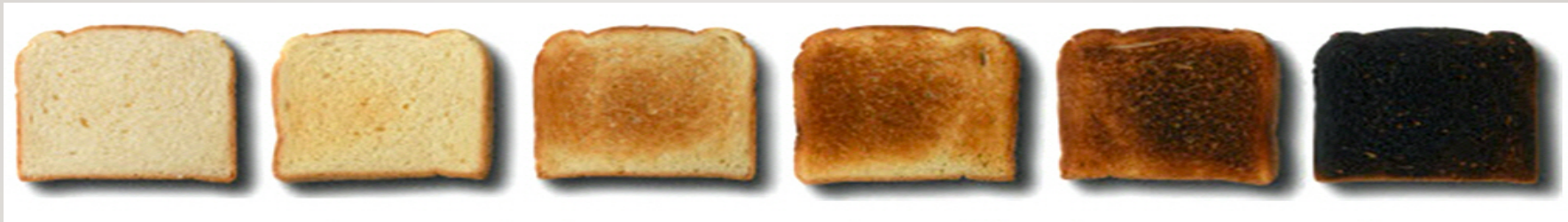


Low

High



IDENTIFY WHAT WORKS AND *WHEN*



Low

High

- Problem solving
- Ask open-ended questions
- Encouragement
- Validation

- Giving space
- Deep breathing
- Encouraging exercise
- Taking a break

PARENT MANAGEMENT TRAINING

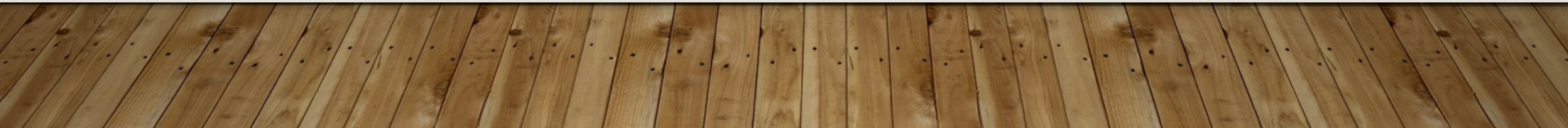
Video - Ray Charles

- 40% of parents of children with anxiety disorders have also had an anxiety disorder
- Caregivers are often complicit with child's avoidance and perceive the child's experience of anxiety as dangerous
- When child is distressed, keep in mind...
“Anxiety is temporary and harmless, but avoidance can ruin lives”



DEFINE PARENT ROLE

HELICOPTER VS SNOWPLOW SHOWDOWN



BRAVE SPACE



Safe Space	Brave Space
Agree to disagree	Honor different views
Don't take it personally	Own your intentions and impact
Challenge by choice	Stay engaged, especially when difficult
Respect	Respectfully challenge
No attacks	Is this personal attack, or just uncomfortable?



(Arao & Clemens, 2013)

BUILDING RESILIENCE, NOT RELIANCE I HEAR YOU...

Restate

A light pink arrow pointing downwards from the bottom right corner of the 'Restate' box to the top right corner of the 'Validate' box.

Validate

A light pink arrow pointing downwards from the bottom right corner of the 'Validate' box to the top right corner of the 'Check-in' box.

Check-in

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

“WATER THE SEEDS AND NOT THE WEEDS”



- Labeled praise (as if talking to a colleague)
- Focus on process versus outcome
- Attend to positive behaviors

WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

- ⇒ Emotional hygiene
- ⇒ Sudden changes in behavior
- ⇒ Avoidance of normal activities
- ⇒ Excessive irritability
- ⇒ Frequent somatic complaints
- ⇒ Social isolation
- ⇒ Child asks for help
- ⇒ Safety concerns
- ⇒ Trust your instincts!



IN CLOSING...



- Anxiety is typical for all of us
- A large dose of anxiety can *interfere* with social and emotional development as well as learning processes
- Early *identification and intervention* can help children foster learning potential and emotional health
- Parents and caregivers can offer support that decreases reliance and builds resilience

**THANK YOU!
REACH OUT WITH ANY QUESTIONS!**

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

