



Calm Kidz  
program

HELPING YOUR CHILD TO COPE  
WITH ANXIETY

*By Anja Zimmermann*

# WELCOME

Your child is **NOT** giving you a  
hard time!

Your child is **HAVING** a hard  
time



# Anja – Director of Calm Kidz Program

- ▶ **Counsellor \* Parent Coach \* Dorn & Paediatric Massage Therapist**
- ▶ **MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH ANXIETY SINCE CHILDHOOD**
- ▶ **\*worried \* disliked crowds \* performance anxiety \* flying \* school**
  
- ▶ **What is the CALM KIDZ PROGRAM?**
- ▶ **ANXIETY – EMOTION REGULATION – EMOTION COACHING – BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT**
  
- WORKSHOPS ON EMOTION REGULATION (ME & MY EMOTIONS WORKSHOP)
- WORKSHOPS AND PD SESSIONS AT SCHOOLS AND WITHIN COMMUNITY



# We are all different & might not agree on everything...that's ok!

- ▶ Every child responds differently to specific therapy approaches
- ▶ If it works for my child, it doesn't mean it will work for yours
- ▶ It may take time to find the right "formula" that best works for your child – Please don't give up!



# What is Anxiety?

- ▶ Type of fear or strong feeling about a situation
- ▶ Thought of a threat or something which may go wrong in the future
- ▶ Causes fright and uncertainty
- ▶ Can affect our ability to eat, sleep, concentrate, travel, leave the house, go to school and work
- ▶ Anxiety can show up in many forms including shyness, worry, anger, social problems, obsessions and disruptive behavior.



# Some Anxiety is good, because...

because it prepares our  
bodies to cope with danger



# Some Worry/Anxiety is normal

- ▶ Fear has a protective function.
- ▶ Kids often feel a little nervous or anxious about an upcoming event- this is normal.

# Why do kids get anxious?

- ▶ Loss of control
- ▶ Sensory issues
- ▶ After something bad has happened
- ▶ loss/illness/separation/bullying
- ▶ Fears: Dogs, spiders, snakes, flying
- ▶ Allergic Reactions
- ▶ New places – new people – crowds



# Anxiety vs Panic Attack

## Anxiety

- Mild to severe intensity
- Gradually
- Last days or longer

## Panic Attack

Extreme intensity

Sudden

Minutes to few hours

Fear of dying/heart attack

Shortness of breath/shallow breathing

Nausea

# How to help your child during a Panic Attack

- ▶ Remain in control and make them feel safe!
- ▶ Validate their feelings
- ▶ Let them know that the feeling will pass
- ▶ **Breathing in for 4 – Hold your breath for 4 – and Breathing out for 4**



# Why “Don’t worry about it” doesn’t help

Kids seek constant reassurance from their parents

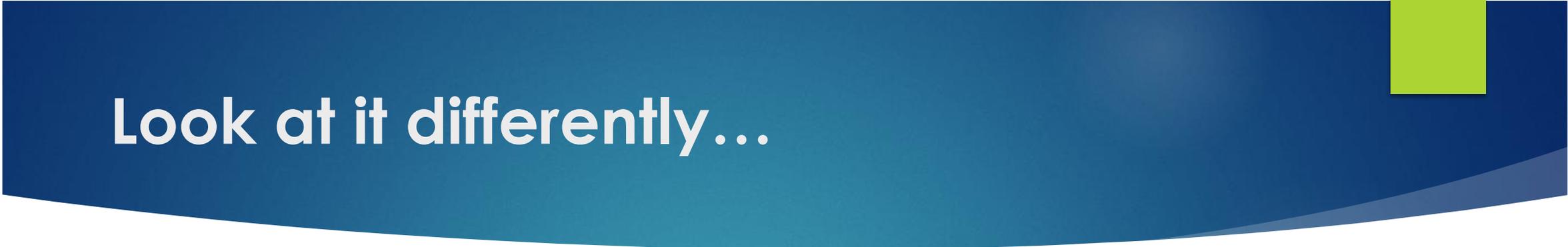
It will make them feel better to hear the:

It’s ok, I am here for you. This must have really scared you

VS

There is nothing to worry about



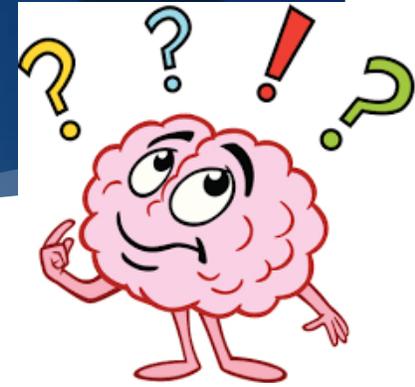


Look at it differently...

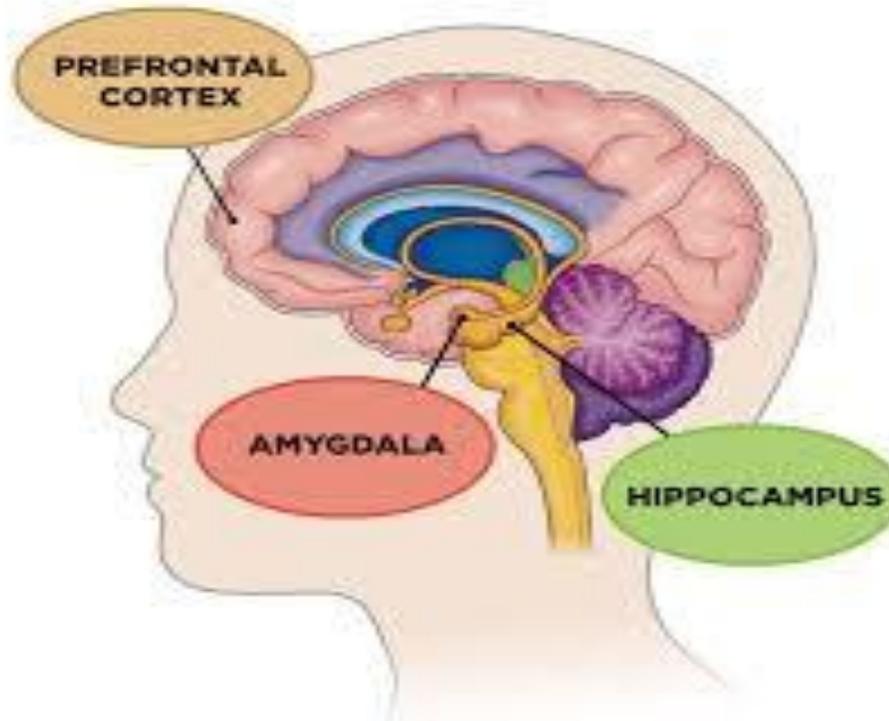
**If we take the TIME understanding & validating our children feelings, they will more likely share their thoughts and worries with us.**



# How do we loose control of our emotions? Let's look at the brain



3 important parts of your brain help you think and react to everything that happens around you.



Note: The female brain doesn't fully develop until the age of 21yrs  
Note: The male brain doesn't fully develop until the age of 25yrs

# HIPPOCAMPUS

- ▶ It creates, stores and processes all important facts and memories the PFC (prefrontal cortex) passes on to it.
- ▶ Let's call it our Memory Brain

What sort of things do we need to remember?

# PRE-FRONTAL CORTEX

- ▶ The PFC helps you to focus and pay attention, solve problems, think, analyse and make smart decisions and calm big feelings.
- ▶ Let's call it our Thinking Brain

# AMYGDALA (Amy)

- ▶ Amy is your Brain's Super Hero!
- ▶ Let's call it our Emotions Brain

Protects you from DANGER

*remember the encounter with the Tiger?*

*That was **REAL DANGER***

**BUT...**



# Amygdala (continued)

## *Amy can be a bit overprotective*

- *Just like a Smoke Detector*
- *Amy doesn't always get it right*

*There is not enough time to think & make a smart decision...*

*therefore she makes us react quickly.*



# What does the Amygdala do to our body when in ALARM MODE

A Child with Anxiety or Behaviour issues has a very overprotective and sensitive Amygdala.

## **Activates: FIGHT, FLIGHT or FREEZE RESPONSE**

Thinking Brain goes offline

- ▶ We might say or do something we regret immediately.
- ▶ We might even start a fight or just freeze when we are take a test, or speak in front of the class.

We might hurt someone by hitting or kicking

- ▶ Amy shuts down the digestive system



# Amygdala in ALARM MODE

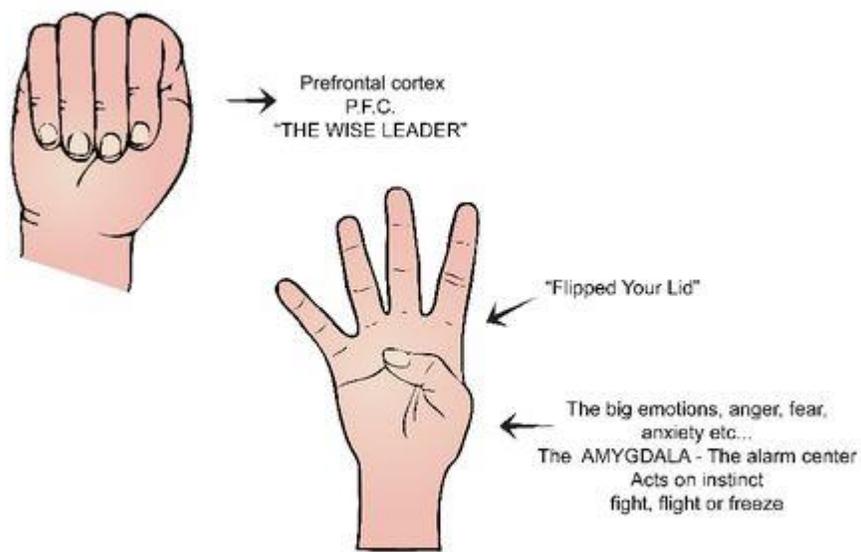


# Example: Fear of Monsters...

- ▶ Amy pushes the alarm button
- ▶ Trying to protect you
- ▶ BUT – ask yourself: Is this a real threat, or a false alarm?
  
- ▶ At this stage, your child does not feel safe
- ▶ Darkness is her/his trigger to be fearful
- ▶ Hence Anxiety symptoms such as tense, crying, tummy aches...etc..

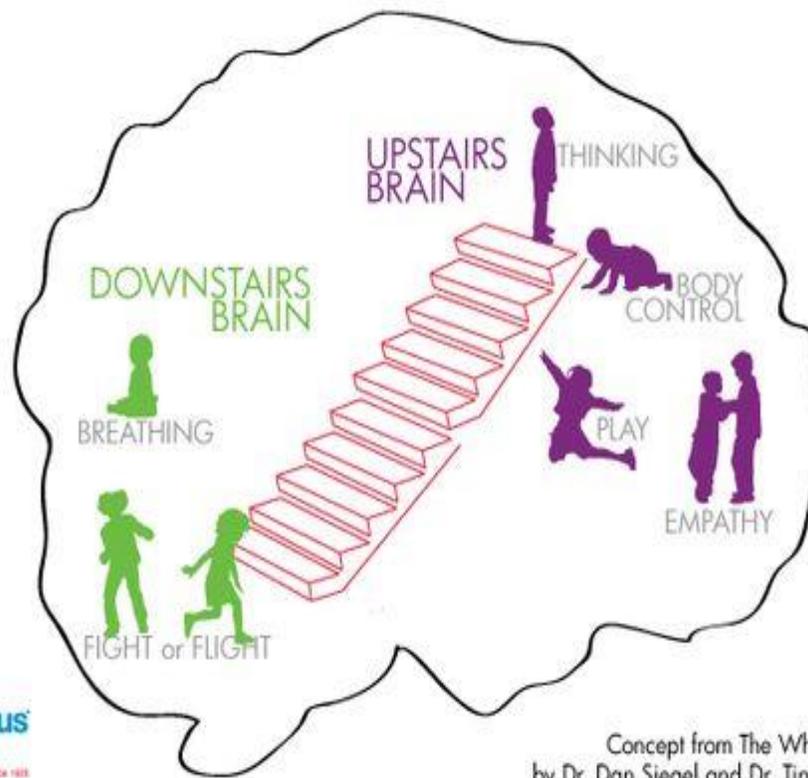
# The Whole Brain Child by Dan Siegel

## “Flipping One’s Lid”



Credit: Daniel Siegel, M.D. is the creator of this metaphor and exercises "Flipped Lid". Copyright © 2014 www.sharonseiby.com

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Concept from The Whole-Brain Child  
by Dr. Dan Siegel and Dr. Tina Payne Bryson

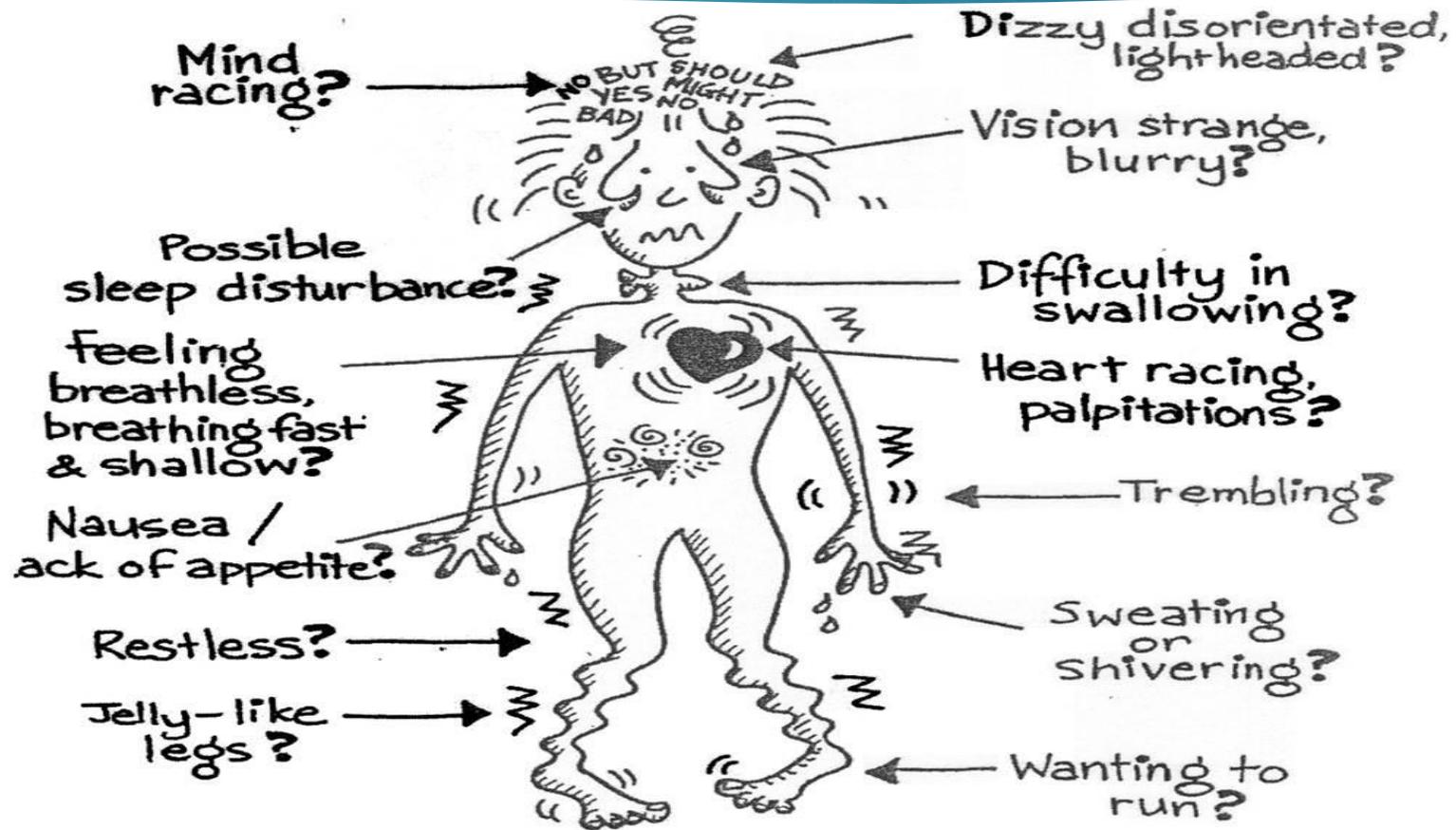
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# SYMPTOMS of ANXIETY

HOW DOES **YOUR** BODY FEEL WHEN  
YOU ARE ANXIOUS?



# Physical Symptoms



# The pathways of the Autonomic Nervous system (Polyvagal Theory)

- ▶ **GREEN** PATHWAY (ventral vagal)– Social Engagement

We feel SAFE, CONNECTED, CALM and SOCIAL

- ▶ **RED** PATHWAY (sympathetic) – Fight or Flight

RACING HEART, SWEATING, ON EDGE, NOT SAFE, THREAT

- ▶ **BLUE** PATHWAY (dorsal vagal) – Shutting down

RACING HEART & FAST BREATHING BUT SLUGGISH BODY – EXTREME FEEL OF DANGER, WITHDRAWN, ANTI-SOCIAL

This is an easy way to codify a child's state of arousal & to help with emotional co-regulation.

# WHY IS A CHILD'S AUTONOMIC PATHWAY IMPORTANT?

- ▶ **Green Pathway** leads to a healthy social and emotional development
- ▶ **Red or Blue Pathway:** The Brain is focused on basic survival, not human engagement or connection.
- ▶ How can we figure out which pathway my child is in?
  - ▶ **Email me for the “cues” worksheet**

# MOST IMPORTANT STEPS

- ▶ ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT AND FIRST STEPS ARE:
- ▶ HELP THEM FEEL SAFE, CONNECT & HAVE FUN TOGETHER
- ▶ BE IN THE MOMENT: LISTEN! (NOT WHILE COOKING OR WORKING ON OTHER THINGS)

# PATHWAYS FOR CHILD AND ADULT

**FOUNDATION:** What pathway is the child in?

Green  Red  Blue 

**FRAME:** Are you and the child warmly engaged?

**WIRING:** Are you and the child communicating back and forth?

**ROOMS:** Is the communication meaningful?

**DECORATION:** Is the child able to describe feelings, concerns or define the problem?

**DRIVEWAY:** Are we building bridges towards a solution?

# The Iceberg

A child's behavior is not always what it seems

*\*Behavior is communication\**

What we see: Behavior

What we don't see:  
What's under the surface

SOCIAL SKILLS

BASIC NEEDS

PHYSICAL SAFETY

NEED TO BELONG

SECURITY

THOUGHTS

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

HUNGER

ATTACHMENT

ENVIRONMENTAL  
STRESSORS

SLEEP

NEED FOR CONNECTION

POWER

ATTENTION

SENSORY NEEDS

EMOTIONS

SELF-ESTEEM

DEVELOPMENTAL LEVEL

SADNESS

ANGER

NEED FOR ATTENTION

FEAR

Anxiety can show up as....

## 8 WAYS A CHILD'S ANXIETY SHOWS UP AS SOMETHING ELSE

### 1. Anger

The perception of danger, stress or opposition is enough to trigger the fight or flight response leaving your child angry and without a way to communicate why.



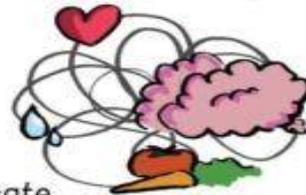
### 2. Difficulty Sleeping

In children, having difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep is one of the hallmark characteristics of anxiety.



### 3. Defiance

Unable to communicate what is really going on, it is easy to interpret the child's defiance as a lack of discipline instead of an attempt to control a situation where they feel anxious and helpless.



### 5. Lack of Focus

Children with anxiety are often so caught up in their own thoughts that they do not pay attention to what is going on around them.

FOCUS

### 6. Avoidance

Children who are trying to avoid a particular person, place or task often end up experiencing more of whatever it is they are avoiding.



### 7. Negativity

People with anxiety tend to experience negative thoughts at a much greater intensity than positive ones.

### 8. Overplanning

Overplanning and defiance go hand in hand in their root cause. Where anxiety can cause some children to try to take back control through defiant behavior, it can cause others to overplan for situations where planning is minimal or unnecessary.

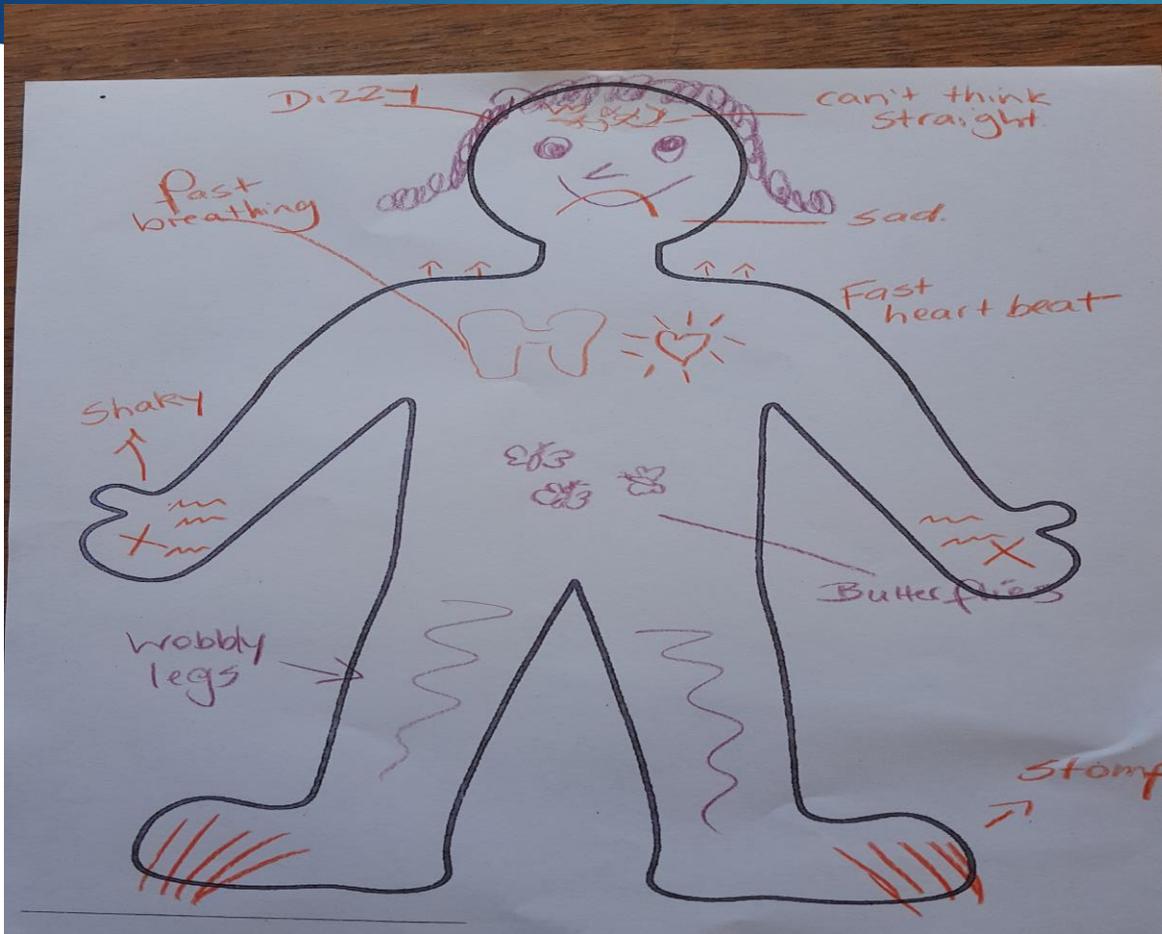


### 4. Chandeliering

Chandeliering is when a seemingly calm person suddenly flies off the handle for no reason. They have pushed hurt and anxiety so deep for so long that a seemingly innocent comment or event suddenly sends them straight through the chandelier.



# This is ME when I am anxious



What you need:

1. Brown paper roll
2. Permanent marker
3. Your child

# Anxiety Disorders

## Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD).

- ▶ GAD causes kids to worry almost every day — and over lots of things.
- ▶ Worries about recess, birthday parties, playtime with friends, or riding the school bus or sleepovers
- ▶ Kids might worry about war, weather, the future loved ones, safety, illness, or getting hurt.

They seek a lot of reassurance from the parent...

## What if's



# Separation Anxiety Disorder

- ▶ When kids don't outgrow the fear of being apart from a parent, it's called separation anxiety disorder.
- ▶ They may cling to a parent, cry, or refuse to go to school, sleepovers, playdates, or other activities without their parent.
- ▶ At home, they may have trouble falling asleep or sleeping alone.
- ▶ They complain of feeling sick in their tummy

# Social anxiety disorder

- ▶ They are always afraid they might do or say something embarrassing.
- ▶ They don't like to be the center of attention.
- ▶ School: raising hand or answer - FREEZE
- ▶ With social phobia, a class presentation or a group activity with classmates can cause extreme fear.

# Selective Mutism (SM)

- ▶ This extreme form of social phobia causes kids to be so afraid they don't talk.
- ▶ Kids and teens with *SM* can talk.
- ▶ But they refuse to talk at all at school, with friends, or in other places where they have this fear.



# Anxiety & Anger = The Terrible Two's

- ▶ Excessively worried = missing skills of emotion awareness & understanding & feel helpless
- ▶ Helplessness = Frustration = Anger

**Anger and anxiety** are also both activated in the threat center (Amygdala) of your brain



# Therapy for your child

- ▶ Bringing your child to a counsellor, psychologist or family therapist can be very beneficial.
- ▶ Important:

Your child feels safe  
with the Therapist



# Emotion Coaching – How to raise an emotionally intelligent child

- ▶ STEP 1: Empathy - Being aware of the child's emotions
- ▶ STEP 2: Recognizing the emotion as an opportunity for Intimacy & teaching
- ▶ STEP 3: Listening empathetically and validating the child's feelings
- ▶ STEP 4: Helping the child verbally label emotions
- ▶ STEP 5: Setting limits while helping the child problem-solve



# Example (try to avoid)

- ▶ **Milla doesn't want to go sleep, because she is scared of the dark**
- ▶ Milla: Mum, I am really scared of the dark
- ▶ Mum: Don't be silly, there is no reason to be scared of the dark
- ▶ Milla: But what if there is a monster under my bed?
- ▶ Mum: There are no monsters Milla, now please go to sleep
- ▶ Milla (out of bed): Mum, I am really scared
- ▶ Mum: Now Milla if you don't go sleep now you won't be able to play on your Ipad tomorrow. This is getting ridiculous.

# Emotion Coaching Example (Emotion Co-regulation)

- ▶ **Milla doesn't want to go to sleep as she is scared of the dark.**
- ▶ Milla: Mum I am scared in the dark.
- ▶ Mum: Yes, I can see that this makes you quite worried. You know, when I was a little girl, I used to be scared of the dark too. It's a scary feeling isn't it Milla?
- ▶ Milla: Yeah, I am scared of monsters under my bed.
- ▶ Mum: I understand. Have you ever seen a monster before?
- ▶ Milla: No
- ▶ Mum: Would it make you feel better if we both check under the bed and in the cupboard so that we know that there is nothing there?
- ▶ Milla: Yes please
- ▶ Mum: How about I'll come and check on you in 5-min to make sure you are ok? I'll also leave the hallway light on for you, that might make you feel more comfortable.

# NAME IT & CLAIM IT

Acknowledge Anxious Feelings – NAME IT & CLAIM IT!

**I notice that I "feel" anxious vs I "am" anxious**

**I notice a thought that I can't do this" vs "I can't do this"**

- ▶ Feeling anxious = name & acknowledge the feeling rather than questioning why it is there.

- ▶ BE A ROLE MODEL for your child!



# Calming Remedies....

► **Bach Flowers – RESCUE REMEDY**



**IBEROGAST**



Available at your Pharmacy – please remember to ask your Pharmacist for advice  
If this herbal supplement suits your child.



# Homeopathy

## ▶ **Arsenicum album**

- ▶ This is purported to be for anxiety due to fear of loneliness, darkness, or being imperfect. People with this type of anxiety fear being alone and may relieve anxiety through control or criticism of others. They may also feel cold often.

## ▶ **Calcarea carbonica**

- ▶ Those who need calcarea may be similar to those who could benefit from arsenicum. They develop fear of breaking out of any safe routine. Anxiety worsens when plans are changed, and they show difficulty in “going with the flow.”

# Continued....

## ▶ **Lycopodium**

- ▶ Similar to gelsemium, lycopodium is suggested for people who lack self-confidence. Though they fear speaking in public and have stage fright, they hide it well. They might cover it up with talking loudly or too frequently.

## ▶ **Pulsatilla**

- ▶ This is for people with childlike anxiety. They may need lots of reassurance and support from others to feel better

# Magnesium baths/soaks

- ▶ **Best way to absorb Magnesium is via the skin**
  - ▶ Magnesium baths are great!
- ▶ Magnesium Chloride Flakes from the Health Food store
  - ▶ Magnesium chloride is easier absorbed than Epsom Salts (magnesium sulfate)

I HIGHLY RECOMMEND A HOMEOPATH as a modality to heal children or talk to your pharmacist



# Forms of Magnesium

- ▶ glycinate- well-tolerated, no laxative effect
- ▶ taurate- best for cardiovascular health, very calming
- ▶ malate- best for fatigue and fibromyalgia
- ▶ l-threonate- best for brain health
- ▶ citrate- can be irritating to the gut, but well tolerated by many.
  
- ▶ You can get Magnesium Powders as well.
- ▶ Body Weight x 10: If you weight 60kg, your body should have 600mg of mag/day

Please contact your pharmacist, homeopath or Naturopath for info on what is best for you or your child.

**REFERENCE/RESOURCE: [Sassy Holistics.com](http://SassyHolistics.com)**



More info via:

▶ [www.sassyholistics.com](http://www.sassyholistics.com)

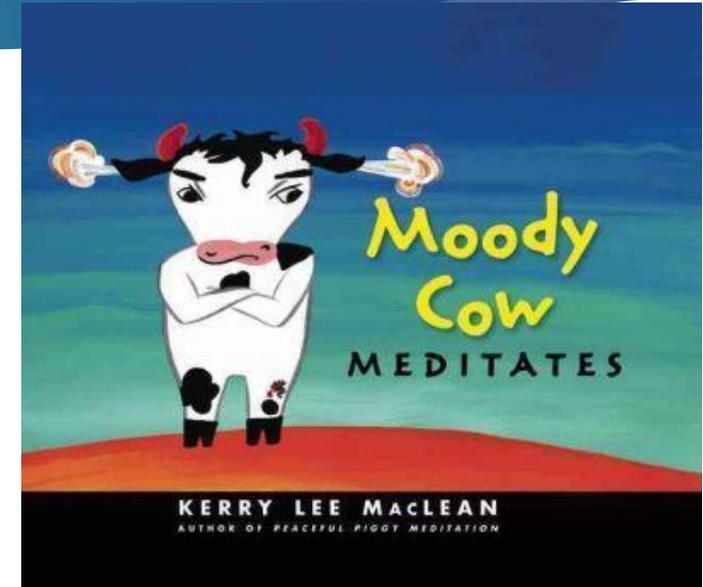
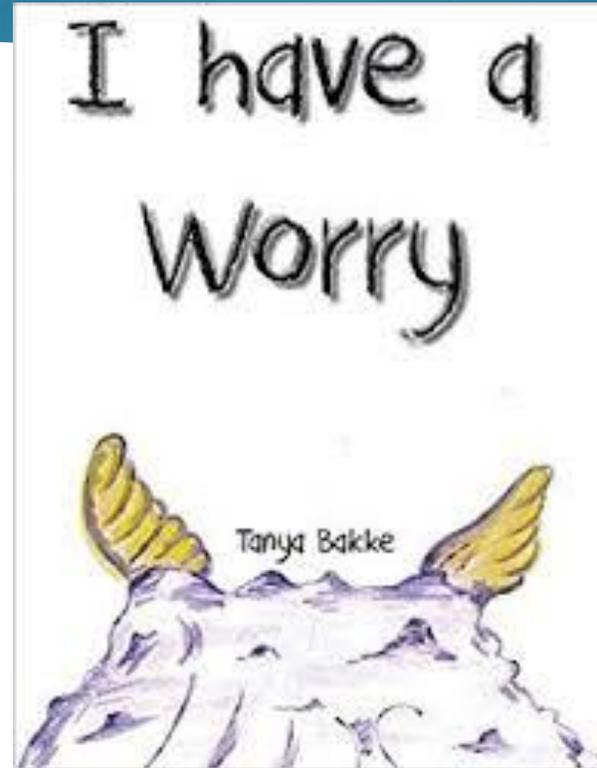
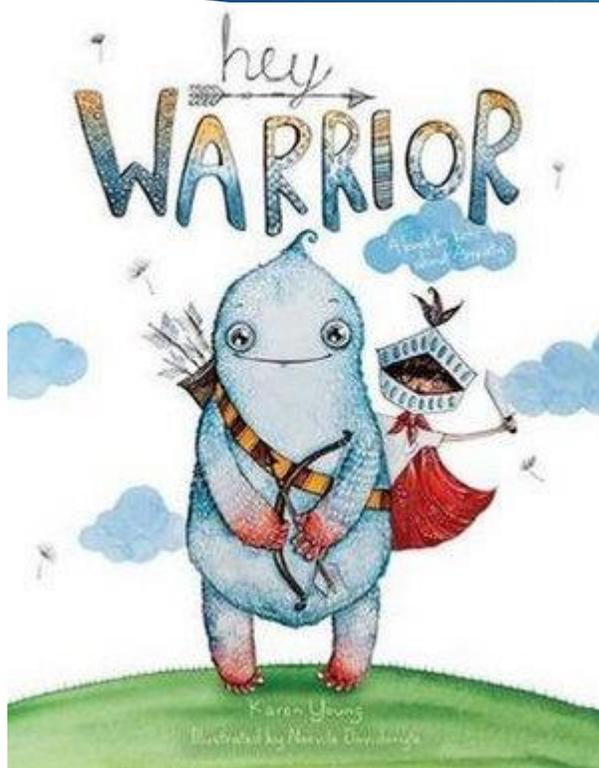


# TOOLS & STRATEGIES

- ▶ Let your child help you choose the right tool or strategy
- ▶ **Ask them:** What can I do to help you calm down?



# My Favourite Books



# JOURNAL WRITING



# BREATHING

Much like brushing teeth, it is helpful to incorporate relaxation techniques into your child's day.

## **Balloon breathing:**

*\* Breathing in through your nose, filling your tummy with air, breathing out through your mouth, letting out all the air.*

## **Hot Chocolate Breathing:**

*\* Pretend holding your cup filled with hot chocolate.*

*\* Breathing in "smell" the hot chocolate*

*\* Breathing out "cool down" the hot chocolate*

*Bed time is a great time to practice...*



# BREATHING during a Panic Attack

- ▶ BREATHE IN FOR 4
- ▶ HOLD FOR 4
- ▶ BREATHE OUT FOR 4
- ▶ REPEAT AT LEAST 5x TIMES

# Breathing (continued)

- ▶ Bumble bee breathing
- ▶ Pinwheel breathing
- ▶ Toy on tummy breathing
- ▶ Go Camping technique
- ▶ Race Track Breathing
- ▶ Finger glide breathing
- ▶ Star Breathing
- ▶ Breathing games with Straw



# Deep Breathing – What does it do?

- ▶ **DEEP BREATHING** activates your body's relaxation response
- ▶ Lowers your heart rate, muscles relax and your digestive system starts working again.
- ▶ Deep breathing preventing you from hyperventilating



# Massage Therapy

- ▶ Decrease in stress symptoms & hormone levels
- ▶ Reduces anxiety, depression and pain
- ▶ Helps with constipation – hence eliminates Toxins
- ▶ Reduce level of cortisol (neurohormone produced by adrenal glands)
- ▶ Increase level of endorphins and oxytocin (happy hormones)
- ▶ Gives children a feeling of being grounded = feeling safe

# The Worry Monster



# The use of Essential Oils

- ▶ **What works for one person may not work for another.**
- ▶ Oils take trial and error to find the right combination and application for your child
- ▶ Always dilute essential oils with a carrier oil before applying to your child's skin
- ▶ Good quality essential oils are from Young Living or Doterra.
- ▶ Good quality carrier oils are: Fractionated Coconut Oil, Jojoba Oil, Almond Oil



# My favourites...

## **Peace and Calming** by Young Living

It can be applied to the spine, across the heart, on the bottoms of the feet, or simply inhaled. It can also be added to a bath with Mag Chloride

## **Valor** by Young Living

It can be used alone or mixed with other oils.

**Stress away** by Young Living. For when you are feeling stressed but not at the point of full anxiety.

**Frankincense** by Young Living. Relaxes & relieves stress

**Lavender:** Simple yet very effective

Apply to back of neck, bottom of feet, behind ears ...or diffuse ☺



# Tips and Tricks for the anxious child with Separation Anxiety

**Acknowledge Anxious Feelings – NAME IT & CLAIM IT!**

**You could name it: The funny feeling rather than Anxiety**

1. Special Rock or Toy that fits in pocket – rub/hold at special time
2. Keyring with Picture of family/mum/dad
3. Keyring with Picture of their favourite plush toy
4. Just a picture in their bag/pocket
5. Make a bracelet together – touch at a specific time & send love
6. Talk to Amy– **I am safe/I am calm/I can handle this**
7. Lava Beads bracelet or necklace

# SAFE PLACE

- ▶ Establish a safe place/Calm down corner in their room or somewhere in your house
- ▶ Great for the child to escape to
- ▶ Put together a Calm down Kit



# ROUTINE for kids with Anxiety

- ▶ Will there be a toilet where we're going?
- ▶ How long will we be there for, Mum?
- ▶ Who will be there? Will you be near me the whole time?
- ▶ Will I be ok mum?
- ▶ THEY NEED TO KNOW: WHAT EXACTLY IS GOING TO HAPPEN?

A Daily routine Visual



# MINDFULNESS

- ▶ Paying attention to your feelings, your friends feelings, your actions & everyday tasks
- ▶ Notice what is happening right now
- ▶ Listen to the birds
- ▶ Looking at colorful butterflies
- ▶ Noticing clouds move by
- ▶ Help's to concentrate better by avoiding distractions
- ▶ Lower's anxiety and stress.



# MINDFULNESS (continued)

- ▶ We get distracted a lot – bringing our brain back to the moment
- ▶ Mindfulness activities teach your child to accept their emotions and experiences in the moment, without critical or negative judgment.
- ▶ Have you ever looked at and analyzed the food on your plate?



# 5 things that “...”

- ▶ Mindfulness activity.
- ▶ Give your child 30 sec – quietly in their head until they got it.
  - ▶ Name 5 things that move
  - ▶ Name 5 things that start with A
    - ▶ Name 5 things that smell
  - ▶ Name 5 things that have wings
    - ▶ Name 5 things that melt

# SELF – ESTEEM BOOST

BOOST YOUR CHILD'S SELF ESTEEM!

Focus on your child's strengths &  
talents!

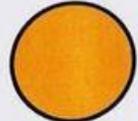
**Give your child POSITIVE Attention!**



# SELF ESTEEM M&M GAME



What is self esteem?



Why is self esteem important?



What's your favorite thing about yourself?



What is something you have done that you are proud of?



What is something that makes you special or unique?



What can you do if you are feeling down about yourself?



Thank you



- ▶ **For joining me today 😊**
- ▶ **For trying to help your child understand their emotions**
  - ▶ **For helping your child cope with Anxiety**
    - ▶ **For being an amazing parent**
    - ▶ **For supporting Calm Kidz Program**

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