Resiliency: Helping Your Child Cope with Anxiety

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Getting to Know You…

- What is your favorite food?
- What is your favorite leisure time activity?
- What is your favorite TV show?
Types of Anxiety

- Social Anxiety
- Test Anxiety
- School Phobia/Anxiety
- Separation Anxiety
- Generalized Anxiety
Social Anxiety in the School Setting

- Peer relationships
- Bullying
- Impact of anxiety on learning/performance
- Physiological impact
- School phobia/separation anxiety
- Need to please adults
Environmental Factors that Impact Children’s Anxiety and Stress

- Divorce/Family Instability
- Grief/Loss
- Financial Instability/Homelessness
- Trauma
- Deployment/Separation
What is Test Anxiety?

Uneasiness, nervousness and/or apprehension felt before, during, or after a test or evaluative situation that significantly interferes with performance, emotional and behavioral well-being.
A Culture of Testing

- Tests, tests, tests everywhere
- High stakes
- High pressure
- Ubiquitous, inescapable
- Necessary in real life situations
Role of Test Anxiety

Facilitating

- Appraisal as challenge
- Motivation
- Effort and preparation
- Problem-solving
- Coping skills
- Mastery and control

Debilitating

- Appraisal of threat
- Excessive preparation
- Outcome overly important
- Constant preoccupation
- Impaired performance
Symptoms of Test Anxiety

Physical, Behavioral, & Cognitive
Stomachaches, nausea, vomiting
Forgetting, confusion, going blank, memory/retrieval
Dizziness, feeling faint
Appetite changes, withdrawal
Crying, reassurance-seeking
Irritability, meltdowns
Procrastination, clowning, silliness
Insomnia, nightmares
## Levels of Anxiety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Optimal</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Insufficient preparation</td>
<td>• Productive energy</td>
<td>• Excessive preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Not important</td>
<td>• Test important</td>
<td>• Tests very important</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Preoccupation</td>
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Vicious Cycle of Test Anxiety

Perception of tests as difficult, threat

Perception of self as unable to handle threat

Poor performance confirms perceptions

Approach next test with greater expectation of threat and failure

Distraction lowers performance

Increased arousal distress

Preoccupation with consequences
Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

- Fear becomes reality simply by one's behavior
- Feared outcome is triggered by the person's response
- Applies to thoughts, actions, interpersonal situations
Age & Gender Differences in Test Anxiety

- Test anxiety scores rise in grades 3 to 5
- Rise to high point in junior high
- Level off in high school
- Slight decline in college
- Gender differences start in 3rd-4th grades
- Females consistently higher levels of test anxiety
Effects of Test Anxiety on Students

- High level of stress
- Negative attitude toward tests
- Lower academic motivation & effort
- Negative attitude toward self
- Potential for unethical test behavior
Implementation of Strategies and Practical Tips
Strategies for Teachers, Students, and Parents are all important.
Strategies for Students
Study Skills: Knowing **What** to Study

- Study Guides
- Cooperative Learning Techniques
- Use educational games and simulated tests to review test content, questions, and conditions

-Salend, 2011
Study Skills: Knowing **How** to Study

- Create a study schedule
- Test oneself at home
- Use mnemonic devices
- Study in a place without distractions
- Flash cards

-Sawka-Miller, 2014
Flashcards - Do's and Don'ts

Wrong Way
- Cards have a lot of text/info
- Use cards in one direction only (only front to back)
- Read flashcards over and over

Right Way
- Keep it short
- Use cards in both directions (front to back & back to front)
- Recall answer first, then look at answer on back

- Chance (2014)
Flash Card Strategy: SAFMEDS (can Google for more info)

- Developed by Dr. Steve Graf and Dr. Ogden R. Lindsley

Say - say answer aloud before turn card over
All - go through all the cards
Fast - go as fast as you can, putting cards in 2 piles (known & unknown)
Minute - in 1 minute
Each - do this at least once
Day - every day
Shuffle - shuffle cards when done
Effective Test-Taking Skills

- Sawka-Miller, 2014

- Goal: Stay relaxed, focused, and motivated
  - Pay no attention to what others are doing

- Memory dump
  - Every time students studies; as well as on test

- Work on easier items first to build confidence
  - 4 times: Answer questions you know cold; answer those you didn’t immediately remember, but now do; make educated guesses on rest; one more time for clerical errors

- Budget your time

- Highlight key directions
General Anxiety Strategies

- Worry Warrior
- Mind Jar
- Create Cognitive Coping Cards
- “Things that went right today” journal
- Physical activity/stretching/sticky hands
- Listen to calming music
BREAK
Generational Differences

Break into small groups - each person think of something that your children may be anxious about now that wasn’t an issue when you were growing up
Strategies for Parents

Suggestions to provide to parents and family members to reduce anxiety
Creating a Positive Home Climate

- Avoid criticism or sarcasm when your child doesn’t perform well
- Avoid comparing your child to their siblings or peers
- Set a positive tone before and after school
- Don’t say "good luck" before a test
- Emphasize effort as well as performance
## Fixed Mindset vs. Growth Mindset

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fixed Mindset</th>
<th>Growth Mindset</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence is static.</td>
<td>Intelligence can be developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leads to a desire to <em>look smart</em> and therefore a tendency to</td>
<td>Leads to a desire to <em>learn</em> and therefore a tendency to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• avoid challenges</td>
<td>• embrace challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• give up easily due to obstacles</td>
<td>• persist despite obstacles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• see effort as fruitless</td>
<td>• see effort as path to mastery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ignore useful feedback</td>
<td>• learn from criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• be threatened by others’ success</td>
<td>• be inspired by others’ success</td>
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Home Strategies for Test Taking Days

- Ensure a good night's sleep before a big test
- Have a healthy breakfast/lunch the day of the test
- Encourage your child to wear comfortable clothing (not too hot or too cold)
- Remind to pack the necessary materials in the backpack the night before (such as calculator, ruler, bottle of water, etc.)
- Help student budget time the week before
- Encourage studying over a few days, not the night before
- Remind your child of the importance of proper hydration
Home Strategies For Helping Cope with Anxiety in General

- Rather than say not to worry, encourage them to talk about their feelings
- Listen if they are willing to talk or let them know you are there for them if they don’t want to talk
- Extra dose of TLC
- Exercise, especially outdoors
- Stick to regular routines if other things are topsy turvy
- Eat healthy and make sure everyone is getting enough sleep
- Avoid overscheduling
- Limit access to upsetting news or stories
- Set a calm example; try to keep your fears to yourself
Other Ways to Help Your Anxious Child

- Have the same expectations as for any child, but be willing to slow the pace and break down big tasks into smaller steps
- Build your child’s personal strength; praise for brave behavior and facing challenges
- Let your child learn to do things on their own; don’t want to send message that you don’t believe your child can do it
- Help your child learn to handle their own feelings, especially the strong ones
- Work together as parents
- It is still important to have reasonable expectations, limits, and consequences for inappropriate behavior
- Create a home environment where humor and laughter are valued
Laughter is the best medicine

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K5yCJbsdJkg
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GceL-ywIGs
You and your child

- Impact of your emotions and your relationship with your child (you still are tops!)
- Children very intuitive about their parents thoughts, feelings, and struggles
- Correlation between parent and child anxiety
- Variables related to anxiety for parents (stress, childhood experiences)
Self-assessment of anxiety

- Not at all - 0 points
- Several days - 1 point
- More than half the days - 2 points
- Nearly every day - 3 points
Cognitive Behavioral Approach

Thoughts create feelings

Feelings create behaviors

Behaviors reinforce thoughts
I THINK...
THEREFORE
I WORRY
Cognitive Behavioral Approach

1) Identify and label feelings and thoughts
2) Connect body changes with thoughts, feelings
3) Identify worry thoughts, feared consequences
4) Use relaxation strategies
5) Replace worry thoughts with realistic thoughts and calming self-talk
6) Evaluate situation after completion

Wagner, 2005a
1) Identify and label thoughts and feelings

**EXAMPLE:**

**SITUATION:** See a dog

**THOUGHT:** “The dog is so cute”

**FEELING:** Calm

**THOUGHT:** “The dog is going to bite me”

**FEELING:** Scared, Anxious
2) Connect body changes to thoughts and feelings

- Heart pounding
- Sweating, cold, clammy hands
- Tension, dizziness, feeling faint
- Disturbed sleep
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
- Difficulty breathing
- Hypervigilance
Feelings Thermometer

Full Panic
High Anxiety
Anxious / Agitated
Minor fears / Worry
Calm
Total Relaxation

http://www.chariscounselling.net/
3) Identify irrational worry thoughts

- I can’t do anything right!
- Everyone will think I’m dumb.
- If I fail this test, I won’t go to the next grade.
- Only the stuff that I don’t know will be on this test.
- I failed the last test so I’m going to fail them all.
- I’m no good at this stuff anyway.
- Everyone hates me.
4) Use Relaxation Strategies

- Taking voluntary control over involuntary tension
- Deep breathing
- Visual imagery
- Muscle relaxation
5) Replace worry thoughts with realistic thoughts and calming self-talk

- Realistic Thinking:
  - What am I worried about?
  - What are the chances that it will happen?
  - What proof do I have that it will happen?
  - What else could happen?
  - So what if it happens?
  - Can I be absolutely sure it won’t happen?
  - How could I handle it if it happened?
5) Replace worry thoughts with realistic thoughts and calming self-talk

- Calming Self-Talk
  - I’m nervous, but I can handle it.
  - I have good friends that I trust.
  - I am good at a lot of things.
  - I just have to concentrate and I'll do fine.
  - I know this information.
  - I feel good most of the time.
6) Evaluate situation afterwards

- How would I rate my anxiety during that situation?
- What positive self-talk did I use that helped me?
- What relaxation or calming strategies did I use that helped me?
- Were there times I let the anxiety get the best of me?
- What could I do next time to have even less anxiety?
Deep (Diaphragmatic) Breathing

- Releasing tension with series of deep breaths
  - Reduces physiological arousal
  - Produces mental relaxation

- How do I do it?
  - Hands on stomach
  - Deep breath in through nose (1, 2, 3, 4)
  - Let your breath expand your belly. Observe your stomach rising
  - Release through mouth while saying “Ahhh” (1, 2, 3, 4)
  - Observe your stomach flattening

Miller and Miller (2014)
Stop, Drop and Roll

- Developed for highly test anxious students
- **STOP** Test
  - Put pencil down
  - Hands on table
  - Focus on coolness of surface in contrast to “fire” of anxiety and stress
- **DROP** head forward
- **ROLL** head around while taking deep breaths

Cheek, Bradley, Reynolds, Coy (2002) - Miller 201
Other Relaxation Strategies

- Taking Breaks
- Guided Imagery
- Visualizing
- Affirmations and Meditations Recordings
- Calming Music
- Squeeze Ball
- Writing about it (10 minutes before exam: “What’s worrying you?”)
- Chewing gum

“Visualize yourself not falling off the wall.”
Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Involves systematically tensing and relaxing different muscle groups through the body one at a time
- Often combined with diaphragmatic breathing
- Use scripts (age appropriate)
- Teens may prefer to do this on their own
- Could audiotape script for them
- Full session - 10 to 20 minutes

http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=youtube+relaxation+music&view=detail&mid=A66272E6EC0C54085CB3A66272E6EC0C54085CB3&FORM=VIRE

Miller and Miller (2014)
Presentation Sources