

Supporting Anxious Children



ANXIETY GIRL!
able to jump to the worst conclusion
in a single bound!

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The Plan:

What is Anxiety?

Giftedness &
Anxiety

How Can We
Help?

What is Anxiety?

"I just can't sit still"

"I feel like I'm coming out of my skin"

"It feels like I'm having a heart attack! My heart is pounding, I can't breathe, I'm sweating! What is going on with me?!"

"I just can't do it"

"I just know that something bad is going to happen"

"My thoughts are going 5,000 miles an hour"



What is Anxiety?

Behaviors that *may* be rooted in Anxiety:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Shutting Down | Shyness |
| Running Away/Hiding | Over-compliance |
| Opposition | Panic |
| Defiance | Fatigue |
| Refusal | Irritability |
| Nightmares | Difficulty Concentrating |
| Insomnia | Avoidance |
| Clinging | Social Difficulties |
| Procrastination | Stuttering |
| Obsessions | Fidgeting |
| Perseverating | Restlessness |
| Controlling Behaviors | Distractibility |
| Meltdowns/Tantrums | Hyperactivity |
| Somatic Symptoms | |



What is Anxiety?

Nothing is all good or all bad . . . We need some anxiety to create motivation and inspiration to change, to protect ourselves, to survive.

It is a natural reaction to stress.

Anxiety becomes problematic, however, when that natural stress reaction becomes hypersensitive or exaggerated.



Anxiety and the Brain



Prefrontal Cortex – Executive Functions

- o Problem Solving
- o Planning
- o Reasoning
- o Task Flexibility
- o Decision Making
- o Troubleshooting
- o Impulse Control

Anxiety and the Brain



Limbic System

Chased by Tigers & the Sympathetic Nervous System

Fight, Flight, Freeze

Physiological Responses

Relaxation Response - the Parasympathetic Nervous System

Anxiety and the Brain



Amygdala - The Emotional Filter

Primary Job is to Keep us Safe

Sensor for the Human Alarm System (Part of the Limbic System)

Processes information from senses while scanning for similarities to previous times we have been in danger, afraid, helpless, hopeless or overwhelmed

Stress, the Brain, Anxiety



Anxiety is the result of a hypersensitive amygdala

False alarm

Reactive vs. Responsive



Giftedness & Anxiety



Not Having
Needs Met

Asynchronistic
Development

External
Expectations

Internal
Expectations

Giftedness & Anxiety



Intensities

Intellectual
Imaginational
Emotional

Sensory
Dysregulation

Social Aspects

Peer
Family

How Can We Help?

Trauma Informed Care

Internal Experience of
the child

vs

External Experience
of the rest of us



How Can We Help?

Trauma Informed Care

Our Own Affect Regulation

Educate

Empathy

Acceptance

Communication

Elicit Feelings of Control

Focus on Strengths & Hope

Make Appropriate Referrals



How Can We Help?

Assist to Trigger Relaxation Response



Diaphragmatic Breathing

Square Breathing

Guided Imagery

Music

Stone

Artwork

Physical Touch

Aromatherapy

How Can We Help?

Cognitive Responses

Label the Anxiety-Producing Story

Best Case - Worst Case Game

Practice Affirmations

Radical Acceptance

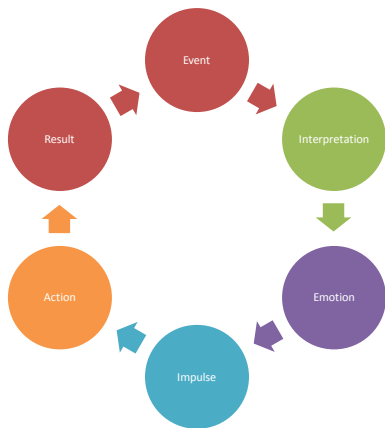
Self Compassion

Set them up to Struggle

Praise the Process

Share our own "Failures"





How Can We Help?

Mindfulness



Create Space to
Increase Time to
Respond instead of
just React

To Slow Minds

To Normalize

Strategies to Increase
Mindfulness



peace.

it does not mean to be in a place
where there is no noise, trouble
or hard work. it means to be in
the midst of those things and still
be calm in your heart.

(unknown)

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