

Parent Workshop

Happy Minds Healthy Futures Project

Anxiety and Stress

Anxiety and Stress

Key areas we will cover today:

- Explore and understand anxiety and how it manifests
- Understand stress and the different stress responses
- The impact anxiety and stress can have on the body and the brain
- Strategies and techniques to manage it in ourselves and our children

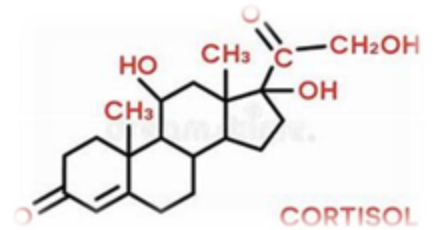
This will include:

- Looking at the difference between worry, stress and anxiety
- Accepting what we cannot control
- Training the brain to not overthink



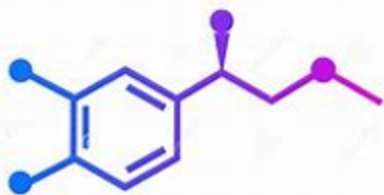
What is Anxiety?

- Anxiety is a **normal**, human feeling of **fear** or **panic**. When we face stressful situations, it can set off our brain's in-built alarm bell system, which tells us something isn't right and that we need to deal with it.
- Our brain wants the difficult situation to go away, so it makes us feel more alert, stops us thinking about other things, and even moves blood to much needed organs and muscles to help us escape.



When we experience anxiety, it can feel unpleasant. These physiological responses are due to our brains and bodies being flooded with the stress hormone **Cortisol and Adrenaline.**

Within children you will usually notice their levels of worry, stress and anxiety through their behaviours.



adrenaline

Internalising and Externalising Symptoms in Children

- Sometimes it is hard to detect when our children are suffering as they find it hard to find the words to communicate this and developmentally many children are still working out who they are.
- Their behaviours can actually inform us of their struggle.
- Two types of behaviours demonstrate this; **internalising** and **externalising**.
- Both ways can hide, mask, defend against emotions and are the symptoms of emotional discomfort .
- Internalising symptoms are **internally-focused discomforts**.
- Externalising symptoms are **externally-focused behaviours**.

Externalising Symptoms in Children

Suffering is externally focused and it leads to:

- Uncontrollable emotions
- Difficulty in handling impulses
- Irritability and aggressive behaviour
- Incompetence to follow rules
- Behavioural problems and difficulty in personal relationships

Internalising Symptoms in Children

Suffering is focused internally and it leads to:

- Crying/sadness
- Inability to enjoy any activity
- Slowness and passiveness
- Self harm/suicidal thoughts
- Perfectionism and thoughts of inferiority
- Sleep and appetite alterations
- Fears and phobias
- Anxiety, nerves and frequent concerns
- Attachment or dependency on adults
- Somatic symptoms, such as gastrointestinal
- Problems or medically unexplained pain

Loss of appetite

Need for physical proximity
'Clingy'

Regressive
behaviour

Withdrawal

Disturbed sleep

Nail Biting

Thumb sucking

Overreactive responses

Fidgeting

Aggressive outbursts

Scanning the room

Heightened Stimming

Emotional Outbursts

Somatic complaints such as sore head or tummy ache



What Anxiety Can Look Like?

Never sitting down to relax

Avoiding Social situation

Angry Outbursts

Always Checking phone and emails

Sweaty Palms



Excessive eating and drinking

Overachiever

Watching hours & hours of TV

Never able to switch of from work

Online shopping addiction

Quick to judge/criticise

Zoning out or conversation

Worry

Stress

Anxiety

They are normal natural responses however there is a difference.

- **Worry** occurs and happens within your **mind** - It's what happens when your mind dwells on negative thoughts, uncertain outcomes or things that could go wrong.
- **Stress** happens within your **body**- It's a physiological response (stressor) connected to an external event or circumstance.
- **Anxiety** happens within your **mind and** your **body** - It has a cognitive element (worry) and physiological response (stress), which means that we experience anxiety in both our mind and our body. Anxiety is what happens when you're dealing with a lot of worries and a lot of stress."

In small doses, worry, stress, and anxiety can be positive forces in our lives.



Anxiety floods your brain with stress hormones

- Anxiety makes our body alert so the brain prepares itself for flight or fight mode.
- It does this to fight off whatever's made you anxious. So our brain floods our central nervous system with adrenaline and cortisol.
- These hormones tell our body that something scary is about to happen.
- The role of our stress hormones is to help you cope with danger.



Anxiety floods your brain with stress hormones

- They sharpen your senses, make your reflexes faster and move the blood flow from less important organs such as the stomach.
- When you suffer from anxiety its harder to reach a sense of calm.
- The rush of stress hormones causes your brain to release even more stress hormones until you're simply overwhelmed.
- When excess amounts of stress hormones flood the brain over and over again, your baseline level of anxiety increases .

Anxiety can make it hard for your brain to reason rationally

- Anxiety weakens the connections between the feeling and thinking brain.
- When the emotional brain alerts that there's danger, the thinking brain should kick in and come up with a rational, logical response.
- The thinking/logic brain ensures that you're capable of processing information, make informed decisions, as well as helping you solve problems.



Anxiety can make it hard for your brain to reason rationally

- In non-anxious brains, the thinking brain responds rationally when the emotional brain sends out alerts.
- This process doesn't work the same in anxious brains as the connection is weak.
- The problem-solving part of the brain isn't heard and is offline which can lead to irrational thoughts and erratic behaviour.



The Four Stress Responses



FIGHT
FLIGHT
FREEZE
FAWN

Most people have one or two dominant stress responses that they typically fall back into as their main mode of reacting to stressful triggers, situations, or perceived threats



ATTACK

FIGHT

Basic survival strategy/Defensive style
Stress response



ATTACK

Narcissistic Rage

Expresses Anger and
Contempt at others



Outer Critic

I'm OK - You're not OK



Control

Dominants
people

FIGHT



- Assertiveness
- Boundaries
- Courage
- Determination
- Leadership
- Articulate

- Bully
- Explosive
- Controlling
- Entitlement
- Demands perfection
- Cant 'hear' other points of view
- Dictatorial



FIGHT

Hyper-aroused state

Children and Young People will:

- Hit, kick, spit, push
- Argue become aggressive, hostile and defiant
- Feel things somatically
- Impulsive and unpredictable
- Show anger and power in their body language
- Say no and object
- Quietly not comply become passive aggressive
- Ruin their own and others work



FLIGHT

Basic survival strategy/Defensive style
Stress response



Left Brain Dissociation
Thinks obsessively



Inner or Outer Critic
I'm not OK -You're not OK

Competence
Avoids people,
focuses on
perfection

FLIGHT



- Objective
- Healthy retreat
- Industriousness
- Know-How
- Perseverance
- Disengagement

- Rushing
- Micromanager
- Drive-ness
- Adrenaline Junkie
- Workaholic
- Panicky
- Worrier



FLIGHT

Hyper-aroused state

Children and young people will:

- Run or hide away
- Easily distracted and distracting
- Overly talkative and hyperactive
- Avoidant
- Quiet and withdrawn
- Feel physically unwell
- Want to leave the room
- Cant stay on task
- Restless and fidgety



AVIOD

FREEZE

Basic survival strategy/Defensive style
Stress response



AVIOD

Right brain
Dissociation
Disconnects from
body/mind



Outer Critic
I'm OK - You're not OK



Circumvent
Avoids people

- Acute Awareness
- Mindfulness
- Poised Readiness
- Peace
- Presence
- Detachment

FREEZE



- Isolation
- Spaced out
- Hiding
- Camouflaging
- Hermit
- Couch potato
- Contracting





FREEZE

Hypo-aroused state

Children and Young people will:

- Be withdrawn
- Selective in who they talk too
- Not able to play and enjoy themselves
- Overly compliant bit of a pleaser
- Stuck on task unable to think
- Feel physically unwell
- Look like a rabbit caught in headlights
- Jumpy
- Don't listen properly due to being preoccupied



SUBSERVIENT

FAWN

Basic survival strategy/Defensive style
Stress response



SUBSERVIENT

Co-dependent Merging
Merges with others
wishes/demands



Inner Critic
I'm not OK -You're OK



Comingle
Merges with people

- Love & Service
- Compromise
- Listening
- Fair/Empathetic
- Peace-making
- Amiable

FAWN



- Slave
- Doormat
- Loss of self
- Servitude
- People pleaser
- Obedient

HOW TO MANAGE ANXIETY

Routine

Create a nourishing routine. Anxiety thrives on chaos and uncertainty. I've found a good routine helps a lot.

Talk

Don't be afraid to talk about your anxiety. Find a good support system. Try therapy. Break the stigma!

Rationalize

Anxiety likes to pull out the worst-case-scenario. Reassure yourself as many times as it takes that you are okay.

Schedule

If something triggers your anxiety, try scheduling it into your week. Don't put things off indefinitely!

Mindfulness

Focus on the current moment. Be in the present. Learn to self-soothe.

Blessing/Manifesting

SELF-SOOTHING

Self-soothing is a quick and effective way to reduce the intensity of negative emotions.



Sight

- Low lighting
- Soothing colors
- Sleeping masks
- Coloring books
- Pinterest Collages

Touch

- Soft things
- Cuddle things
- Massage
- Hot/cold shower
- Heated/weighted blanket



Sound

- Calming noise
- ASMR videos
- Nature sounds
- Guided meditations
- Binaural beats



Smell

- Aromatherapy
- Fresh air
- Candles/incense
- Comforting smells



Taste

- Strong flavors
- Warm drinks
- Eat slowly
- Nostalgic flavors



www.blessingmanifesting.com



Write down or share at least three things that you are taking away to try in the next few days?

