

Stress, Anxiety and Children

Presented by:

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Objectives:

- ▶ Overview of stress
- ▶ Anxiety in children:
 - ▶ Signs and Symptoms - how do we recognize anxiety in children?
 - ▶ Commonalities between Stress and Anxiety
 - ▶ How do stress and anxiety differ?
 - ▶ What can parents and others do to help?
 - ▶ When might professional services or treatment be indicated?



Objectives:

- ▶ Promoting emotional well being in youth:
 - ▶ Role of self-regulation in resiliency
 - ▶ Easily implemented strategies to help reduce the negative impact of stress, anxiety or dysregulation in youth
 - ▶ Additional strategies that build resiliency, promote composure and enhance well-being
 - ▶ Provide some additional “take home” information, apps, resources, etc.







Stress

What IS IT?



*Why yes, I'm a bit stressed.
Why do you ask?*

Stress = change

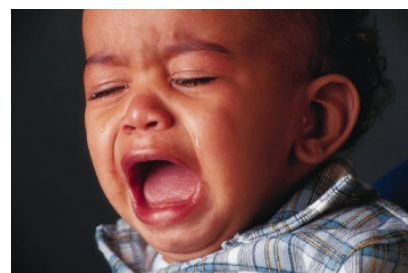
Stress occurs when we are exposed to a **change** in our internal or external environment. The **change** we are exposed to is called the **stressor**.

Exposed to change(s) from: (aka Stressors)

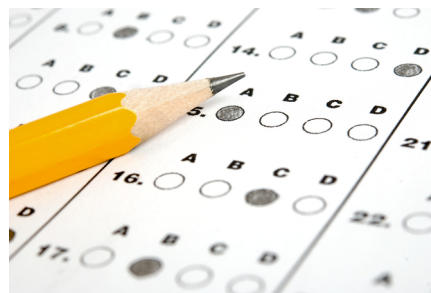
Internal Environment



I'm so excited.



External Environment

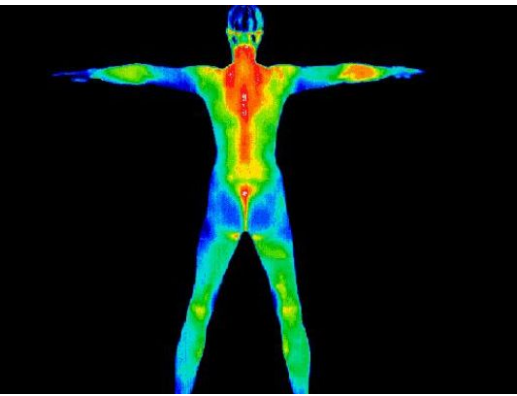


Division
Champions



*What are your
expectations?*

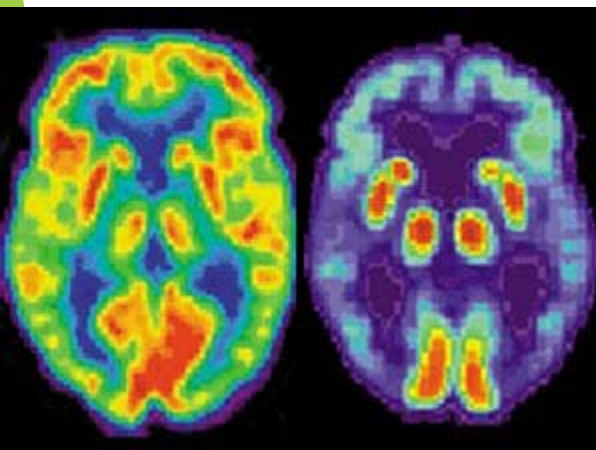




Changes in how your body works



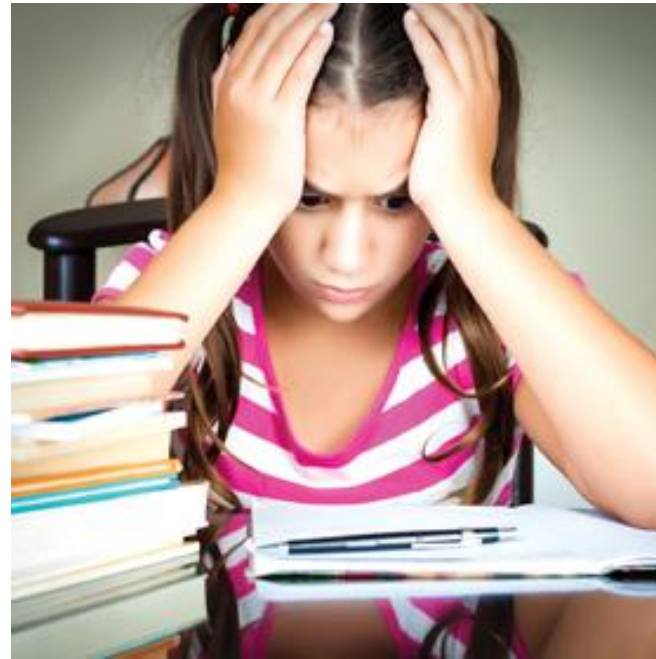
The stressor(s) initiate **changes** in how our **bodies** and our **brains** (cognitive processes) operate or respond.



Changes in how your brain works



Change(s) lead to the **STRESS REACTION**



Our body and brain's reaction is called the “**stress reaction**”¹¹

Anyone Afraid of Spiders?



ARE YOU SURE



**THE SPIDER IS
GONE?**



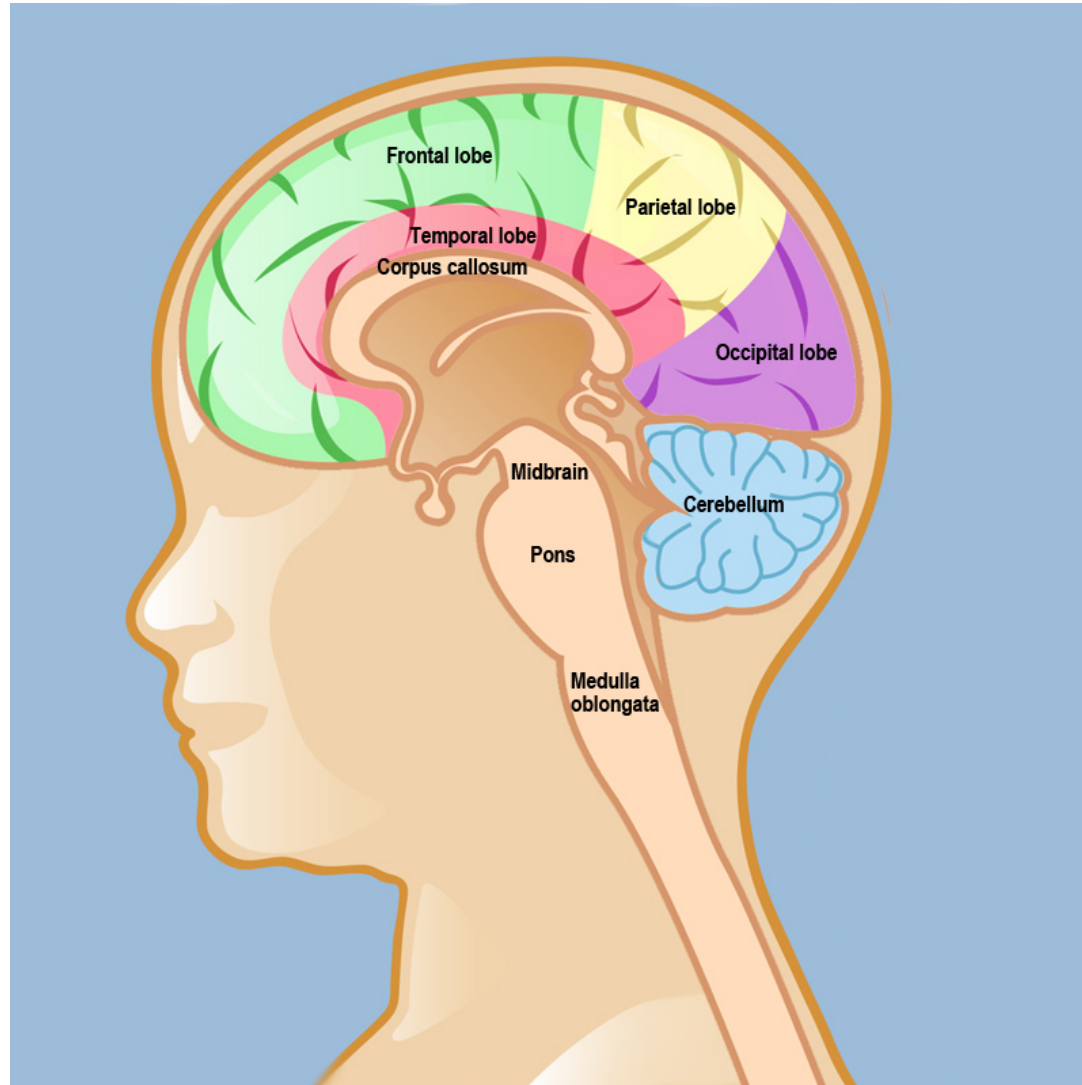
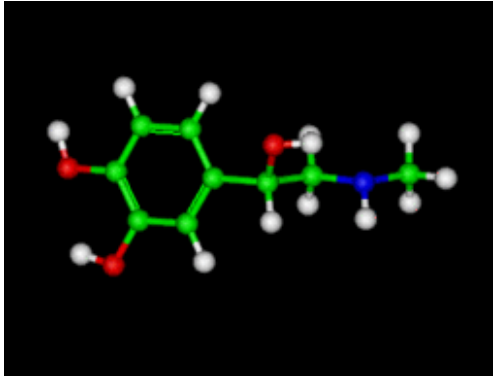


What happens when one is significantly stressed or anxious?

- ▶ F,F,F type of “reptilian response” from lower brain regions takes over to protect us:



What happens in one's body when significantly stressed?



What happens in one's mind when significantly stressed or anxious?

- ▶ May worry excessively, ruminate, etc.
- ▶ Coping strategies and typical resources seem to vanish
- ▶ Perceptions may become distorted
- ▶ Negative self statements may start to develop
- ▶ Fluctuations in mood may occur

The largest source of carbon pollution comes from power plants.



What if the teacher calls on me? What if I don't know the answer?

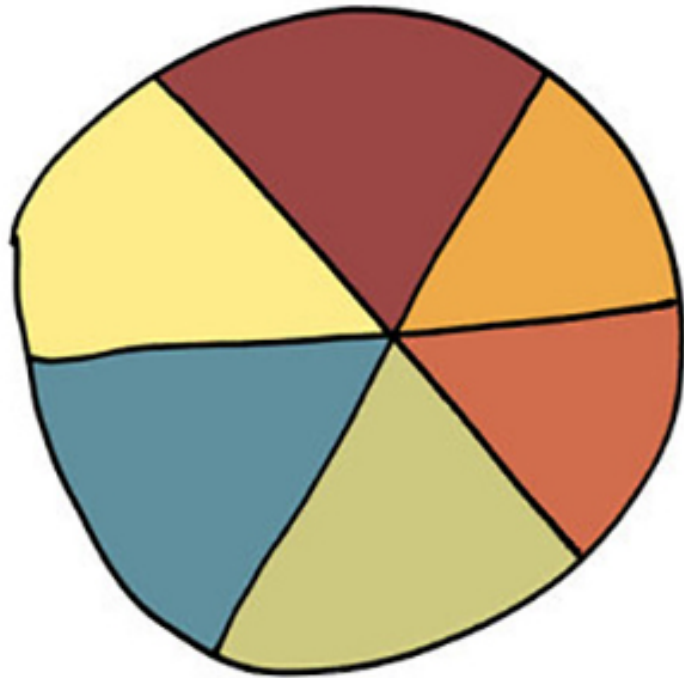
Everyone will think I'm stupid. I must be stupid. So stupid! ...



Careful
I'M MOODY

The Joy of Overthinking:

THINGS YOU THINK ABOUT IN BED INSTEAD OF FALLING ASLEEP



- what went wrong yesterday
- what went wrong today
- what could go wrong tomorrow
- what could go wrong next year
- what could go wrong years after you're gone that your great great grandchildren will have to deal with
- also, that awkward joke you made at 4:17 PM on February 21st that no one laughed at

A day of worry is
more exhausting
than a week of
work. ~John Lubbock

When Stressed or Anxious Your Emotions Are Also Involved:

- Can't help but “feel” those changes in your body
- Sometimes EMOTIONS trigger the stress reaction
- Fatigue or decreased motivation
- More challenging for children and youth to understand and regulate these feeling states





**KEEP
CALM
AND
CARRY
ON**



KEEP
CALM...
OH
WHO ARE
WE
KIDDING



STAY
ALIVE
AND
AVOID
ZOMBIES

Key Stress Factors:

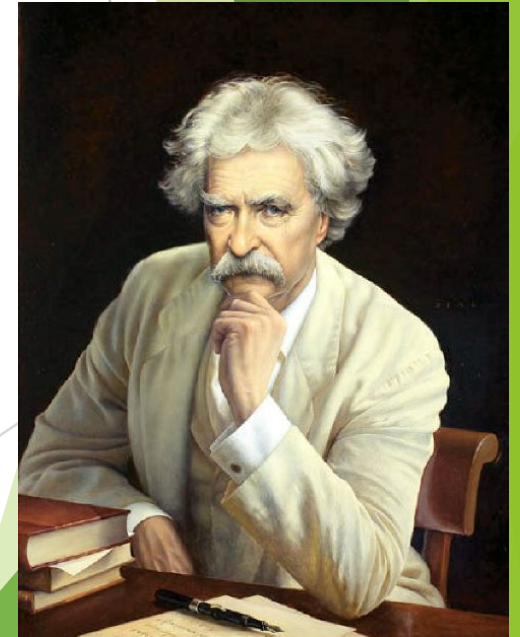
- ▶ Mild, moderate, severe:
perception = important role
- ▶ Frequency and duration:
 - ▶ Never, rarely, sometimes, often, intermittently
- ▶ Acute/Brief vs Chronic/Unrelenting



Key Stress Factors Continued:

- ▶ Beliefs and values contribute as well
- ▶ Perception of Control vs No Control
- ▶ Knowledge and/or past experience with stressor
- ▶ Predictability or likeliness of stressor

“I am an old man and have known a great many troubles, but most of them never happened.” Mark Twain



Who would have thunk?



What about anxiety?



Anxiety:

- ▶ “Anxiety is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes”

American Psychological Association

(<http://www.apa.org/topics/anxiety>)

- ▶ Experiencing anxiety on occasion is expected
- ▶ An anxiety disorder occurs when it is persistent or specific to certain things and interferes with functioning (L/L/L: school/work/home life, relationships, activities)
- ▶ Anxiety is a component of many other mental health issues and disorders as well (i.e. Mood Disorders, Trauma and Stressor- Related Disorders)

Marron (2018)



Anxiety Disorders:

- ▶ Types of Anxiety Disorders:
 - ▶ Separation Anxiety
 - ▶ Selective Mutism
 - ▶ Specific Phobia
 - ▶ Social Anxiety
 - ▶ Panic Disorder
 - ▶ Agoraphobia
 - ▶ Generalized Anxiety
 - ▶ Substance or Medication Induced Anxiety Disorder
 - ▶ Anxiety Disorder Due to Another Medical Condition
 - ▶ Other or Unspecified
- ▶ (<http://www.apa.org/topics/anxiety>)



Additional Mental Health Disorders that Often Include High Rates of Anxiety:

- ▶ **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder**
- ▶ **Acute Stress Disorder**
- ▶ **Adjustment Disorders**
- ▶ **Dissociative Disorders**
- ▶ **Obsessive -Compulsive Disorder**
- ▶ **Hoarding Disorder**
- ▶ **Reactive Attachment Disorder**
- ▶ **Disinhibited Social Engagement Disorder**
- ▶ **Trichotillomania Disorder (hair pulling)**
- ▶ **Excoriation Disorder (picking skin)**
- ▶ **Body Dysmorphic Disorder**
- ▶ **Eating Disorders**
- ▶ **Others**

How to cope with stress and/or anxiety ?



Where do we start?

- ▶ What are some of the key things to think about when trying to reduce the negative impact that stress (or anxiety or dysregulation) may have on your child?
 - ▶ **Acute Intervention:** Quick calming tools
 - ▶ Tools and strategies geared toward immediate stress reduction in the moment.
 - ▶ Consider the context.
 - ▶ Is there a trigger?
 - ▶ What is the sensory input?



Where do we start?

▶ Long Term Skill Development:

- ▶ Tools, strategies, skills and lifestyle choices that decrease the impact of stress and promote wellbeing in the long term.
- ▶ While these skills promote wellbeing in general, some may also be helpful “in the moment” when coping with sudden dysregulation or stress.
 - ▶ **HOWEVER**, many require practice to be effective
- ▶ These promote the development of self-regulation and resiliency



Tips for Preparing Yourself to Support Your Child



► First, calm thyself:

- Are you showing signs of your own stress?
- Are you in a stress response in reaction to your child's anxiety?
- Do a self check-in. What is your own stress level or regulation capacity at that moment? If elevated, be sure to implement coping strategies **before** intervening with student.

► Try not to lead your child to anxiety or to increased anxiety level

- For example: Are you scared to go to the party because...?
- Or: _____ is afraid of new things and won't want me to leave...
- Develop cues if needed



**KEEP
CALM
AND
TAKE A DEEP
BREATH**

Self Regulation (SR):

- ▶ Ability to control (or “regulate”) aspects of self from within self (as opposed to “external” or imposed control)
- ▶ Developmental in nature (note: Frontal Lobe and growth spurts)
- ▶ Spheres: Physical, Behavioral, Emotional, Cognitive, Motivational
- ▶ Attending to, monitoring, controlling, adjusting response, analyzing own abilities, taking in contextual clues, assess situation, consider social nuances, anticipate results, etc.
- ▶ **All based on present context**
- ▶ Good SR related to other positive outcomes and skill development (competence, mastery, self-efficacy, autonomy)



Emotional Self Regulation

- ▶ “Responding” vs “reacting” (intentional response with ability to resist knee jerk/initial instinct) = Being Intentional = acting with agency
 - ▶ Putting something between the S and R

intentional (adj.)

an action performed with awareness; done deliberately, consciously, on purpose





Characteristics of Self Regulating, Soothing or Calming Activities:

- ▶ Repetitive
- ▶ Rhythmic
- ▶ Creative
- ▶ More sensory or physical in nature (Multi-modal)
- ▶ Mindfulness Strategies - focus on the present - here and now (fabulously examined this morning)
- ▶ Many strategies draw on both or combine mindfulness and bodyfulness components



Relaxation techniques:



- ▶ Deep Breathing
- ▶ Visualization or Guided Imagery
- ▶ Muscle relaxation
- ▶ Body Scan
- ▶ Meditation
- ▶ Others?



Some Examples of Soothing or Calming SR Activities:

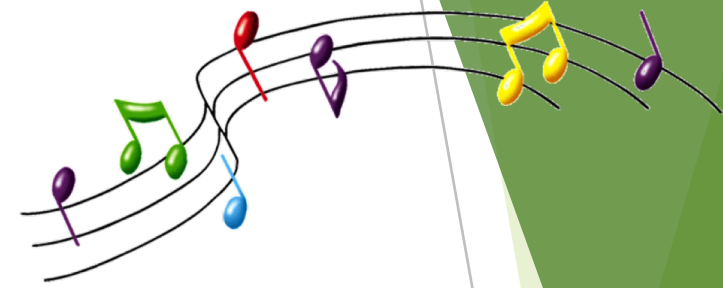
► Exercise:

- Walking (why do people pace or go for a walk?)
- Running, Swimming, Biking. Rowing, Hiking/Climbing, etc
- Throwing a ball against a wall
- Gym routines; sports drills
- Yoga
- Pilates
- Martial arts (Qui Gong, Tai Chi, Aikido, karate, Kinetic Movement, etc)



Some Examples of Soothing or Calming SR Activities:

- ▶ Music based:
 - ▶ Playing an instrument
 - ▶ Dancing
 - ▶ Composing
 - ▶ Listening
 - ▶ Drum circles
 - ▶ Singing
 - ▶ Snap-alongs
 - ▶ Other





Some Examples of Soothing or Calming SR Activities:

- ▶ Art Based:
 - ▶ Drawing, sketching
 - ▶ Coloring/Coloring mandalas
 - ▶ Collage making
 - ▶ Painting
 - ▶ Playdough, clay, pottery,
 - ▶ Sculpturing
 - ▶ Needle work - crocheting, knitting
 - ▶ Crafts
 - ▶ Other





Some Examples of Soothing or Calming SR Activities:

- ▶ Creative Expression:
 - ▶ Poetry
 - ▶ Journaling
- ▶ Everyday activities or tasks:
 - ▶ Cooking (chopping, etc)
 - ▶ Gardening
 - ▶ Breaking up boxes for recycling, shred paper
 - ▶ Cleaning
- ▶ Stay away from digital activities if possible (exception: apps developed for calming and relaxation)

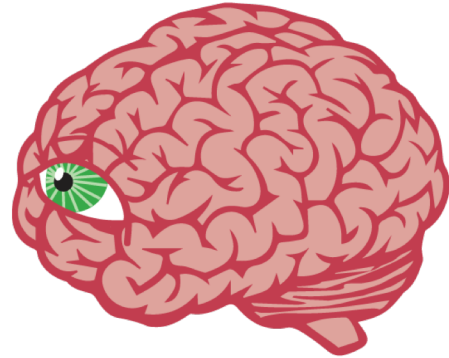


Mindfulness?

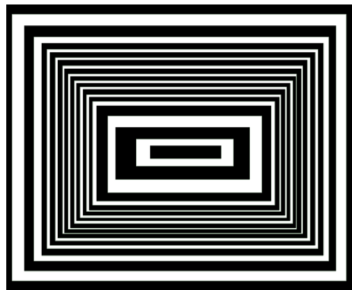


Mindfulness Basics:

- ▶ Focusing the “minds eye” on the present (here and now):



- ▶ Within that “present centered” awareness, being able to notice and identify one’s thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations:



Look Inward and
Outward

Mindfulness Basics:

- ▶ Involves paying attention to the present in a very **purposeful** manner (to the present moment)
 - ▶ Keep the purposeful attention “**alive**” via intentionality
 - ▶ Normalize that the mind wanders
 - ▶ Bringing self back to present from distractions
- ▶ While doing so, being **free of judgment**
 - ▶ awareness = noticing; **NOT** judging
 - ▶ approach openly and with curiosity



Mind Full, or Mindful?

Amy Cuddy's Power Poses:

"High Power" body language (top row)

vs.

"Low Power" body language (bottom row)

(Images courtesy of Amy Cuddy, Harvard University)



Simple Body Poses for Mindfulness and Self Empowerment:

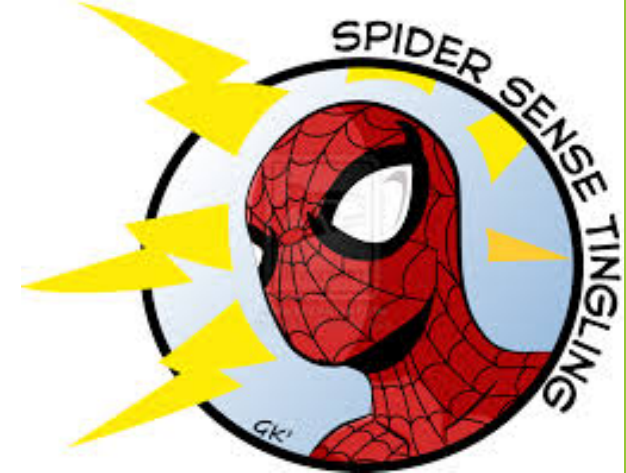
- ▶ Power Stances: Centering and empowering
 - ▶ Can use super hero analogies based on age and interest:
 - ▶ Superperson stance (arms bent at elbows and sticking out, hands to hips, feet forward apart wider than hips)
 - ▶ Prepare to fly like Superperson (fists closed but not clenched tight, 1 arms straight down; one up, feet forward and just beyond hip width)
 - ▶ Royal pose (fists closed but not clenched tight, arms spread straight out as far as can go parallel with floor, feet forward and just beyond hip width)
 - ▶ Sit like a super boss (hands behind head, elbows out, feet extended)
 - ▶ Stand like a super winner (fists closed but not clenched tight, arms spread upward in v as far as can go, feet forward and just beyond hip width)



Sensory Based Mindfulness Activities:

- ▶ Spidey Sense (Young, 2017) = analogy to Spiderman and strongly focused senses
 - ▶ go through each sense
- ▶ 5 around (should be relaxed first)
 - ▶ Go through five sensory systems:

- ▶ Vision
- ▶ Hearing
- ▶ Touch
- ▶ Smell
- ▶ Taste



- ▶ Mindfulness Walk - great if outdoors but does not have to be. Use term based on age and interests i.e. Safari (Young, 2017)

Sensory Based Mindfulness Activities:

▶ Visual:

- ▶ Glitter Bottle
- ▶ Snow Globes - (Willard and Saltzman, 2015) or Clear container with glitter or baking soda (Burdick, 2014)
- ▶ Find the _____, “I spy” games
- ▶ Hot/Cold but switch up and use visual clues
- ▶ Walks in a new space
- ▶ Nature walks
- ▶ Taking in art





IN CASE
OF STRESS,
POP BUBBLES

WWW.LIFEASAFIELDTRIP.COM



Sensory Based Mindfulness Activities:

▶ Listening/Sound based:

▶ Bells:

- ▶ Note when bell stops

- ▶ between the Bells - (Willard and Saltzman, 2015)

▶ Listening walk

- ▶ Guess the nature sound; guess the person

- ▶ Recording of a different environment and then try to identify all the sounds they hear

- ▶ Intonation games

- ▶ Match this sound or pull out the _____

- ▶ Pulling out instruments in musical pieces

- ▶ Row style sing a longs, snap-alongs

- ▶ Authentic movement



Sensory Based Activities for Mindfulness:

▶ Smells

- ▶ “scratch n sniff” like game
- ▶ guess the fruit or flower



▶ Taste

- ▶ mindful cooking
- ▶ mindful eating

▶ Touch

- ▶ blindfold game - name the item
- ▶ in the bag (or other container): guess the item, or find the _____ among various different items
- ▶ describe the texture
- ▶ gardening, art activities
- ▶ pop the bubble wrap



Sensory Based Mindfulness Activities and Intro to Deep Breathing:

▶ Breathing Strategies:

Info re breathing:

- ▶ One hand on chest; other on belly
- ▶ Can use analogies
- ▶ Can use of mantra or term
- ▶ Diaphragmatic breathing or “belly breaths”
- ▶ 4,2,4 - nose
- ▶ 4, 2, 8
- ▶ 4 Square Breathing
- ▶ Breathing to increase energy



Sensory Based Mindfulness Activities:

- ▶ Breathing - attention to breath
 - ▶ Start with focus on breathing aspects themselves:
 - ▶ Discuss inhaling, exhaling, holding breath, fast breathing, shallow, etc.
 - ▶ What do we notice when we breathe like _____
 - ▶ Different through our nose or mouth?
 - ▶ Play and experiment with breath and use of analogies:
 - ▶ Clouds, waves, sailboat on wave, motor boat sputtering
 - ▶ Inhale - balloon analogy,
 - ▶ Exhale - balloon analogy, bubble analogy
 - ▶ Play with bubbles and various breath lengths and speeds
 - ▶ Pinwheels
 - ▶ Tissues game
 - ▶ Do a relaxation exercise and then have them notice breath; follow with a brief period of exercise and compare






RESILIENCE



- ▶ The ability to be less effected by and/or the ability to bounce back from stressful experiences
- ▶ Key to successful stress and anxiety management over the long haul
- ▶ Enhanced by these techniques that regulate the body and mind
- ▶ Everyone can develop a personal resiliency tool kit




Never Give Up

Never Give Up

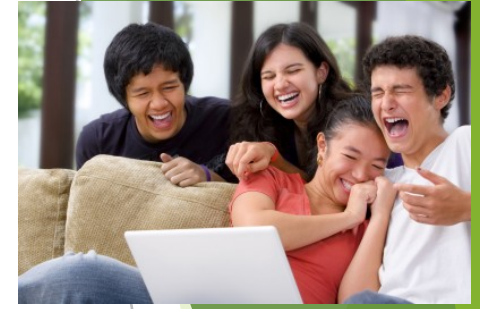


Underlying Mental Wellness Basics for Everyone (Yes - you adults too!):

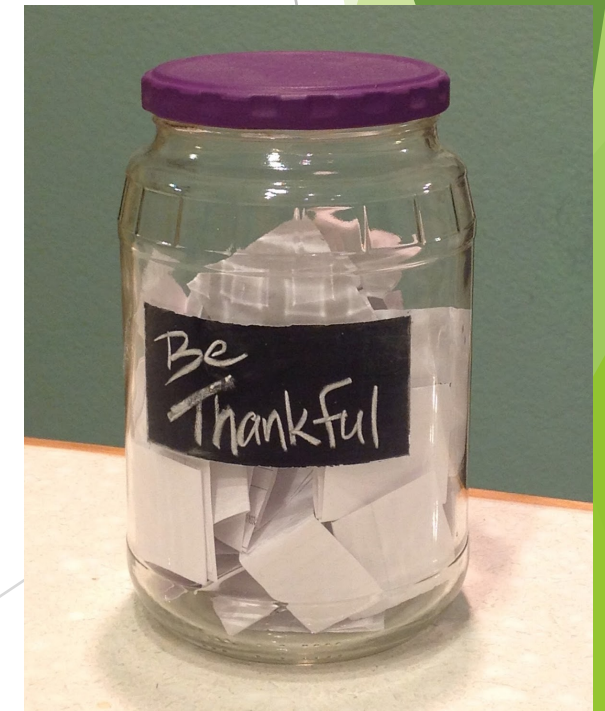
- ▶ Nutrition - healthy diet; hydration
- ▶ Exercise regularly (include crossing the midline)
- ▶ Quality Sleep 
- ▶ Is a basic tool necessary (i.e. noise reduction)
- ▶ Schedule Time to Relax more - what de-stresses the child/teen/you?
- ▶ Play More/Have fun - what do they/you enjoy?



Underlying Mental Wellness Basics for Everyone continued:



- ▶ Humor: Find ways to laugh
- ▶ Spend time with family, friends, etc.
- ▶ Become part of a community
- ▶ Be of service to others
- ▶ Express Gratitude
 - ▶ Self, Others, World



Don't Forget Practical Tools:



What would you choose?



Relaxation and/or Mindfulness Related Apps:

- ▶ **60 Seconds:** [http://www.pixelthoughts.co/60 seconds](http://www.pixelthoughts.co/60%20seconds)
 - ▶ enter a word and in 60 seconds goes away
- ▶ **Positive penguins helping kids to know their feelings (ages 9-11)**
- ▶ Worry box (ages 6-16)
- ▶ Breathe
- ▶ Breathe2Relax (6 and up)
- ▶ Smiling Mind: age 7 and up
- ▶ Bedtime Meditation for Kids (12 and up)
- ▶ Mindful app: meditation <http://www.mindful-app.com/>

Source for many: <https://www.anxiety.org/gift-apps-children-anxiety>

- ▶ Also see references for additional sites, etc



Relaxation and/or Mindfulness Related Apps:

- ▶ Mindful app: meditation <http://www.mindful-app.com/>
- ▶ Songza - playlists for anxious teens
- ▶ Calm - teens and adults
- ▶ Mindfulness - tweens, teens and adults
- ▶ Zen Sand
- ▶ Zen Studio
- ▶ Mind Yeti

Source for many: <https://www.anxiety.org/gift-apps-children-anxiety>

- ▶ Also see references for additional sites, etc





References:

- ▶ Burdick, D (2014) *Mindfulness Skills for Kids and Teens*. Eau Claire, WI: PESI, inc.
- ▶ Crescentini, C., Capurso, V., Furlan, S., & Fabbro, F. (2016). Mindfulness-oriented meditation for primary school children: Effects on attention and psychological well-being. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7, 805. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00805
- ▶ Flook, L., Smalley, S. L., Kitil, M. J., Galla, B. M., Kaiser-Greenland, S., Locke, J., ... & Kasari, C. (2010). Effects of mindful awareness practices on executive functions in elementary school children. *Journal of Applied School Psychology*, 26(1), 70-95.
- ▶ Flook, L., Goldberg, S. B., Pinger, L., & Davidson, R. J. (2015). Promoting prosocial behavior and self-regulatory skills in preschool children through a mindfulness-based kindness curriculum. *Developmental psychology*, 51(1), 44.
- ▶ Willard and Saltzman (2015) *Teaching Mindfulness Skills to Kids and Teens*. New York: Guilford Press.
- ▶ Young, Karen. (2017). Mindfulness for children: Fun, effective ways to strengthen mind, body, spirit. Retrieved from www.heysigmund.com
- ▶ Zhang, D., Chan, S. K. C., Lo, H. H. M., Chan, C. Y. H., Chan, J. C. Y., Ting, K. T., Gao, T. T., Lai, K. Y. C., Bögels, S. M., & Wong, S. Y. S. (2016). Mindfulness-based intervention for Chinese children with ADHD and their parents: A pilot mixed-method study. *Mindfulness*, 8, 1-14. doi:10.1007/s12671-016-0660-3
- ▶ Zhou, Z., Liu, Q., Niu, G., Sun, X., & Fan, C. (2017). Bullying victimization and depression in Chinese children: A moderated mediation model of resilience and mindfulness. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 104, 137-142. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2016.07.040
- ▶ <https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/mindfulness-for-children-kids-activities/>
- ▶ <https://www.edutopia.org/>

Resources:

- ▶ On Defining Mindfulness:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/what-matters-most/201711/3-definitions-mindfulness-might-surprise-you>

- ▶ Video on breathing:

<https://youtu.be/CvF9AEe-ozc>

- ▶ On Mindfulness in Schools:

Napoli, M., Krech, P. R., & Holley, L. C. (2005). Mindfulness training for elementary school students: The attention academy. *Journal of Applied School Psychology, 21*(1), 99-125.

Schonert-Reichl, K. A., & Lawlor, M. S. (2010). The effects of a mindfulness-based education program on pre- and early adolescents' well-being and social and emotional competence. *Mindfulness, 1*(3), 137-151.

Additional References and Skill Building Resources:

- ▶ **Websites:**

- ▶ On Mindfulness in Schools:

- ▶ <https://mindfulnessinschools.org/>

- ▶ <https://www.edutopia.org/article/mindfulness-resources>

- ▶ <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/implementing-school-wide-mindfulness-program-patrick-cook-deegan>

- ▶ On Self-Regulation in Schools:

- ▶ http://teacher.scholastic.com/professional/bruceperry/self_regulation.htm

- ▶ <http://thehighlyeffectiveteacher.com/how-to-develop-self-regulation-in-your-students/>

- ▶ <https://www.edcan.ca/articles/self-regulation-calm-alert-and-learning/>

Additional References and Skill Building Resources:

- ▶ **Ted Talk Links:**
- ▶ On Mindfulness:
- ▶ Andy Puddicombe on All It Takes Is 10 Mindful Minutes:
https://www.ted.com/talks/andy_puddicombe_all_it_takes_is_10_mindful_minutes
- ▶ Richard Burnett on Mindfulness in Schools:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mlk6xD_xAQ
- ▶ On Listening:
- ▶ Julian Treasure focuses on 5 strategies for listening consciously:
- ▶ https://www.ted.com/talks/julian_treasure_5_ways_to_listen_better
- ▶ Brene Brown Animated:
- ▶ On Empathy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw&feature=youtu.be>
- ▶ On Blame: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZWf2_2L2v8&feature=youtu.be

Please direct follow up questions regarding
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201-934-1160 x 7243

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activities and services, please visit our website:

www.westbergen.org

For information regarding initiating mental health services and
appointments, please call our ACCESS center at: 201-485-7172

For information regarding how to have West Bergen involved in
a community or work place based presentation, workshop or
event, please contact Mary Davey at: mdavey@westbergen.org
or 201-444-3550 x 7150.

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