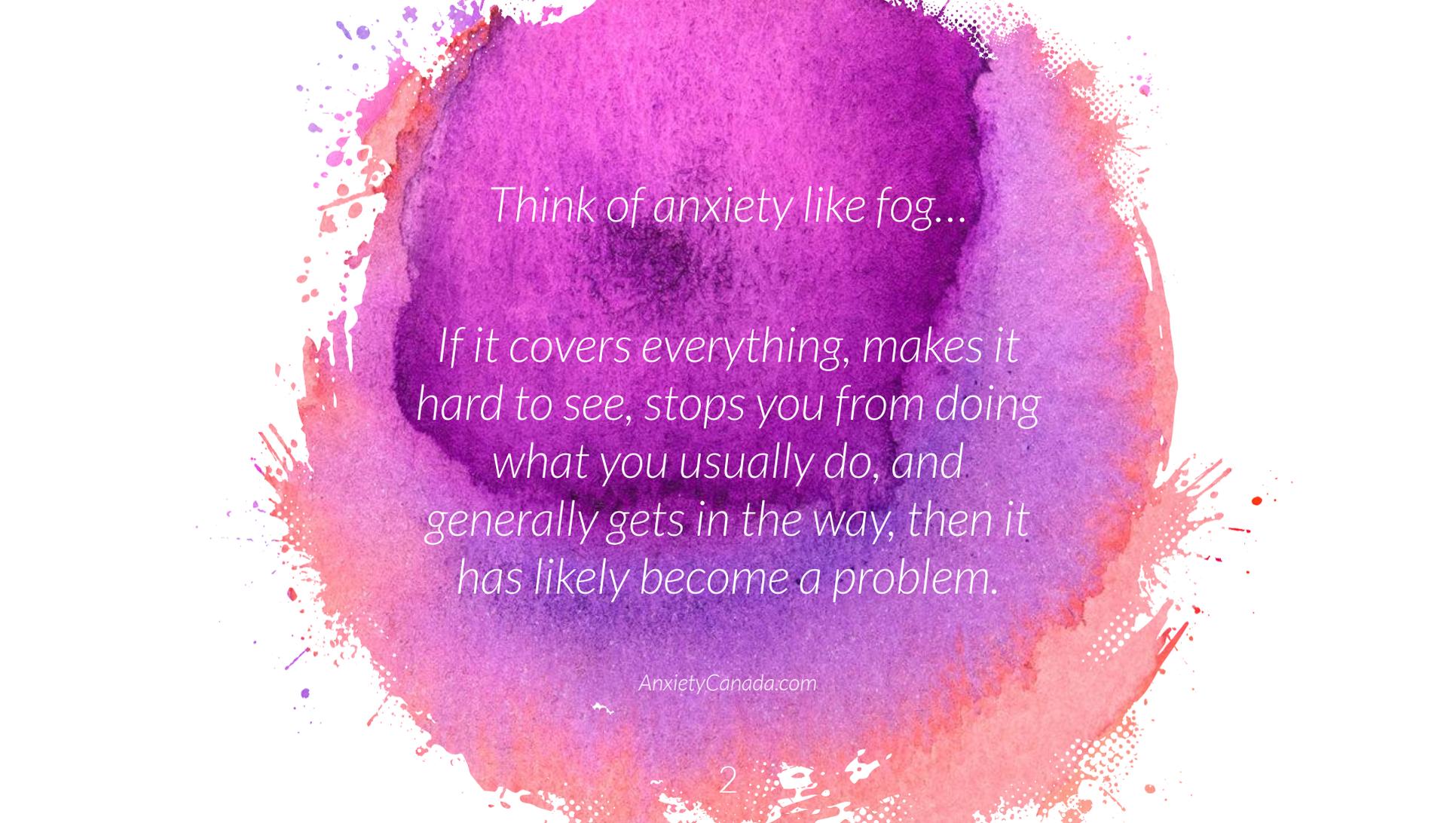


Anxiety Information Session for Caregivers

Developed by HRCE Specialists, Spring 2020

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Think of anxiety like fog...

If it covers everything, makes it hard to see, stops you from doing what you usually do, and generally gets in the way, then it has likely become a problem.

AnxietyCanada.com

What is Anxiety

Anxiety is an emotion characterized primarily by worried thoughts. It is also often accompanied by physical and behavioral changes, such as increased heart rate, muscle tension, restlessness, or task avoidance.

Everyone experiences anxiety from time to time. Small doses of anxiety in certain situations are useful. For example, anxiety can help alert us to danger, assist us to perform at our best and motivate us to study for an exam or practice for a big game.



All children experience anxiety as part of their normal development.

0 - 5 Months	Loss of support, loud noises
7 - 12 Months	Fear of strangers, fear of the unexpected
1 Years	Separation from main attachment figures, toileting and injury fears
2 - 6 Years	Many fears: loud noises, animals, darkness, separation, life changes, strangers, Injury, monsters
7 - 8 Years	Supernatural beings, dark, media events, left alone, injury
9 - 12 Years	Test and exams, school performance, bodily injury, physical appearance, thunder and lightning, death, the dark (low percentage)
Adolescents	School, home, safety, political issues, personal relationships, personal appearance, natural phenomena, uncertainty/future, animals

Varies across cultures

When anxiety becomes a problem

The usual signs of anxiety differ between the anxious and non-anxious individual primarily in degree, and may be shown in one or more of the following ways:

- × Excessive for age or developmental level;
- × Excessive for the situation on a frequent basis; and
- × Have persisted for several weeks or months.

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

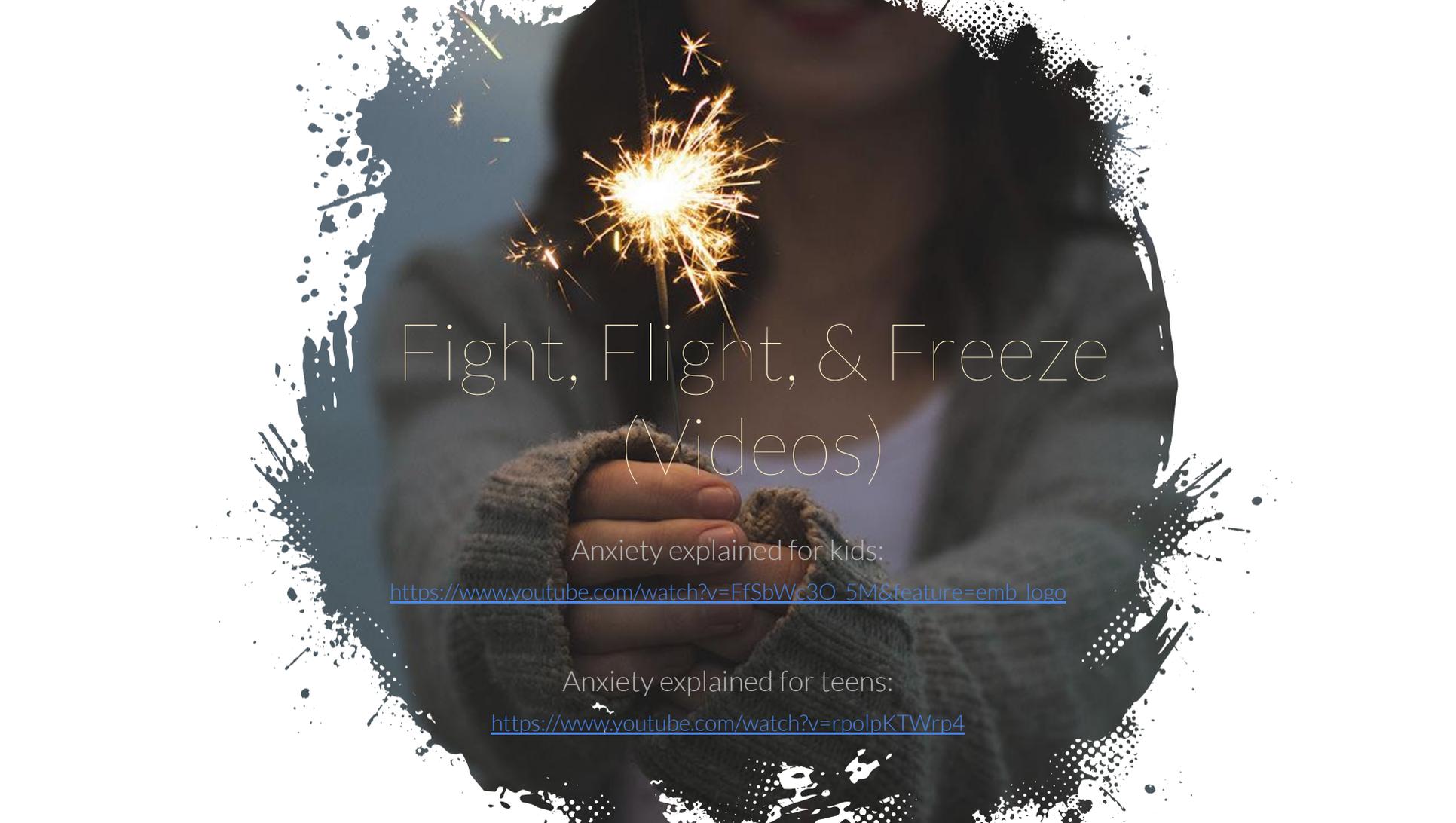
If your child is experiencing anxiety, they might complain of physical symptoms such as:

- × Stomach aches/ discomfort
- × Nausea
- × Difficulties breathing
- × Faster heartbeat
- × Muscle tension
- × Sweatiness
- × Frequent urination, especially before leaving home
- × Headaches
- × Dizziness
- × Shakiness

BEHAVIOURAL SYMPTOMS

If your child is experiencing anxiety, some behavioural changes that you might notice include:

- × Increased irritability
- × Difficulties falling or staying asleep
- × Difficulties separating from you
- × Refusal to go to school or do other activities, even fun activities
- × Difficulties meeting new people
- × Not speaking to people outside of the family
- × Withdrawal
- × Rapid speech

A hand holding a lit sparkler against a dark, splattered background. The sparkler is bright and glowing, with many small sparks flying out. The background is dark with white splatters and a circular pattern of dots.

Fight, Flight, & Freeze (Videos)

Anxiety explained for kids:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfSbWc3O_5M&feature=emb_logo

Anxiety explained for teens:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rpolpKTWrP4>

Types of Anxiety Disorders

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD): Excessive and uncontrollable worry about aspects of day to day life, future events, and minor matters.

Health Anxiety: There is a preoccupation with one or more somatic symptoms or having or getting a serious illness.

Body-Focused Repetitive Behaviours (BFRBs): A cluster of habitual behaviours that include hair pulling, skin picking, nail biting, nose picking, and lip or cheek biting.

Hoarding Disorder: Ongoing and significant difficulty getting rid of possessions.

Types of Anxiety Disorders

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD): Involves unwanted and disturbing thoughts, images, or urges (obsessions) that cause a great deal of anxiety or discomfort, which the child/teen then tries to reduce by engaging in repetitive behaviors or mental acts (compulsions).

Panic Disorder: Experiencing unexpected and repeated panic attacks. This is typically followed by at least one month of concern about having additional attacks.

Social Anxiety Disorder: An excessive and persistent fear of social and/or performance situations such as school, parties, athletic activities, and more.

Types of Anxiety Disorders

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): A trauma- and stressor-related disorder that can develop after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event, or learning that a traumatic event has happened to a loved one.

Selective mutism: An individual consistently does not speak in some situations, but speaks comfortably in other situations.

Separation Anxiety: For some children their response to actual or anticipated separations is far more extreme than their peers, and/or continues well beyond the first 1-2 years of school. These children's difficulties may indicate the presence of separation anxiety disorder.

Types of Anxiety Disorders

Specific Phobia: A phobia is an intense fear that is out of proportion to a specific object or situation. This means having an extreme anxiety response towards something that is not causing immediate danger.

Research suggests that phobias can run in families, and that both genetic and environmental factors (nature and nurture) can contribute to developing a phobia. Some children and teens develop a phobia after being exposed to a traumatic or frightening event such as a fear of water after a near drowning or fear of dogs after being bitten.

PANDAS (pediatric autoimmune neuropsychiatric disorder associated with streptococcus, or 'strep') and PANS (pediatric acute-onset neuropsychiatric syndrome): Rare neuropsychiatric conditions that affect children and young adolescents.

Causes of Anxiety Disorders

Several things play a role in causing the overactive "fight, flight, or freeze" that happens with anxiety disorders. Some of these include:

Genetics. A child who has a family member with an anxiety disorder is more likely to have one too. Kids may inherit genes that make them prone to anxiety.

Brain chemistry. Genes help direct the way brain chemicals (called neurotransmitters) work. If specific brain chemicals are in short supply, or not working well, it can cause anxiety.

Life situations. Things that happen in a child's life can be stressful and difficult to cope with. Loss, serious illness, death of a loved one, violence, or abuse can lead some kids to become anxious.

Learned behaviors. Growing up in a family where others are fearful or anxious also can "teach" a child to be afraid too.

Talking to your Child about Anxiety

Why Talk about Anxiety?

MYTH:

Talking to your child about anxiety will make them even more anxious.

FACT:

Providing accurate information about anxiety can reduce confusion or shame. Explain that anxiety is a common and normal experience.

Talking to your Child about Anxiety

Normalize Anxiety

- × Anxiety is normal and everyone experiences anxiety at some time in their life – before an exam, meeting new people, speaking in front of the class.
- × Sometimes it happens for no reason at all. That’s also normal. It happens to lots of adults and kids.
- × About 1 in 8 kids struggle with anxiety. Let your child know that in their class, there’s a good chance that 3 or 4 other kids know exactly what they’re going through.

Talking to your Child about Anxiety

Explain Why Anxiety Feels the Way it Does

SMOKE ALARM RESPONSE

An alarm can help protect us when there is an actual fire, but sometimes a smoke alarm is too sensitive and goes off when there isn't really a fire (e.g. burning toast in toaster).

Like a smoke alarm, anxiety is helpful when it works right. But when it goes off when there is no real danger, then we may want to fix it.

Talking to your Child about Anxiety

Name the Anxiety

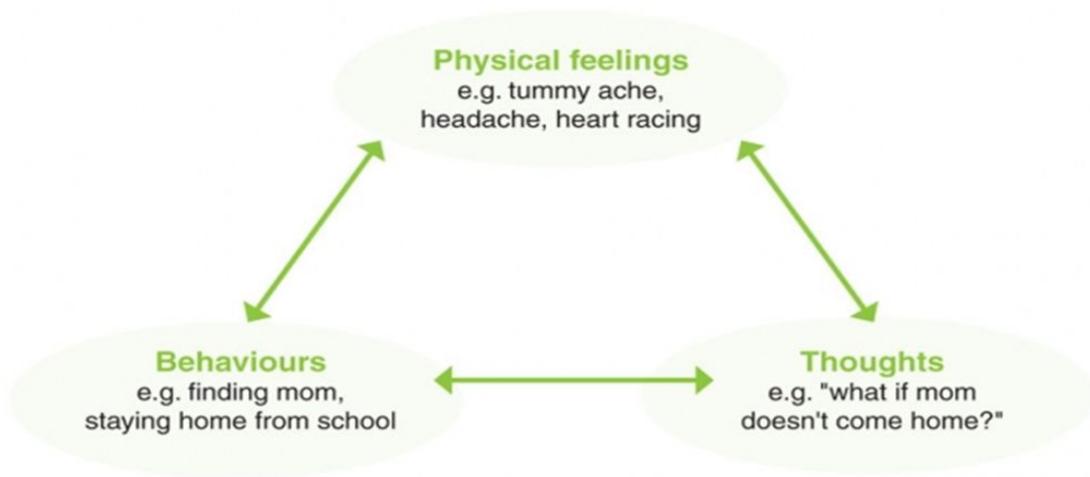
- × Ask your child to come up with a name for the anxiety (e.g. Mr. Worry, Worry Monster).
- × Refer to your child's anxiety with this new name, particularly in terms of "bossing back" anxiety (e.g. "It's just the worry monster talking. I don't have to listen!").

Talking to your Child about Anxiety

Encourage your Child to Open up About Worries

- × Start by describing a recent situation where you observed some signs of anxiety in your child.
- × Share with your child some things you were scared of when you were the same age (especially if you shared the same types of fears), and ask if s/he has any similar worries or fears.

Teach your Child to Recognize Anxiety



Be a Detective: Recognize Avoidance

- × If you woke up tomorrow morning and all your anxiety had magically disappeared, what would you do? How would you act? How would your family know you weren't anxious (Your teacher? Your friends?)
- × My anxiety stops me from...
- × When I am not anxious, I will be able to...

Talking to your Child about Anxiety

What NOT to say / What TO say

<p>Don't worry. You can't will away your child's anxiety by telling him not to worry. He's already worried.</p>	<p>Can you tell me more about your worries?</p>
<p>It's no big deal. Anxious children know that their worries are a big deal. Their worries can negatively affect relationships, school performance, and other areas of functioning.</p>	<p>I can see that you're feeling very anxious about this. Let's do some deep breathing together.</p>

What NOT to say / What TO say (cont...)

<p>You'll be fine. When a child's anxious mind is racing, he doesn't feel anything close to "fine".</p>	<p>You can help ease the fears by opening the door to a conversation: Let's talk about that together.</p>
<p>There's nothing to be afraid of. Anxious kids have plenty to fear: Judgment, peer rejection, failure, and the list goes on. You can't stamp out anxiety with a quick phrase.</p>	<p>You can help ease the fears by opening the door to a conversation: Let's talk about that together.</p>
<p>I'll do it. Anxious kids want to confront their worries and be more independent, but anxious thoughts often get in the way.</p>	<p>Use this positive phrase to help your child: I know you feel anxious but I know you can do this. I am here to support you.</p>

What NOT to say / What TO say (cont...)

<p>You just need to sleep more! A worried mind tends to race at night when the busyness of the day finally slows down. This isn't your child's fault.</p>	<p>Try this: Let's do a meditation app together before bed to help us relax into sleep.</p>
<p>It's all in your head. Anxiety is a brain-based disorder, but dismissing it in this manner shames the anxious child, increasing feelings of guilt.</p>	<p>Use this helpful phrase instead: It sounds like your worry brain is really loud right now, let's take a walk together and calm that worry brain down.</p>
<p>Hurry up! Anxious kids tend to move at a snail's pace. While some get caught in the trap of perfectionism, others are burdened with feelings of regret when making decisions.</p>	<p>Ask a simple question to help your child move along: How can I help?</p>

What NOT to say / What TO say (cont...)

<p>I don't know what you need. Parenting an anxious child is very difficult and often downright exhausting. Your child needs you to remain calm and hopeful.</p>	<p>Try this phrase: Let's brainstorm ways to help calm our minds right now.</p>
<p>Stop thinking about it. Trust me, your child would love to stop thinking anxious thoughts. The problem is that it's very difficult to interrupt the anxious thought cycle without proper supports in place.</p>	<p>Try this: Let's talk back to that worry brain by telling it positive stuff!</p>

Talking to your Child about Anxiety

Resources:

<https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/infosheet/talking-to-your-child-or-teen-about-anxiety>

www.anxietycanada.com

<http://www.worrywisekids.org/node/48>

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/anxiety-disorders.html>

<https://www.psycom.net/child-anxiety-things-never-to-say/>

<https://www.heysigmund.com/anxiety-in-kids/>

Interventions for Home

- × Be consistent in how you handle problems and administer discipline.
- × Be patient and be prepared to listen.
- × Avoid being overly critical, disparaging, impatient, or cynical.
- × Maintain realistic, attainable goals and expectations for your child.
- × Do not communicate that perfection is expected or acceptable.
- × Maintain consistent but flexible routines for homework, chores, activities, etc.
- × Accept that mistakes are a normal part of growing up and that no one is expected to do everything equally well.
- × Praise and reinforce effort, even if success is less than expected.

Interventions for Home

- × Practice and rehearse upcoming events, such as giving a speech or other performance.
- × Teach your child simple strategies to help with anxiety, such as organizing materials and time, developing small scripts of what to do and say to himself or herself when anxiety increases, and learning how to relax under stressful conditions.
- × Do not treat feelings, questions, and statements about feeling anxious as silly or unimportant.
- × Often, reasoning is not effective in reducing anxiety. Do not criticize your child for not being able to respond to rational approaches.
- × Seek outside help if the problem persists and continues to interfere with daily activities.

Interventions for School

- × Establish predictable routines
- × Set clear and reasonable expectations
- × Break tasks into manageable units
- × Have specific evaluation criteria
- × Provide opportunities for practice and rehearsal
- × Pair anxious students with peers who are confident and supportive

Interventions for School

- × Give special responsibilities
- × Give time to relax when anxiety becomes high
- × Reduce or avoid unexpected situations
- × Avoid punitive and negative attitudes
- × Reduce time constraints, if possible
- × Move the student to a quiet setting with fewer distractions

Practical Strategies for Coping with Anxiety

- × Model and reinforce positive behaviours and coping strategies
- × Model how to identify positives in situations
- × Model how to pay attention to positives instead of pointing out the negatives
- × Model positive self-talk
- × Discuss one happy event each family member experienced that day at dinner
- × Model and Practice Gratitude
- × Encourage and model problem solving
- × Build resiliency



Practical Strategies for Coping with Anxiety

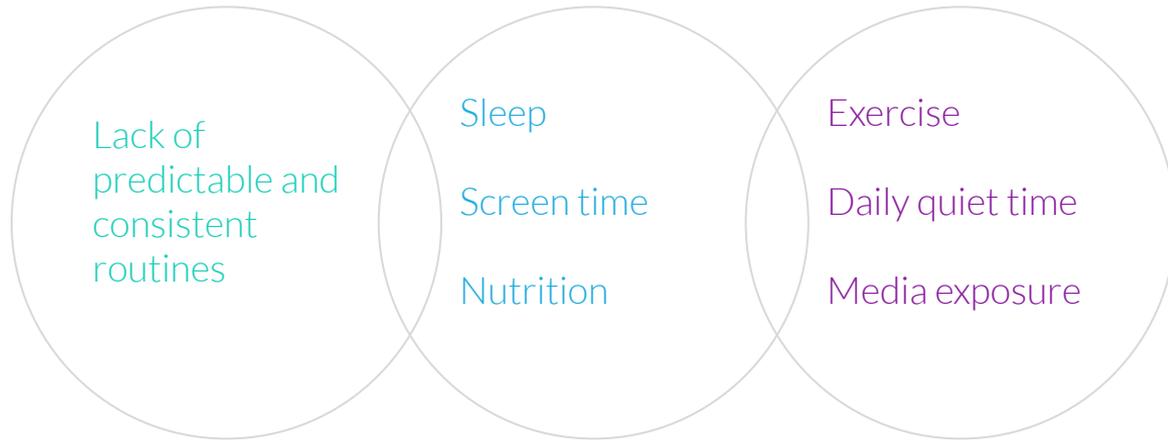
- × Help to recognize awareness of body cues
- × Model calming and relaxation techniques
- × Model quiet time-do happy, enjoyable and relaxing activities
- × Laugh and play daily
- × Create a Menu for happy and relaxing activities like listening to music, taking a warm bath, watching the stars, closing your eyes and taking slow deep breaths, time with your pet, watching a fish tank, sipping your favorite drink, sitting in the sunshine, eating a treat, etc.



Practical Strategies for Coping with Anxiety

- × Show how to handle emotions before emotions handle you
- × Model and learn mindfulness techniques
- × Engage in the “Here and Now”
- × Free 30 day program: MindWellU
<https://novascotia.ca/mental-health-and-wellbeing/>

Things that impact your ability to cope and handle stress:



Apps

- × **"Mindshift"**

It provides psycho-education about different types of anxiety including social anxiety. There are tools for self-monitoring and challenging negative thinking. There are several "chill out" strategies and audio-scripts to play.

- × **"MoodGym"**

It teaches cognitive behavioural skills for depression/anxiety.

- × **"Happify"**

This has games and activities that use positive psychology to increase a teen's well being. The teen rates happiness in different aspects of life and sets different goals to work toward

Some Key Handouts include:

- × Practical Strategies for coping with Anxiety
- × Reassurance Seeking
- × Tolerating Uncertainty
- × Realistic Thinking
- × Calm Breathing
- × Muscle Relaxation
- × Hopping Down the Worry Path

<https://www.anxietycanada.com/free-downloadable-pdf-resources/>

My Anxiety Plan (MAP) Online Courses

The MAP program was designed as a self-help program for parents or caregivers to support children and teens with mild to moderate anxiety problems.

Sign up for the adult MAP course

<https://maps.anxietycanada.com/courses/my-anxiety-plan-map-for-adults/>

Sign up for the child/teen MAP course

https://maps.anxietycanada.com/courses/child-map/?_ga=2.149220787.446132132.1591883848-2084789997.1585835485

Anxiety & Covid-19

- × Talking to kids about Covid-19:
<https://www.anxietycanada.com/articles/talking-to-kids-about-covid-19/>
- × What to do if you are anxious or worried about Coronavirus:
<https://www.anxietycanada.com/articles/what-to-do-if-you-are-anxious-or-worried-about-coronavirus-covid-19/>
- × Returning to New Normal:
<https://www.anxietycanada.com/articles/returning-to-a-new-normal-12-tips-for-handling-uncertainty/>

Free Resources:

IWK Central Referral
(902) 464-4110

Family Physician/Pediatrician
Kids Help Line Call: 1 800
668-6868/Text: 686868 (24/7)
NS Govt. Covid-19

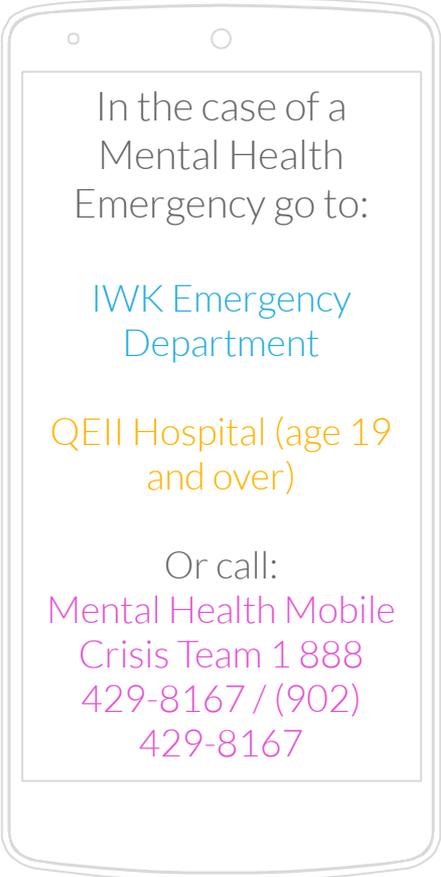
Mental Health and Well Being
<https://novascotia.ca/mental-health-and-wellbeing/>

Strongest Families Institute
("ICAN" anxiety program)
<https://www.nshealth.ca/content/ican-conquer-anxiety-and-nervousness-anxiety-program-18-plus-years-age>

(also available for children)
Call 811 (everyday health
information)

Call 211 (to connect you to
community and social services)

Where to
Reach out
if your
child has
Anxiety



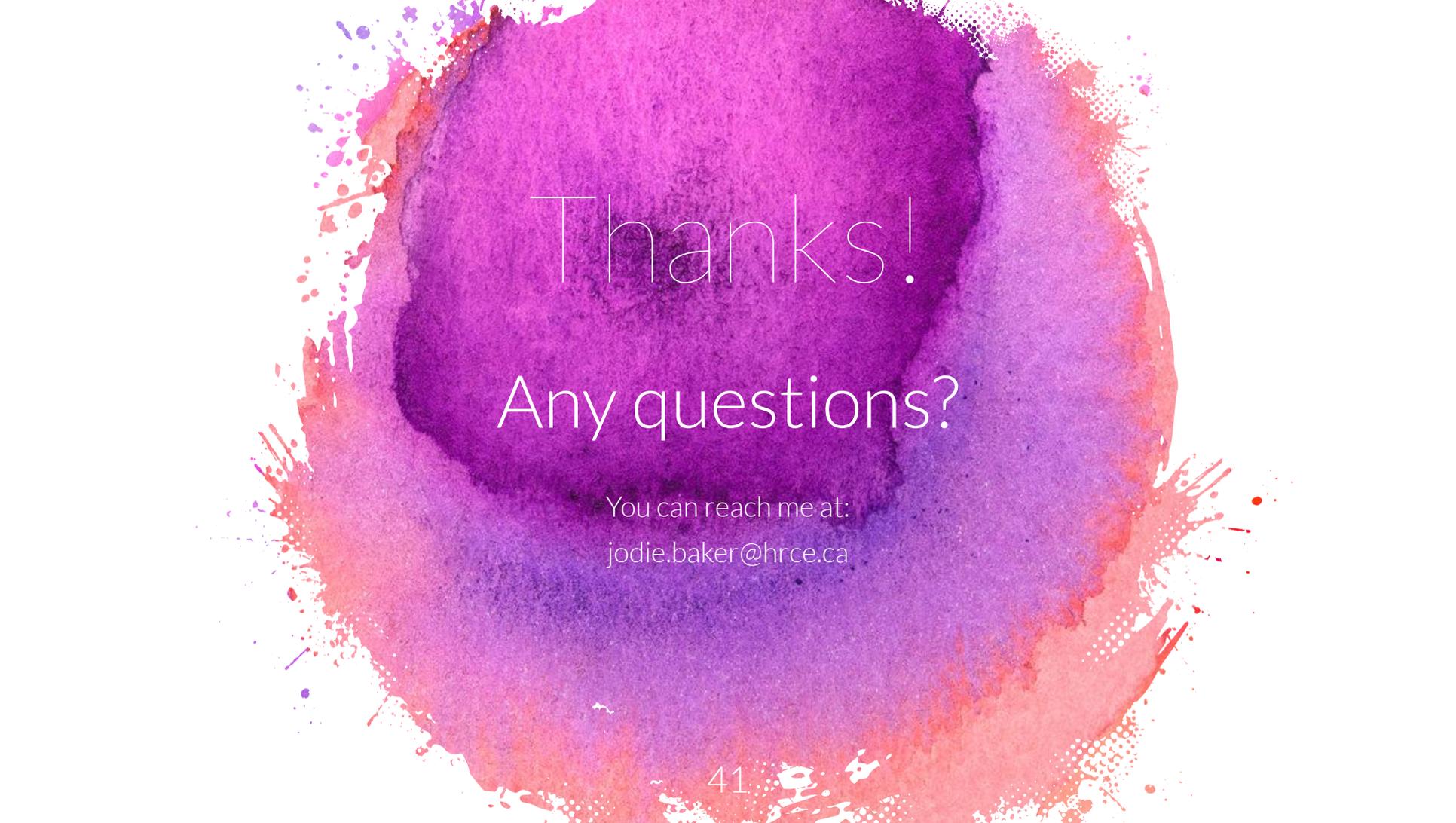
In the case of a
Mental Health
Emergency go to:

IWK Emergency
Department

QEII Hospital (age 19
and over)

Or call:
Mental Health Mobile
Crisis Team 1 888
429-8167 / (902)
429-8167

Where to
Reach out
if your
child has
Anxiety



Thanks!

Any questions?

You can reach me at:
jodie.baker@hrce.ca

Guided Deep Breathing Activity

https://www.anxietycanada.com/sites/default/files/calm_breathing.pdf

Additional Information:

Presentation on Anxiety, Dr. A Bagnell, IWK

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWynIGiNUt8&feature=youtu.be>

Joey Manages Worry

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7g8Atv27Q>

8



F-E-A-R

Has two meanings:
Forget everything and run

Or
Face everything and rise

Zig Ziglar