

Supporting Your Anxious Kid & Building Resilience

**Recognizing anxiety,
Redefining “mistakes” and success”, &
experimenting with more helpful parenting responses**

with KATIE GRUVER



Hi! I'm Katie

- Parent Educator (11 years)
(Certified in Positive Discipline & Gottman's Bringing Baby Home)
- Adjunct Faculty at Seattle Colleges; Finalizing my Master's in Couple & Family Therapy
- Founder, Positive Parenting Seattle
- Parent of Quincy (11) & Clark (9); Partnered for 21+ years
- Late in life introvert and experiencer of anxiety



POSITIVE PARENTING SEATTLE

www.positiveparentingseattle.com

ALL ARE
welcome
HERE

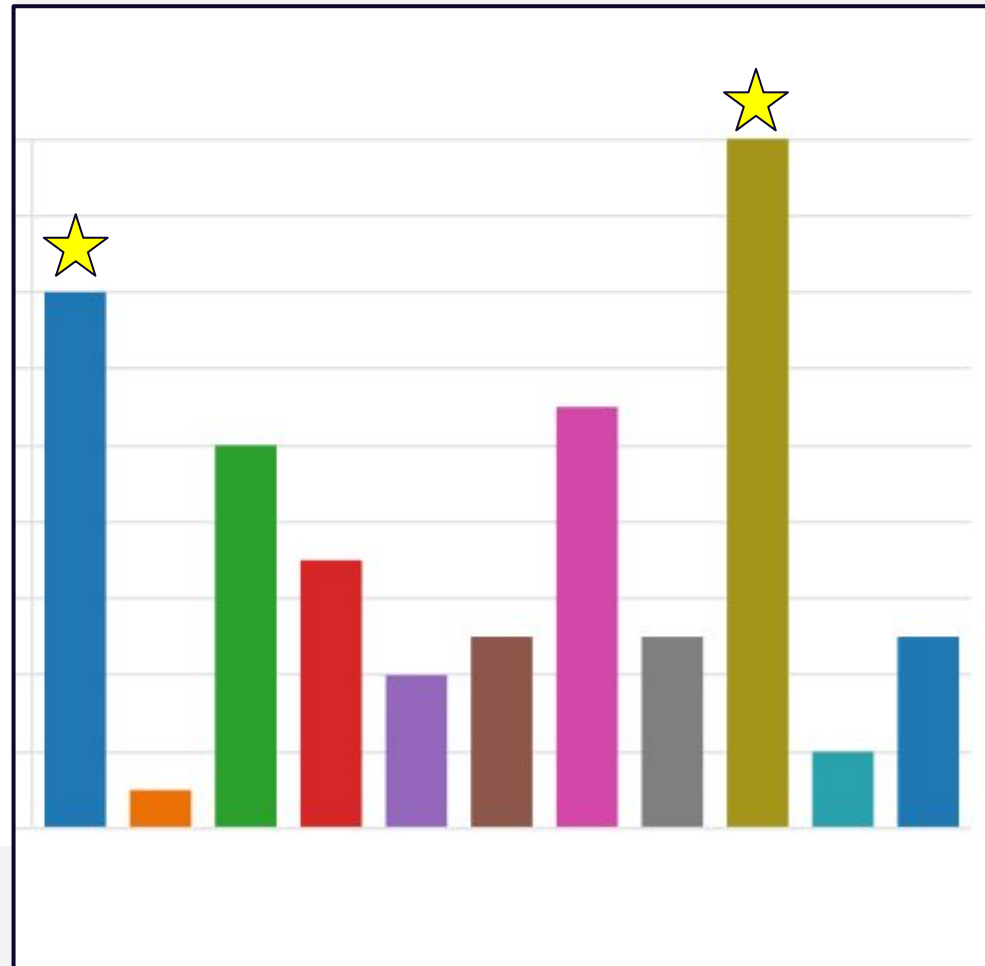


When asked what you needed:

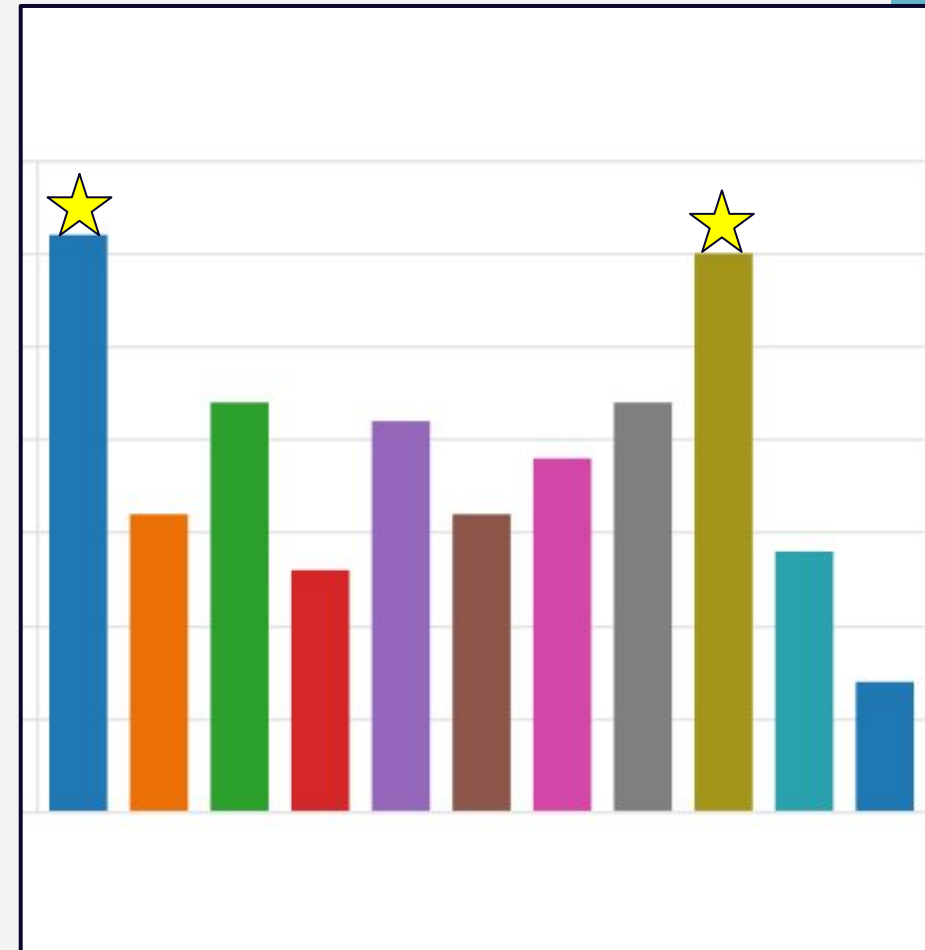


- ★ Skills for Dealing with Anxiety a...
- Building Growth Mindset
- Screen Time and Social Media
- Building Consistent Routines
- Bullying and Social Skills
- Literacy and Supporting Readin...
- Building Independence
- Positive Parenting
- ★ Developing Resilience and Copi...
- Managing Achievement Culture
- Other

From Parents & Families



From Teachers & Staff



SERENE	FULFILLED	CALM	BALANCED
EASYGOING	CHILL	THOUGHTFUL	CONTENT
SATISFIED	GRATEFUL	TRANQUIL	RELAXED
COMFY	COMPLACENT	PEACEFUL	MELLOW

M
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O
D

LIVELY	UPBEAT	EXCITED	ECSTATIC
ENTHUSIASTIC	ENERGISED	INSPIRED	HYPER
MOTIVATED	SURPRISED	FOCUSED	PLEASANT
JOYFUL	BLISSFUL	HOPEFUL	HAPPY

M O O D M E T E R

SAD	LONELY	TIRED	BORED
GLUM	DRAINED	APATHETIC	DOWN
PESSIMISTIC	CONCERNED	EXHAUSTED	MISERABLE
DISCOURAGED	DRAINED	SPENT	ALIENATED

E
T
E
R

TENSE	NERVOUS	RESTLESS	TROUBLED
PEEVED	WORRIED	FRIGHTENED	UNEASY
FRUSTRATED	STRESSED	IRRITATED	PANICKED
STUNNED	ANNOYED	ANGRY	FURIOUS

Group Agreements

- Be respectful (one another and yourself). We're all learning here.
- If you're feeling uncomfortable/defensive ("this would never work for my kid"), get curious.
- Share your voice. Make space for others. Pass if you want.
- **YOU are the expert on your child. Take what works for you, *let go of the rest.***
- Consider confidentiality — Seattle is such a small big city.



WHAT ARE YOU HOPING TO LEARN?

Also... grab a fidget if it helps :)

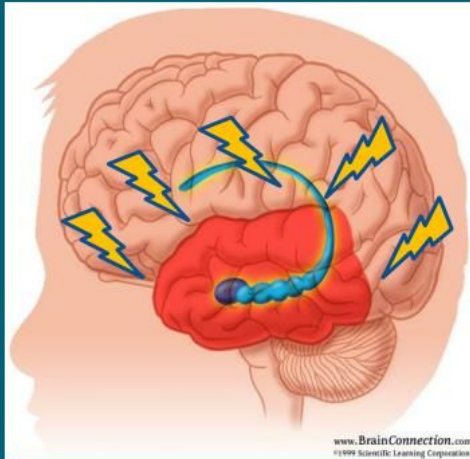
GOALS FOR TONIGHT**

1. Understand landscape of stress and anxiety of kids right now
2. Learn Do's & Don't of supporting anxious kids
3. Get more comfortable with letting kids fail
4. Learn from each other: Q & A – 8-8:30pm

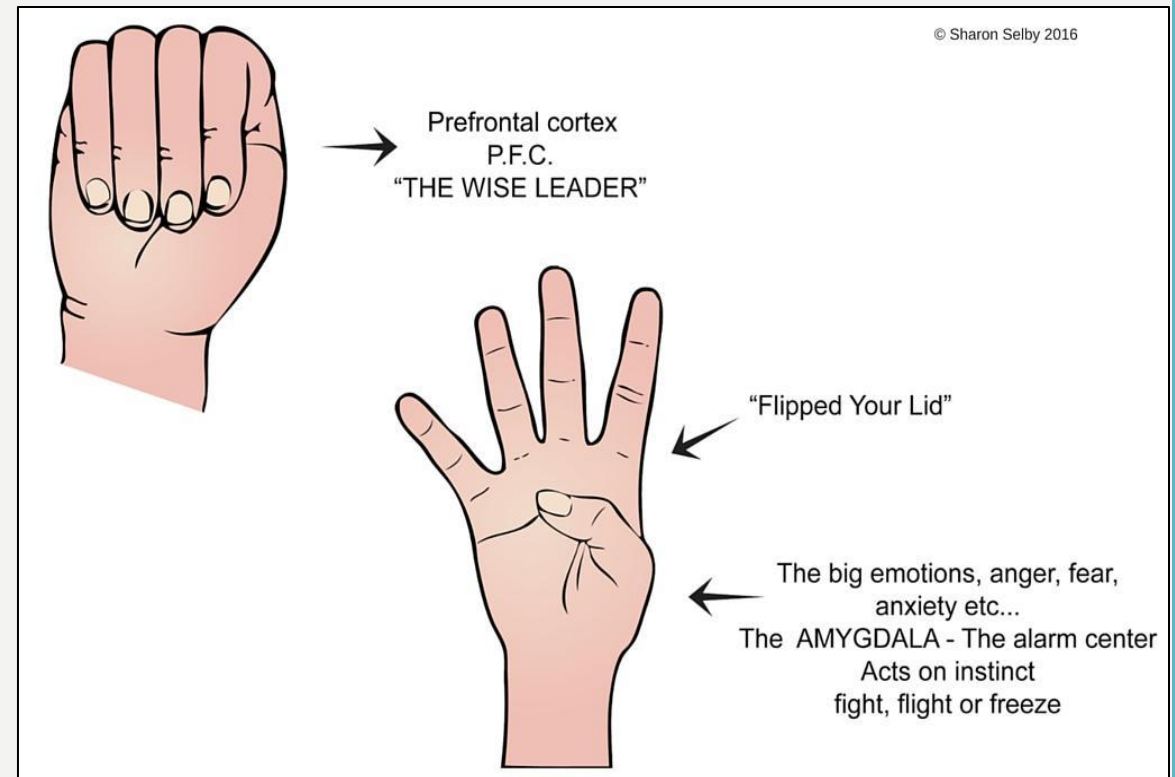
What happens to brains under stress?

Brain Stressed Out

1. Hippocampus overwhelmed by glucocorticoids
2. Amygdala overwhelms hippocampus



3. "Talk" between neurons disrupted
4. No new neurons formed
5. Prolonged glucocorticoid exposure *might* damage or kill hippocampal neurons





Kids & Anxiety

- Fear: A healthy, essential emotion that keeps us safe. Activation of the brain & body's internal alarm system
- Anxiety: An overactive/maladaptive alarm system. Excessive worry that keeps your child from doing what they **want** or **need** to do.
- Anxiety is on the rise in youth ages 6-17 (5.4% in 2003, 8.4% 2012, > post COVID)
 - + More referrals at school for “worry”
 - + Anxious parents = anxious kids
 - + Certain populations (high ACES, BIPOC & LGBTQIA+) experience significantly more trauma than others

Anxiety presents itself in many different ways...

The desire to control people and events



Difficulty getting to sleep



Feeling agitated or angry



Defiance and other challenging behaviors



Having high expectations for self, including school work & sports



Avoiding activities or events (including school)

Pain like stomachaches and headaches



Struggling to pay attention and focus



Intolerance of uncertainty



Crying and difficulty managing emotions



Over-planning for situations and events



Feeling worried about situations or events

When is it time for extra support?

Generalized Anxiety Disorder —

DSM-5 Criteria

((((Lifetime prevalence is 8-27%)))

- Difficult to control worry
- Occurs for *at least 6 months*, more days than not, in multiple settings;
- 3 or more symptoms
 - Restlessness or feeling keyed up or on edge
 - Being easily fatigued
 - Difficulty concentrating or mind going blank
 - Muscle tension
 - Sleep disturbance
- Clinically significant distress**

Things to look out for:

- When anxiety interferes with what your child **wants** to do (go to friend's house) and what they **need** to do (go to school, sleep).
- Frequent physical symptoms
- Avoiding developmental experiences

+ *80% of kids with anxiety have co-occurring mental health condition*

GROUNDING TECHNIQUE

THINK ABOUT:



5 THINGS YOU CAN SEE

4 THINGS YOU CAN HEAR



3 THINGS YOU CAN TOUCH

2 THINGS YOU CAN SMELL



1 THING YOU CAN TASTE



What does this bring up for you?

Pair & share. ((5 minutes))

**Also, what do YOU need right now? CHOCOLATE???*

We all have worries...

Any of these sound familiar?

- Transitions / Separating from parents
- Getting over embarrassment
- Going to sleep
- Academic pressure / Testing
- Friend troubles / bullying
- COVID
- War, natural disasters
- Not being a “good” student
- Racism / bigotry / oppression
- Not being liked/understood; Feeling left out
- Moving; new job; new pet; new sibling
- Financial concerns
- Divorce / Family separation
- Violence: guns (at school), people breaking in
- Death of a loved one (real or imagined)

Worry often gives a small
thing a big shadow.

Swedish Proverb





So...

How can we support anxious kids?

- 1) Offer authentic validation & connection
- 2) Stop demanding. Stop rescuing
- 3) Teach skills that build confidence & honor their locus of control

1. Offer validation & co-regulation



Mirror neurons are always at work.

2. STOP Demanding & STOP Rescuing

Two ways adults keep kids in their anxiety:

Demanding:

*Requiring a child to participate in a feared experience while discounting their feelings.

- “We paid for these swim lessons, so get in the pool.”
- “You’ll be fine”
- “You are GOING to camp.”

★ *Rescuing / Protecting / Fixing:*

*Helping child to avoid feared experiences, challenges or failure.

- “Ok, you don’t have to go to school today.”
- “Fine, I’ll order for you this time.”
- “I’ll call your friend’s parents and figure out why he was mean today.”

What does Demanding & Rescuing teach kids?

Demanding:

Kids learn:

“When I feel panic, I’m on my own.”

“It’s wrong for me to feel this way.”

★ *Rescuing / Protecting / Fixing:*

Kids learn:

“The world is too scary or hard for me.”

“Failure is bad.”

Instead: Validate. Consider a small step. Offer confidence!

“Hmmm... that does sound uncomfortable. Let’s figure out a plan together. What’s your idea?”

“I am confident that you can participate even while feeling anxious; I’ve even seen you do it!”

“Something about this just doesn’t feel good to you right now. I believe you. What is one thing that felt ok last time?”

Want resilient kids?

Let them fail!

(Yes, Really.)



ALL Kids *(especially anxious ones)* Need:

- ❑ **Scary + safe** new opportunities
- ❑ Space to calm & cope
- ❑ Choices & chances
- ❑ Skills to “fix it” themselves
- ❑ Opportunities to contribute & feel important
- ❑ **BOREDOM!** (Time & space to recover)

Fail early

(when it's safe)

+

Fail often

(when the stakes are low)

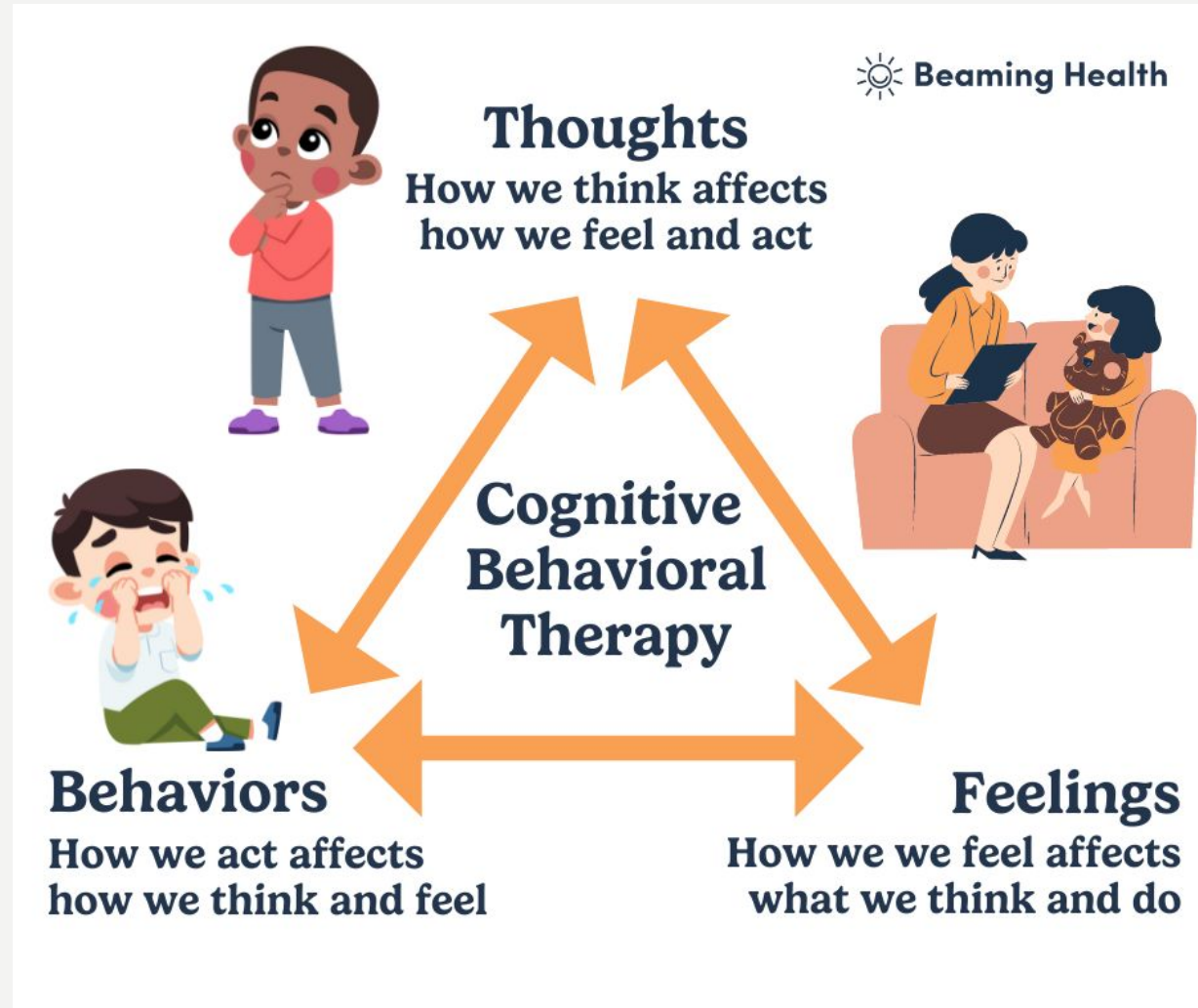
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RESILIENT KIDS!!!

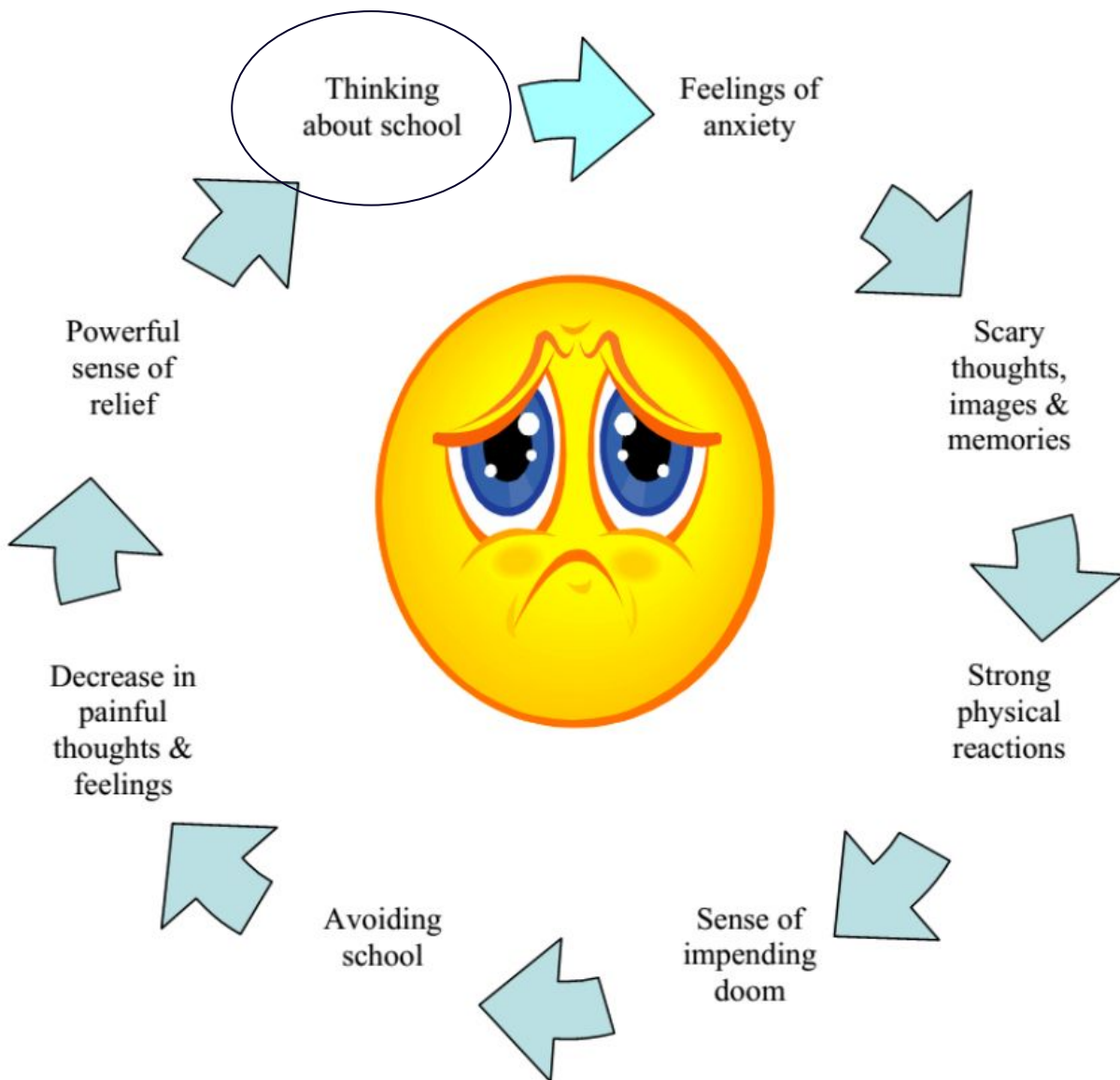
*(who trust that they can
recover from life's ups and downs)*

3. How to help kids build skills

****CBT 101**



Support #1 – Checking our thoughts



CBT Skills to practice:

- 1. Get the facts**
What is my negative automatic thought?
- 2. Seek a more balanced position**
(What *might also* be true? And more helpful?)

* Anxious kids need facts & specific examples, not platitudes or praise.

* “What would you tell a friend?”

Positive affirmations for
anxiety

- I am loved
- I am not alone.
- I am strong
- I am always improving
- I can climb every mountain.
- I have everything I need.
- I am not afraid of what could go wrong.



AFFIRMATIONS FOR
Anxiety

- THIS IS ONLY TEMPORARY
- I AM IN CONTROL
- I CAN TAKE THINGS ONE STEP AT A TIME
- I'VE MADE IT THROUGH BEFORE AND I'LL MAKE IT THROUGH AGAIN
- ANXIETY DOES NOT DEFINE ME

Share a helpful affirmation or tool.

It's not wishful thinking.

It's finding a more helpful truth.

Support #2: Focus on healthy control



Support #3: Family Meetings



Support #4: Schedules & Routines

Routines build safety.

- ❑ Can kids easily see their schedule? *VISUAL ROUTINE CHARTS!
- ❑ Do you talk (frequently) about schedule changes in advance? (Who's picking them up? What's happening this weekend? What needs to happen before screen time?)
- ❑ What control do kids have in their schedule?
- ❑ Where have you built in time for relaxing? Connecting? Play? (Do kids know it's coming?)
- ❑ If a time of day is hard, what ideas do the KIDS have to make it go smoother? (“What can I do or stop doing that would feel better to you?”)



YOUR QUESTIONS

WHAT ELSE WOULD BE HELPFUL?



What are you excited to try?

Can you share something you've tried that is working for
you / your kid(s)?

Need more support?

Therapists to follow:

@thrivinglittles
@dr.annlouise.lockhart
@positivelypresent
@therapyforwomen
@latinxparenting
@sitwithwhit
@drheidigreen
@lisaolivera
@nedratawwab

Articles:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/05/childhood-in-an-anxious-age/609079/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/15/parenting/kids-tantrums-advice.html>

Books for adults:

“Listen” by Patty Wipfler
“The Opposite of Worry” by Lawrence Cohen

Books for Kids:

“A Kids Book About Anxiety” by Ross Szabo
“Some days I flip my lid” by Hannah and Kellie Bailey.

More Support:

If concerned about child’s depression
<https://www.erikaslighthouse.org/>

Find a local therapist:

psychologytoday.com/us/therapists

Find a reduced fee therapist:

<https://openpathcollective.org/>

Find an online therapist (all ages):

<https://www.betterhelp.com/>

Grief support for children/families:

<https://healingcenterseattle.org/>

24/7 Crisis support for LGBTQ+ youth

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

24/7 King County's local crisis hotline:

<https://www.crisisconnections.org/>

Find resources for suicide:

<https://intheforefront.org/>

(206) 461.3222 or (866) 427-4747

Connection
is your superpower.



FINAL REMINDERS

The most powerful tool you have to influence your kid's behavior is *the relationship* you have with them.

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THANK YOU!!!

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