

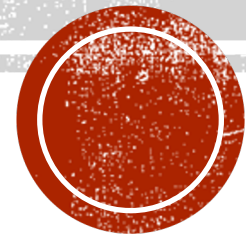
ANXIETY BASICS FOR EDUCATORS

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ANXIETY BASICS

- 10% of youth aged 6-17 have an anxiety disorder
 - Only 30% of these are treated
- Compare to:
 - 7 million children with asthma
 - 7 million with peanut allergy
 - 200,000 with diabetes
- Half of lifetime mental illness cases begin by age 14, $\frac{3}{4}$ by age 24
- 17% increase in anxiety disorder diagnosis in last 10 years
- Anxiety affects 30% of children
 - 80% of children with anxiety are not receiving treatment

ANXIETY BASICS

- Average age of onset
 - 11 years old for separation anxiety and specific phobias
 - 14 years old for social anxiety disorder
- As little as 1% of children with anxiety receive treatment in the year that symptoms begin
- Anxiety leads to increased risk of depression, school failure, substance abuse, and suicide
 - Social anxiety has highest correlation to later depression- twice as much as other anxiety disorders and three times that of children without anxiety
 - Children with anxiety twice as likely to develop substance abuse

WHAT IS ANXIETY?

- Anxiety is **NORMAL**
 - Anxiety disorders appear with disproportionate anxiety responses to things others cope with more easily that happen daily
- Amygdala
 - Section of brain responsible for fear and preparing for emergencies
 - Helps store memory of events and emotions
 - Tries to keep us safe, alarm goes off when danger is sensed
 - This is good when there is actually danger

WHAT IS ANXIETY?

- For those with anxiety, amygdala gives false alarm of danger
- F.E.A.R.
 - False Evidence About Reality
 - 85% Rule
- Reframe from “they won’t” to “they can’t”

CAUSES OF ANXIETY

- Females at greater risk for anxiety disorders
 - Gender difference begins at puberty- females twice as likely
- Combination of increased vulnerability to anxiety and exposure to specific trauma or ongoing stressors
- Genetics may help determine overall vulnerability and susceptibility to anxiety
 - May be born being more reactive or sensitive but temperament, environmental stress, and health might tip the scales
 - Children 5x more likely to develop anxiety disorder if parents have anxiety



CAUSES OF ANXIETY

- Learning/Modeling
 - Parents and other role models who view the world as frightening or have an anxious interpretation of the world influence children
 - May teach children to avoid situations rather than deal with them
 - In trying to protect child from anxiety, take away the opportunity to learn and practice skills



CAUSES OF ANXIETY

- Environmental
 - Exposure to stressful environment can be pathway to creating anxiety, but with exposure to traumatic event, only $\frac{1}{4}$ of children develop PTSD
 - Situations that disrupt child's sense of structure and order (divorce, death, moving, trauma)
 - Common to have anxiety during transitions



RED FLAGS

- Easily distressed, or agitated when in a stressful situation
- Repetitive reassurance questions, "what if" concerns, inconsolable, won't respond to logical arguments
- Headaches, stomachaches, regularly too sick to go to school
- Anticipatory anxiety, worrying hours, days, weeks ahead
- Disruptions of sleep with difficulty falling asleep, frequent nightmares, difficulty sleeping alone



RED FLAGS

- Perfectionism, self-critical, very high standards that make nothing good enough
- Overly-responsible, people pleasing, excessive concern that others are upset with him or her, unnecessary apologizing
- Demonstrating excessive avoidance, refuses to participate in expected activities, refusal to attend school
- Disruption of child or family functioning, difficulty with going to school, friend's houses, religious activities, family gatherings, errands, vacations
- Excessive time spent consoling child about distress with ordinary situations, excessive time coaxing child to do normal activities- homework, hygiene, meals



OUTWARD SIGNS OF CHILDHOOD ANXIETY

- Trouble sleeping
- Stomachaches and other physical problems
- Clingy around parents/guardians and other caregivers
- Difficulty focusing and fidgety
- Outbursts
- Withdrawal
- Severe shyness
- Avoidance



OUTWARD SIGNS OF CHILDHOOD ANXIETY

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- Demonstrating excessive avoidance, refuses to participate in expected activities, refusal to attend school
- Meltdowns/irritability
- Rituals, like handwashing



TYPES OF ANXIETY

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder- 2% of anxiety diagnoses
 - When children worry about a wide variety of everyday things. Kids with generalized anxiety often worry particularly about school performance and can struggle with perfectionism
 - Occurs most days for period of 6 months or more over number of different activities and events
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4WJS0O1IIUo>
- Social Anxiety- 9% of anxiety diagnoses
 - When children are excessively self-conscious, making it difficult for them to participate in class and socialize with peers.
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ypHzXOcUQwE>



TYPES OF ANXIETY

- Separation Anxiety- 8% of anxiety diagnoses
 - Children worry when they are away from parents/caregivers
- Specific Phobias- 13% of anxiety diagnoses
 - Excessive fear of specific things



TYPES OF ANXIETY

- **Panic Disorder- 2% of anxiety diagnoses**
 - Panic disorder is diagnosed if your child suffers at least two unexpected panic or anxiety attacks—which means they come on suddenly and for no reason—followed by at least one month of concern over having another attack, losing control, or "going crazy."
- **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (may not fall under the anxiety umbrella)**
 - When children's minds are filled with unwanted and stressful thoughts. Kids with OCD try to alleviate their anxiety by performing compulsive rituals like counting or washing their hands.



TYPES OF ANXIETY

- **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)-(may not fall under the anxiety umbrella)**
 - Children with posttraumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, may have intense fear and anxiety, become emotionally numb or easily irritable, or avoid places, people, or activities after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic or life-threatening event.
 - Not every child who experiences or hears about a traumatic event will develop PTSD. It is normal to be fearful, sad, or apprehensive after such events, and many children will recover from these feelings in a short time.
 - Children most at risk for PTSD are those who directly witnessed a traumatic event, who suffered directly (such as injury or the death of a parent), had mental health problems before the event, and who lack a strong support network. Violence at home also increases a child's risk of developing PTSD after a traumatic event.



TYPES OF ANXIETY

- **Selective Mutism**
 - Inability to communicate effectively in select settings
 - Can speak and communicate in situations where comfortable
 - Not something that is outgrown
 - Is not oppositional defiant disorder
 - Not related to abuse/neglect/trauma



SELECTIVE MUTISM

- **Strategies**
 - **Remove pressure and expectations for speech**
 - Tell student he or she won't be picked to speak
 - **Convey understanding of fear to speak**
 - **Set up alternative communication system at child's comfort level**
 - **Include child in classroom activities even if not speaking**
 - **Practice patience**
 - **These things lower child's anxiety, increase self-esteem and increase self-confidence**
 - Could lead to being comfortable to speak



STRATEGIES



Untreated anxiety often leads to poor coping mechanisms

Lower self-esteem, poor academic performance, self-medication



Avoidance reinforces anxiety

Seen as short term solution but not effective



STRATEGIES



Avoid giving students breaks

Need to get them thinking about something else

Breaks = more time to become anxious



These ideas slow brain down, change from react to respond:



Tongue click ABC's



Belly Breathe Exercise

Hands on belly, breathe in for 4 seconds through nose, hold 4 seconds, breathe out through mouth



Door Touch Pass

Student allowed to walk down hall, touch farthest door then come back



- Alternatives to talking children out of fear/providing reassurances
 - Asking questions brings the child out of the fear
 - Switches brain from fight or flight into thinking and planning
 - Rather than “Why are you afraid of that?” to “What feels like the hardest part about that?”
 - Teaches child to test their worry, not trust their worry



STRATEGIES

STRATEGIES

Narrow it Down

- Ask child what his or her worries are rather than guessing
- Let child know that everyone has worries
- Provide opportunity to “tell on your worry”
 - “What are your worries telling you about school?”
 - “What’s the part that you are having the most worry thoughts about?”

Comparison of Fact Vs. Fear

- Help/ask child to counter each worry with a “what if” or “what else”
- What does child think is more likely to happen and why he or she believes it will turn out that way
- Put ideas side by side and determine which is more accurate and believable
- **Million dollar question:** “If you could win \$1,000,000 right now by correctly guessing if your fear is going to come true or not, could you win?”
 - Helps to see if worry is exaggerated and unrealistic



STRATEGIES



Keep it real and concrete

Fear might be a sign that information is missing or inaccurate

Ask for details and correct misinformation



Put a time limit on adjustment

Anxiety often happens in new or unknown situations

Ask child how long they think it will take to get comfortable with new situation

Gives perspective that adjustments are temporary



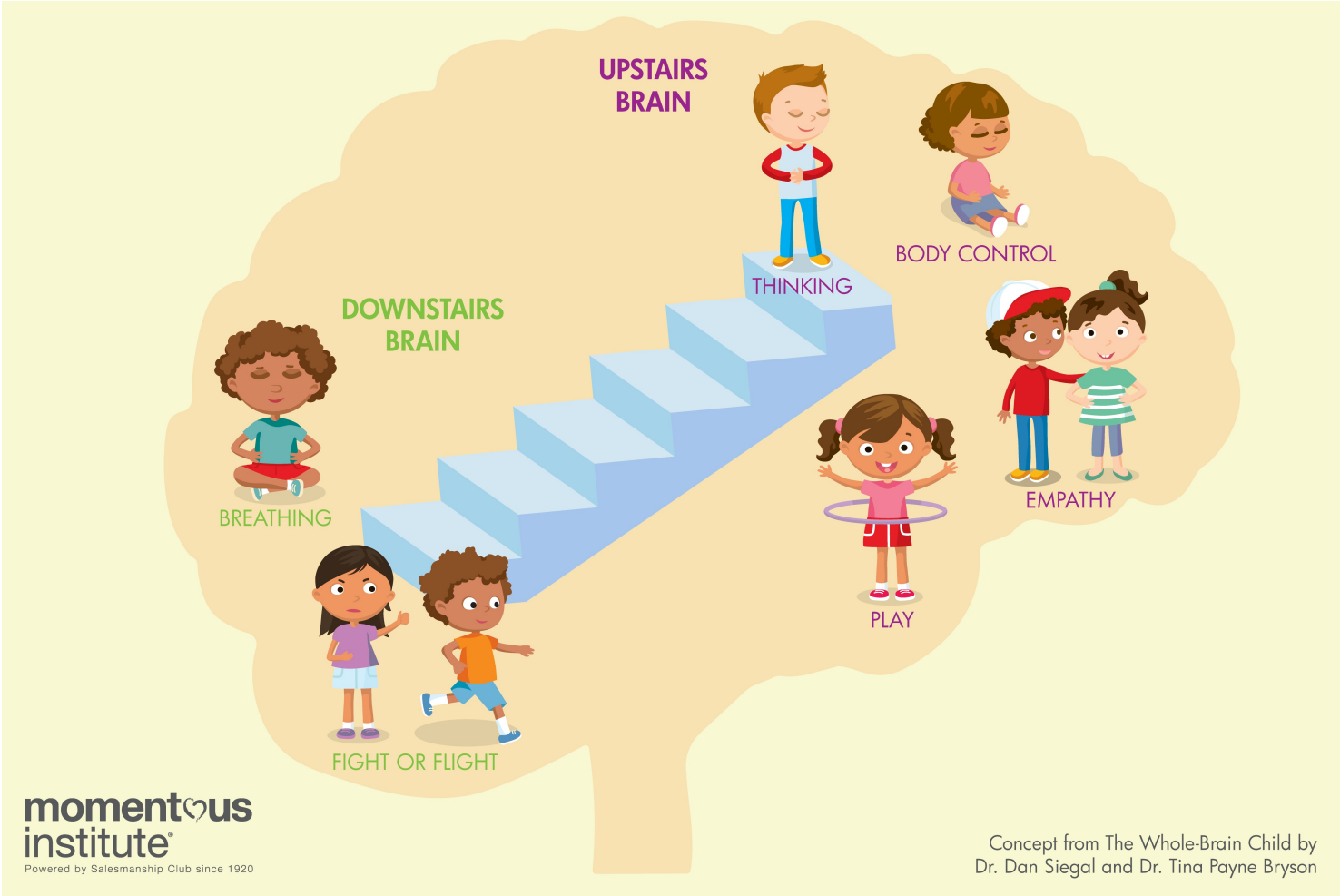
Avoid adding in your (parents') anxiety

Keep worries to yourself, away from child

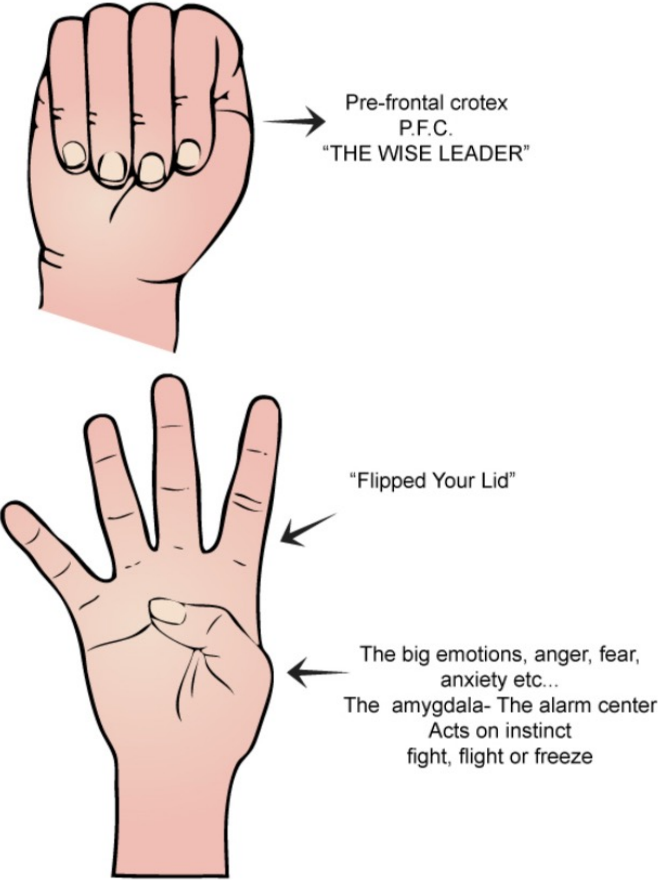
Fear is contagious, but confidence is too



DR. DAN SIEGEL- UPSTAIRS BRAIN, DOWNSTAIRS BRAIN



DR. DAN SIEGEL- FLIPPED LID



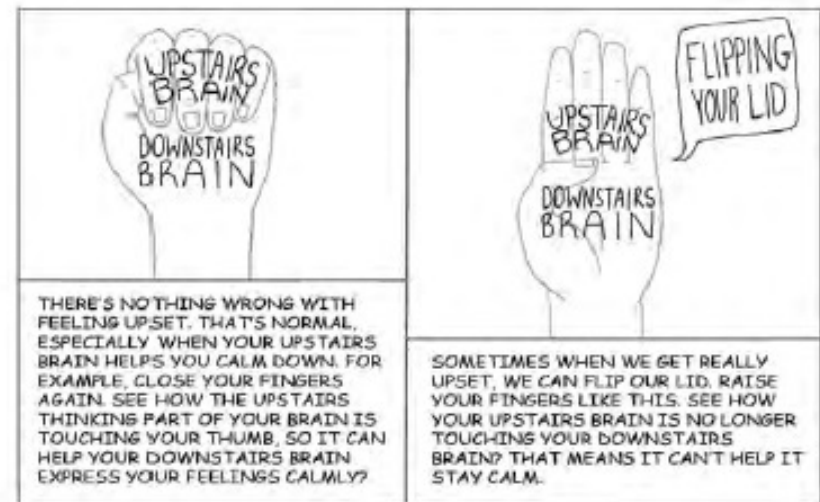
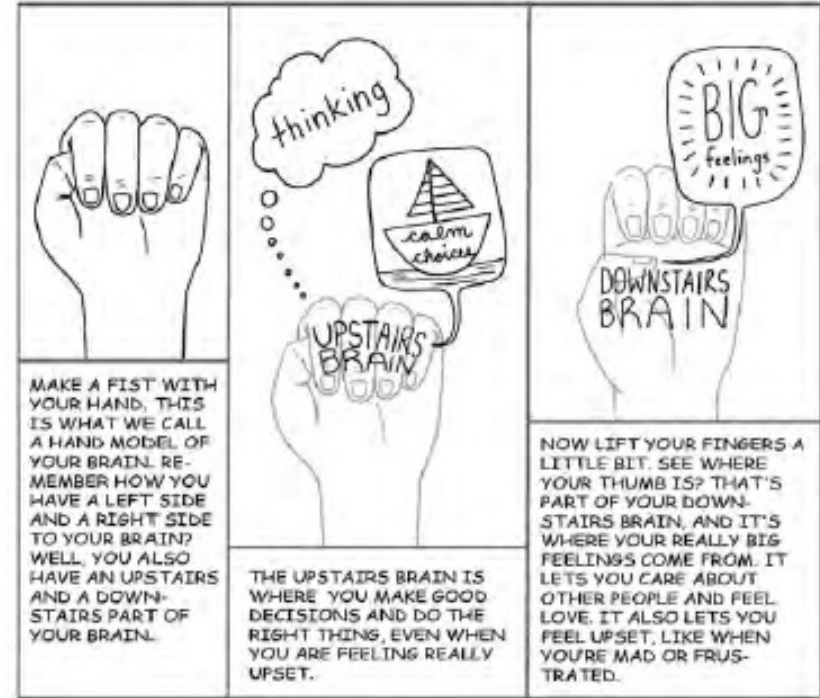
Credit: Daniel Siegel, M.D. is the creator of this metaphor and expression "Flipped Lid"



YOUR DOWNSTAIRS BRAIN AND YOUR UPSTAIRS BRAIN

DR. DAN SIEGEL- UPSTAIRS BRAIN, DOWNSTAIRS BRAIN

*from "The Whole-Brain
Child: 12 Revolutionary
Strategies to Nurture your
Child's Developing Mind" by
Dr. Daniel Siegel and Dr.
Tina Bryson*



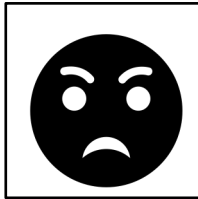
**DR. DAN SIEGEL-
UPSTAIRS BRAIN,
DOWNSTAIRS BRAIN**



SO THE NEXT TIME YOU FEEL YOURSELF STARTING TO FLIP YOUR LID, MAKE A BRAIN MODEL WITH YOUR HAND. (REMEMBER, IT'S A BRAIN MODEL, NOT AN ANGRY FISTI) PUT YOUR FINGERS STRAIGHT UP, THEN SLOWLY LOWER THEM SO THAT THEY'RE HUGGING YOUR THUMB. THIS WILL BE YOUR REMINDER TO USE YOUR UPSTAIRS BRAIN TO HELP YOU CALM THOSE BIG FEELINGS FROM THE DOWNSTAIRS BRAIN.



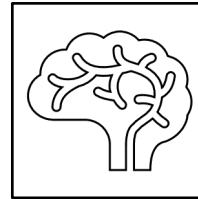
UPSTAIRS BRAIN, DOWNSTAIRS BRAIN STRATEGIES



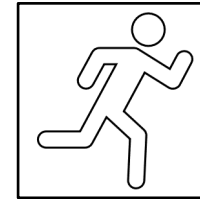
Understand difference
in upstairs and
downstairs tantrums



Engage, don't enrage:
Appeal to the upstairs
brain



Use it or lose it:
Exercise the upstairs
brain



Move it or lose it:
Moving the body to
avoid losing the mind



- **Self-regulation**
 - Teach children to calm themselves down without always adult there to do it for them
 - Jumping in ultimately makes it more difficult for child to calm themselves down in long run
- **Talk to child about what is frightening**
 - Ask questions about what makes that specific thing scary to understand
- **Validate the fear**
 - Rather than say “oh that’s not scary” say “I know a lot of kids worry about that” or “ I see why that would seem scary”
 - Do this quickly without dwelling on this step
 - Use words to indicate this is temporary (I know you are feeling worried right now)



- Relabel the problem
 - It's anxiety talking, not reality
- Rethink and shrink the worry
 - Start talking together about how to help child manage the fear
 - Set reasonable goals
 - Worry glasses vs. smart glasses
 - Worry glasses say what you're worried will happen
 - Smart glasses say what WILL happen
- Offer encouragement/Practice patience



- **Exposure Tasks**
 - Various steps or actions taken to face fears or reach the goal
 - Facing things that are less scary (could do with some anxiety) and working toward scarier or harder things
 - Example: child afraid of dogs
 - Goal- to be able to pet new dog
 - Exposure Tasks-
 - Look at pictures of dogs
 - Watching videos of dogs
 - Reading about dogs
 - Being in same room with dog on a leash
 - Being in same room with no leash
 - Petting dog



- Exposure Tasks
 - Things that can make exposure tasks easier or harder
 - Length of time
 - Distance
 - Time of day
 - Who is with you
 - Number of people



EXPOSURE TASKS FOR SPECIFIC PHOBIAS

- Children with phobias typically avoid the situation or thing they're afraid of such as dogs, insects, water, heights, loud noises, and injections (needles). Therefore, set **goals** that involve your child approaching or engaging with the thing they fear and avoid. For example, **exposure tasks** for a fear of needles can include *looking at pictures of needles, holding a needle, seeing someone else get an injection, and so on.*



EXPOSURE TASKS FOR SOCIAL ANXIETY DISORDER

- Children and teens with social anxiety tend to avoid situations where they might do something embarrassing or that might result in them being teased or rejected. Therefore, set **goals** that target doing the things your child has been avoiding. **Exposure tasks** might include *answering a question in class, sharing an opinion, disagreeing with others, or accepting a social invitation.*



EXPOSURE TASKS FOR GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER

- Children and teens who experience excessive worry about daily life events, tend to stick closer to home, opt out of trying new things, or be intolerant of the unexpected (e.g. being late or making a mistake). Therefore, **goals** should target tolerating uncertainty, making mistakes, or trying new things. To reach these goals **exposure tasks** might include *trying a new activity, being late to ballet, going on a sleepover, or eating a new food.*



EXPOSURE TASKS FOR PANIC DISORDER

- Kids with panic disorder and/or agoraphobia worry about having panic attacks and avoid being in places where escape might be difficult or help unavailable if they became anxious or had a panic attack. **Goals** that target tolerating uncertainty or sitting with panic sensations will help your child to learn how to push back the limits anxiety has imposed. This can be done by setting **exposure tasks** such as *purposely trying to bring on the sensations associated with a panic attack and purposely being in situations previously avoided due to fears of having a panic attack (e.g. going to a movie theatre or the mall).*



EXPOSURE TASKS FOR POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

- One of the most common situations that can result in the development of PTSD is being involved in a significant automobile accident. Therefore, *goals* that focus on having a child resume riding in a car or returning to their previous daily routines will be important.



BUILD A FEAR LADDER (EXPOSURE HIERARCHY)

List of exposure tasks ranked from least to most scary

0=No Fear

10=Tons of Fear

Should include 8-12 steps, including some things the child can do now with some anxiety, some they can do now with moderate anxiety and some they can not do now



Social Anxiety

For a fear of being around other children

Goal: To make new friends and hang out with them

Step	Situation	Fear Rating
11	Invite a few people to hang out- be the leader of the plans	10
10	Talk in person to a friend and ask them to hang out.	9
9	Text a friend and ask them to hang out.	8.5
8	Text a friend and ask if they want to work together on a school assignment.	8
7	Text a friend just to say "Hi" or to ask about a homework assignment.	7
6	Raise hand in class to ask a question.	6.5
5	Raise hand in class to answer a question to which you know the answer.	6
4	Go up to someone at their locker and say "hi" and ask them to walk to class together	5
3	Walk down the school hallways and say "hi" to 3-5 specific people.	4.5
2	Walk down the school hallways and make eye contact with 3-5 specific people.	3
1	Walk down the school hallways with head up	2

**FEAR
LADDER
EXAMPLE**



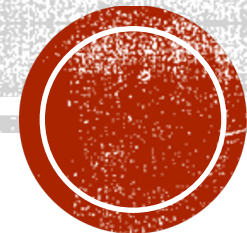
Generalized Anxiety Disorder

For a fear of making mistakes

Goal: To be able to manage small, routine mistakes in a calm way without giving up

Step	Situation	Fear Rating
11	Skip an entire section on a test	10
10	Make a small mistake on a quiz or test	9
9	Raise my hand in class and give the wrong answer	8.5
8	Don't hand in a homework sheet	8
7	Make 3 mistakes (out of 12) on a homework sheet	7.5
6	Show up to dance class 25 minutes late (1/2 way through)	7
5	Make a small mistake on a homework sheet	6
4	Leave to dance class so I arrive 5 minutes late	5
3	Leave to dance class so I arrive 2 minutes late	4.5
2	Leave to dance class so I arrive on time	3
1	Leave to dance class so I arrive with only 2 minutes to spare	2

**FEAR
LADDER
EXAMPLE**



A GUIDE TO ANXIETY FOR KIDS



A GUIDE TO ANXIETY FOR KIDS

- A Guide to Anxiety for Kids
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=129&v=FfSbWc3O_5M



SCRIPT FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

- In the context of a game or roleplay, parents can use puppets or a silly voice to differentiate worry thinking from regular thinking. A worry bug can be buzzing around, scaring a stuffed animal, say an elephant who is afraid of dogs, only because the worry bug keeps saying mean, bossy things-"you can't play with the doggy, doggies bark and you are too scared." Parents can then turn to your child and say, "Wow that worry bug is being so mean, and it's not right. It is saying that all doggies are mean, that's not true, let's think of some nice doggies. So now when we go for a walk and the worry bug tries to scare you, you can be brave and boss it back! Let's use a strong voice and say, "Hey worry bug, doggies can be nice, go away, I'm the boss!"
- **Idea Box:** Use stuffed animals to play out the parts, ask the child what the stuffed animal is afraid of; use a different stuffed animal to say the "brave" thoughts about the situation.
- From *Freeing Your Child from Anxiety* by Tamar Chansky, Ph.D. (Broadway, 2004).

SCRIPT FOR OLDER CHILDREN

- Outside of the heat of a worry moment, you can let your child know that worry is the body's alarm system causing false alarms. Maybe a situation is a little bit risky or scary, but worry exaggerates so much that you feel afraid to try at all. It's like your mind is seeing everything through worry glasses, and makes you think of all the things that could go wrong, all the what if's?. Worry makes you feel like those bad things are *likely*, but just because you're *feeling* scared, doesn't mean the bad thing is going to happen. It's like you're reading a scary story-you're going to feel scared, but it doesn't mean that you are in danger.

SCRIPT FOR OLDER CHILDREN

- You can learn to label your worry thoughts and treat them differently from your smart or rational thoughts. Worry is no voice to trust, but you have a choice. What if you heard the worry voice to the tune of "Old McDonald" or imagined a comedian like Adam Sandler saying the worry story-would you feel scared? Once you learn how to recognize the sound of worry, you can begin to feel free to take the power away from it. Over time, you can turn down the volume on those worry thoughts and your brain will calm down and you will have a direct line to more calm, realistic thinking. If your mind tells you the true story about a situation, you will feel more confident approaching it because you know what the real risks are and that they are unlikely.
- From *Freeing Your Child from Anxiety* by Tamar Chansky, Ph.D. (Broadway, 2004).

RESOURCES

- [Worrywisekids.org](https://worrywisekids.org)
- My Anxiety Plans (MAPs)
 - <https://maps.anxietycanada.com>
- Tamar Chansky
 - [Tamarchansky.com](https://tamarchansky.com)
- Cool Little Kids Parenting Program
 - <https://coollittlekids.org.au/>
- Camp Cope A Lot
 - https://www.copingcatparents.com/Camp_Cope_A_Lot



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