





Strategies for ANXIETY and SCHOOL PHOBIA and impact on attendance and school success.

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Objectives

- Understanding "What is anxiety?".
- Learning the 5 Types of anxiety.
- Understanding our own anxiety.
- Learning physical anxiety symptoms and how they negatively affect student's learning.
- Learn the organization of the brain.
- Strategies to implement in our schools so students can manage their anxiety with success to have the ability to optimally learn.





Anxiety tends to lock up the brain, making school hard for anxious students to be successful in our schools.



Anxiety

- Anxiety disorders are the **MOST** common mental illness in the United States, impacting an estimated one in eight children.






Let's think about this statistic.




If you have 24 students in your classroom, you have four students suffering from anxiety.

It is also important to know this statistic includes only those that are diagnosed.

So truly it would be a minimum of four students in your classroom.





What we do know is.....



We need to learn new knowledge to have successful classrooms for optimal learning for not only students with anxiety but all students.



Our focus today is on Anxiety due to the increase in school phobia, absences, and poor performances.

- If we do not learn new knowledge to teach the student's with anxiety the result is:
- Poor School Performance.
- Poor social functioning
- Substance abuse
- Attendance concerns





What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a nervous disorder characterized by a state of excessive uneasiness and apprehension, typically with compulsive behavior or panic attacks.





- *It is a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome.*





Experiencing occasional anxiety is a normal part of life.

However, people with anxiety disorders frequently have intense, excessive and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations.





Often, anxiety disorders involve repeated episodes of sudden feelings of intense anxiety and fear or terror that reach a peak within minutes (panic attacks).

These feelings of anxiety and panic interfere with daily activities, are difficult to control, and are out of proportion to the actual danger.




Types of Anxiety

- Separation Anxiety
- Selective Mutism
- Generalized Anxiety
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
- Specific Phobias





Separation Anxiety

- When children are worried about being separated from their caregivers.
- When children are **excessively self-conscious**, making it difficult for them to participate in class and socialize with peers.





Selective Mutism

- When children have a hard time speaking in some settings, like at school around the teacher.





Generalized Anxiety

- When children worry about a wide variety of everyday things.
- Students with generalized anxiety often worry particularly about **school performance** and can struggle with **perfectionism**.





Obsessive-compulsive disorder

- When children’s minds are filled with unwanted and stressful thoughts.
- Students with OCD try to alleviate their anxiety by performing compulsive rituals like counting how many times they wash their hands.





Specific Phobia

- When children have an excessive and irrational fear of things, like being afraid of animals and/or storms.





ANXIETY AND ME

- Please take out your hand out titled “ANXIETY AND ME”.
- We will be filling this out individually as some may be personal.
- We will only be sharing “What I do” and “How I feel”
- **Before you begin.....**





Basic Information

- **Family Beliefs:** List your ideas you think your family has about how to behave. What is good versus what is bad in life, and other important values.
- Example: Your family believes its not okay to make mistakes or being loud is bad. Your family might not say it but how they behave gives it away.(frowning when people are talking loudly in a store)





Basic Information

- **Important Life Events:** Write down important things that have happened in your lifetime.
- **Biological Factors:** Think of any physical, mental health, or biological conditions either of you or your family members have. For example, asthma, a heart condition, chronic worry, depression and more.





Basic Information

- **Daily Events:** List out the things that happen in your day or week that you think cause you to become anxious or engage in the behaviors listed in the "What I Do" section.





Basic Information

- **What I do:** List out the things you do when you feel anxious, scared, fearful, sad, mad, and any other negative emotions that bubble up for you.
- **How I feel:** Check off any of the signs and symptoms that you notice or add any when you are feeling negative emotions.





- Let's take 15 minutes to fill this out.
- And we will take 15 minutes for folks to share "What I do" and "How I feel".





General Physical Anxiety Symptoms

- Feelings of panic, fear, and uneasiness
- Problems sleeping
- Cold or sweaty hands and feet
- Shortness of breath
- Heart palpitations
- Not able to be still and/or calm
- Dry mouth





continued

- Numbness
- Nausea or Vomiting
- Stomach aches
- Headaches
- Muscle pain





- *Who has students that request to see the nurse often throughout their day or during certain times such as a test or quiz?*
- *Physical symptoms feel very real to students who have anxiety disorders. Didn't they feel real to you during your own event?*



Symptoms of anxiety that negatively affect students learning

- Difficulty focusing or mind going blank
- Fatigue from sleep disturbance
- Feeling of restless or on edge
- Irritability (sometimes referred to as "acting out")
- Fear of talking in front of group





Continued

- Fear of judgement
- Difficulty separating from care givers
- Avoidance behavior
- Tantrums or meltdowns
- Excessive worry





Strategy

- Let's go back to our "Anxiety and Me" to review our "What I do".
- These are actual things you do to decrease stress in your body.
- Go back and pick your top three that you would be able to perform anywhere you may feel stress. If you are not able to perform anywhere think of other tools that you would be able to use. Example-I can deep breath anywhere but I cannot blast music anywhere.



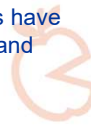

Safety Plan

- The top three you picked are written on a piece of paper, or index card, construction paper or any other paper item that you want.
- This is carried with you at all times. When you become stressed you take the plan out and begin to decrease your stress.
- Take 2 minutes to practice.





Safety Plan

- This is also done with your students.
- This allows them to learn tools to use when their body is feeling stressed from the symptoms.
- You can be creative. Use classroom name as the plan, or idols students have to motivate them to carry the plan and use the plan.





Safety Plan

- Create a school climate that everyone has a safety plan.
- Model the safety plan. "Oh I am feeling _____ so I am going to use my safety plan". Use this through out the day not only when a student is showing symptoms.
- By modeling you are demonstrating this is okay, we are all in this together.





Unlock the brain

- Ken Schuster, PsyD neurologist from Child Mind Institute says "What all types of anxiety have in common is that anxiety *tends to lock up the brain*"






So if that is true

The great news is we can unlock the brain!
Which means we can then unlock the anxiety!





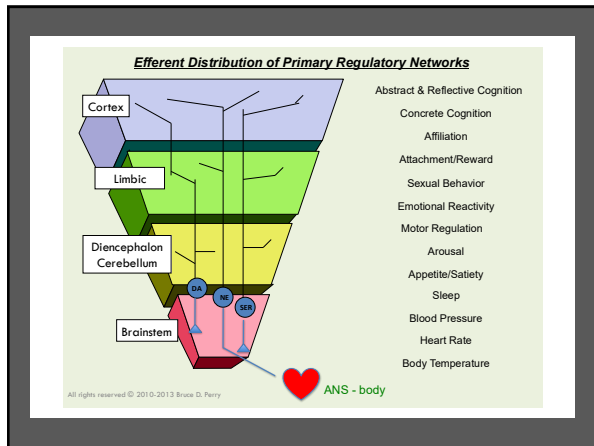
The Developing Brain

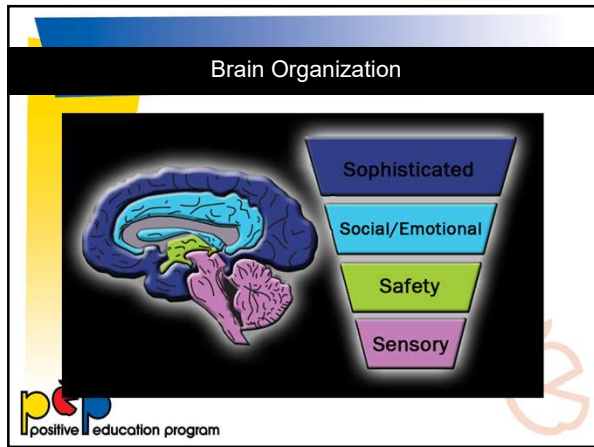


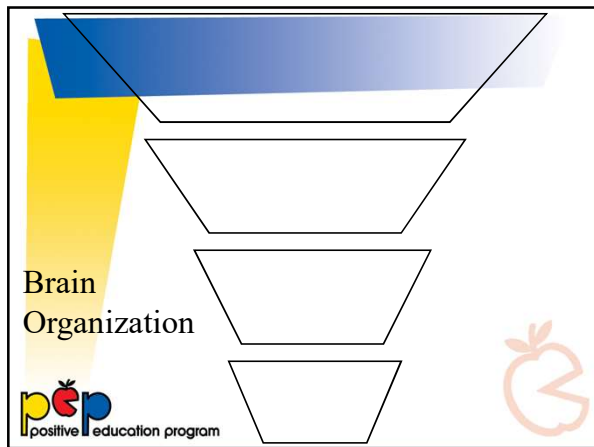
Neurosequential Model in Education (NME)

- The brain is organized bottom to top.
- The brain develops in a sequential and hierarchical fashion – from least to most complex.











Brainstem

- We need to start here to unlock the brain so a student can use their executive functioning skills located in the cortex to decrease their stress.
- How?
- By offering regulating activities throughout their day.





What is self-regulation

- The ability to manage sensations and circumstances of distress in a physically safe and socially appropriate manner.
- Simply stated, ***it is the ability to control emotions, thinking and behavior when experiencing stress.***



What happens if you do not have the ability to manage?




Threat/Stress Response

Flight
Fight
Freeze





The Stress Response in Behavior
Hyper-arousal (Fight)




- Hyperactivity
- Tension, irritability, impatience, distraction
- Anger and aggression
- Impulsive reactivity
- Defiance
- Hypervigilance

- Their **motivation** to fight is to regain control over the perceived threat.




Stress Response in Behavior:
Hypo-arousal (Flight or Freeze)




- Frequent absences
- Daydreaming
- Forgetting assignments or material previously mastered
- Lethargy, sleeping in class
- Self-soothing behaviors (self-mutilating, chronic drug use)
- Apathy, lack of motivation

- Their **motivation to flight** is to avoid the perceived threat.
- Their **motivation to freeze** is to not feel the pain associated with the perceived threat





Back to Self-Regulate

- So if we **regulate** the brain to feel a sense of safety, the brain can then **relate** to the emotions and control them and then finally one can **reason** to the behavior being experienced in a socially appropriate manner.
- The brain has than been **UNLOCKED**.



Research on Self-Regulation

- Higher academic achievement is more likely when interventions include self-regulation components.





- **Rhythmic** activities are processed by the brain as regulating providing a sense of safety and comfort.
- Using **rhythmic** activities can help the brain manage its response to stress
- Please look at your handout Regulation Activities. Please pick one to perform at your table. One person will need to be the teacher and the others are students. 15 minutes





What about school anxiety?

- We have learned what anxiety means, symptoms of anxiety, types of anxiety, and a few strategies.
- But what are other strategies we can do in our schools to support these students?





What your students want you to know about their anxiety.

Video
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jf404_H0r8Q#action=share





School Anxiety

- We can begin by understanding that it is in our schools. And rather than asking yourself "what is wrong with him/her" begin asking "what has happened to him/her"
- Social Anxiety is very common in our students.
- Research shares there are three types of school anxiety.
 1. School Refusal which is now known as School Phobia.
 2. Text Anxiety
 3. Social Anxiety





School Phobia

- This simply means refusing to go to school on a regular basis or has problems staying in school on a regular basis.
- Students will try to avoid school at all costs and will become visibly upset if their care givers force them to go.
- Students may complain of vague physical illness, younger students may have temper tantrums but there is a genuine anxiety of fear and the student will feel ashamed.

School Phobia

- Is very common in students making the transition from pre-school to kindergarten, elementary to middle school and middle school to high school.
- Other reasons include: Staring school, moving, fear of something happening to their caregiver, and fear of failure.



So what do we do?

What do you know now that you can do?




Poor Attendance Intervention Plan

- Please take out this handout.
- Think about the student you have been thinking about and check off what **preventive strategies** you can begin to use.
- What **alternative behaviors** you will teach this student.
- What **positive reinforcements** you can use to motivate attendance.





Regulation Activity



Test Anxiety

- This is related to fear of failure.
- Childhood test anxiety can continue to adulthood and take other forms of performance anxiety.
- Lack of preparation and poor test history are also reasons for test anxiety.





ADD/ADHD/Disorganized

- Please take out this handout.
- Think about the student you have been thinking about and check off what **preventive strategies** you can begin to use.
- What **alternative behaviors** you will teach this student.
- What **positive reinforcements** you can use to motivate attendance.




Social Anxiety

- Also known as social phobia.
- Typical onset of social anxiety is 13 years of age.
- It is also thought that sever social anxiety in students may be caused due to altered serotonin pathways in the brain.





Social Anxiety

- Everyday interactions cause significant anxiety, fear, self-consciousness and embarrassment because you fear being scrutinized or judged by others.
- In social anxiety disorder, fear and anxiety lead to avoidance that can disrupt your life.



Anxious/Poor Self-Esteem

- Please take out this handout.
- Think about the student you have been thinking about and check off what **preventive strategies** you can begin to use.
- What **alternative behaviors** you will teach this student.
- What **positive reinforcements** you can use to motivate attendance.



Regulation Activity



Things people with anxiety are tired of hearing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h12mg2CiRnc>