



5 TIPS FOR SUPPORTING ANXIOUS CHILDREN

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Objectives

To teach and discuss:

What anxiety is

Where anxiety comes from

What types of anxiety are most common in childhood

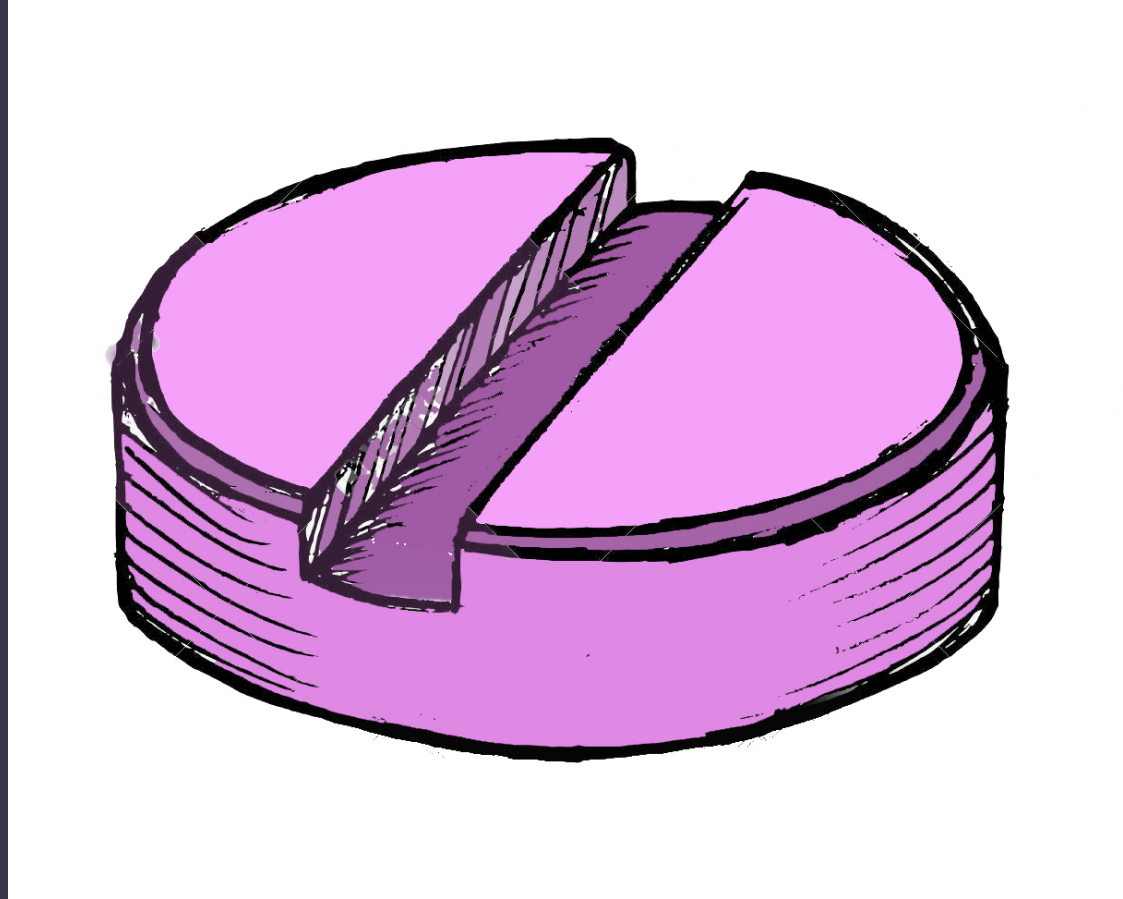


To provide five key strategies to support children experiencing problematic anxiety

Why talk about anxiety in children?

- Anxiety is essential and beneficial
- Problematic anxiety can stop children from doing things that make them happy
- Problematic anxiety appears to be increasingly common (25.1% lifetime prevalence for Anxiety Disorders in 13-18 yr. olds and 5.9% for severe disorders (NIMH, 2009))
- Anxiety can dramatically influence a child or youth's educational experience



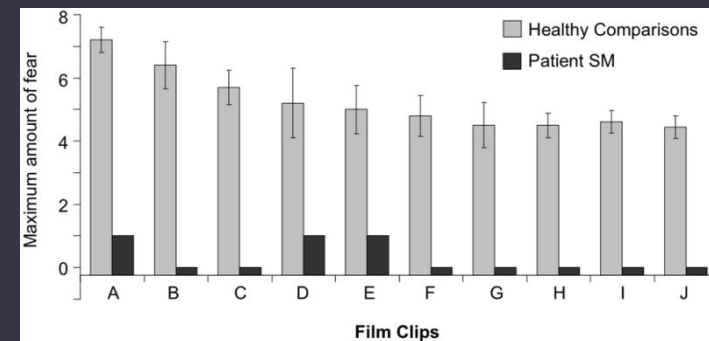
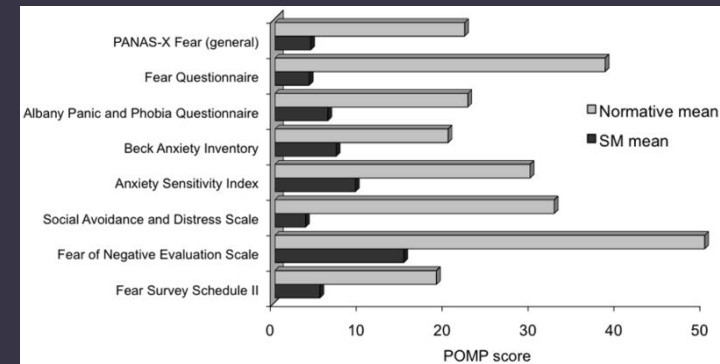


What if you had no anxiety?

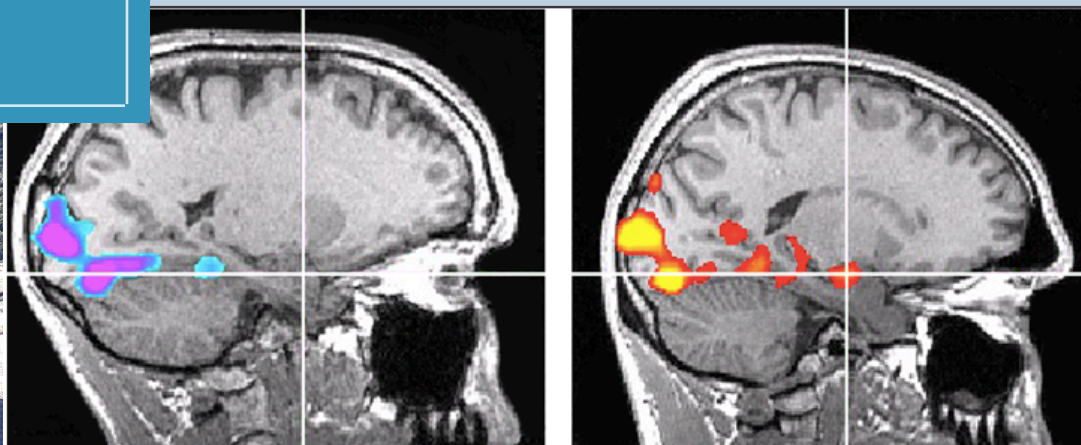
- What if you could take a magical pill right now that would get rid of all anxiety?
 - Would you take it?

Patient SM

- Urbach-Wiethe Disease
- "Fearless" due to bi-lateral lesions of the amygdala



Feinstein, J., Adolphs, R., Damasio, A. & Tranel, D. (2011). The human amygdala and the induction and experience of Fear. *Current Biology*, 21(1), pp.34-38



ABSENCE OF FEAR: Scans compare Honnold's brain (left) with a control subject's (right), a rock climber of a similar age. Crosshairs mark the amygdala, a group of nuclei involved in generating fear. As both climbers look at the same arousing images, the control subject's amygdala glows, while Honnold's remains inert, showing no activity whatsoever.

Jane Joseph

ANOTHER UNIQUE BRAIN TO CONFOUND THE DISCUSSION



kids are freaking snowflakes

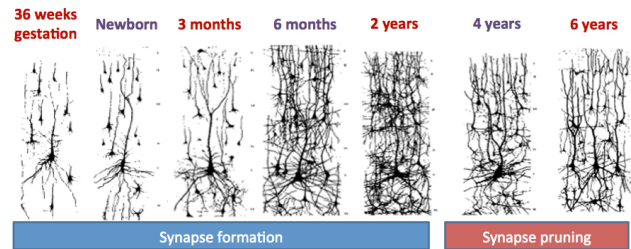
- "Every [Child] is in certain respects a. like all other [Children], b. like some other [Children], c. like no other [Children]" (Allport, 1953)
- The goal is to be equally curious about what works for all kids, what works for some kids and what is unique about your own child...

What is anxiety?

- Anxiety is an emotion
- Emotions are good
- Emotions influence “motivated behaviours” that draw people towards things good for themselves or their species and repel them from things that may be harmful.
- ANXIETY IS AWESOME!!!



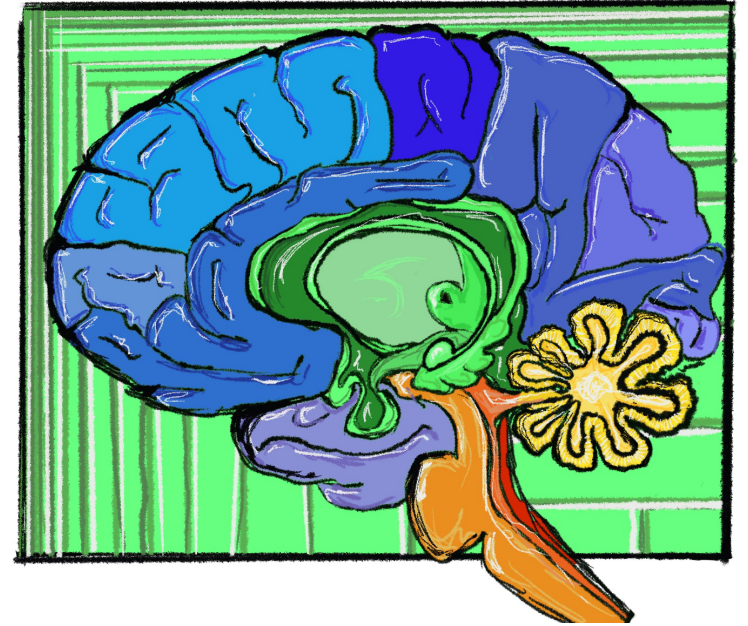
Developing Brains



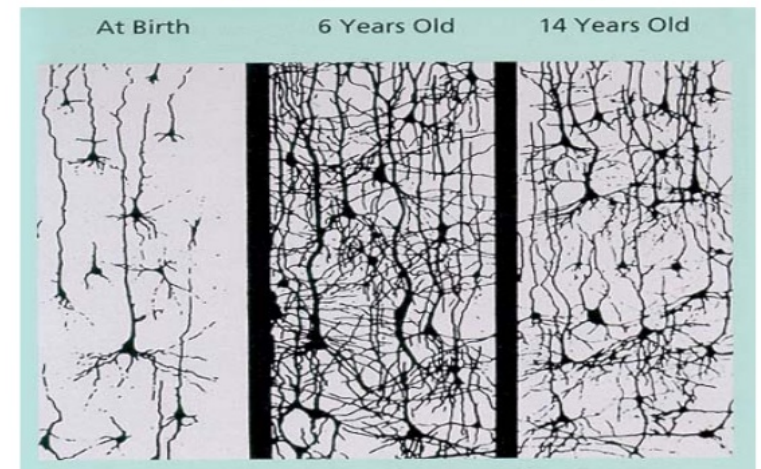
- **Brains start with more material than they need**
- **Brains organized through use**
 - **Synaptic strengthening and pruning**
- **Organization continues till mid 20's**
 - **Myelination**

Developing Brains

- Brains are still developing till mid 20's
- Organize from the inside out
- Work Different than adults brains:
 - Poor time travelling skills
 - KIDS LIVE IN THE MOMENT!!
 - Heightened emotional experience
 - Less insight
 - Less cognitive control



Synaptic Density



From *Rethinking the Brain: New Insights into Early Development* by Rima Stone (NY: Families and Work Institute, 1997)

Synaptic Density: Synapses are created with astonishing speed in the first three years of life. For the rest of the first decade, children's brains have twice as many synapses as adults' brains. (Drawing supplied by H.T. Chugani)

TEEN-AGE MOUSE



Teenage Brains

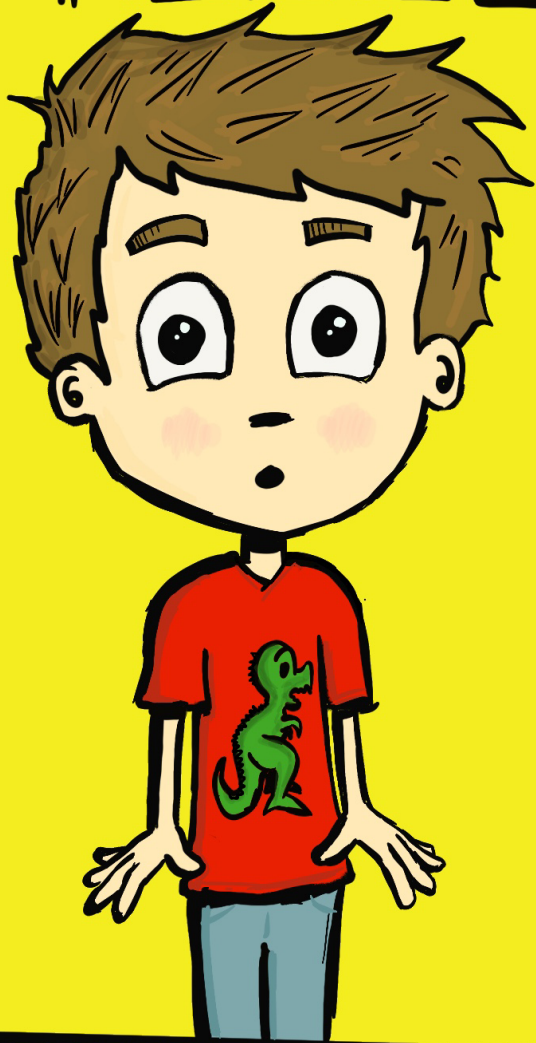
- Poor Planning (Under-developed cortex)
- Increased reward for risk
- Emphasis on social ranking
- Fragile sleep routines

Understanding the "F" words of anxiety

- Anxiety moves us towards things that are good for us and away from things that are bad
- Within this system is a clear response pattern to threat
- This response pattern develops in people like everything else- via strengthening of pathways through use



FREEZE



FLIGHT

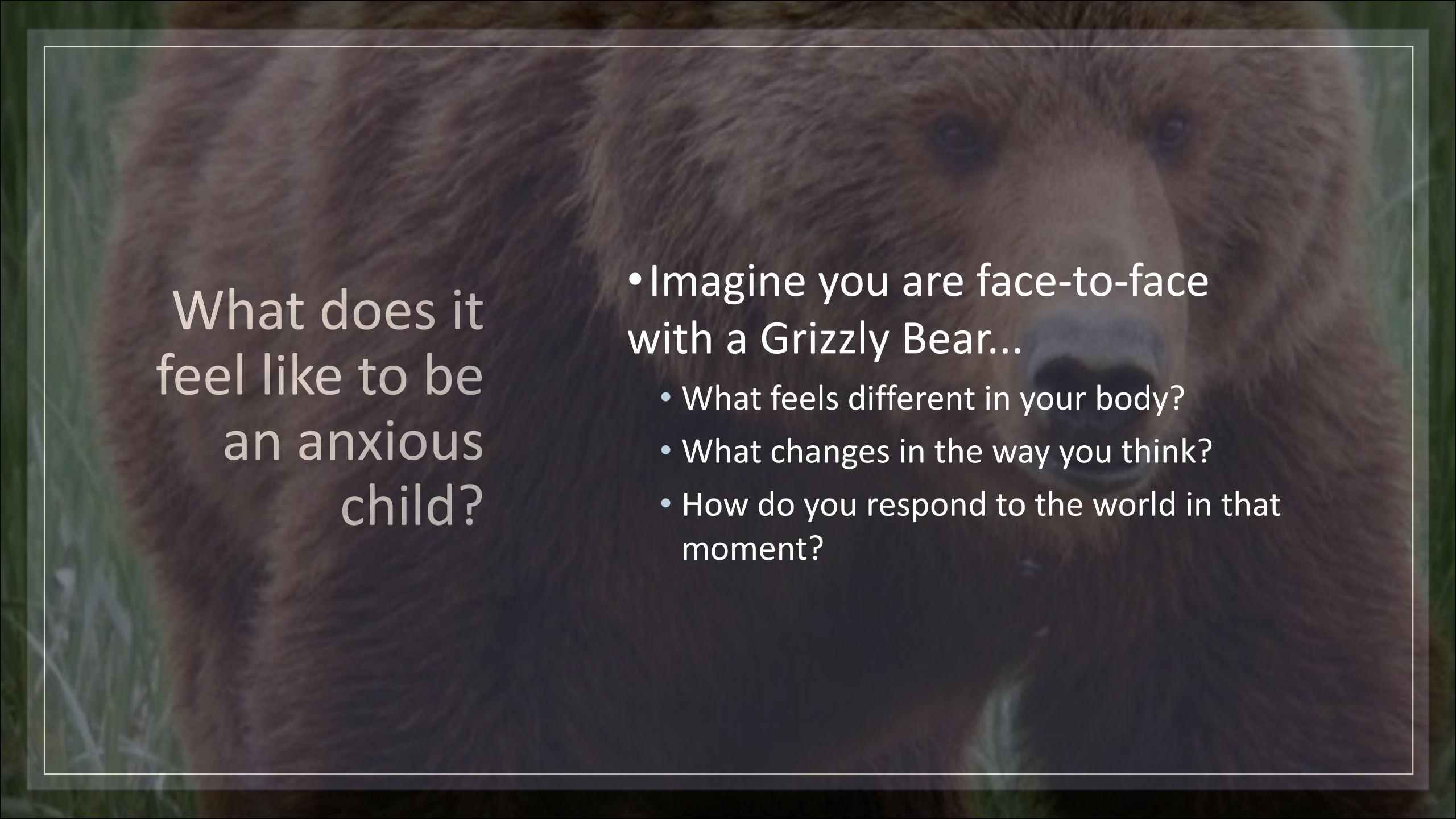


FIGHT



The “F” words of
anxiety





What does it
feel like to be
an anxious
child?

- Imagine you are face-to-face with a Grizzly Bear...
 - What feels different in your body?
 - What changes in the way you think?
 - How do you respond to the world in that moment?



Anxiety in the Body

- Fight/Flight/ Freeze
- The body alters its functions to prioritize survival
 - Elevated heartrate
 - Rapid/shallow breathing
 - Dizzy, nauseous, itchy, tingly
 - Less fine motor control
 - Gross motor strength increases
 - Muscle tension increases
 - Circulation changes



Anxiety in the Brain

- The brain favors lower limbic and brain stem activity when stressed
- The goal is to keep you alive

Emotion & Arousal

- **Emotion** (Direction)
- **Arousal** (Vigor and Persistence)(Pfaff, 2005)
 - The energy behind it!





When is Anxiety Problematic?

Non-Problematic..... Problematic

- When it causes significant dysfunction in necessary areas of functioning
- When it leads to **AVOIDANCE** of rewarding or beneficial activity



The many masks of problematic anxiety

- Anger
- Withdrawal
- Depression
- Autism Spectrum
- ADHD
- Learning Disabilities
- Speech and Language Problems



Anxiety and development

Common Fears by Developmental Stage

- 1-5 Years
 - Fears rooted in understanding reality and maintaining proximity to caregivers
- 6-12 Years
 - Fears rooted in the world outside the home
- 12-18 Years
 - Social evaluation fears

Diagnosing Anxiety



- A disorder (dis-order) is a measure of functioning related to available and necessary intervention
- DSM V or DSM IV-TR or ICD-10
- Snapshot in time

DIAGNOSTIC AND STATISTICAL
MANUAL OF
MENTAL DISORDERS

FIFTH EDITION

DSM-5

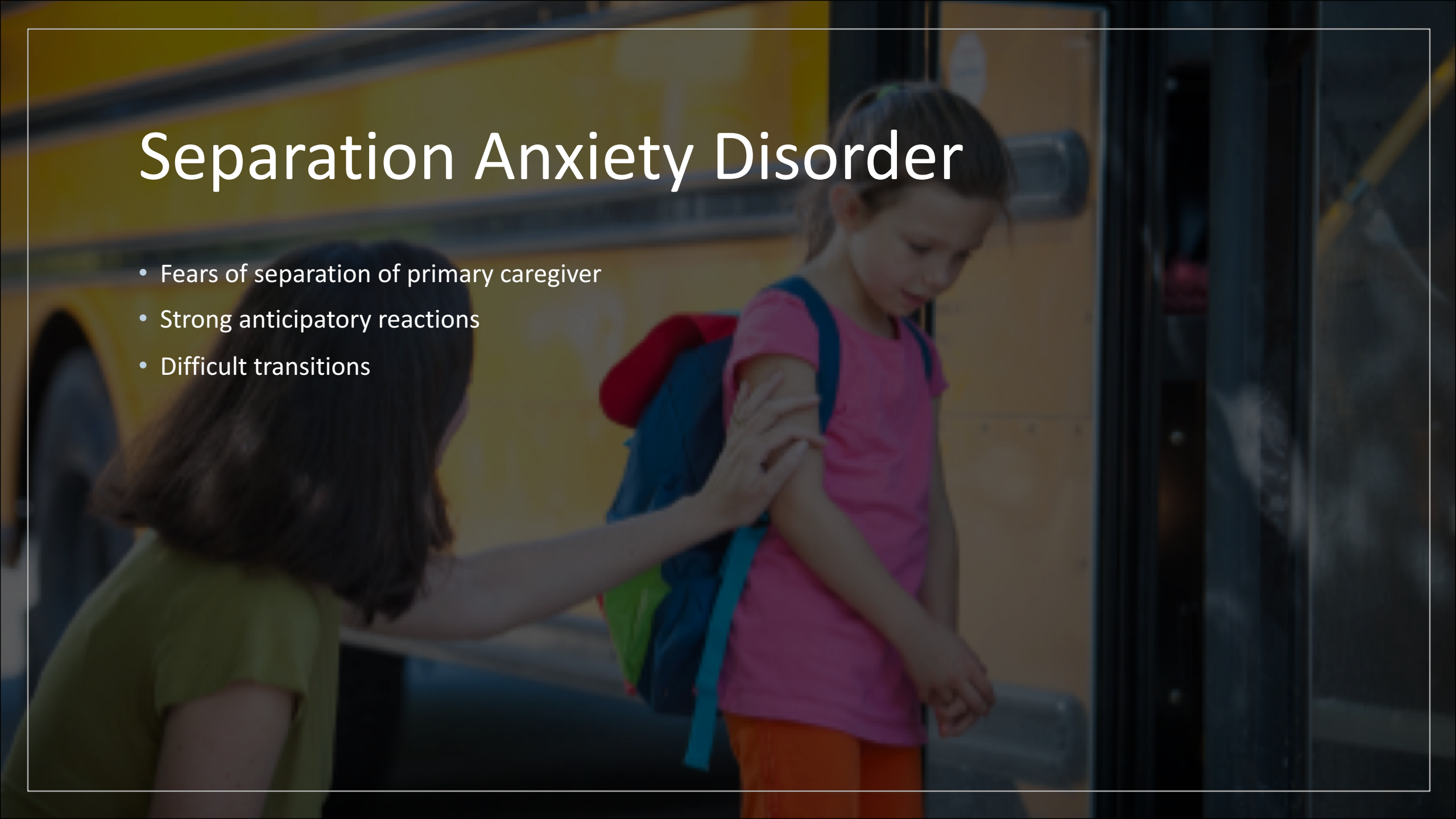
AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION

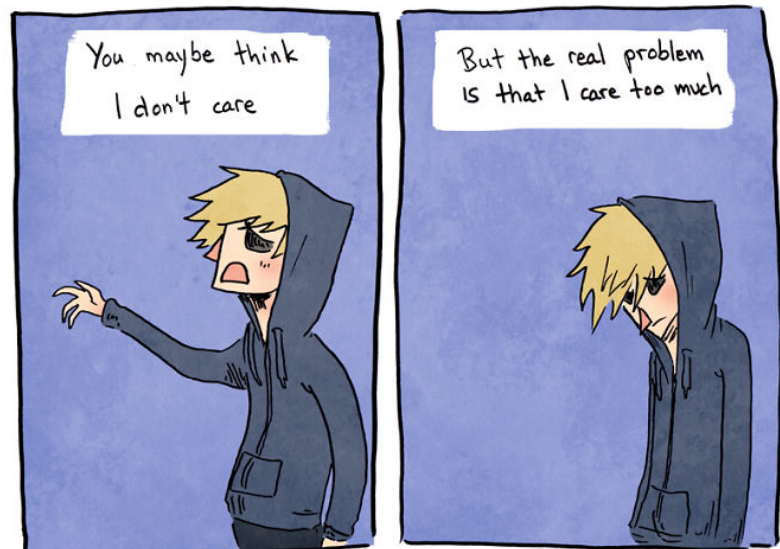
DSM V Anxiety Disorders

- Anxiety Disorders:
 - Separation Anxiety Disorder
 - Selective Mutism
 - Specific Phobia
 - Social Anxiety Disorder (Social Phobia)
 - Panic Disorder w/ or wo/ Agoraphobia
 - Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and related disorders
- Trauma- and Stressor- Related Disorders inc. RAD & DSED
- Eating Disorders (Sometimes)

Separation Anxiety Disorder

- Fears of separation of primary caregiver
- Strong anticipatory reactions
- Difficult transitions

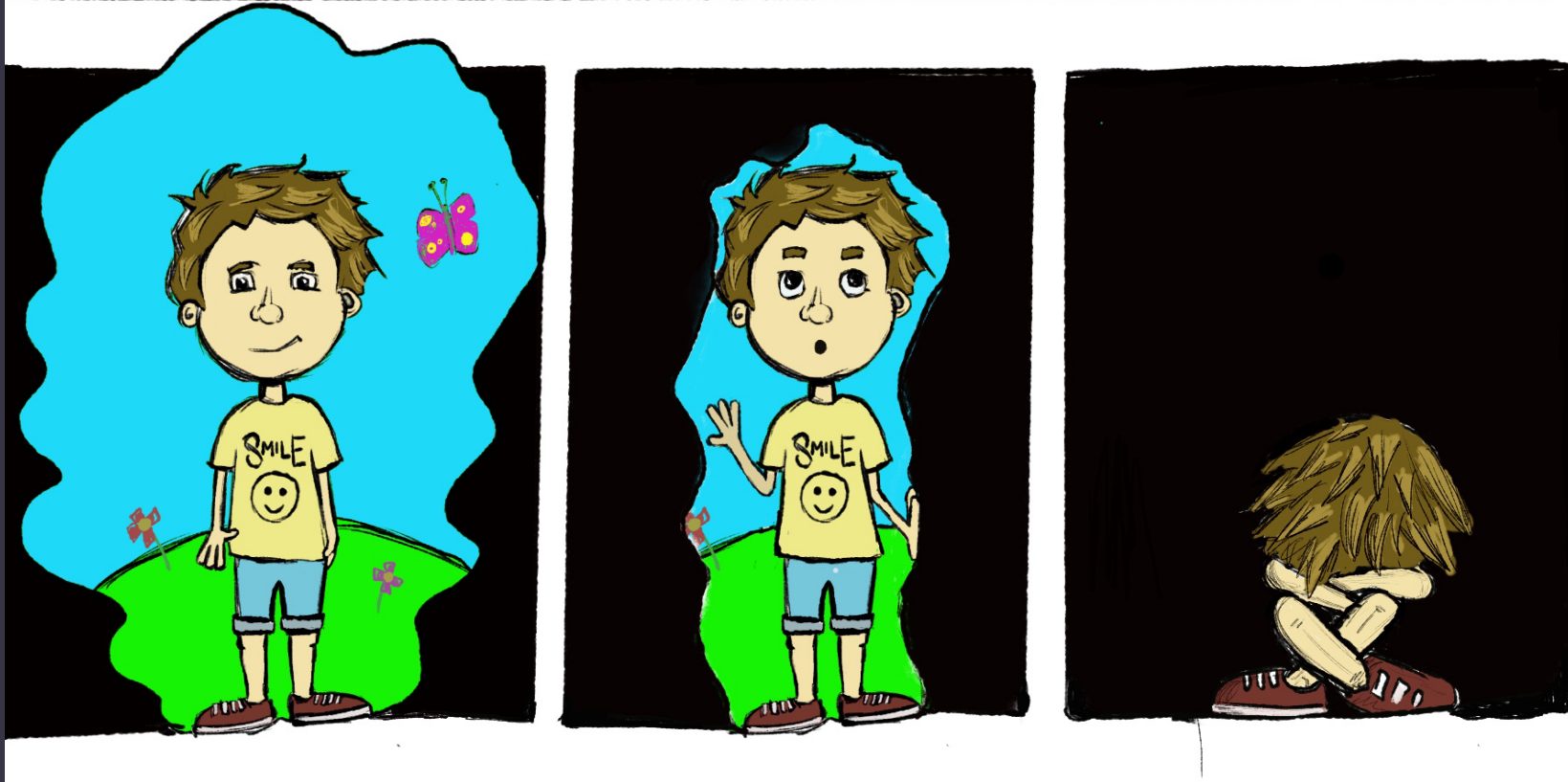




Social Anxiety Disorder

- Fear of judgement from others
 - Not just shyness
- Developmentally driven in adolescence
- Avoidance of situations where they perceive they might be judged

HOW A PANIC ATTACK FEELS



Panic Disorder

- Panic attacks can occur as a result of non-disordered anxiety or as a result of symptoms from other anxiety disorders
- A fear of panic attacks
- Can be driven by somatic symptoms



Generalized Anxiety Disorder

- Persistent worries
- Adolescence is a anxiety saturated period
- Problematic when:
 - Intensity and duration more than expected
 - Causes dysfunction in relationships and performance
 - Causes avoidance of important activity



Post Traumatic Stress

- Protective System
- Symptom Categories
 - Hyper-arousal
 - Re-experiencing
 - Avoidance
- Linen Closet Metaphor



Anxiety and Depression

- Anxiety limits the frequency of rewarding activity and the reward experienced in those activities
- Anxiety focuses attention on the negatives



What can you do?

The Basics:

- Routine/ Structure (Predictability)
- Basic Care
 - SLEEP!
 - Diet
 - Physical Activity

5 Tips for Supporting anxious Children

1. Help Children Face Fears!

- Exposure Therapy
 - “Stepladders”
 - Progressive approximations
 - Best as a collaborative process
- Avoidance amplifies anxiety



5 Tips for parenting anxious Children

A pair of hands is shown holding a small, vibrant green plant with several leaves. The hands are positioned at the base of the plant, supporting it. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color, possibly a wall or a backdrop, which makes the green of the plant stand out. The overall image has a gentle, nurturing feel, which aligns with the theme of parenting anxious children.

2. Be mindful and teach mindfulness

- Breathing
- Relaxation
- Mindful practice
 - Sensory Stones
 - Body Scans
 - Staring Contests
 - 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding
 - “How does your engine run?”
 - Sensory toolbox building



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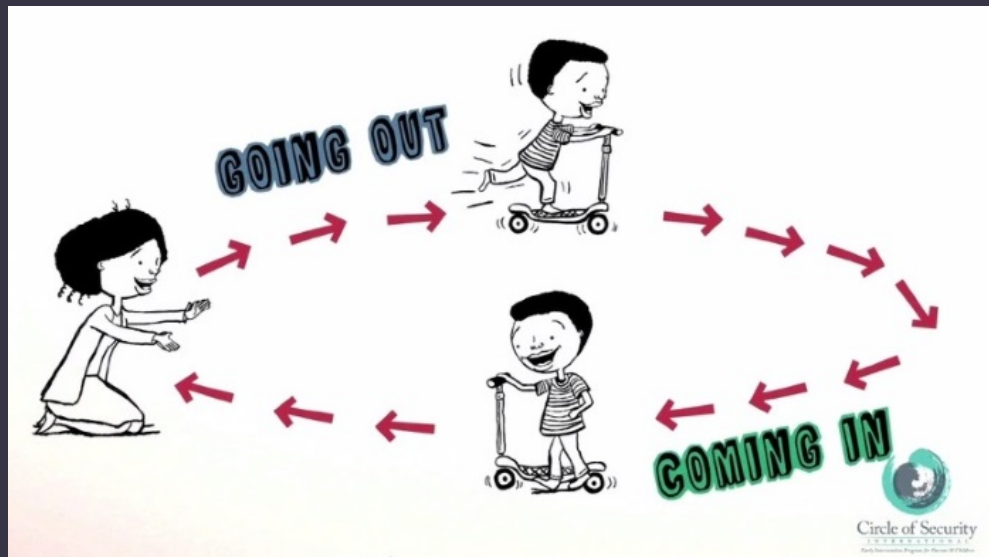
3. Help children to explore their emotional experiences


- Emotions are there to help you!
- Explore where they are helping and hindering
- Exploration occurs when calm!

5 Tips for Supporting anxious Children

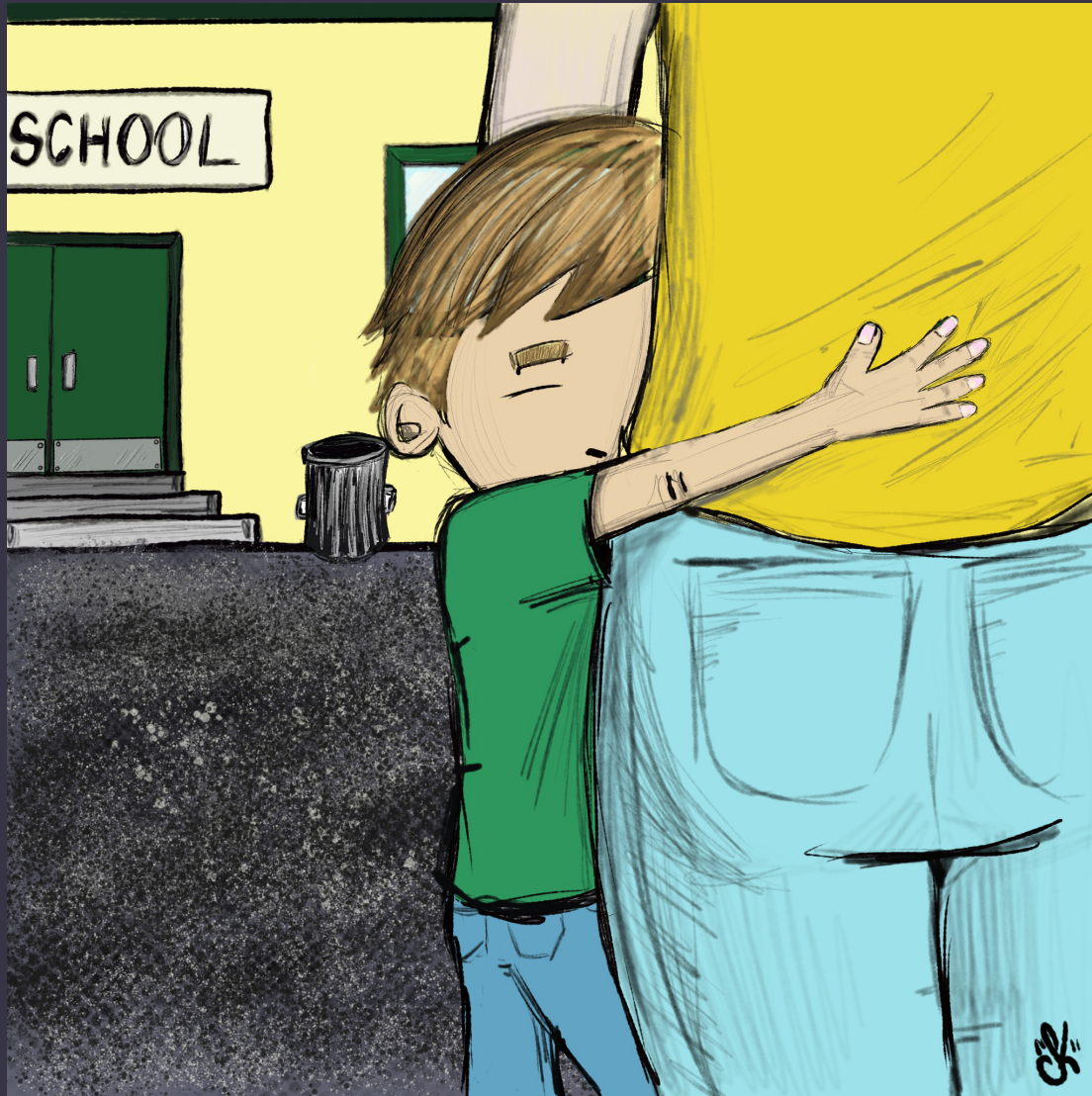
4. Be a secure base!

- Attachment Theory
 - Capacity to regulate emotions grows in safe, reflective relationships
 - Promote growth/be a safe harbor
 - Connect before direct!



- 
- A fluffy yellow duckling is shown in profile, facing right. Its beak is open, and it appears to be calling or chirping. The duckling is standing on a large green leaf. The background is dark and out of focus.
- 5. Be Arousal Aware! (Trauma Informed)
 - Vary learning styles based on arousal
 - Collect before direct
 - Safe before stimulate

5 Tips for supporting anxious children



WHAT TO DO WHEN KIDS FREAK OUT!

Our strategies need to change when
kids are overwhelmed

— **C**hange/control the situation

- **Less stimuli**
 - **Reduce movement**
 - **Minimize noise**

— **A**llow time

- **Arousal is a physiological response that takes time regulate**

— **L**ess talk

- **Emphasis on non-verbal**
- **Verbal messages simple**
 - **Choices?**

— **M**ovement

- **The body is primed to move**
- **Restricting movement can increase arousal**
- **Movement can speed regulation**

5 TIPS FOR SUPPORTING ANXIOUS CHILDREN

5. Be Arousal Aware in
Your Approach!



Additional Strategies when freaking out

- Arousal Mirroring (“Vitality Affects”)
- Consequences immediate and natural
- Boundaries based on safety
 - Clear boundaries

Conversations in Post Modern Anxiety



- Caffeine
- Pot
- Interpersonal Communication Technologies
- Videogames

Child AND YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

- If there is significant interference refer to CYMH
- Open intake clinics once per week
 - Trail: Thursday 1-3pm
 - Located 2nd floor riverfront building

