

Anxiety and Your Child's Future Success

Information taken from a presentation by
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5% of all children miss school due to
an anxiety-related disorder **EVERY DAY**
in the United States

What to look for...

- Headaches
- Stomachaches
- Acid reflux
- Frequent 'accidents'
- Diarrhea
- Weight loss
- Poor hygiene
- Poor sleep



I want to go home

I threw up

My head hurts

The Bunny Analogy

Instinctive reactions are not wrong/bad

- What reactions are the result of a surprise?



What would your reaction be to seeing this guy at home? Work?

- Run from room
- Freak out

When we have an anxiety disorder, our body acts like he's around all the time.

It's helpful to explain to kids we just have to turn down this natural reaction to things we think are scary.



It all happens in less than a minute!

- Brain says, “Danger!” (real or perceived)



- Heart starts pumping faster so I can get away

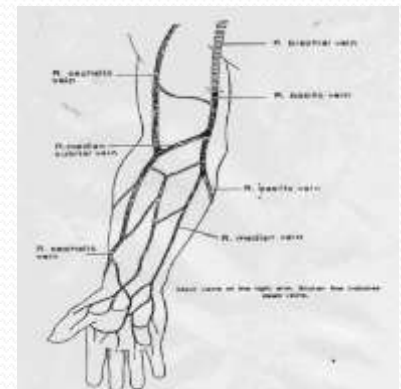


- Lungs have to breath to help the heart pump



- Blood moves fast to extremities so I can run away

- This may make kids feel itchy on their skin.
- They might say they sometimes feel like they have bugs on them.



- In the ears, blood may swell vessels and ears become muffled (may get dizzy)



- Pupils dilate to be able to see a way out

- Tunnel vision
- May feel like walls are closing in



- Body knows that it's better to run fast on an empty stomach, so body works to release stomach contents

- Extra acid in stomach to help dissolve any food
 - Sore throat
 - Dry mouth
 - Acid reflux
 - Diarrhea
 - Vomitting



One key to a panic attack

- Use breathing to shortcut system at the beginning of this process
 - 3 deep breaths to get in control of panic
 - Help children to find their first symptom
 - Breathe then, don't wait

Is it born or grown?

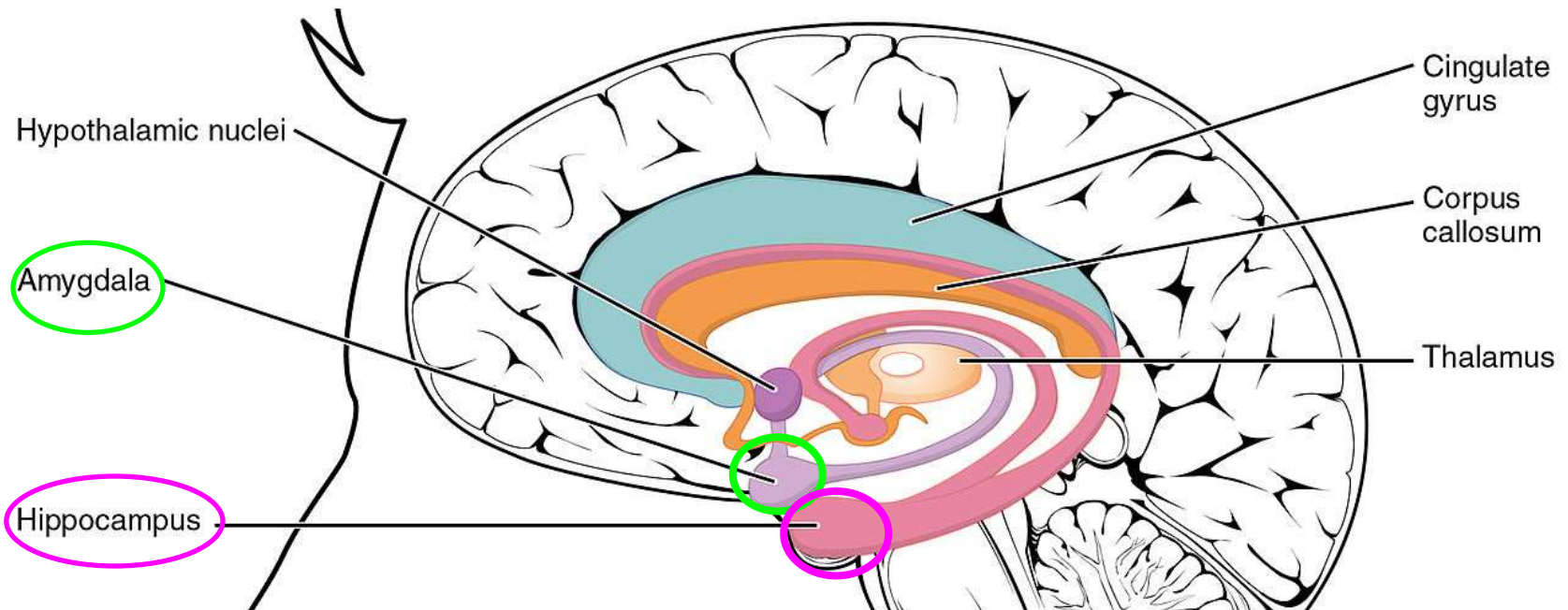
- There is no clear genetic marker for anxiety.
- May be a result of a combination of personality traits, biological sensitivity, and stress overload

Personality traits

- Overachiever
- people pleaser
- No time for self, sleep, relaxing
 - Can't find 30 minutes for self

Biological sensitivity

People prone to anxiety tend to have a more sensitive limbic system (houses emotions, etc)



Amygdala- size of almond normally

- Emotional center of brain; linked with fear

Hippocampus- larger normally than Amygdala

- where we derive pleasure, feel safe, etc

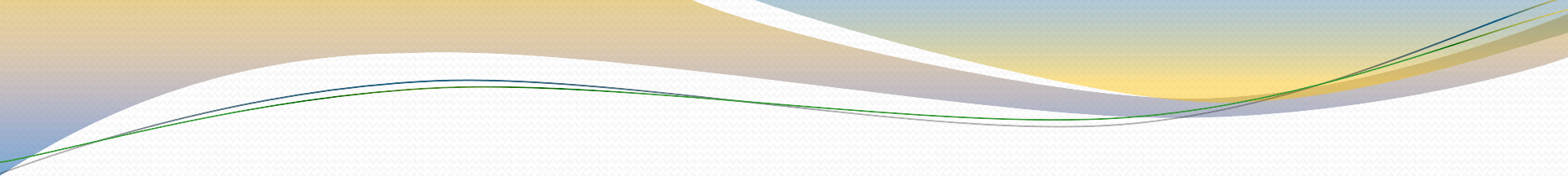
Stress Overload

- Nature of child's brain: to soak in information around them and process it
- Taking so much in; learning so much; need to express knowledge, discuss it, work through it
- Children are taking in
 - Emotions of those around them (learning tone of voice, etc)
 - Weather (storms, danger)
 - News (constantly present dangers)
 - Internet sites (reality from fiction)
 - Friends (how to make them, what it means to have one)
 - Homework (responsibility, job)

So stressed, so young!

- We aren't made for this!
 - To watch traumatic events happen repeatedly
 - To have access to the world in our hands
 - To be in front of a screen for a relationship to form
- Children are stressed and no one's listening!
 - Just need someone to spend time with them to listen to them

Watch [this](#)....



Imagine!
You want to give them
the best you can
and the best is
yourself!

Generalized
Anxiety

Social Phobia

Post-Traumatic Stress
Disorder

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

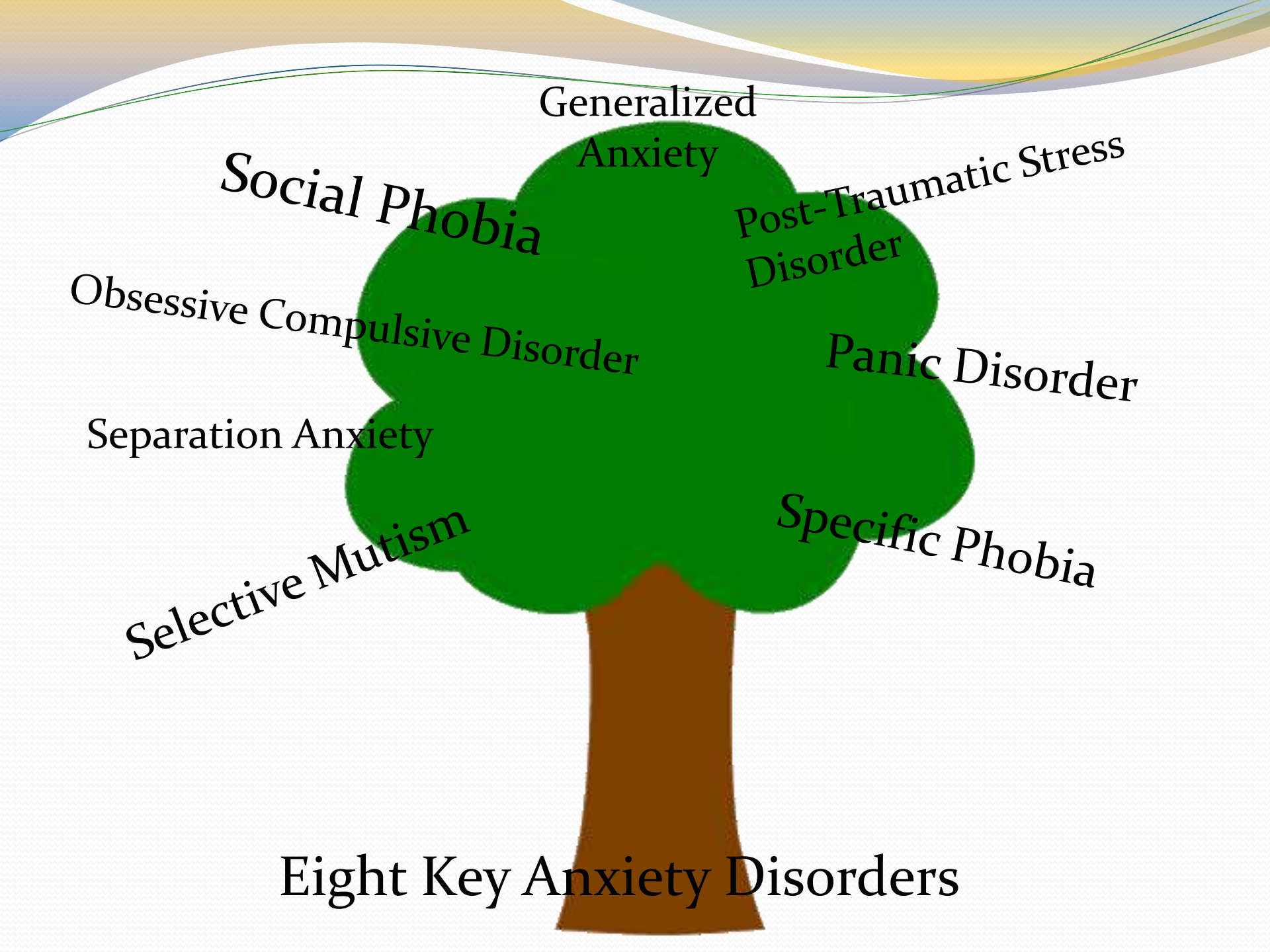
Panic Disorder

Separation Anxiety

Selective Mutism

Specific Phobia

Eight Key Anxiety Disorders



5 Sense solutions

- Where does the anxiety live in the body?
- How does it make you feel?
- What makes it worse or better? (children may not know how to articulate this...)

Possible helps

- Auditory calming techniques (calming playlist, etc)
- Visual: drawing, writing out worries/lies that we hear in our minds throughout the day
 - Not fast enough, smart enough, etc
- Tactile: soft blanket/fabric sewn into uniform sweatshirt, etc; food issues with texture?
 - Acupressure: push on inside of doorway for anger release
- Taste: some foods release relaxing chemicals in body
 - Turkey: tryptophan
 - Oranges: vitamin C brings down cortisol levels
 - Sweet potatoes
 - Dried apricots/spinach- high in magnesium (natural muscle relaxant; helps with stress/headaches)
 - Rice/oats/bread/pretzels- helps soak up excess acid in stomach
 - Ginger chews for stomach
 - Peppermint relaxes

Possible helps

- Sleep
 - Regular bedtime: even if they like to stay up, be a parent
 - Limit things that stimulate in afternoon/1 hr before bed
 - Nothing on TV that excites them
 - Backlight on TV/tablet wakes up part of brain that calculates
 - Book
 - Lighting dim to produce melatonin
 - White noise machine, not TV
 - Shower/raise body temp to relax (hot tea, etc)
- Anxiety Log
 - Notebook dedicated only to anxiety
 - Do it AT LEAST 2 hours before bed (finish at least 1 hour before bed)
 - Keep it at bedside
 - Notate any new thoughts: thoughts now live in notebook

Anxiety Log helps

- Increases awareness
- Allows for clear understanding of processes in brain
- Creates mindfulness
 - When things calm down (snow globe) we can see clearly what's going on in our minds
- Gives evidence of patterns of thought
- Engages child in DAILY anxiety work outside of any help, which gives child ownership vs. victimization

Let go! Allow things to be exactly as they are!

Acceptance is:

- Ending the constant struggle to run away from a situation
- Necessary for change
- Continually practiced
- Easier the more you practice

It is not:

- Surrendering
- Giving up
- Simply 'accepting' a negative future
- Avoiding emotions or thoughts

Path of misery

- Avoidance
- Denial
- Worry
- willfulness

Acceptance

- Seeing opportunities
- Acknowledging greater plan than yours
- freedom



Our own parents:
find something else they can give than what you want/need to receive

Panic disorder

Symptoms	
Palpitations	Sweating
Shortness of breath	Nausea
Numbness	Vision shortness
Muffled hearing	Trembling
Dizziness	Tingling
Chest pain	Shaking
Chills	Swelling of tongue
Dryness of mouth	Abdominal pain

Panic

- Makes you think you cannot breath
 - Assure child they cannot die from an attack, just pass out
- Gauge the panic
 - Scale it from 1 (boneless-so relaxed) to 10 (we're all gonna die!)
- Popcorn machine vs. volcano (know stress management)
 - Everything is a bother
 - Last straw reaction



I am late for school!

My mom will be mad

I will get in trouble by my teacher

My teacher won't like me

My teacher will give me bad grades

I will fail and my mom will hate me

My mom won't love me and she'll throw me out

I will have to live all alone in the woods and will die of hunger

Solutions!

Phobias

- Animal (snakes, spiders, dogs, rodents)
- Natural environment (heights, storms, water, dark)
- Situational (enclosed spaces, driving, flying, tunnels, bridges)
- Blood/injury (needles, blood, medical procedures)

Normalization

- 0-2 years: loud noises, strangers, separation from parents, large objects
- 3-6 years: imaginary things (monsters), dark, sleeping alone, strange noises
- 7-16: realistic such as injury, illness, school performance, death, natural disasters

Is it a phobia or a normal fear?

- Normal fear

- Nervous around dogs
- Nervous about getting a shot
- Missing mom or dad when away
- Thinking might be a monster under bed

- Phobia

- Refusing to go to park because there might be a dog
- Refusing to go to doctor
- Not allowing mom/dad to leave
- Refusing to sleep in bed or be in room

Explaining phobia

- NORMALIZE!
 - Everyone is afraid of something: how we're made!
- Fear is automatic
- Avoidance is common
- Understanding fear is best way to conquer it!
 - Get to know the fear (come up with ways to name it and point it out)
 - Build a fear hierarchy (sharks)



Quick Cheat Sheet

- Does the fear have a name? Can we say it?
- Where does it live?
- When did it start?
- What does it look like?
- Are other people afraid?
- What is the worst part?

DO's and DON'Ts

- DON'T

- Make fun
- Ignore the problem
- Minimize feelings
- Force child to engage in fear

- DO

- Take seriously
- Listen and validate
- Model brave behaviors
- Keep child away from fearful media
- Keep child away from caffeine

Positive Coping Statement

- See yourself overcoming fear and behaving as you would like
- “I feel afraid, but no harm is going to come to me.”
- “Just because my body is scared doesn’t mean bad things will happen.”
- Review last positive event with fear

In general

- Rewards systems: not food, but time with parent/family reward so all are involved; praise all good efforts
- Role-playing always helpful
- Talk to your child
- Teach them how to talk to you, others, and themselves about what they need
- Pray for your child every day!