DURHAM CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
Learning and Living in Faith

Understanding and Supporting Your Worried Child

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Overview

- To provide information about anxiety and sensitivity in children

- To learn strategies to cope with anxiety and sensitivity.

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Keys to Parenting your Anxious Child

Dr. Katharina Manassis

http://www.katharinamanassis.com/

(book can be downloaded for free on website)

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Anxiety Issues Among Children and Youth

- Most common form of psychological distress
- Affects 1 in 10 school-aged youth
- Can interfere with children in academic, social and family situations

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Common Types of Anxiety Disorders

- Separation Anxiety
- Specific Phobias
- Social Anxiety
- Generalized Anxiety

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What looks like:	Could be:
• Defiance or refusal	• Avoidance of anxiety provoking event
• Need for control	• Attempt to manage anxiety
• ADHD-type Behaviors	• Restlessness or agitation
• Physical Complaints	• Psychosomatic

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Range of Severity of Anxiety-Related Problems

Mild ←——————————→ Severe

Sensitive
- approx. 8 % of pop.

Extremely Anxious
- approx. 2%of pop
- persistent
- often family history

Strategies are the same no matter where your child is on continuum

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Adaptive vs. Problematic Anxiety

ADAPTIVE

Reaction caused by actual threat of danger or harm

Sensible response to something potentially harmful

Necessary and useful to preserve life

PROBLEMATIC

Reaction to events or things that are not dangerous or are much less harmful than imagined

Feelings come from the anticipation of danger or that something might happen

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When to be concerned

Disproportion
Intensity and frequency of anxiety

Duration
Does not disappear over time as expected
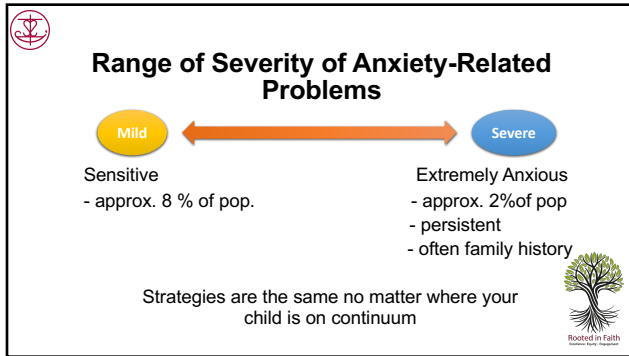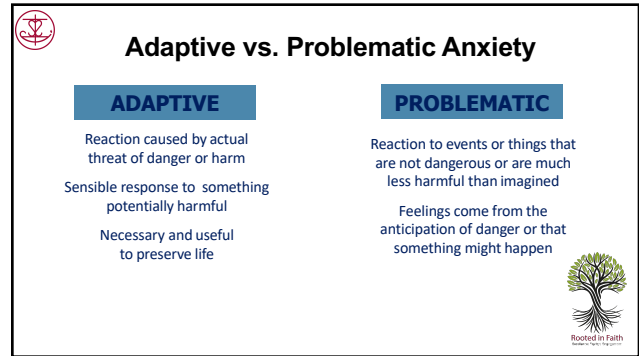
Disruption
Level of interference with daily activities and well-being

Distress
Unexpected level of upset

Anxiety disorders are categorized based on the features of the anxiety. Anxiety may be present in many forms.

Source: School Mental Health Ontario https://smho-smso.ca/

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Fight, flight, freeze response

https://www.youtube.com/embed/rpolpKTWrp4

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How Anxiety Works and Why it Doesn't Go Away on it's Own

Fear of Dogs

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Stress Vulnerability Model
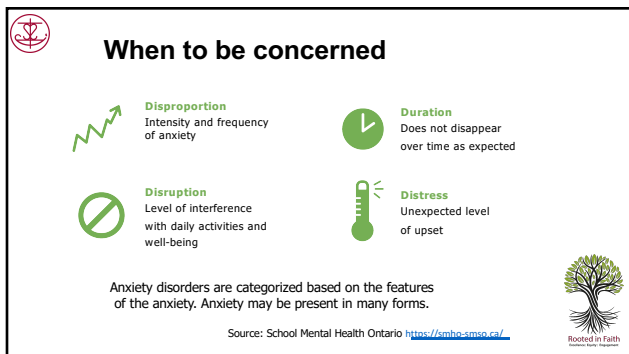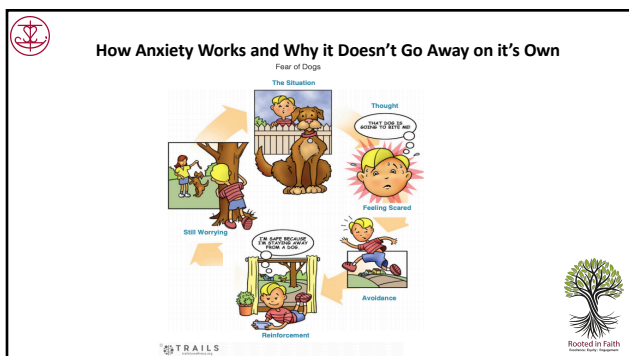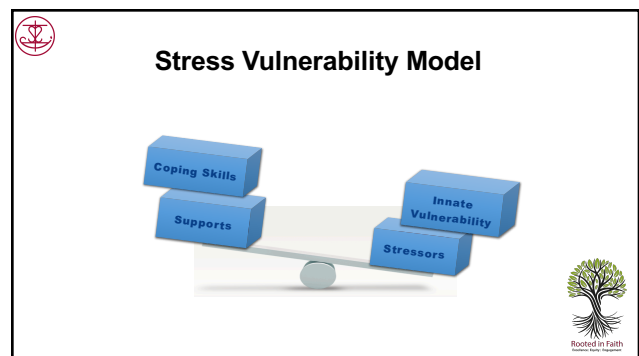
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Will my child outgrow their anxiety?

•If avoidance is used, anxiety grows and can be disabling

•Facing fears decreases sensitivity and anxiety

•Coping vs a cure

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How to Talk to your Child about Anxiety

- Express positive - but realistic - expectations
- Validate the feelings, but don't empower them
- Don't ask leading questions
- Don't reinforce the child's fears

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How to Talk to your Child about Anxiety

- Encourage the child to tolerate her anxiety
- Try to keep the anticipatory period short
- Think things through with the child
- Try to model healthy ways of handling anxiety

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Fear Ladder (hierarchy)

5) Present speech to whole class

4) Present speech to family & friends

3) Practice speech at home alone

2) Write speech

1) Plan speech

Fear: Dogs	Anxiety (0-10)
Pet a large dog off leash	9
Pet a small dog off leash	8
Pet a dog on a leash	8
Go to a pet store and view dogs in cages	7
View videos of police dogs	5
View videos of little, fluffy dogs	2
View pictures of dogs	2

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Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

Think

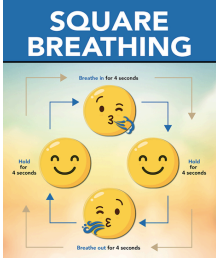Do   Feel
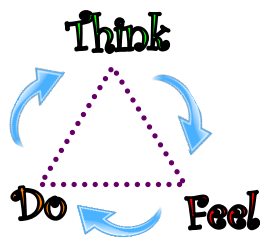
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Questions to challenge worried thoughts

- What PROOF do I have that this is true?
- What else could happen?
- What is more likely to happen?
- What would I tell my friend if he or she worried about this?
- What's the worst that could happen and how would I handle it?

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Other Strategies / Actions That Help

- Breathing exercises
- Relaxation
- Visualization
- Problem Solving
- Distraction

SQUARE BREATHING

Breathe in for 4 seconds

Hold for 4 seconds

Hold for 4 seconds

Breathe out for 4 seconds

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I FEEL REALLY ANXIOUS!
What should I do?

Anxiety Canada website:
Helpful "How To" Documents for Parents

https://www.anxietycanada.com/free-downloadable-pdf-resources/

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School Mental Health Ontario: Parents and Families

Parents and Families

Your Role
Learn More
Take Action
Overview
Work Together with your School
How to Find a Community Resource
How to Talk With Your Child About Mental Health
Find a Resource

Work Together With Your School

In Ontario, schools are the most common place where children and youth access mental health supports—you can work together with school staff to support your child.

How to Find a Community Resource

There are community resources available to help you support your child.

How to Talk With Your Child About Mental Health

It can be challenging to talk about mental health, but bringing up your concerns can help open lines of communication with your child.

https://smho-smso.ca/parents-and-families/

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Takeaway Tips For Parenting your Anxious Child

1. Take your child's worries seriously, while expressing confidence in their ability to challenge their fear.

2. Set clear, age appropriate expectations that are individualized for your child's needs.

3. Use positive consequences to provide motivation for your child to pick the brave choice over the fearful choice.

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Takeaway Tips For Parenting your Anxious Child

4. Ensure consistency, particularly between caregivers.

5. Communicate directly, overtly and without anger.

6. Try to avoid over-protection and over-involvement.

7. Ensure your child is aware that they are not alone and others have similar struggles.

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Thank-you!
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