

Parenting the Anxious Child with Liesl Glover, Ph.D.

Slide 2: Outline (00:02)

What I want to do is -- I actually want to start by giving a little bit of a formal presentation. So, I'm going to lead you through PowerPoint -- try not to put anybody to sleep in late daylight days. But I want to get on the same page in terms of what anxiety is, what some of the causes are -- talk little bit about some of the common language things that you might be looking for to identify it, or things you may notice in your own child or children where you work -- in a school setting, I'll talk about some common treatments for it.

And then also really focusing on the parenting side. So, some coping resources and strategies you may use at home. I'll actually go through a couple of those tonight to practice and some things you can use on the spot with your own kids while you're driving, while you're at home, anything like that, that you may notice. So -- give you a couple of those practices and stuff tonight.

And then I'm going to try to reserve as much time as possible actually for questions and answers. So, at the end we'll go through all of this and then make room for some -- have more of an informal discussion.

Slide 3: What is Anxiety (1:05)

So, starting first with what anxiety is. So, anxiety is the most common mental health issue in America. It is something that right now our best numbers and research say about one in ten young people are diagnosed with some kind of anxiety disorder over the course of their life. And actually, that number increases when we look into more high school aged and teenage up to 15%. So, it's definitely something that is happening more frequently than a lot like to see. It is something that can impact and affect a lot of families, can be experienced by a lot of families. And so, for that reason, I'm hoping to give information tonight that will be helpful in recognizing that.

One of the biggest areas that I want to focus on tonight too is what's the difference between stress and worry and anxiety?

So, when we talk about stress, we talk about worry, we talk about anxiety. Often those terms are used interchangeably easily, as if they mean the same thing and they really are quite different. So, I want to kind of separate those out a little bit tonight and talk about what the difference between what those are.

Stress is something that can be positive or negative. It's not automatically negative. We use it that way usually we talk about "stress, stress, stress," "negative, negative, negative." But stress is just anything that pushes on us and forces some sort of change -- whether that's in our environment, in our life and our feelings and our behaviors -- anything like that is called stress. How we react to it then can be positive or negative as well.

We talk about worry, we're talking more about the thoughts that somebody has. So, when I am dealing with some sort of stress, the way I'm thinking about that may cause me to worry. So, I may be nervous about it, I may be fearful about it. When worry turns into something more significant -- when it turns into something that causes distress, that causes somebody to not function as effectively as they used to, to interrupt or interfere with their daily living -- then we're talking about anxiety.

So, when I'm talking about anxiety tonight, I'm really meaning that. I'm talking about the thing that is several steps away from stress -- where it puts somebody in a position they're dealing with something on a daily basis that is causing them to not live as well as they possibly could. All of us feel stressed every day, and all of us feel worried to some extent every day. And those things are actually okay.

Slide 4: Fight or Flight (3:21)

When we talk about stress, one of the favorite ways to think about it is the fight or flight response. Everybody's familiar with or heard that terminology before thinking about stress and how it's related to this. So whenever something came into our world or environment that even slightly made us nervous or scared -- or we thought there should be a reason to be fearful, we could flee as fast as possible or we could stand our ground and fight. Right? So, this fight or flight response -- it's automatic process, it's physical and saved lives. That is why it happened. And it happened because there was usually some really imminent threat of harm, whether it was environmental or an animal.

The difficulty is that we as humans still have this response every single day. It's built into us. It's just how we're made. But when we have anxiety, we are starting to have that type of response to things that are actually not all that dangerous for us.

Some would argue that a phobia to snakes -- that might make sense. There's some fear factor there. But when it turns into a true anxiety, it's when it makes you avoid going places or worried ahead of time, a long time, about whether or not you might run into a snake where you're going. And now you start avoiding things and not being able to live fully. Does that make sense? Right?

So why it's important to focus on this positive thing? Why am I going here? It's because this isn't something that's abnormal. Everybody experiences it every day and all the time. So when we're talking about looking at anxiety in ourselves and our children and our families, we're looking for something that's way different than just experiencing this fight or flight response to normal everyday things.

Anxiety is about -- not what you're fearful of -- but how much or in what ways it affects you.

Slide 5: Worry Vs. Anxiety (5:08)

So, worrying would be that normal reaction to stress, and it can be beneficial in some situations. To be honest, it's actually beneficial to us in a lot of situations in our daily life as well. So, when we talk about test anxiety, to some extent, test anxiety is helpful to a lot of kids and to a lot of adults. There's a level of

stress and a level of worry that actually makes us perform better. When it crosses over the threshold and it becomes really big, then we don't perform as well. But that benefit is there because it gets all of our systems going and moving.

Something is anxiety when it moves from that worry or stress place into anxiety, when it becomes extreme for the circumstances, when it becomes excessive for the situation that it's happening in, when it causes somebody to be more dependent on others than they would normally need to be. So, children who can't go with their peers at the same age level or developmentally appropriate level to do different things because they fear that they can't work well in a situation -- that they won't have a parent with them -- those types of things would be seen.

It's also something when it affects the length of time. So somebody may have something that's pretty typical, healthy, kind of level of worry or stress, but the length of time that they experience it in their life and may cause it to turn into something that's more significant than we would call anxiety.

Slide 6: Cycle of Anxiety (6:36)

What anxiety is, is a cycle. And this is important not only in understanding anxiety, but this is also how we treat anxiety. So, we don't actually see reality. None of us do. What we do see is our image of reality, right? So, we have thoughts about things and those thoughts we then have feelings about -- they create our feelings. Those feelings then, make us happy. Our behaviors come from our feeling about something. And then our behavior actually reinforces those first thoughts.

So going back to that snake example, if I'm fearful of thinking my thought, I'm not sure about that. I think that can be dangerous. And it caused me to feel scared, right? And then feeling scared will make me avoid. So behaviorally, I'm going to avoid that situation and that place. And then by avoiding, I just reinforced -- when I didn't go there, I didn't get hurt, right? So, obviously that was the right thing to do -- so that thought cycles back.

And what anxiety does is it circles and circles and circles and when we want to interrupt it, we try to work on all three of these areas. And interrupting anywhere in the cycles can usually be effective for somebody.

So, you'll hear some of the things we'll talk about tonight would be behavioral things. How do we interrupt just stopping someone from avoiding going there? Why would we want to do that? You hear about exposure therapy. Why would you just want to put somebody in this stressful and scary situation? And part of it is not allowing them to see that that link continues -- so that there's an alternative, right? Or sometimes we may go to the thought part. How do we fight those thoughts that are telling you to do this?

Also why this cycle is so important to see, understand and know is that this is how panic happens. So, when we talk about anxiety, one form that is having a panic attack or panic symptoms, right? Where physically in your body feels like you're unable to control what's happening. You may feel fearful that

something really bad is happening to you – your heart's racing, you're short of breath, unable to think straight, anything like that. And the reason that this happens is that your cycle starts to rapidly go around and around and around -- where somebody starts to feel all of these areas in play for them quickly and it turns into a panic feeling.

Slide 7: Causes (8:53)

Some of the causes of anxiety... There are definitely some genetic causes that we found. Mainly though, genetics are most responsible for a vulnerability. So, there's no one genetic link. At best, 30 or 40% of the anxiety that we all experience is linked to in some way to our genetics. So, there's not a direct link. There's a lot of other things that come in to factor like learning or modeling.

So what we're exposed to in our life, how we watch other people deal with stressors in their own -- Again, is this a one to one ratio? We watch one person be scared or have anxiety and then we develop it? No, not necessarily, but all of these factors together... So, somebody may genetically be more vulnerable to it. It's something that's passed down in families and then they may experience watching someone else deal with panic symptoms or be fearful in certain situations and that may then encourage some of that genetic vulnerability to come out.

And then additionally environmental factors. So, although there's not always an environmental factor for somebody, we have found in some cases things like some obsessive and compulsive behaviors and symptoms have been linked at times to strep infections. That's a rarity, but it does exist and it still falls in this environmental category. It's something that you were not born with, that you were exposed to that changes you.

Also, environmental things would be being exposed to life stressors that would cause you to be put under such stress in your life that you might develop anxiety or have trouble controlling worry over a course of time. So for some people that can be a move, it can be change in family structure or status. It can be loss or grief in the family, something along those lines.

Slide 8: Sources of Stress in Kids (10:34)

Common sources of stress in kids that I wanted to just kind of highlight and go through -- and I'm actually hoping more come up in the questions tonight so we can talk about these in depth. But there are a number of different sources of stress for kids. They experience stressors that are very similar to what adults do, especially now with the access to media, the access to outside information through the interactive social media platforms.

But one unique source of stress that's being seen more and more often and is being studied and is relatively new is access to social media. So, the idea that kids no longer leave peers when they come home, but that they have peers with them all the time, the idea that they can be getting feedback from different people even when they're at home and not with peers. And the idea that social media is

something that's sort of faceless. So although we put pictures up, although we share those images, we don't interact with somebody while we're watching them speak to us. And so all of those things are being studied more in terms of what their actual impacts are. But they're sources of stress because they're new -- they're ways that kids are affected and impacted in terms of their relationships.

Peer relationships are another big source of stress for kids, although stress can be good, right? So, some of those peer relationships are -- things that are positive for them, that are growing places for them -- learning new skills, learning new traits, learning how to get along with different people, learning how to adapt and problem solve.

There can also be negative consequences with peer relationships -- when things aren't going as well or when they're not feeling as effective, or when they're not feeling well liked.

Family, sibling relationships are also a big source of stress often for kids. So whether you're the younger, older siblings, middle child -- those things can play roles and stressors depending on how you dip into the family -- whether they're good or poor relationships, whether one child has something going on that they may need more of a focus from parents or may beginning different services or changes within the family, of course. So parents, marriage, divorce, changes in structure, changes in living arrangements.

Anything school related... So testing anxiety is one we've already mentioned -- but anything that could be related to just going to their job every single day for lots of hours and having really high demands and expectations

Stressors in the family -- we can cover. There's the idea of separation anxiety -- that being something that is experienced by most kids and that at different stages in their life -- that can be experienced in different ways -- more or less developmentally appropriate. So that we expect certain signs of that. But that separation anxiety can cause a child to also then miss out on certain things with peers -- friends as well as with their school relationships.

And then new tasks. So, anything that would be thrown in front of them, that is a brand new challenge, whether it's by choice or it's just something developmental for them -- going through normal growth and development just can be stressful because there's a lot to learn and there's a lot to gather.

Slide 9: How to Spot It (Emotional and Cognitive) (13:32)

How to spot it. So, this is definitely something that can apply to adults as well. This more geared here towards looking at and talking about children. How do you spot something like anxiety? I think there's some really common things that we notice and we expect when we talk about anxiety. We think about somebody who maybe is shaky, who may be breathing heavily, who you may notice is pacing -- those sorts of things. But there are a lot of ways that anxiety comes out that's observable for kids emotionally, in their thought processes, physically and in their behavior.

So, we're going to go through all four of those and some of them are more easily spotted, others are not. Any combination of these things that we point to somebody that's struggling more with worry and stress than what they can actually handle or manage on their own.

So the idea that emotional category -- somebody experiences low self-confidence, being hypersensitive, right? So being criticized for something or being given feedback and not being able to react to that without really being upset, hurt or dramatic about it. Being out of proportion to the situation. So crying, sadness, frustration, anger, hopelessness -- that seems unreasonable given sort of what they're facing. Mood lability. So the idea of ups and downs quickly going from one place to another, having that sudden mood change.

Feeling like they need to be perfect, talking about needing to be perfect, putting pressure on themselves. Worrying about things, asking questions excessively. "How is this going to be? How am I going to do that? Where are we going to go? Where are we going to be? What's this going to be like?" Critical, self-thinking. So, being the first one to say something negative about themselves -- or not believe in themselves that they can do something. And worrying about what other people think.

Slide 10: How to Spot It (Behavioral and Physical) (15:26)

In the physical and behavioral side, you may notice things like headaches, nausea, sweating, shortness of breath, rapid heartbeat, lightheadedness, right? All of those things because the fight or flight response has kicked in for a while which is a really good thing -- because when you need to fight or need to leave, you need the blood supply, the oxygen rich blood supply to be going to all the vital organs that they are going to allow you to run as fast as possible -- and not be wasted on the things that you don't need, like digesting your food. In that moment, not all that important -- so you're going to feel nauseous.

Behaviorally, you may notice somebody has difficulty concentrating, that they frustrate themselves very easily, be angry a lot. And those symptoms can actually be very often and easily confused with things like attention difficulties or unwillingness or being unmotivated. So, a lot of times we talking with family and looking at number of things and there may be a lot of anger, a lot of intense frustration, a lot of back and forth and argumentativeness that really is rooted in anxiety, but that child may not be aware of how to verbalize that. So you may even notice some of these things that are atypical.

And then looking at things like avoidance. So, that's one of the most key and important behavioral things that you can notice in your child. If you notice that they're avoiding things often, or if you notice that they're constantly avoiding the same thing, not wanting to approach it, asking lots of questions about it, working really hard to find ways to avoid something -- that may be something that they're actually quite anxious about.

Slide 11: Types of Anxiety Disorders (16:58)

Going briefly into the type of anxiety disorders... So, it's more -- kind of just want to put up here the idea that there are lots of them. When we say anxiety, I'm talking about a generic and talking about it generally. But in reality, there's a lot of different ways that this can affect somebody. And each of these different disorders, each of these different experiences is going to be vastly and wildly different.

Then on top of it, you may not even have an anxiety disorder, but still experience anxiety -- that it doesn't necessarily meet our criteria for one of these labels. But the idea of this -- they can be so vastly different. And if you're looking at one child and one experience of anxiety, then will look very, very different -- even within your own family. And so, keeping in mind that everyone's experience of it can be very different.

Slide 12: Helping Children Cope (17:49)

So where do we go in terms of coping? Some of the things we share here are really geared towards the parent goal. So, what kind of things can you do within your own home? What kind of things can you do to be most helpful if it's your child who has some form of anxiety or some anxiousness? This lists the idea of listening, normalizing, educating, modeling and tolerating -- those are main headings -- the things that you can be most effective with and most helpful to your child in doing.

So listening -- seems fairly easy, right? Be an active listener, be a good listener. What I mean by this is be available when you know that they are most likely to talk. For the most part, that doesn't happen when you say "what's going on right now?" -- right when you're noticing it. But it may be times where you know they are most at ease. So, crawling into bed at night -- they're more likely to talk to you at that moment about things.

Car conversations are one of my favorite things. So there's something about the parents being in the driver's seat, handling the steering wheel and unable to provide a lot of eye contact that seems to make kids talk more. I think it's partially distracting. They can't get away from you, right? Even if they wanted to. But the other part - that low-key, "I'm-not-being-pressured" -- "I'm able to kind of think about what my response is and I don't feel that intense pressure being faced with a conversation."

Also listening actively. So, when you are suspicious of -- or when you notice some type of anxious symptoms in your child -- listening to them actively in the sense that you listen to what they are saying without trying to interject or interrupt. So really listening fully to whatever they're saying, even if it seems irrational, even if it seems illogical or out of sorts with the situation, right? So, often anxiety is based on something that's much more grand from what the situation is possible. Trying to listen all the way through and then repeat back what you actually heard them say, can be enough to make somebody feel heard and bring that level of anxiety down. And also be what can help you move into the next phase.

So listening it that way without interjecting or trying to soothe and then -- normalizing. So, one of the most effective things that you can do for a child is let them know that not only are they not alone, but this is really common. A lot of people worry about that, a lot of people think about that. And this is absolutely something that's okay. Taking that stress off of that -- does that make sense?

So when we go back to thinking about that cycle of anxiety, if you're worrying about something and on top of it, you think "gosh, I probably shouldn't be worried about this because I'm being told I shouldn't be," or "this is different," or "this is weird." Well now all-of-a-sudden, those are extra worries. What are those going to do? They're going to feed those feelings, those feelings are going to feed additional behaviors – and before you know it, you have even more cycles going. So, one of the ways you can intervene is by normalizing it -- saying "this is okay, this happens and it's not unusual."

Educating. So, educating the child and educating yourself -- gathering as much information as you can, but in that moment, also educating them a little bit. Using some language that's developmentally appropriate, putting some labels on things, giving them words to describe what they're experiencing so that they have the power to express it -- can be really helpful.

Modeling it. This is single the most important thing that you can do. So not only facing their anxiety with a sense of calm, assuredness and bravery, but facing your own in that way, even when you don't think that they're watching.

Now, like I said, it's not a direct link. Not everything that you do is going to be watched and witnessed immediately. But watching and seeing that when something is uncomfortable or something is stressful -- that there's a way to get through it, even if you feel that way. And also part of modeling it is not hiding it. So, we also want to insulate our kids from worry symptoms and stressors. By doing so, we do protect them to some degree, but we don't allow them to see that if you feel this way, you can cope or there are options for you.

So modeling for them when you say something difficult -- modeling for them when you say something that makes you uncomfortable -- and allowing them to see that that will end, that that will be solved and that that it will be coped with. is a really effective thing to do.

Tolerating. This goes along with modeling. So, the idea that not trying to necessarily solve it, soothe it or take it away, I don't know if that can be counterintuitive or not, but usually when somebody says something to us, they say, "I'm really worried about going and standing up in front of 75 people tonight to talk about anxiety," right? What do you think everyone said to me today? "You're fine, no big deal, you got this."

Not one person, even though I'm working with psychologists, right? You should know not one said to me, "that's stressful -- you're right." But what happened was when they said that to me, did I feel any better? When they said "you're fine," did I walk away from any of those conversations going, "no," -- because what I felt was, "okay, I'm still worried. But they don't get it. They don't understand, right?"

I'm not supposed to feel upset now, shouldn't be sick, I shouldn't feel like it, I shouldn't feel worried. Instead, if somebody had said to me, "that is nerve wracking, isn't it?" You probably -- you got me first. And then they start talking you through it and show me that they're not going to take that all the way

immediately with their words -- but that some of that distress is going to be there, and that's okay -- can be a really, really powerful thing to do.

So, if you were to come in and seek additional help -- that may be the next thing -- knowing when to seek additional help, when it's something that is going on for a very long period of time that is maybe affecting your child, their functioning more significantly than it was before. Seeking additional help can sometimes give you a fresh perspective, a set of eyes, some ideas on coping strategies that may be really personalized for your family, that would be effective. The other side of it is that in treatment, in terms of at least psychological treatment, one of the things we talk about is frustration and distress tolerance.

Actually something we do -- we don't come in and try to make you distress. Have you sit there and tolerate it. But the idea that sometimes we're going to be uncomfortable and we just can't run, but what can we do in that moment to get through it, even if it's uncomfortable? So modeling that idea of tolerating discomfort can be really powerful.

Slide 13: Parenting (24:32)

These kind of fall under those same headings. But thinking about "how do we talk through thoughts and feelings," -- labeling things can be really helpful. Things like red light and green light thoughts. So as you educate a child, give them labels, give them words to talk about what they're feeling and experiencing. You can do it through a number of different things, but one would be something like starting to call worry thoughts, "red light thoughts." Starting to call the balancing thoughts or the counterargument to those "green light thoughts" -- and helping them to identify in that moment, is this green or red? Is it stopping you from doing something or just helping you go and do something? It can be in a powerful way to help them express.

Helping them with their own feelings. So not trying to push into rationalizing why something shouldn't be scary or why you shouldn't be afraid of something, but instead working with the fact that they realistically are fearful of that -- and trying to help them come up with a solution as to why they feel that way and what might undo it.

Staying calm through -- the idea of planning for transitions. So, if you know that there are certain things that will be coming up in terms of transitions, whether it's in family, whether it's in the environment, at school -- talking about those ahead, knowing how to put some coping strategies out there that might be helpful in advance. So, if you feel this way today, starting with something coming up next week, talking about that transition, "what that difference in school is going to be like? What are some things you might do if you notice that you feel nervous?"

The expectations that you set up between you and your child, but more importantly, the ones that you talk through with them. A lot of times anxious kids will have really unreasonable, really unrealistic expectations of themselves, actually -- even if no one else has put that on them. But they'll own that idea of "I have to be the person" or "I have to do better" or "someone's going to be disappointed in me if I

haven't done as well as they expect," even though that may not be what you expect and what you put out there. And so really clearly talking through those expectations.

Building on personal strengths. So, sometimes just focusing on the other side of things, things that are going well. "Yes, this is not easy right now. Let's tolerate this because of what comes next "or "let's tolerate this because you know what's happening tomorrow" or "what kind of things are you really good at that we might use to distract you while you're feeling this way?"

Working together as a team. The way I talk about it is this isn't something that you do without them, where you have the prescription – "this is how we get rid of anxiety." But instead working together as a team, including them and having them help plan.

Slide 14: Parenting (continued) (27:06)

One of my favorite ways to do that then is rewarding bravery. So when it comes to anxiety, there is no way to do exactly the "stopping anxiety" task. Right? That cycle kind of continues on its own. The idea if I say to you, "please don't right now, no matter what you do, do not think." You can't stop yourself. Our brains just do that. So, when we talk about anxiety, sometimes what we do instead is we try to reward and grow the exact opposite.

So you often hear relaxation strategies -- which we're going to do a couple. The reason that they work so well is not because they directly think, "this is the anxiety thought, this is why you shouldn't be having it." What they do is they force you to do the complete opposite of being stressed and anxious. When you are relaxed, you cannot be anxious. The two don't exist together, right? So, when you are being brave, you can't be avoiding. That behavior can't be happening to continue the cycle.

So sometimes we can't just directly argue anxiety or fear on somebody, right? We just start to grow something else and then that's what strength is there. So bravery is one of the best ways to do that. Labeling something, working with your child together, identifying "how can they be brave in the face of something that makes them fearful or anxious?" And then creating a plan to give them reward for that -- whether that's earning tokens, whether that's any points towards something, whether that's earning an activity or a choice that they get what dinner is that Friday night -- something along those lines.

Working together on this kind of plan is most helpful for kids because it allows them to have a stake in it. It allows them to say, "yes, this is going to be challenging or this is difficult for me, but I'm going to be part of this solution, I'm going to be part of changing it."

If you set up a plan like this, there are some tips on this website here and these slides will be published, you can access that. But what you want to do is you want to help them identify what they might be fearful of, what they might be anxious about, some of the things that go along with that. So, if they're afraid of testing, if they're afraid the night before test, and then they notice that they're also afraid in the morning,

and then when the test is passed out – these are three distinct moments. You can separate those out and help, have them help start figuring out all of what really goes into it for them.

And then you divide the plan. Or think about some small moments that you can break in each of those periods of time or each of those places, or each of those things. And then you allow them to start accumulating some sort of reward for that.

The best way to do that is that list of thoughts. Be clear, consistent, immediate, positive and flexible. So these are also outlined even further on that website. So, you can go there to get some feedback if this is something you want to try. But the idea of stating exactly what's expected. So using a visual chart, using some way to record having that not be gray area really looking like this is what the expectation is in order to earn something.

Being consistent. So, every single time they turn that bravery star sticker and every time that they don't. Also sticking to that and not feeling like you would reward not brave.

Being immediate. So, jumping on it as quickly as possible not going to be something, if you're busy, that you can't get to that day, but trying as quickly as possible to give that token reinforcement.

Being confident. So, this actually means when they don't -- when they fail to be able to be brave in a moment -- being positive about the fact that that doesn't mean they can't in the next.

And then being flexible with it. Noticing if things change for them and adapting the plan. Noticing if they're doing really well and successful you may change whether what the system is or what the plan is.

Slide 15 Parenting – Take Care of You (31:00)

Lastly, in terms of parents, the parenting side so I know I'm focusing a lot on parents and there's a reason. So, taking care of yourself, if you are parenting a child who is anxious, if you are caring for a child who is anxious, chances are that you are putting a lot of energy out as well. And taking care of yourself can be one of the best things that you can do. Not only is it a modeling where your child can watch you using effective self-care and show them ways that they can do that, but it will also give you the energy that you need and the support you need in order to do that.

So things like reducing stress in your own life – easier said than done. Taking breaks and not feeling guilty about that because you know that when you take a break you are fueling yourself up to be more effective when you come back to the situation. Seeking out support, whether that's professional or social support. Eating well, feeling good, sleep again, easier said than done. And doing something fun, that's going to be our own list.

I think it's the thing that people most feel guilty about when you're dealing with something that can be stressful for the whole family. When you notice that your child may be anxious and needs your support,

taking time away to do something that's just for you -- just for fun, may seem frivolous or may not be high on your priority list. But in fact, doing that is an effective way to model for your child. That in spite of these things going on, you can also have this balance in your life.

Slide 16: Coping Strategies (32:29)

Some ideas for coping strategies. So, going back to the anxiety cycle -- where you can interrupt at any of those three places, right? So, the thoughts, the feelings and behaviors that someone may experience. The first two on the list are all about physical. So, these are both breathing techniques. I actually want to go through them with you right now.

They're really quick, they're really simple, they're really effective, you can use them. I do. They're kind of silly. I've been known in my practice to do bubble breaths and have people see me and laugh and I say "good, I helped you." But these are things that you may use in a moment when you notice that your child was anxious that you can help them to just slow themselves down physically. So, if we can slow that physical fight or flight response down, then we're going to be more effective in talking about it next or in helping them cope with it the next step. So, breathing techniques or other physical calm down techniques can usually be a break -- a first warning defense.

So, bubble breaths. What these are -- there are two different ways to do bubble breaths. The first is taking an imaginary jar of bubbles, right? You dip the wand, you take a deep breath in through your nose. And then you go slowly through your wand out your mouth. So, we're going to try just one double breath.

Try that for the second -- notice in through the nose, out through the mouth.

And why this is helpful is because when you say to somebody "breathe slowly, deeply, don't go out quickly." Most of the time they're already getting anxious. What are they going to go?

Okay. (loud, rapid, heavy breathing)

And there's a way to help a kid understand how to exhale really slowly. Because if you blow bubbles too quickly, what happens? Then you're not going to get any good bubbles.

The other way to do bubble breaths -- is fill your cheeks and then you are holding bubbles in your cheeks. So, picture me in my car. This is one I do in my car. Hold those bubbles in your cheeks. Everybody can. Now breathe slowly in and out of your mouth -- or your nose.

(laughter)

Really? This is fun! Hold them, hold them -- and in and out through your nose only. There is no way to do that fast, right? You cannot take those breaths in and out fast. It forces you to have to slow down.

So there are both ways that you may describe and relate how to take nice deep, slow breaths to a child who might be feeling anxious. What's really great about both of those too, is that they can use them across situations. They're really effective at school. Sometimes you don't want to do this bubble cheeks at school, but you can practice it at home if it's a good fit. It's a way to know how to call on that muscle memory of what slow breath is.

The next one, rainbow breaths. So, picture the baby stacking toy, right? With the rainbow rings going up the column of the body. What you're going to do is you're going to take those slow, deep breaths again. They're going to be in through your nose and then slowly out through your mouth. And as you take that deep breath in through your nose, I want you to picture starting at your toes, the colors of the rainbow being pulled up your body by your breath. So, you have to take slow, effective, long breaths in order to get so it's red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple is what you're imagining and picturing on your body.

It helps if you close your eyes when you do this as well. And then as you exhale through your mouth, you picture those colors all melting back down off of your body. So, when you close your eyes and you do this – anyone want to try it? Okay, I'll make you the next one.

And you come through this process. Do it in effect three. And what it does is it forces somebody to realize that they're breathing too quickly because they only have to breathe and they needed to get two more colors down to their toes. Does that make sense? And then as you release that breath, you can picture it melting. And that strong visual image also will give somebody a break just slightly in a moment from whatever it was that was causing them to be stressed or anxious in that moment.

So, another really effective one. If somebody practices this at home -- that they can use at school, even right before our test. So taking a couple deep breaths, sitting in their chair with your eyes closed for just 30 seconds can set a better tone for them going into it.

Taking a break, I know there's not a way to report it, but if you notice in a child they're anxious, setting them up and telling them it's okay to take a break, even in the moment of frustration, even in the moment where it would be hard to do so. Saying one of the ways it's okay to cope is saying "I need a quick break."

Breaks meaning you come back as well. Breaks aren't, "I walk away and I'm not coming back to homework because I don't like this and it's difficult for me." But the idea that occasionally I need to just clear my head and take a small break and come back.

Another exercise – the five finger exercise, which I'm going to pause. We're going to come to that on the next slide.

Progressive muscle relaxation is something that is also really effective. I have a link to one in here if we wanted to do it tonight. So, when you get the slides, you can click on that link. But what the idea is, is systematically being led through a meditative exercise where you clench each of the muscles in your body and then you release them off. So if we do a quick version of this right now, if I were to say relax

your arms. Think in your head on a rating scale right now, one to ten, how relaxed the muscles feel. Just think of the number of your hands. So one being, not relaxed at all. So super tense. Ten being, I am so relaxed I'm asleep already. Now, to compare to that, tense the muscles in your arms and hands as tight as you can and hold them and don't let go.

Tight, as tight, as tight as tight. Tight. Keep going

Now let go. Now relax. Do you notice a difference in how relaxed your muscles feel now after you tensed them? Anybody?

Picture doing that though, through your whole body. So, this progressive muscle relaxation is really effective tool where someone else's voice will guide you through. Starting with your head all the way down to your toes. Systematically releasing intensity for muscle groups. Not only does it help you to have that feeling of relaxation, because you know how tense that feels like, but it actually helps for kids to notice what those muscle groups are.

When you say "relax, relax, relax, relax," we think we're doing a really good job with it. But then also you get to your shoulders and you think "tense" and you "go, oh, I already was." Right? So that can be a nice way to help them actually have full body relaxation.

Progressive muscle relaxation is one that I really, really like to use before sleep. So, if you are working on better sleep, longer sleep, disruptions, nightmares -- anything like that that's going on, making sleep more difficult -- putting yourself into the most relaxed state possible before you go to sleep can be a really effective way to help assist that process. And so listening to something like the link that's in these slides for the 15 minutes before you fall asleep, then you're kind of crawling to bed and turning it on, even doing it together, can help somebody to have that body relaxation, which then leads to that cycle not happening.

Making a list, in this case, making a list of your favorite things. So it can be in the moment, it can be something when you notice that you're anxious, when you notice that they're anxious, that you stop them and you try to balance them back out. Right, so we're interrupting thoughts now. So, if I interrupt your thoughts right now, that you keep thinking about the same thing over and over and that cycle is spinning.

But now if I interrupt your thoughts and I say name for me your five favorite things. Chocolate ice cream, giraffe, going to the zoo, floating at the pool, sleeping. I'm the mom of my uncle right now, so sleeping is like number one on my list. But you do that and what you do is you distract that idea of thoughts for somebody.

What you can also do with making a list is you can have somebody make a list ahead of time and then bring it out for them when they are most needing it. So, you might have a secret stashed list somewhere in the top floor, tucked away with their socks and they can then -- when they can't come up with that list and go, "I don't know my favorite thing!" So have them go get your list -- and just by reading through it can interrupt their thought process and then distract them.

Slide 17: Five Finger Exercise (41:15)

So, coming back to that five finger exercise, this is just one more closing strategy. I think it's really neat, effective and easy to use. This is one that really ties into the idea of muscle memory.

So, this one works. If you were to do it right now, it's going to work for you. But the more often you practice and the more often you do it, the better it's going to work. So this is the kind of thing that's great to practice on a daily basis if you can. And what it will do is it will cause your brain to tie this movement, which is what you'll do -- it'll tie this movement to the idea that "I am supposed to relax right now." Make sense?

So, when you practice at home, then you can use it in situations quickly and easily to call that relaxing feeling into your body. We are trained to be in fight or flight as often as possible. So, rehearsing relaxation and practicing it is actually necessary to be good at it.

So, what you do is – the five finger exercise is for either hand, but always use the same hand. So, I use non dominant hand so that I can drive with the right or do something else while I'm doing it.

The idea is the thumb is going to go to four different spots. These are four different spots in the brain. They can be four different spots or places if you want to take it back. This is adapted more for kids from this version. If you go to the stress reduction workbook, there's a more adult version of it.

You take your thumb and you put it with your pointer finger. And while you hold that there – nice, deep, relaxing breath. And you think of a time you had really healthy relaxed muscles. So, after you get out of swimming pool, usually all your muscles are -- after you've exercised in some way. Healthy, not worn out. "I've used my muscles well, my body feels physically relaxed." And so you close your eyes. Close your eyes.

So as you point your finger and your thumb together, hold them lightly, breathe deeply and slowly and call the mind of time that you felt relaxed and healthy. Remember what you were doing. Remember how you felt during and after. Try to bring that feeling into your body right now.

Without opening your eyes, move your thumb to your middle finger. And as you touch your middle finger, I want you to think of a time that you felt loved. You just knew deep down in yourself that you were loved. What made you feel that way? Or who made you feel that way? Where were you? What did that feel like?

Another deep breath. Move your thumb to your ring finger. And as you do, you should call to mind a compliment has been given recently. Big or small, doesn't matter what was said to you, who said it -- how did you feel?

Deep breath again. Then move your thumb to your pinky finger. And when you land there, I want you to picture the most beautiful place you've ever seen. Maybe you've been there before, maybe you've seen it in a movie, maybe you just created it. Take a moment there, look in all directions, notice what you can hear and see who's with you. Notice how you feel.

Deep breath in and out and come back to the room.

So, this idea, the five finger exercise, is one thing that can give you that break, right? So, this is one version of taking a break. It's another version of giving yourself -- it's another way to distract yourself. But what it is -- is it's a way to rehearse, "I am paying attention to nothing else but how my body feels right now." It's bringing a sense of calm, but it's also bringing a sense of control that when I want to, I can invoke that sense of calm in my body. Rehearsing this on a daily basis, you can get pretty quick and good at being able then to touch the pads of your fingers even quickly -- and it'll call to your brain that sense of "right now I'm trying to relax myself."

Slide 18: Progressive Muscle Relaxation Link

Slide 19: At School (45:53)

Sort of the last piece, we're just touching briefly on some of the things I get asked often. What kind of things might somebody do at school or in the classroom that would be helpful for somebody who is experiencing anxiety? And of course, it varies based on age. Some of the things that might be considered -- if needed -- would be things like where somebody is seated within the classroom, whether that's in the front of the class or the back. There can be a number of different reasons why you would choose either of those things.

What expectations there are in terms of class rules and following directions, class participation, raising their hand versus being called on. Speaking, if there's any type of anxiety around that. How somebody would earn participation points is one of the things that they're working on is being brave in those moments but struggling with it. Testing conditions are another thing. So, feeling anxious, worrying, rushing through tests can be a big issue. So, moving somebody to a space where they're maybe not as aware of other people's finishing speeds or rates -- less distractions expertise can also help reduce the anxiety.

Having somebody who's a safe person to go to identify in their school as well as in their classroom. So, "when I feel this way, I don't have to be embarrassed. This person is going to understand and they already are up to speed on what's happening for me," -- being able to seek them out.

And then also just how to meet some unusual non-daily circumstances like field trips, routine changes, fire drills, that sort of thing -- are all things that may be addressed at the school level.

Slide 20: Treatment (47:21)

Once again, professional help. We've sort of already touched on this. But the idea in going through -- there's a lot that you can do at home obviously identifying, noticing, helping with some of these coping strategies and mechanisms. But anxiety is not a disorder based on what somebody is worrying about. It's a disorder based on how much or how often somebody is worrying -- about how much of an impact it's having on them. So, seeking professional help would come at a time when it feels either unmanageable -- so at-home techniques may not be as effective or helping as well, or that there may be a change in how much you notice it's affecting someone's time, space and function.

Two different courses, usually for treatment. We can talk about therapy and we talk about medication. There are some medications that are helpful -- none that cure anxiety, but they can be really helpful in making somebody more able to use some of the things that they learn in therapy -- some of the coping strategies and resources and helping them build some level of difference in how they physically feel. So that that anxiety can be dealt with effectively.

And then considering things like therapy. So that can be a number of different things outpatient mental health therapy, physical therapy and occupational therapy are all things that can be used for coping resources and helping somebody undo something that's making them anxious cycle go.

Slide 21: Resources (48:41)

A couple really good resources. So, on the connecting for kids website there's an entire section. It is beautiful and brilliant. Go there. In addition, because you're getting the slides you're already going to be there -- these are some of the other resources that I recommend.

They all have really good at-home techniques that you can use as well as checklists or quizzes that you may take to say "gosh, is this something that I may need to seek professional help or do something different?"

Slide 22: Contact Information (49:08)

Just my information here. And now going on to the question and answer.

Question and Answer Session: Response 1 (49:17)

Question: How to help a child who can become overly negative/self-critical after failure.

So, asking about your son, who definitely has a lot of things on the checklist, is anxious -- but it really felt critical -- it sounds like -- and laughs about it. Others around him kind of verbally. He's really into this frustration phase, right? And says a lot of negative things about himself. How do we get, how do we move

him in a direction that he's more positive and that he knows all the things that we so openly know about him -- that he's awesome?

One of the things to do with that, it's kind of counter-intuitive, but the idea of "don't argue the anxiety away from hm." So often when we're in a place that we're anxious, we are so stuck on it that it doesn't matter what rational, logical, long-data-driven, you-love-me-so-much stuff you say, right? It's not going to matter because "I'm so stuck in that cycle." And it appears that what we usually want to do is we want to say, "I love you, I love you, you're so awesome, look at how cool you are, you're so good at math - if you work at home" or something to that effect.

The trouble with that, although it's helpful, of course -- if you're positive. The trouble with that is it's hard to interrupt that cycle with those things because they don't undo those initial thoughts, which are, "this isn't going well. I don't like this. I'm afraid of this." So, one of the things you might do is start by talking without trying to soothe or go in that direction and say, "what made me feel that way?" Something that didn't say, "I don't like this" or "I don't like myself" or something like this. "I don't like myself." What we would normally quickly jump to is, "you're great. Why would you say that?" When we're hurt, we're upset, we're bothered.

But instead, if you can kind of follow it and say, "what made you feel that way?, really? why?" And see if you can get an answer and if they say, "because I'm never -- not good enough" and "I'm not good at this."

Never closing it down, not arguing that you are in fact, good enough and help him to follow that path of thought -- because what can happen is it grows and grows and grows -- basically in the dark, right? When it's in our mind, it's allowed to grow. There's no feedback. There's nobody else interfering. And it just spins and spins and spins.

If you can help him kind of go through that whole path, even if those can be hard to listen to -- because you just want to jump in there and snuggle him and soothe it and make it -- if you can let him or help him to see that "when I go from here to here, I don't like myself. I don't like myself because I'm not good at this."

(pretending to be parent) "Why do you think you're not good at this?"

(pretending to be child) "Well, because I just didn't didn't get this answer right."

(pretending to be parent) "Well, why do you think you didn't get the answer right" or "what's going on that's making it difficult?"

(pretending to be child) "Well I just learned it today and I didn't understand."

(pretending to be parent) "Well, tell me about that not understanding."

(pretending to be child) "When the teacher said it, I didn't hear the part and then I didn't want to ask for help because I felt silly or stupid asking for help -- "

And you say, "yeah, that makes sense. Then when you felt that way, what else were you feeling?"

(pretending to be child) "Well, I was feeling embarrassed."

(pretending to be parent) "Yeah, you feel embarrassed? When I feel embarrassed, I get afraid to ask somebody for help" or men-- . You might find yourself in a place where you can say something like, "yeah, when you're embarrassed, it's easy to tell yourself all these things about yourself."

But you know what? Which one of those do you think isn't true? And then you start to get him kind of trying to bite off pieces of it and change that thinking for himself -- of course, with help and soothing with guidance. But if you can help him to try to chase it down. Usually we get to a place where we see gosh, whatever it was that started it ended up with something really big. Or whatever it was that started it, it ended up in something really far away from how I ended that train of thought. And that can usually undo it a little bit faster.

Question and Answer Session – Response 2 (53:13)

Question: How to help a child who shuts down when anxiety is triggered.

That sounds good, except you won't talk when you just shut down. And how could you get in there and do this whole thought process saying when he's shut down. Where would you go, where would you start? You want to get there, but you may not get there first. So we're wither going to go to the physical side or rewarding bravery.

So, I would try to say get him doing one of those coping strategies, the bow breath, the taking a break, the going and doing something like relaxing for him, turning on music and drawing. This is one of my favorite things. You don't actually have to talk -- but you get him doing something that's a really healthy way to cope for a moment, take a small break to distract himself. And that is when you reward his bravery.

(pretending to be parent) "Whenever I notice that you don't feel good, when you feel anxious or worried or when you feel frustrated -- every time I notice that you feel that way, but you're willing to do bubble breath or you feel that way. But you're willing to take a really good break and talk to me about it? You're going to get a checkmark," or "you're going to get this," and then go add it on. Or ask, "what would you like to earn?" and get him involved in the process,

You may not go right to the thought process part of it. If you can start to just open up a little bit of that cycle anywhere in it -- you'll start to find it easier then, to jump into the other part. So, I would probably start somewhere like that.

Start just by rewarding him noticing it. He's able to say to you, "I don't want to talk right now. I'm too worried" or "I'm so frustrated right now." If that's the place that you're starting at, rewarding for being able to do that is great. And then if he's good at that, then you move that standard.

(pretending to be parent) "Okay, you are really, really good at this now. So now when you go -- you do that and then you go back to talking. Now you're going to get your star."

Question and Answer Session – Response 3 (54:57)

Question: How to tell if it's anxiety or something else, like attention issues.

So the question is, I talk about a lot of the signs and symptoms of anxiety, but so many of them sound like other things or look like other things or they are similar enough that they can tie into one another. How do you tell the difference between what you do?

Well, one is if you have some concerns that you think, I'm noticing some of these, but I also am concerned that it could be one of these other things. That is one of the times that getting some professional help can be a really big answer. That's part of why my field exists is to try to come in as an outside resource to look at things with a fresh perspective and say, which of these do I think is happening -- so that we can give you the stuff to do at home that would be most helpful. So that would definitely be one direction to go.

Other than that would be also the talking process. So without trying to steer this conversation and without trying to soothe it at all, trying to follow a thought pattern and notice where you're left on the thought pattern, pattern can also tell you. So, the answer might be, "I don't like myself because I'm not good at this."

"Why are you not good at this?" -- Because it leads to something that's much more about "I can't pay attention," or "I got in trouble again today because I was..." And it leads you more in the direction of attention based or something like that. You may start to pick up little bits and pieces like that that will tell you maybe something else or different.

Think more often than not, what happens is there's something else going on and anxiety is underneath. Usually, and we tend to not see the anxiety that's a really critical and part of some of those other things actually. So more often than not it happens like that -- and we think it's something else. And then it turns out that it's actually anxiety underneath. So if you notice some of those symptoms, there could actually be something else going on too.

Question and Answer Session – Response 4 (56:50)

Question: A parent asked, how do you know if the symptom is because of ADHD or because of autism or because of anxiety?

I'd be looking if the anxiety is bigger, bad part, I'd be looking for more avoidance. That team seems to be a little bit different, although an ADHD is a lot of avoidance behavior. So if you notice a number of things that are on this list, a lot of other things that weren't on that list that you talked about, there may be something else going on. That is exactly why I'd seek professional help.

I think often, if you haven't thought of a counselor or psychologist before, is that you're going to come in -- and you're going to be looking to come in lots and lots and lots of times -- and it's going to be something that's extra stressful and every single week and all that. Sometimes we may come up with a treatment protocol and say this is really what we expected. But more often than not, our first job, the first thing we do is taking everything you're saying and back up: unbiased, completely objective, what could be going on, what is the underlying story?

Question and Answer Session – Response 5 (57:48)

Question: How to help a child with anxiety at school.

The question is about school. How do you help them at school? Know how to differentiate if something is anxiety versus being caused by ADHD or something else, versus having an accurate diagnosis? Absolutely.

So, the first part is out of school probably having an accurate diagnosis, working with somebody who can give you an accurate diagnosis -- that may end up being something that would call for having a 504 plan or an IEP. If that's the case, in which case we can set up a plan for how is the school going to notice the differences? How are they going to work with these types of behaviors and that sort of thing?

I think the most important thing that you can do is have an open communication dialogue, though, as well. Because often kids, no matter what they're dealing with, are going to act very similar in some ways and very different in other ways at home and at school. And so, having that open feedback dialogue as often as you can, partnering with the teachers, partnering with the school to give feedback about what are you seeing that I'm not? And also giving feedback about what you're seeing at home that they're not.

So speaking to anxiety, specifically, a lot of kids that I work with look like perfect students at school. They don't act out, they don't speak out of turn, they follow the rules, they work really hard on their studies and then they come home, and they're just drained. They have given everything and they've worked so hard holding it all in all day. Nobody knows because it's not showing in the behaviors that we would normally point to.

It's showing in perfectionism. It's showing in the way that they manage their schoolwork. It's kind of reward some of their ancient behavior. And then by the time they get home, at the end of the day, they're still

exhausted that they're having behavior issues or parents are going, "I don't know how to change this for you because it's happening so much at school."

And so, in those cases, giving the feedback also back to the teachers, "what can we switch, manipulate, or change throughout the day that may also make it more effective" and it can be really, really helpful.

Question and Answer Session – Response 6 (59:36)

Question: How to help a child with people-pleasing

How do you change people pleasing? Right? So, somebody's getting reinforced for it all the time because this is positive behavior in a lot of ways. But what's happening is it's causing them to be out of sorts with themselves or what they actually need to do for themselves. They're working so hard to make other people like them.

Part of it is helping them to figure out how it's costing them as well. So maybe not labeling it as negative, but saying, "there are some parts of this that are really great, but it's costing you something as well." So maybe it's costing them some distractions. Maybe they notice that they are a little distracted because they were worrying about this person or doing something for that person. Maybe it's costing them energy. They notice that they get worn out really easily -- whatever you can find that may be costing them and you help them to start to see the difference in those thoughts. Right? So we're interrupting that cycle at the thought level, which is, "I need this person like me, but not I'm going to feel bad. So I'm going to do this." So, you start to interrupt it there, if that's possible.

The other side of it is we can't control other people. So I thinking we can't reward all of us all the time for different things. Helping the teacher, maybe see if there's something going on like that in terms of a cycle -- and identifying it as something that this is something that although it looks like it's helpful, it's actually something we're working on seeing. If we can get him change or do this behavior more or less often and seeing if they can also help to kind of change the number of reinforcements that happen.

Question and Answer Session – Response 7 (1:01:05)

Question: How to discipline children when anxiety is a factor in your family.

The question is -- there's a big impact on families -- on the whole family when one child is really anxious and there's so much effort kind of being put there. But then how "hard do you discipline someone who's already hard on themselves and feels guilty about danger," we'll kind of spin on that. So that question then, including what? You're being manipulated a little bit?

She's got that language then that she knows anxious and she can see an idea. (laughing)

There's a lot of things I want to say. Trying to keep it brief -- first is in some way impacting and changing the way the school day works. She's there to be educated, to mingle, of course, what they're already doing. So, we can't ask for everything in the world to change, but if there are small things that we might do so that the buildup is very different by the time she gets home -- if she's not drained down to where she has no reserves, she's working at primal level. "I have exhausted myself today, probably to the point that the smallest thing is going to make me" -- "look I just don't have it in me," right? So, some part of changing that can be really effective.

One of my favorite ways to do that is planned breaks during the day, where they can be kind of a helper to the teacher -- something where they get to move a little bit and take a break. They don't even have to know why they're doing it or what the break is about. They just happen to get asked often to run an errand. "Can you run this note to the principal for me?" Or are allowed to be taking a break to go get a drink of water or something like that that you can ask for -- but not waiting until they look like they're upset, like they're worried or anxious. You actually want to plan those in and schedule them at certain times of the day so that they're getting up and moving before they even realize that that spinning is happening for them. So that's one part.

Then at home, this is hard and so glad they're working for me too, because that's actually part of it. You want someone to get in there and help you individualize this, what's actually happening in your family and the dynamics of the other kids.

But you're right, you absolutely still have to have consequences and discipline. And so, I think that lessons, we get fearful of disciplining somebody who's already dealing with something. But actually that structure, that routine, that predictability is really, really positive. One of the best things you can do for anxiety is have a really sort of rigid, strict protocol. Of course, you're going to lack flexibility because we're human and it happens. But the idea that there's always this consequence for this behavior is a really good thing.

Predictability is something that most anxious kids respond to really well. They don't have to guess what's going to happen or the different rules for different people, that sort of thing. So, the more that you can do that, that's good.

I think that the other part of it is all those sorts of things we talk about -- modeling, tolerating the distress, walking away. So no. Do I want you to walk away from me and not come back? No. But sometimes say, "you know what? What's going on right now is actually causing everybody to feel really differently. So if you're not willing to take a break and do something different, we're going to. And that's okay because when we come back, we're all going to be..." or "when we're done with this activity or whatever it is, you need to name something concrete that you're going to do." Not, "I'm going to go away for a little while." So name it. "I'm going to be back in ten minutes" or "I'm going to go take a shower. I'm going to go --" something. Right? But make it concrete and say, "and when I get back, we're going to work this out."

Or, “pause. Hold that thought. Right where you are.” But you name and label the fact that you're walking away. Absolutely.

Or if it's not a break in a separate room, you may say something like, “right now I feel like we're both worried a lot about this,” or “we're both stressed a lot about this, we're both frustrated.” Name the emotion. And so, “we're going to take a break from talking about this for five minutes. I'm looking at my class right now for five minutes. We aren't talking about this.”

That's fine. But you know, what's happened in that five minutes is she's paused, she's waited, and something has to have changed. You start doing that on a regular basis, you may not only get her calming somewhat in the middle, you may get for the five minutes, “I'm going to sit here and do bubble breaths.” And then you sit there, right? And you let her stare at you or come close, but you do consistently her doing it during the time -- but taking a break, pausing on something is completely okay.

Question and Answer Session – Response 8 (1:05:33)

Question: How to support siblings of kids with anxiety

Letting it go. How do you spoke with siblings who are dealing with stress and anxiety now, because they are sibling is challenging to deal with. You give them the same language. You talk about what worry and anxiety are. So you label these things so that they know that it's not something that they're making up or that they shouldn't be feeling.

“This makes sense that you're feeling.” You give them words so that when they feel that way, they can express it to you because that's really powerful to be able to say what it is you're feeling. Then you can do something and you give them room for breaks as well.

So that's one of the basics. So maybe it's technically homework time, but a meltdown is happening over here, and it's causing everybody – “so today, yeah, if this is causing you that way, you need to take a small break in your life.” Take a break, do something healthy for yourself. Model how to do that. Maybe he'll even catch on if you see you doing that every day. You can do that in that pyramid frame style talk, but allowing some room.

I keep saying take a break. It's something I'm saying, always walk away, be separated from. It doesn't necessarily mean that. It can be just something that is an emotional break, something that's a thought break, something that's a behavioral break. The behavioral break would be walking away briefly. The thought break would be, “you don't have to worry about your homework for a little while.”

“It's okay, take a minute, take a breather. Let's talk about something else.” It could be interrupting a thought with “gosh! All of this going on right now, all I can think about is pizza. What's your favorite pizza topping again?” And you just hit them with something -- you interrupt that thought -- idea, right?

You may hit with a feeling and you may change and take a break in the feeling side and say, “right now I feel frustrated. I feel frustrated because we've got a lot going on there in all the different directions. Going, “how are you feeling right now?” Right? See what they say.

“Since you're frustrated, what do you think might help you feel better?” They might come up with a reasonable answer and you say, “great, go do it.” And they may say, “staying home from school tomorrow” and that's not going to work well. And see if they can come up with something reasonable for you. But try to meet them with as much of that. “I feel you, I see you. I notice what you're feeling” kind of mentality, and that can help.

Question and Answer Session – Response 9 (1:07:38)

Question: Anxiety and learning disabilities

Anxiety and learning disabilities are going together. One chicken or the egg? So is it anxiety that's causing something to look like it's a learning disorder? Or is there actually a learning disorder that causes anxiety? Because yeah, of course it would.

I want to get an accurate diagnosis first. I want to make sure -- learning disorders often come with some sort of anxiety because things are tough. Things are not easy on a day-to-day basis. You're constantly being met with something that you may not feel great about. You're constantly being up with something if you are getting services at school, that you notice that you may look different from your peers and you don't know why you don't like that.

So anxiety is absolutely something that can come along with that. No matter what, it sounds like you know there's anxiety there. So I would definitely work on trying to figure out good coping strategies regardless there and see what kind of impact it also makes. And that may tell you how much underlying that is.

Question and Answer Session – Response 10 (1:08:34)

Question: Anxiety and anger

Last question. Anxiety and anger, how do they go together? What's that connection or relationship?

Usually, anxiety is the cause and anger is a symptom. So I'm making a sweeping generalization, I know that that can change based on the situation. But usually, anxiety is that churning worried thoughts, your knees, it's the thing that gets in your head and is go, go going. And we don't even really realize it's often happening to us.

And when it turns into something that comes out behaviorally, it comes out as anger. So, anger being usually, “I've worn myself out because actually all of that mental gymnastics I've done has drained my energy, even though you didn't notice I was doing anything. And when I'm tired and frustrated, I snap” or

"I look angry," those sorts of things. The other side of it is anger and anxiety go together because anxiety puts you in a position that's harder to cope. And so when it's hard to cope, you lash out.

You get angry easily because you don't know what's going to help make you feel better. So usually, it's underlying an anxiety issue. So, if somebody is acting out, lashing out, seems angry, quick tempered, that sort of thing, hitting them with the anxiety type strategy will often be all you have to do.

Thank you all. Thank you.