

Smart Thinking

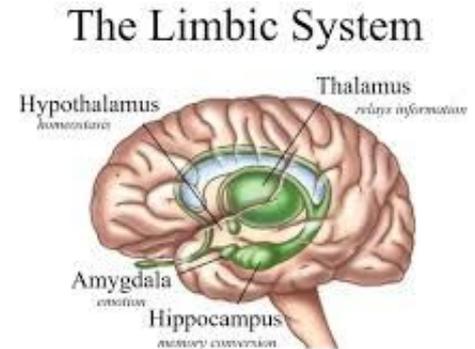
A collaborative guide for helping our littles, middles, high schoolers, and ourselves overcome fear and worry.

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Is this even normal?!



- Fear and worry are natural and normal emotions that everyone experiences.
- Fear activates the amygdala, which is a part of our brain that allows us to respond to fear inducing stimuli, it is responsible for our Fight or Flight response.
- Fear and worry can be helpful or harmful.
- For our little's emotion vocabulary is important.



When fears are helpful...

- Fears are helpful when they motivate us to make changes for ourselves or our environment that ensure our health/safety and or the health and safety of others.
- The upside of fear includes: a heightened sense of awareness, flexibility, may lead to preparation and planning, may motivate skill acquisition, and *fear can keep you safe...it's our internal alarm for danger.*
- Understanding personal fears is important in developing self-awareness.
- Having an awareness of fears can be helpful in identifying how we can regulate our reactions to fears and then overcome them!

When fears are harmful...

- * Fears are harmful when they become excessive.
- * An excessive fear response may be referred to as Anxious.
- * How can we know if fear is excessive?
- * The 4 D's: Disproportionate
 - Disrupting
 - Distressing
 - Duration of...

The 4 D's Continued...



- Disproportionate- if you are extremely worried about a topic, event or experience that others may consider only mildly worrisome.
- Disrupting- it interferes with your everyday life (school, friendships, family, ADL's. etc.)
- Distressing- your fears monopolize your thoughts and are uncomfortable mentally, emotionally and or physically.
- Duration of- if your fears linger for longer than 6 months.

NOTE: if your fears/anxiety fall in one or more of these categories, fears may be considered excessive.

The Good NEWS!



- Anyone can work through or overcome their fear/worry.
- The keys to overcoming excessive fear are:
 - Understanding it happens more often than not to EVERYONE (particularly now).
 - Building a supportive group of people to help you... don't go it alone.
 - Find calming strategies that are comfortable and doable for you.
 - THINK SMART!

The waffle dilemma...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WpTjFhAo9kO>

What do I do when my worry wheel is out of control?

- When our mind is filled with thoughts that are worrisome or distressing, we forget some of our tools.
- One of the first steps in gaining control and slowing our “worry wheel” is to employ calming strategies.
- The easiest and often times most discreet tool is abdominal breathing.
- Abdominal breathing or belly breathing together with mindfulness can slow our worry wheel by distracting us from unwanted thoughts.
- Mindfulness simply means being in the moment, focusing on one thing (like belly breathing) without judgement.

Let's Practice :)

- Sit in a comfortable position, you may close your eyes if you want and place your hand above your belly button.
- Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth (Unless otherwise instructed by a doctor, parent or if it is uncomfortable for you. You can do all breathing through your mouth if needed).
- While breathing, focus on the sensation of the air passing through your nostrils or mouth, listen to the sound your breath makes, notice the rise and fall of your hand as you are breathing.
- Take a slow breath in through your nose and count in your mind to 4.
- Hold the breath for 1 second.
- Exhale through your mouth for 5 seconds.
- Take a cleansing breath and repeat.

Ok, I'm a little calm. Now what?

- Now that your mind is less fearful or anxious, we can work on identifying the unwanted thoughts that are bothering us.
- By giving the unwanted thoughts a name, we can identify what tool will help to keep the worry wheel from spinning out of control again.
- There are different types of unwanted thoughts:
 - Book ends- thinking there are only 2 possible outcomes to any situation.
 - Binocular vision- this is when we see things as magnified or shrunken. Unwanted thoughts may be blown out of proportion while shrinking the positive outcomes in situations.
 - Fortune telling- unwanted thoughts lead us to believe that we can predict the future
 - Mind reading- guessing what others are thinking
 - Overgeneralization- using one small thing to explain or make conclusions about other things.
 - Catastrophizing- “End of the World” expecting a disaster
 - Should-y/Must-y Thinking- overthinking things you should or must do and second guessing yourself.
 - Mind jumps- jumping to conclusions without knowing all of the facts.

How to think smart...

- Smart thinking is a way of retraining your brain using self-talk to replace anxious thinking with positive affirmations, calming strategies, and using mental scripts or checklists to reduce the level of unwanted anxious thoughts.
- Smart thinking slows your “worry wheel” and allows you to think more clearly and rationally.
- Checklists and mental scripts can help in identifying the size of the problem and ways to resolve issues.
- They also serve as a reminder to access supportive personnel (parents, teachers, and counselors).

Creating a calming script

- Creating a script involves writing or audio recording a 2-5 minute narrative detailing your calming sequence of breathing, muscle relaxation or visualizing a calm place.
- Slide 9 is a script! Yours to keep! :)
- For our littles, focus on validating their feelings, labeling the emotion, calming, and positive self-talk. Use of visuals is also very helpful.

What Zone Are You In?

Blue	Green	Yellow	Red
			
Sick Sad Tired Bored Moving Slowly	Happy Calm Feeling Okay Focused Ready to Learn	Frustrated Worried Silly/Wiggly Excited Loss of Some Control	Mad/Angry Mean Yelling/Hitting Disgusted Out of Control

Making a checklist...

- Fact and opinion (Evidence For and Against unwanted thoughts).
- Responsibility Pizza
- Confidence Booster Checklist
 - “I can train my brain.”
 - “My efforts make a difference.”
 - “I am not afraid of hard work.”
 - “Asking for help is a good thing.”
 - “I believe I can.”

Calm Mind Tool: Evidence For and Against

EVIDENCE FOR	EVIDENCE AGAINST
I failed my first quarter final. I receive tutoring every week.	I passed the second quarter final and got a 93% on the third quarter final. My tutor tells me I know the material well. Tutoring doesn't mean I'm a bad student. Tutoring helps me understand math and makes it easier to study for tests and do well.

Evidence review: As I reviewed my evidence I asked myself, “What is it that I think could happen?” At first I was thinking I was a terrible student, because I failed the first final and would, for sure, fail the class. But then I thought, “How likely is it that I would really fail?” and realized it wasn't very likely after all the studying I've done and the tutoring I've received. I realized it was more likely that I'd pass the class with at least a C or a B.

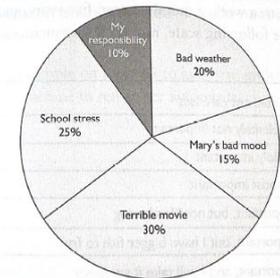
My remixed track: I got off to a rough start this year when I failed the first final, but I've improved since then. My tutor tells me I know the material well. Even if I do badly, I won't fail the class because my overall grade is a B.

Darcy's Think Smart Checklist

My anxious track: My friends had a bad time, and it was all my fault.

Calm Mind Tool: Responsibility Pizza

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS	RESPONSIBILITY % (percentage)
Weather was bad.	20%
Mary was irritable.	15%
Movie was terrible.	30%
Schools has been stressful and we were distracted.	25%
I am responsible.	10%



My remixed track: I'm only slightly responsible for my friends having a good time. Many other factors influence the quality of our time together.

Make it a habit...

- Know what your triggers are.
- Remember your supportive personnel.
- Know what tools work best for you.
- Make time for your self-care and wellness.
- Use calming scripts 5-15 minutes daily.

Resource...

- “My Anxious Mind: A Teen’s Guide to Managing Anxiety and Panic.” *by Michael A. Tompkins PhD and Katherine Martinez, PsyD.*

