

Anxiety and Your Child

Dr. Kerri Tomy

Agenda

- What is anxiety?
- When is anxiety a problem?
- How to support your anxious child

Anxiety

- Regular emotions designed to navigate life
- Protective
- Alerts us to danger
- Motivating

Clinical Anxiety

- Might not make sense anymore
- More sensitive- reacts more easily than expected
- Reaction is more intense than expected
- More irritable
- Sleep disturbances

Clinical Anxiety

- Activities once performed are now performed with more struggle
- Refusal to perform activities
- Withdrawing from regular activities and friends
- Substance use
- Gets in the way of everyday function

What Do I Do About It?

- Brain
- How to settle the brain
- How to directly address the anxiety
- How to maintain a lowered state of anxiety

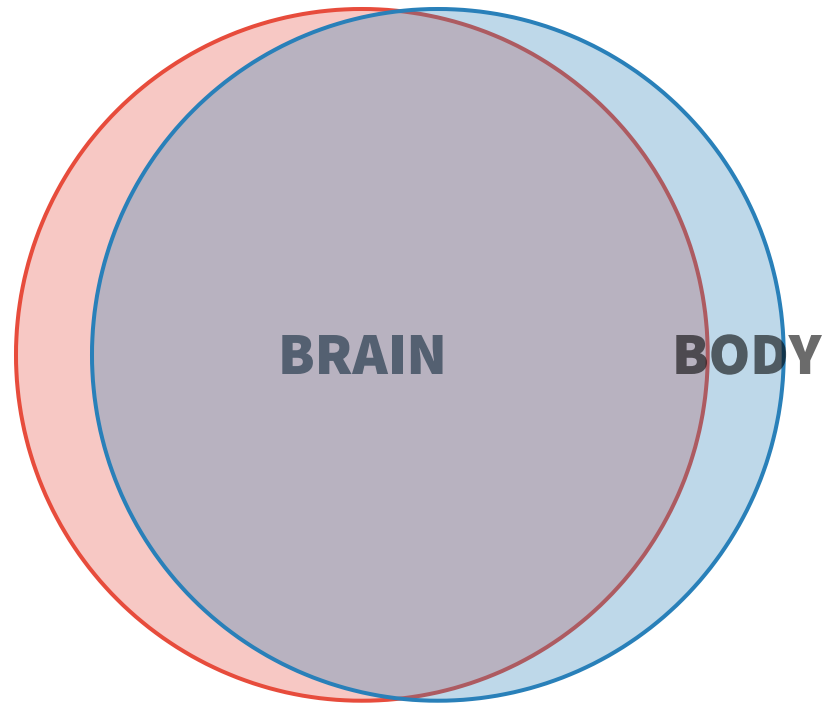


THE WHOLE-BRAIN CHILD

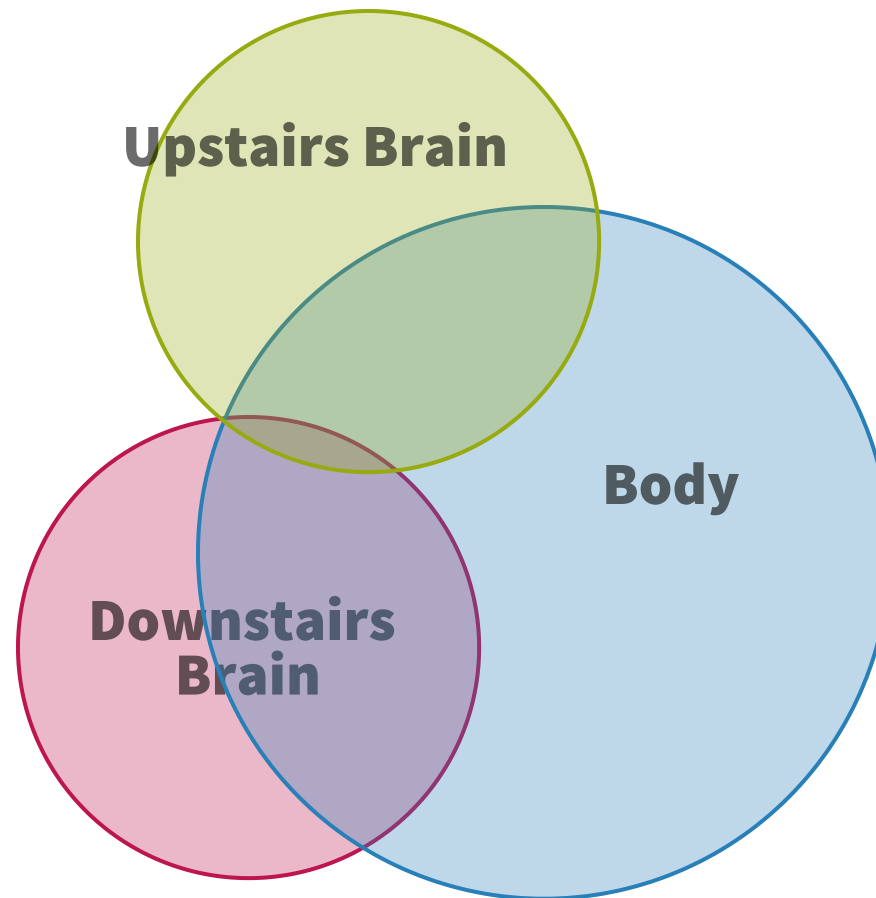
12 PROVEN STRATEGIES
TO NURTURE YOUR CHILD'S
DEVELOPING MIND

DR DANIEL J. SIEGEL
AND DR TINA PAYNE BRYSON

Brain- Body Connection



Brain-Body Connection



Upstairs Brain

- Thinking Brain- think then act
- Problem Solving
- Attentive
- Self awareness
- Empathy

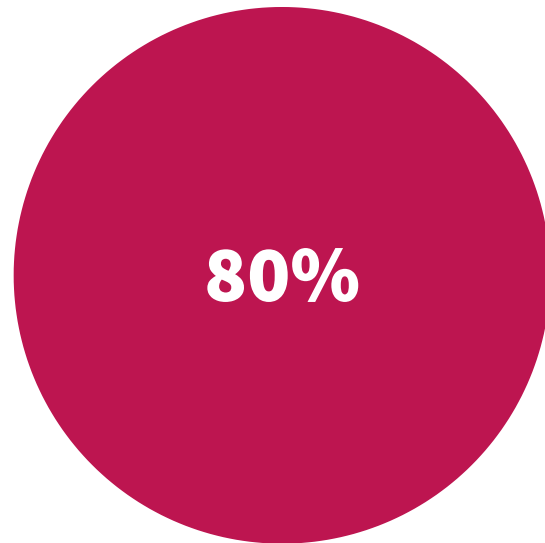
Downstairs Brain

- Automatic Response: Act before thinking
- Fight-Flight-Freeze- physical reactions
- Emotions in high gear

Physical reactions of Downstairs Brain

- increased heart rate
- rapid breathing
- sweating
- flushed face
- headache
- muscle tension
- clenched teeth
- tingling/numbness
- dizzy
- stomachache/butterflies

Fight-Flight-Freeze

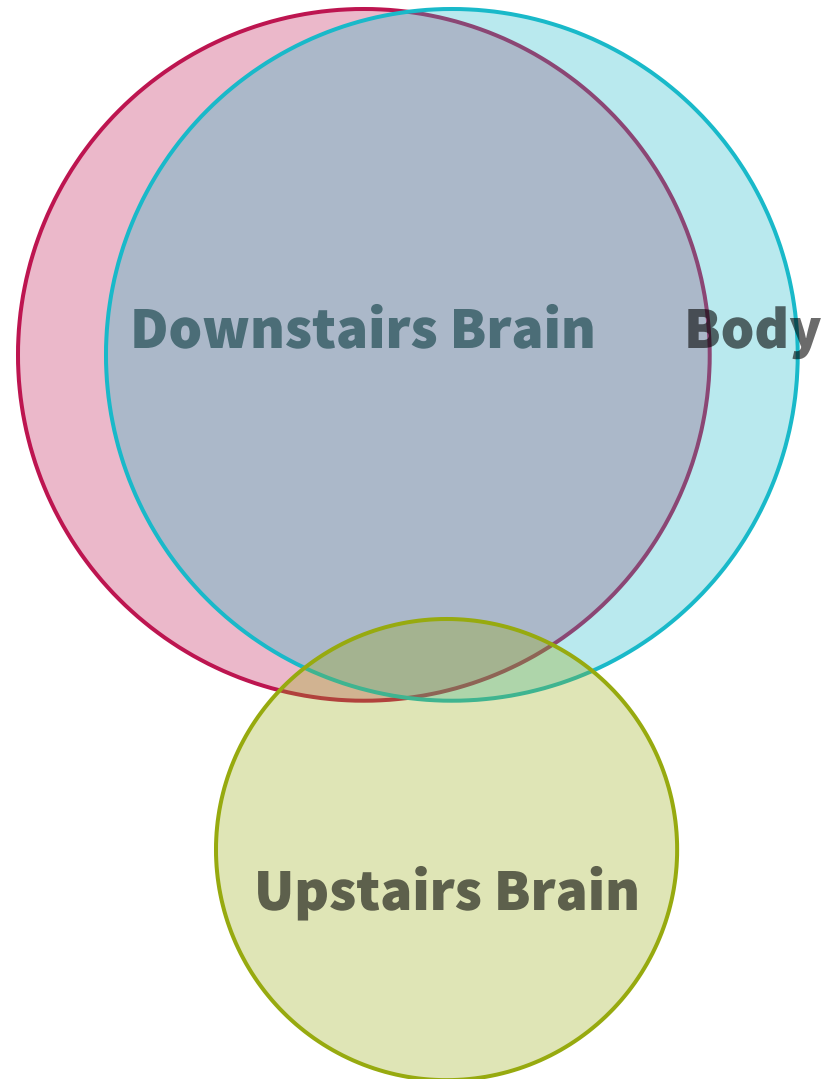


Downstairs Brain

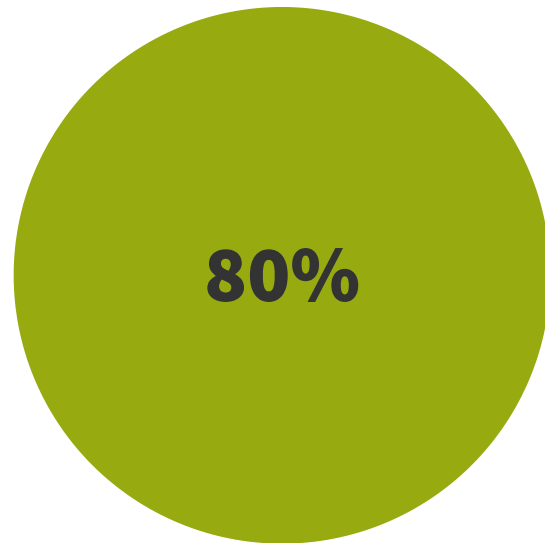


Upstairs Brain

Downstairs Brain



Non-Anxious state

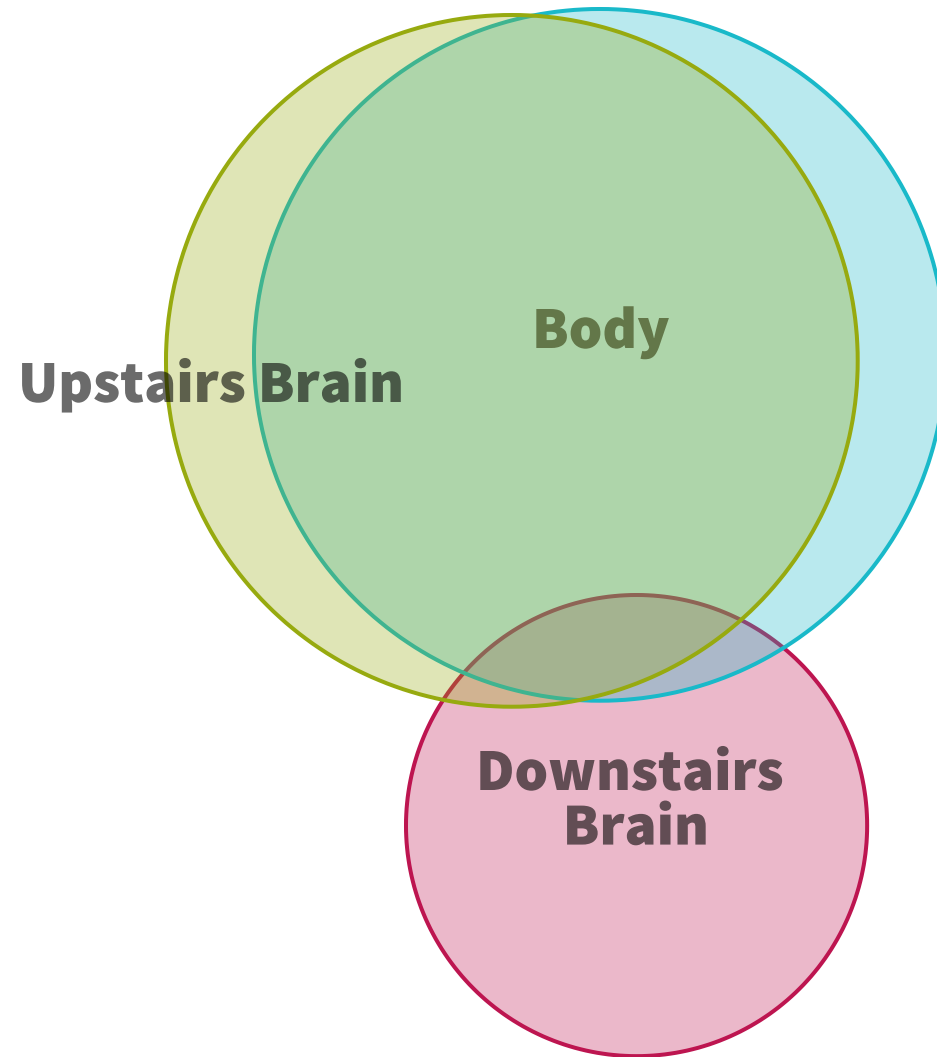


UPSTAIRS BRAIN



DOWNSTAIRS BRAIN

Upstairs Brain



Rating Scale of Anxiety

- Upstairs Brain = 0
- Downstairs Brain = 10
- Non- anxious state range is 0-2
- Higher the baseline, easier to get to 10
- Prolonged anxiety increases baseline

First, Get Upstairs

VALIDATE
VALIDATE
VALIDATE

VALIDATE

- Does not mean agreement
- Listening (non-judgmentally)
- Opens the door to the Upstairs Brain

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How To Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk

"Will bring
about more
cooperation
from children
than all
the yelling
and pleading
in the
world."
*Christian Science
Monitor*

**ADELE FABER AND
ELAINE MAZLISH**

Authors of the #1 Bestseller
SIBLINGS WITHOUT RIVALRY

VALIDATE

- If you are not certain how to validate- paraphrase
- “I can see why you feel that way when that happened

WHEN IN DOUBT...

VALIDATE

Observing can be validating

- I notice you are pacing more than usual, is something up?
- In the past, pacing was usually a sign of anxiety.
- Your face seems a bit flushed, is something going on?

How To Get Upstairs

- Validate
- Relaxation exercises
- Pleasant activities (specific to your child)
- Externalize
- Write it Down

Relaxation Exercises

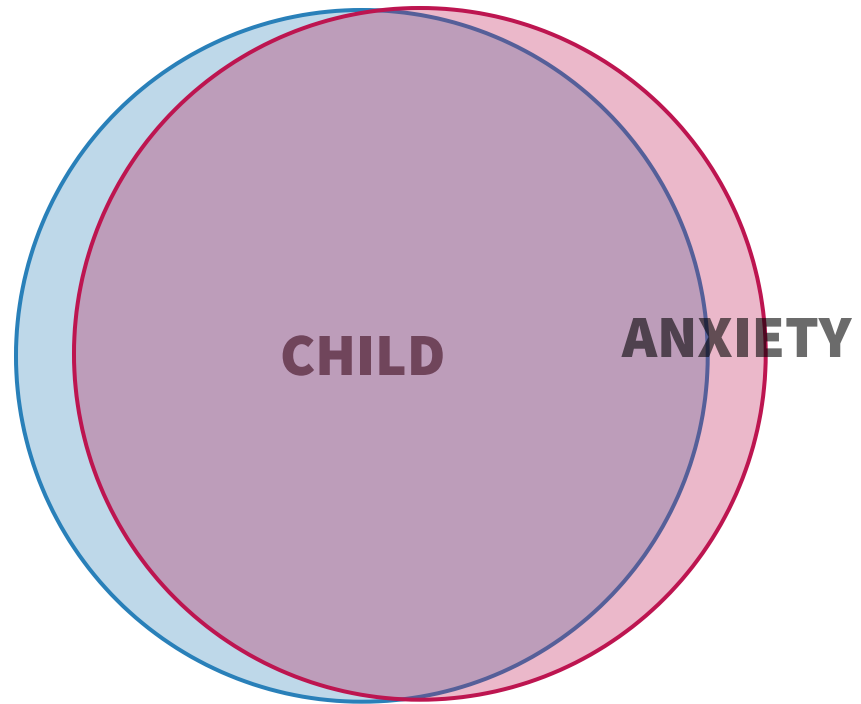
- Meditation
- Mindfulness
- Stretching
- Yoga
- Exercise

Pleasant activities

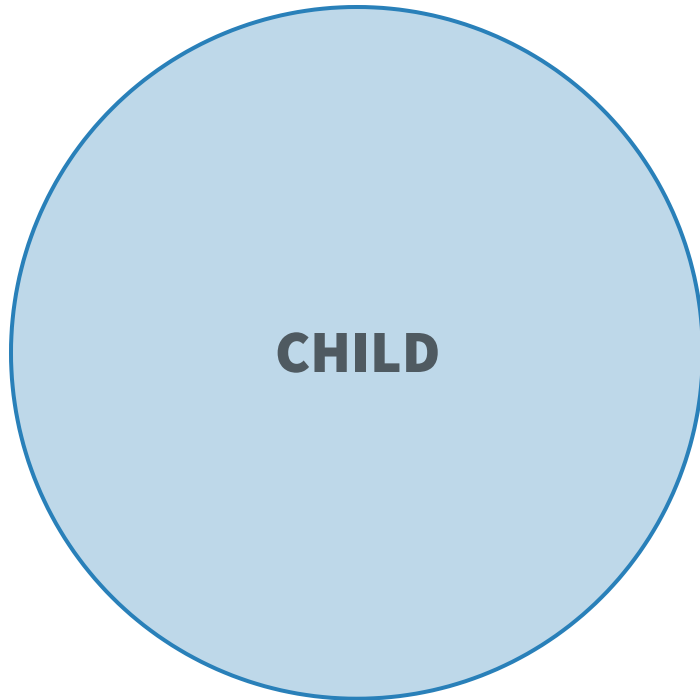
Keep it simple

- walk/other exercise
- hot cocoa/tea
- draw
- music (listen or play)
- shower
- cook/bake
- call friend
- TIME limited screen*

EXTERNALIZE



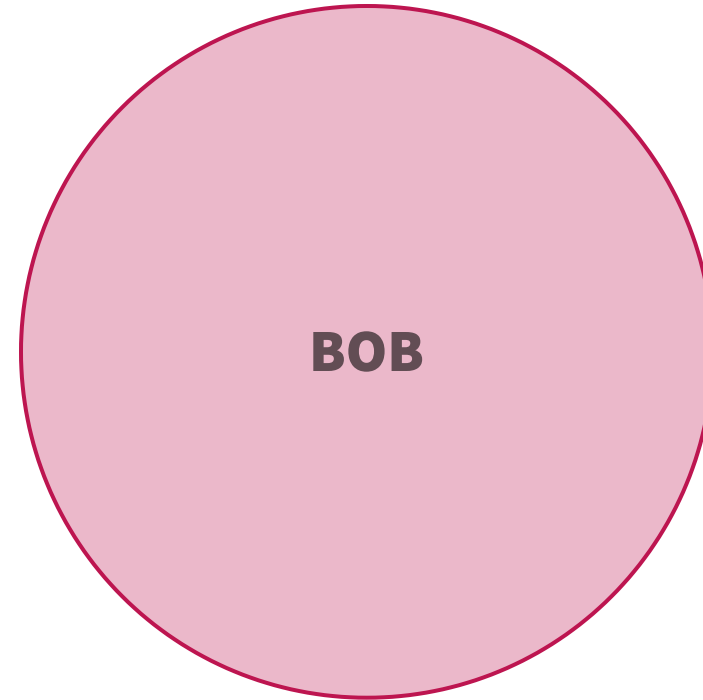
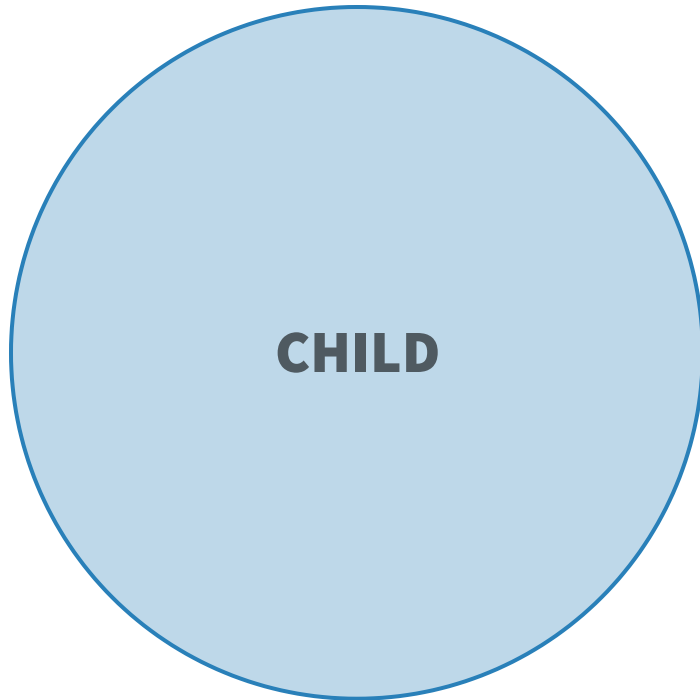
EXTERNALIZE



Externalize to Analyze

- Name the anxiety
- Barry, Bob, Poop
- Zombie
- Best if child names it

EXTERNALIZE



Back to...Observing can be validating

- I notice you are pacing more than usual, is Bob bugging you?
- In the past, pacing was usually a sign of anxiety. I wonder if Bob is here.
- Your face seems a bit flushed, is Bob here?

A Bit About Anxiety And The Brain

Anxiety and The Brain

- Every thought is a neural connection
- Anxious thoughts are more powerful than neutral or positive thoughts

Anxious Thoughts Create Ruts



A Poem about Worries



Worries, worries- they make big ruts
The more you worry, the deeper the ruts
The deeper the ruts, the worse you feel
So stop the worries, so you can heal

Anxious thoughts are like pop songs



Anxious Thoughts are...

- Anxious Thoughts are like swear words
- Anxious Thoughts are vague- Anxiety hates detail
- Anxious Thoughts are exaggerations

Back to Getting into Upstairs Brain

How To Get Upstairs

- Validate
- Relaxation exercises
- Pleasant activities (specific to your child)
- Externalize
- Write it Down

WRITE IT DOWN

- Moves into Upstairs Brain
- Slows Down Anxious Thoughts
- Externalize to Analyze

WRITE IT DOWN

- Don't judge, just write
- Rate each emotion 0-100
- Notice body sensations

Writing it down

Scenario: C has been missing school, initially due to illness. Now C only goes once a week at most, and catches up on work in the Resource room

I really don't want to go to school. I haven't been there for such a long time. People are going to notice I was gone. Then they are going to notice I am there. They are going to be staring at me, asking me questions, talking behind my back. Plus, I am so far behind in work, I will never catch up. They even have me going to the Resource Room to catch up, which only puts more attention on me. Everyone will be looking at me! They're so stupid! They should all just leave me alone. I'm not going to school!!!!

Describe emotion and rate each one: angry 60/100, scared 30/100 embarrassed 80/100

Notice body sensations: sweaty palms, heart rate increases, dizzy, breathing harder



Break it Down

- I haven't been there for such a long time
- People are going to notice I was gone
 - Then they are going to notice I am there.
 - They are going to be staring at me, asking me questions, talking behind my back
 - They even have me going to the Resource Room to catch up, which only puts more attention on me
 - Everyone will be looking at me!
- Plus, I am so far behind in work, I will never catch up

Perspectives



Perspectives



Perspectives



Perspectives



Perspectives

- Evidence for, Evidence against
- Worst case scenario
- What would you say to a friend?
- Even “mistakes” are data
- What would you think if you saw it on tv?

Externalize To Analyze

I really don't want to go to school. I haven't been there for such a long time. (VAGUE/EXAGGERATION)

THE LAST TIME I WAS THERE WAS THURSDAY, WHICH WAS 2 SCHOOL DAYS AGO.

People are going to notice I was gone. (VAGUE)

WHEN I WAS THERE THURSDAY, MY TWO BEST FRIENDS SAID HI TO ME, WHICH WAS KINDA NICE. I CAN'T REMEMBER ANYONE ELSE COMING UP TO ME. THE TIME BEFORE THAT, JULIE SAID HI, BUT THAT WAS ABOUT IT.

Then they are going to notice I am there. (POP SONG: same as above “People are going to notice I was gone”)

Externalize To Analyze

They are going to be staring at me, asking me questions, talking behind my back. (POP SONG/VAGUE/GENERALIZATION)

I DON'T REMEMBER ANYONE STARING AT ME THE PAST FEW TIMES I WENT. NO ONE ASKED ME QUESTIONS OTHER THAN MR. BROWN WHO WANTED TO KNOW WHAT I WOULD WORK ON FOR THE MORNING. I DON'T KNOW THAT ANYONE TALKED BEHIND MY BACK. I DON'T HAVE ANY PROOF OF THAT EITHER WAY. MY FRIENDS WOULD HAVE TOLD ME IF PEOPLE WERE TALKING ABOUT ME.

Plus, I am so far behind in work, I will never catch up. (EXAGGERATION/VAGUE)

YEP. I AM BEHIND. EVERY DAY I GO, I CATCH UP SOME MORE. I END UP WORKING FASTER WHEN I AM ALONE BECAUSE I DON'T HAVE TO WAIT FOR THE TEACHER TO BE DONE TEACHING BEFORE I CAN DO THE WORK. I STILL HAVE 10 UNITS TO GO. I STARTED OUT WITH 25 UNITS.

Externalize To Analyze

They even have me going to the Resource Room to catch up, which only puts more attention on me. (POP SONG)

THERE ARE LOTS OF KIDS COMING AND GOING FROM THE RESOURCE ROOM. WHEN I WAS GOING TO SCHOOL BEFORE I GOT SICK, I DIDN'T NOTICE WHO WAS LEAVING THE CLASS AND WHO WAS COMING IN.

Everyone will be looking at me! (POP SONG)

They're so stupid! (SWEAR)

They should all just leave me alone. (SWEAR)

THEY DON'T PAY MUCH ATTENTION TO ME REALLY

I'm not going to school!!!! (SWEAR)

Rewrite it with the Upstairs Brain

- **VALIDATE** first by restating the worry and the emotions:
- I really don't want to go to school. I'm angry, sad and mostly embarrassed. I'm worried people are going to be looking at me, noticing I am going to the Resource Room and talking about me behind my back. Plus, I'm worried because I am so far behind in my work. My heart is racing, I'm breathing faster, my palms are sweaty and I'm dizzy.

Rewrite it with the Upstairs Brain

- When I stop to think about it though, the last few times I went to school, my friends chatted with me during breaks and at lunch, which was kinda nice. No one asked me rude questions and I did not hear anyone talking about me. My friends would have told me if someone did.
- I am behind in work, but I am catching up. I work more quickly alone in the Resource room which is good.
- I never notice when other kids go to the Resource room, so it is likely they don't notice me either.

Rewrite it with the Upstairs Brain

- **VALIDATE** again for the closing summary:
- So while I really don't want to go to school, it is not actually embarrassing when I go. I'm catching up and I get to see my friends. So **GO AWAY BOB!**
LEAVE ME ALONE! I'M GOING TO SCHOOL!!

Re rate emotions and body sensations

- Sad 10/100
- Angry 0/100
- Embarrassed 40/100
- Decrease in anxious body sensations

Rewriting story reduces anxiety

Next steps

- Might still need to lower anxiety rate
distraction/pleasant activities
- So while I really don't want to go to school, it is not actually embarrassing when I go. I'm catching up and it's fun to see my friends. So GO AWAY BOB! LEAVE ME ALONE! I'M GOING TO SCHOOL!! Now I'm going to go walk my dog to distract myself and feel better.

IT'S NOT MAGIC, IT'S WORK

- Will likely need more than one pleasant activity to return to baseline (0-2)
- Doing it once will not produce long term results
- Preventative and Maintenance: make sure you have a pleasant activity multiple times a day

**EXTRA! EXTRA!
READ ALL ABOUT IT**

(Read it aloud)

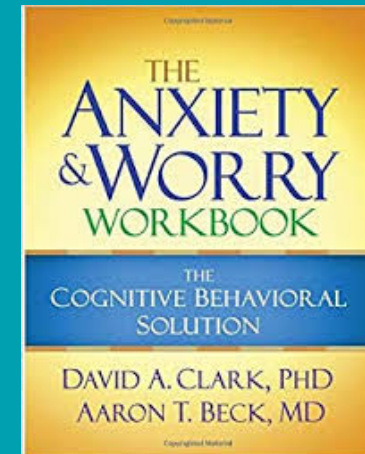
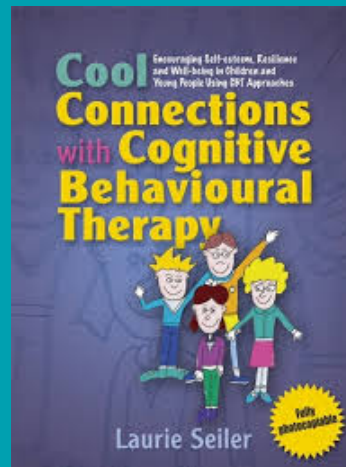
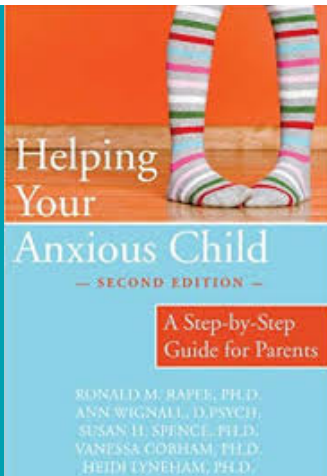
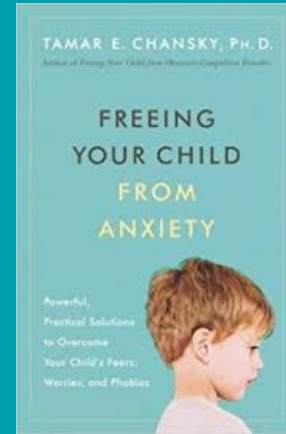
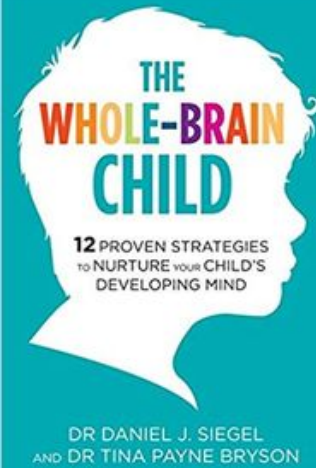
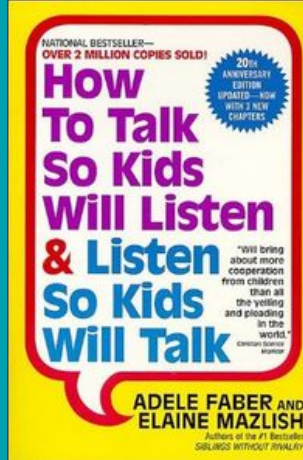
In Summary

- Validate
- Externalize
- Relaxation/pleasant activities
- Write it down
- Perspectives
- Relaxation/pleasant activities
- Read it aloud over and over
- Lifestyle of regular exercise, relaxation/pleasant activities

Website References

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- [fall, Park, Leaves, Nature, Path, Trees, Landscape, Gold, Sunlight ... Wallup.net](#)

Recommended books





Create healthy “ruts” in the brain