

Coping with Stress and Anxiety: Empowering Children

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Scenarios

- 5 year old cries daily on the playground and begs you to stay at school
- 8 year old won't get on the school bus for a third week in a row
- 9 year old can't sleep worrying about the upcoming birthday party this weekend
- Your 10 year is begging you not to go out with your friends
- Your 11 year old wanted to sign up for hockey but hasn't gone since the first practice and wants to quit

Stats and Facts

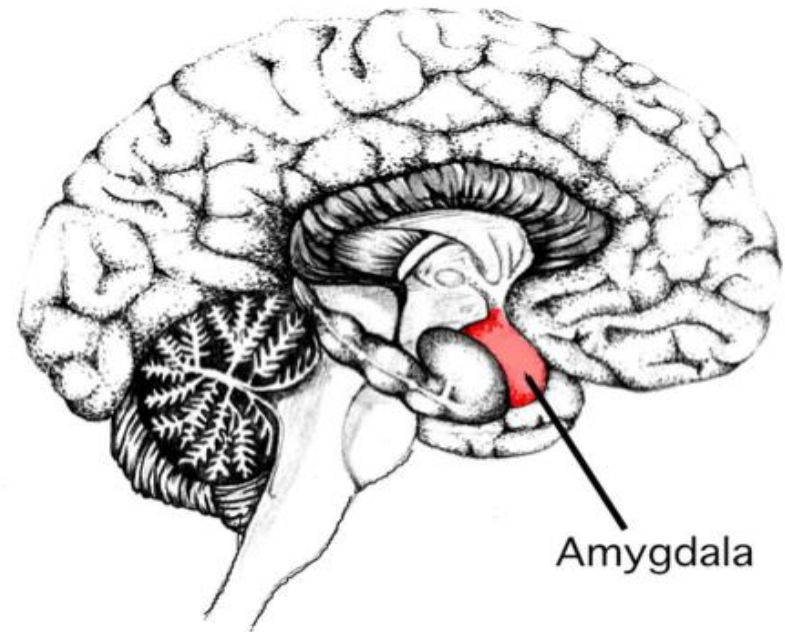
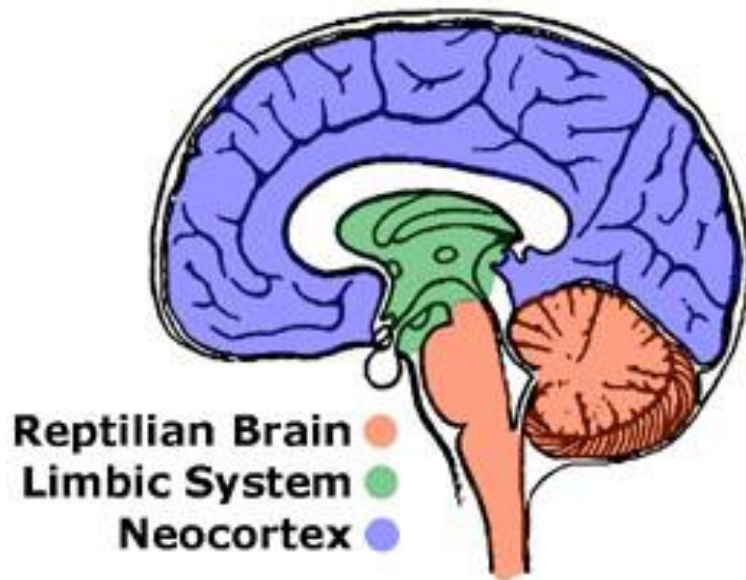
- 1 in 5 or 3%-20% of children and adolescents (NASP, 2010)
- 75% of all mental health issues begin before 25 years
- Gender ratio 1:1 during elementary (NASP, 2010)

What is stress?

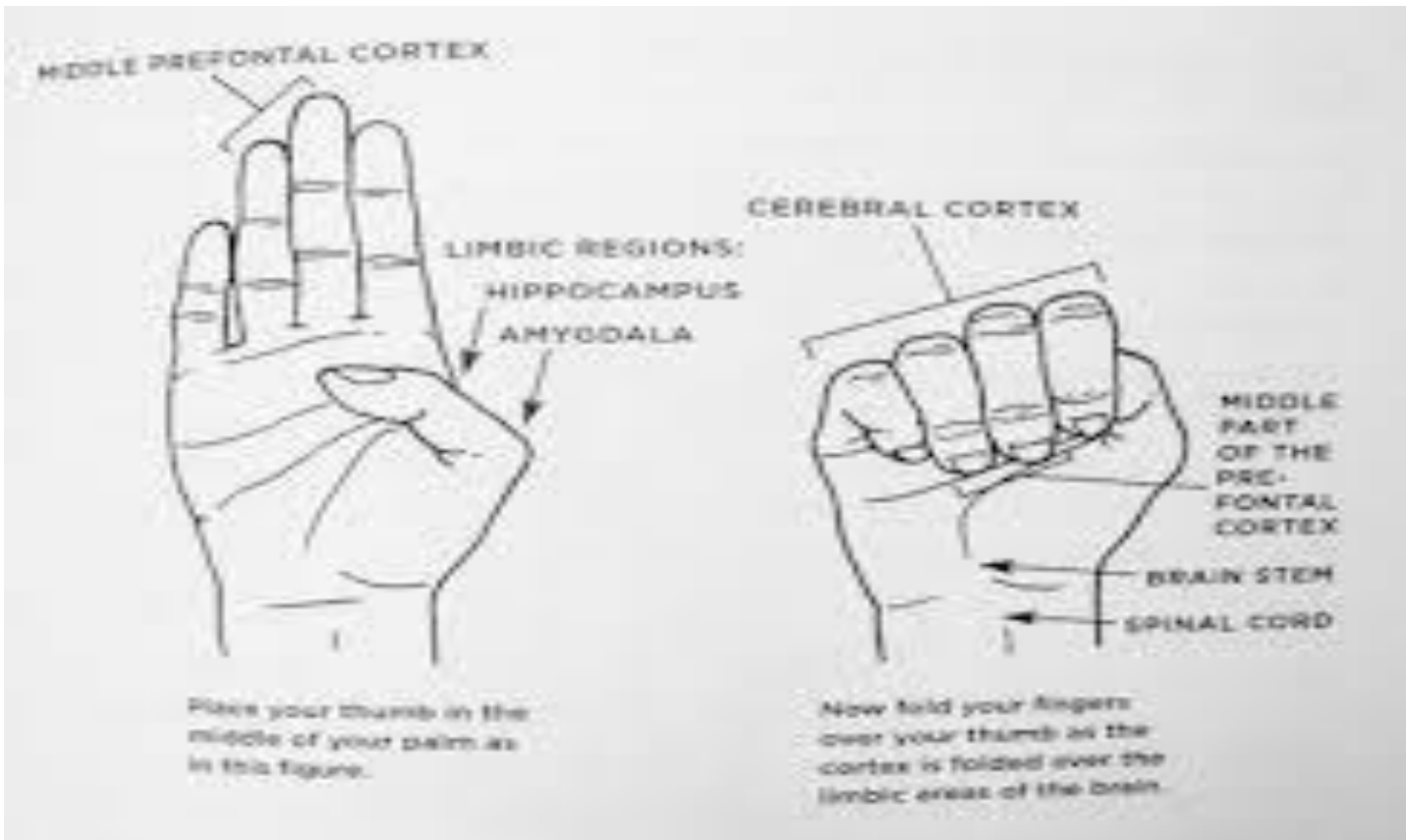
- A natural reaction
- Our perceptions and interpretations of the way our body responds to demands placed upon us by the environment (NASP, 2009)
- Serves as a protective mechanism
- Chronic stress can be “toxic”



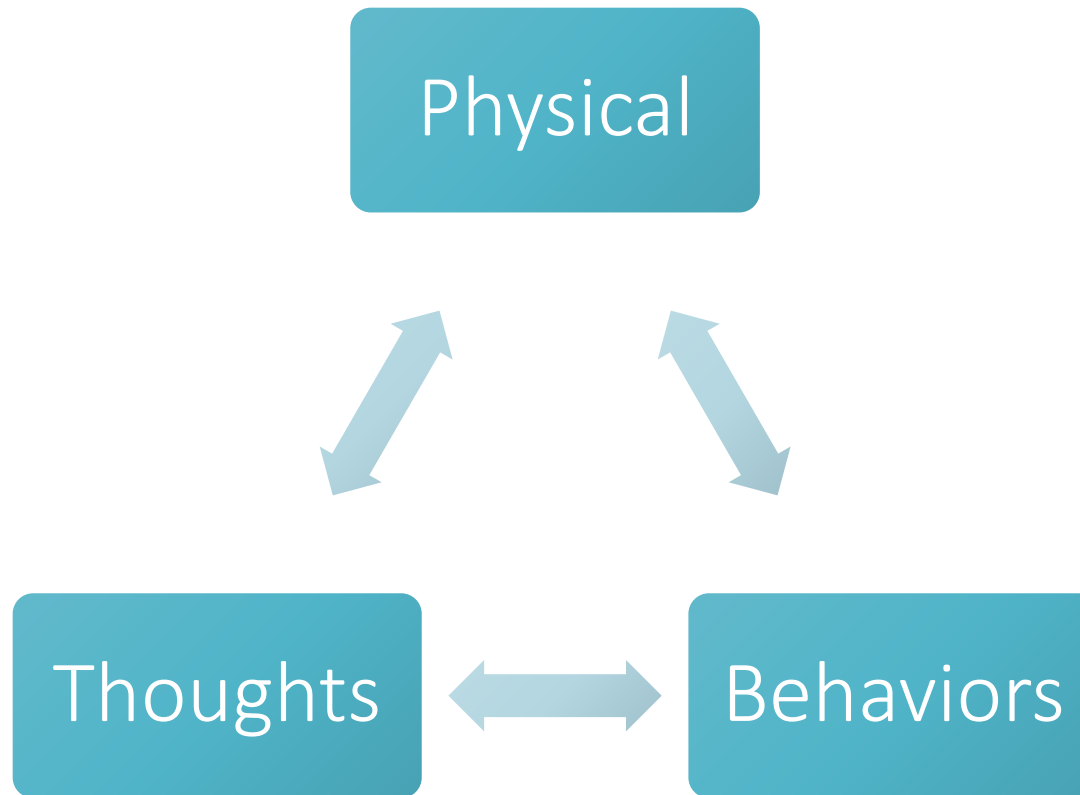
Stress and the Brain: Fight, Flight, Freeze



Hand Model of the Brain: Dr. Dan Siegel



Anxiety Cycle



Thinking/Learning

Concentration problems

Memory problems

Attention problems

Problem-solving difficulties

Worry

Behavioral

Restlessness

Fidgeting

Avoidance

Rapid speech

Irritability

Withdrawal

Perfectionism

Lack of participation

Failing to complete tasks

Seeking easier tasks

Physical

Stomach discomfort

Rapid heart rate

Flushing of the skin

Perspiration

Headaches

Muscle tension

Sleeping problems

Nausea

How Can Parents Support

- Normalize stress/anxiety
- Teach the facts!
- Become a “Thought Detective” (3 Cs):
 - Catch Your Thoughts
 - Collect the Evidence
 - Challenge the Thoughts
- Change the “channel”
- Change “what if” to “what is”

How Can Parents Support

- Work toward not avoiding!
- Give parts of your brain a “personality”
- Teach behavioural strategies
- Allow “worry time”

Children's Books

Cook, Julia (2012). *Wilma Jean the Worry Machine*.

<http://www.juliacookonline.com>

Watt, Melanie - Scaredy Squirrel (series)

<http://www.scaredysquirrel.com>

Apps & Websites

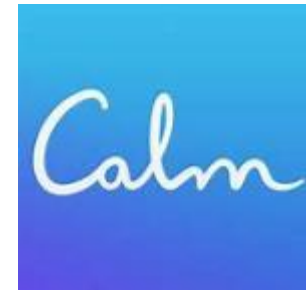
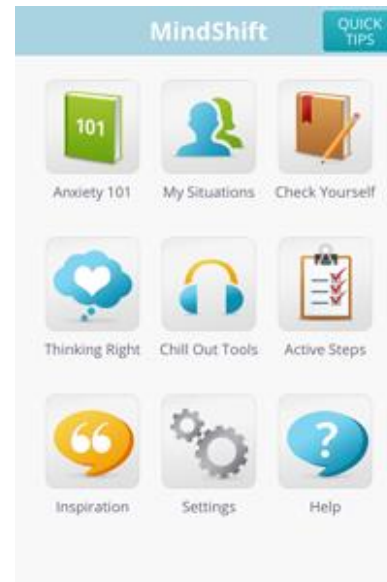
Anxietybc.com

Gozen.com

Worrywisekids.org

Anxietycanada.com

Kidshealth.org



Where to go for help

Family Physician

Mental Health – 453-2132

Private therapists

School Education Support Team

Community Programs:

Yoga

Mindfulness

Gym/Sports

Resources

Dunn Buron, Kari (2006). When my worries get too big: A relaxation book for children who live with anxiety.

Matthews, Bonnie (2006). What to do when you worry too much: A kid's guide to overcoming anxiety.

Shapiro, L. & Sprague, R. (2009). The relaxation and stress reduction workbook for kids: Help for children to cope with stress, anxiety & transitions.

Siegel, D. & Payne Bryson, T. (2011). The whole-brain child: 12 Revolutionary strategies to nurture your child's developing mind.