

# *Overcoming Anxiety*

Christopher C. Jones, CAGS  
Licensed Educational Psychologist #2819  
Dynamic Interventions

# ***Learning Objectives***

- Identify the social reality in which our children live
- Understand stress and anxiety
- Learn to recognize symptoms in children and adolescents
- Review treatments and discuss strategies to reduce anxiety and anxious behavior

# Today's Social Reality



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA](#)

- Economy
- Pandemic
- War, challenging politics
- Families more stressed than ever
- Social media
- Peer pressure

# What is Stress?

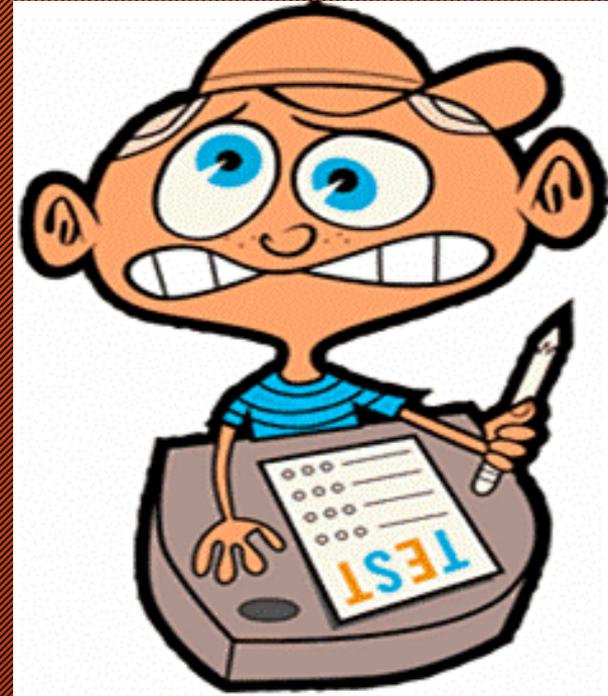
- Psychological definition:
  - Nonspecific response of the body to a demand
  - Stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person **perceives** that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual can utilize
- Body response:
  - Fight or flight or freeze
    - Increased heart rate, blood pressure, sweat and diverted blood
    - Focused attention on perceived threat
    - This is an autonomic response; you don't have initial control over it.

# *What is Anxiety*

- Anxiety is a **subjective** sense of worry, apprehension, fear and distress.
- Two components:
  - Physical – headache, nausea, sweating
  - Emotional – nervousness and fear

# What is Anxiety

- Anxiety disorders can affect...
  - A child's thinking
  - Decision-making ability
  - Perceptions of the environment
  - Learning
  - Concentration



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-NC

# *What is Anxiety*



- It can raise blood pressure and heart rate
- It can cause a multitude of bodily complaints
  - Nausea, vomiting, stomach, pain, ulcers, diarrhea, tingling, weakness and shortness of breath

# *How Often Does Anxiety Occur?*

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental health problem in America.

- Anxiety affects approximately 18% of the adult population every year.
- Anxiety affects approximately 25% of adolescents.
  - Post pandemic statistics indicate that prevalence rates have been fairly consistent, with an increase noted in females.
- Anxiety affects approximately 37% of children under the age of 18 post pandemic.

# *Anxiety in Children & Adolescents*

- Rapid heartbeat, dizziness, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing
- Muscle tension, upset stomach, diarrhea, headache
- Hyper or hypo activity, difficulty sleeping
- Selective mutism, avoidance of feared situation and object, temper tantrums
- Defiance, anger, inflexibility
- Restlessness
- Fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating

# *Types of Anxiety Disorders*

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Panic Disorder
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Acute Stress Disorder
- Social Phobia
- \*Reactive Attachment Disorder
- Specific Phobia
- Adjustment Disorder with Anxiety
- Anxiety Disorder Due to a General Medical Condition
- Drug-Induced Anxiety Disorder
- Anxiety Disorder Not Otherwise Specified

# ***Generalized Anxiety Disorder***

- Excessive worry, apprehension, and anxiety involving concern over a number of activities or events.
- Child has difficulty controlling the anxiety.
- Restless, feeling “keyed up” or on edge, easily fatigued, difficulty concentrating, irritability, muscle tension, difficulty falling or staying asleep or restless sleep.
- Anxiety causes significant distress and problems functioning.

# ***Panic Disorder***

- Different from panic attacks – sudden, discrete episodes of intense fear and/or discomfort accompanied with bodily or cognitive symptoms
- Disorder consists of recurrent unexpected panic attacks with inter-episode worry about having others.
- Panic attacks lead to marked changes in behavior related to the attacks.

# ***Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder***

- Exposure to a traumatic event in which the person experiences or witnesses an event that involved the actual or perceived threat of death or serious bodily injury.
- The person's response is one of intense fear, helplessness or horror.
- Early diagnostic criteria was specific to older adolescents and adults, this thinking has changed with new research on children who have been abused or neglected

# ***Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder***

- The traumatic event is continually re-experienced in the following ways:
  - Recurrent and intrusive memories involving images, thoughts or perceptions
  - Acting or believing that the event is recurring
  - Intense anxiety and distress to exposure to situations that resemble the event

# ***Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder***

## Symptoms

- Avoidance of situations reminding him of the event
- Inability to remember details from the event
- Diminished participation in usual activities
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling detached or estranged from others
- Restricted range of emotional expression
- Difficult falling asleep or staying asleep
- Irritability or angry outbursts
- Exaggerated startle response
- Excessive vigilance

# ***Social Phobia***

- Persistent and significant fear of one or more social situations in which a person is exposed to unfamiliar persons or scrutiny by others and feels he or she will behave in a way that will be embarrassing or humiliating.
- Exposure to the feared social situations almost always causes significant anxiety, despite the fact the anxiety is seen as excessive and unreasonable.
- May lead to avoidance of such situations or endurance under extreme distress, leading to a marked interference in a person's functioning and routine.

# Causes of Anxiety

## Psychological

- Combination of increased internal and external stresses overwhelm ones coping abilities
  - Psychodynamic: internal competing mental processes, instincts and impulses conflict, causing distress
  - Behavioral: maladaptive learned response to specific past experiences and situations that becomes generalized to future similar situations



# Causes of Anxiety

## Genetic

- 50% of patients with Panic Disorder have at least one relative affected with an anxiety disorder
- Higher chance of anxiety disorder in parents, children and siblings of person with an anxiety disorder



# *Causes of Anxiety*

## **Biological**

- Evidence supports the involvement of norepinephrine, serotonin, and GABA (Gamma-Aminobutyric Acid)
- Possible abnormal functioning in brain's GABA receptors

## **Medical**

- Illness that may cause anxiety disorders:
  - Cardiovascular disease, lung disease, certain tumors, endocrine disorders, infections and neurologic disease

# Environmental Treatments



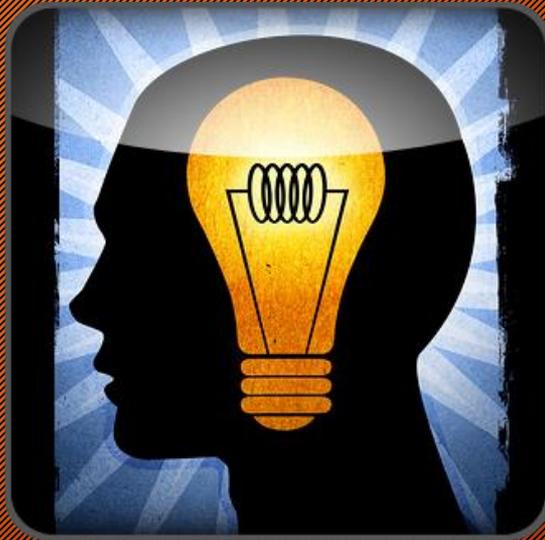
- Avoidance or minimization of stimulants (caffeine, asthma medication, nasal decongestants, cough medicines)
- Good sleep habits
- Reduction of stressors
  - Identify and remove/reduce stressful tasks or situations at home and school

# *Psychological Treatments*

- Mind Body Theory
- Relaxation Techniques
- Progressive Desensitization
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Dialectical Behavioral Therapy



# Psychological Treatments



- Anxiety Management Training
  - Based on Sports Psychology
    - Incorporates relaxation, CBT, Guided Imagery and Visual Rehearsal
  - Research-based positive outcome
  - Additional benefits
    - Effective in reducing depression and PTSD symptoms

# Psychopharmacological Treatments

- Long-acting anti-anxiety medications
- Newer anti-depressants act as anti-anxiety agents as well
- Older anti-depressants may have more side effects
- Combination of anti-anxiety and anti-depressant meds may also be effective
- Antihistamines



# *Other Resources*

- The Feeling Good Handbook (Burns)
- Helping Your Anxious Child: A Step By Step Guide for Parents (Rapee, Wignall, Spence, Cobham)

# Questions and Answers

Thanks for coming!

Christopher C. Jones, CAGS

Licensed Educational Psychologist #2819

Dynamic Interventions

661-257-1254

[cjones@dynamicinterventions.net](mailto:cjones@dynamicinterventions.net)

[www.dynamicinterventions.com](http://www.dynamicinterventions.com)