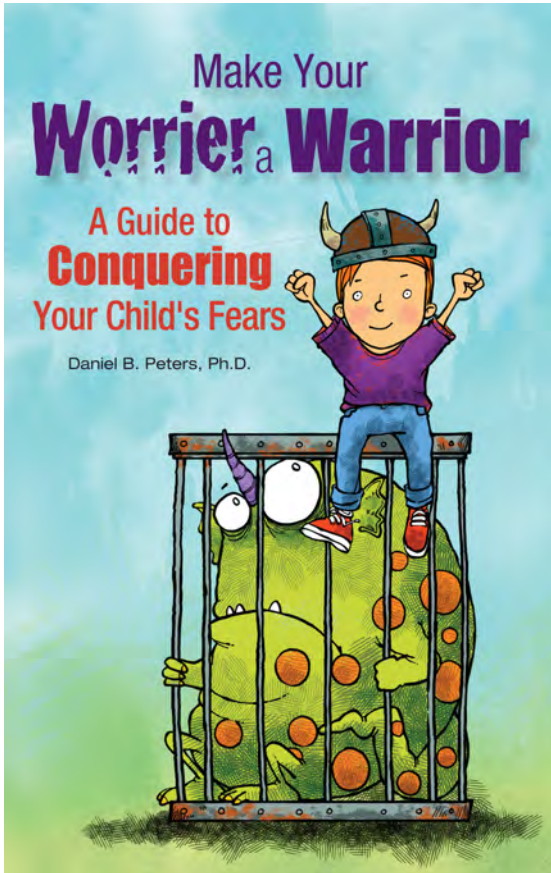


Make Your Worrier a Warrior:

A Guide to Conquering Your Gifted Child's Fears



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Premise

- **Anxiety is a “monster” that can be overcome and/or managed by demystifying it’s power through understanding the way it works, outsmarting it, and thus, rendering it powerless.**



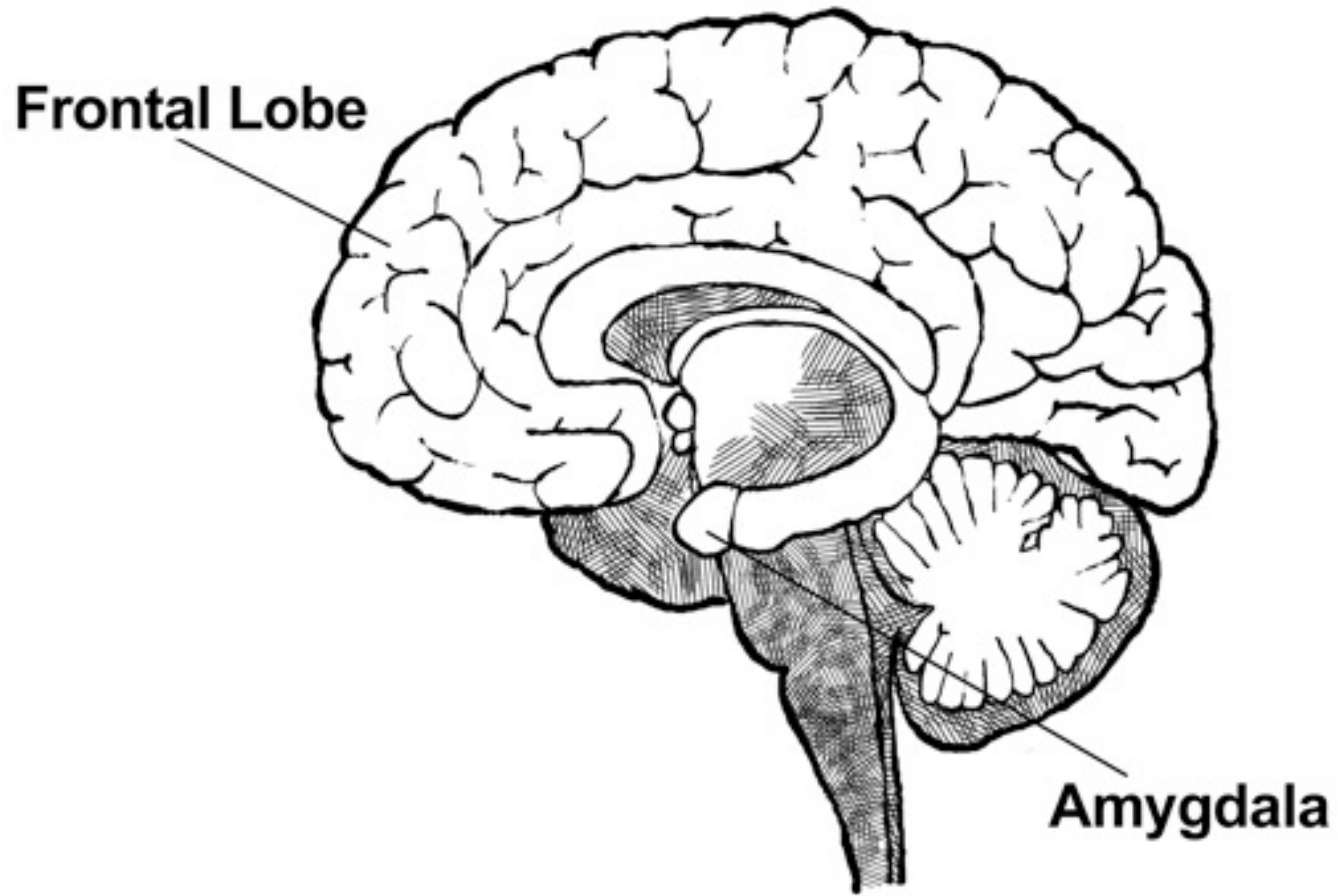
What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is an **Irrational Fear**

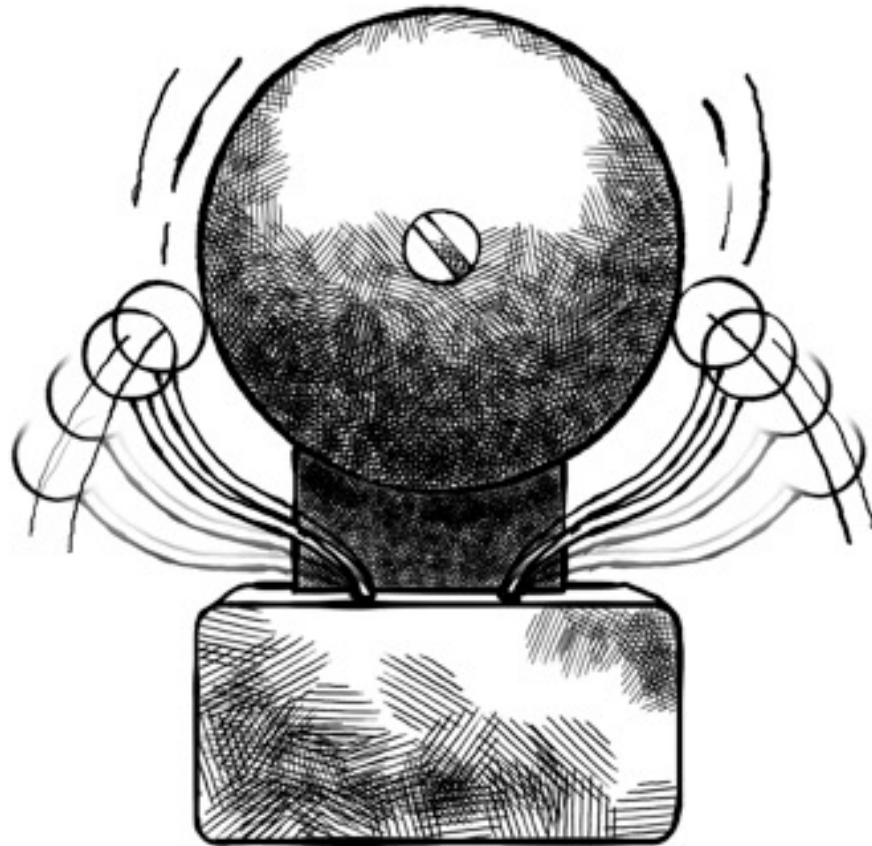
However, our brain tricks us to thinking the fear is rational because it is based on a rational premise (“The plane could crash and I will die”).

What is Fear?

- Fear is a **normal** and **useful** emotion
- **Adrenalin** is produced in a small gland on top of our kidneys, called adrenal glands
- Nature devised a “**fight or flight**” response to allow us to survive a life or death situation



Survive! Fight or Flight



Survival Response

- **DANGER!** - The **amygdala** sends messages to our adrenal glands to squirt a large dose of **adrenalin** in our blood stream.
- Adrenalin increases the heart and breathing rate, increases the strengths of muscles, and diverts blood from the brain and stomach into the muscles.
- We are immediately converted into super-powerful beings, capable of super-human feats.

Why does our body feel this way?

- **Heart and lungs** - beats faster, chest gets tight, you breathe faster and can't get enough air.

Reason:

To fight better, the body speeds up the heart and lungs and sends more blood into the muscles so they are stronger.

- **Stomach** - stomach pain, nausea, diarrhea.

Reason:

All the blood goes out of your stomach and intestines and goes into the heart, lungs and muscles to make you a fighting machine.

- **Brain** - dizzy, lightheaded, strange feelings fainting, going crazy, losing control.

Reason:

Blood goes from the brain into the heart, lungs, and muscles.

- **Arms and legs** - sweating, cold hands, numbness, shaking, trembling, muscle tenseness and pain.

Reason:

Blood goes out of the skin so you won't bleed as much if you get hurt which explains all those funny nerve symptoms.



Types of Worry and Fear

- **Panic Attack** - severe fear response caused by repeated and large outpourings of adrenalin, due to perceived threat, and resulting with several physical symptoms.
- **Generalized Anxiety** - excessive and persistent anxiety and worry.
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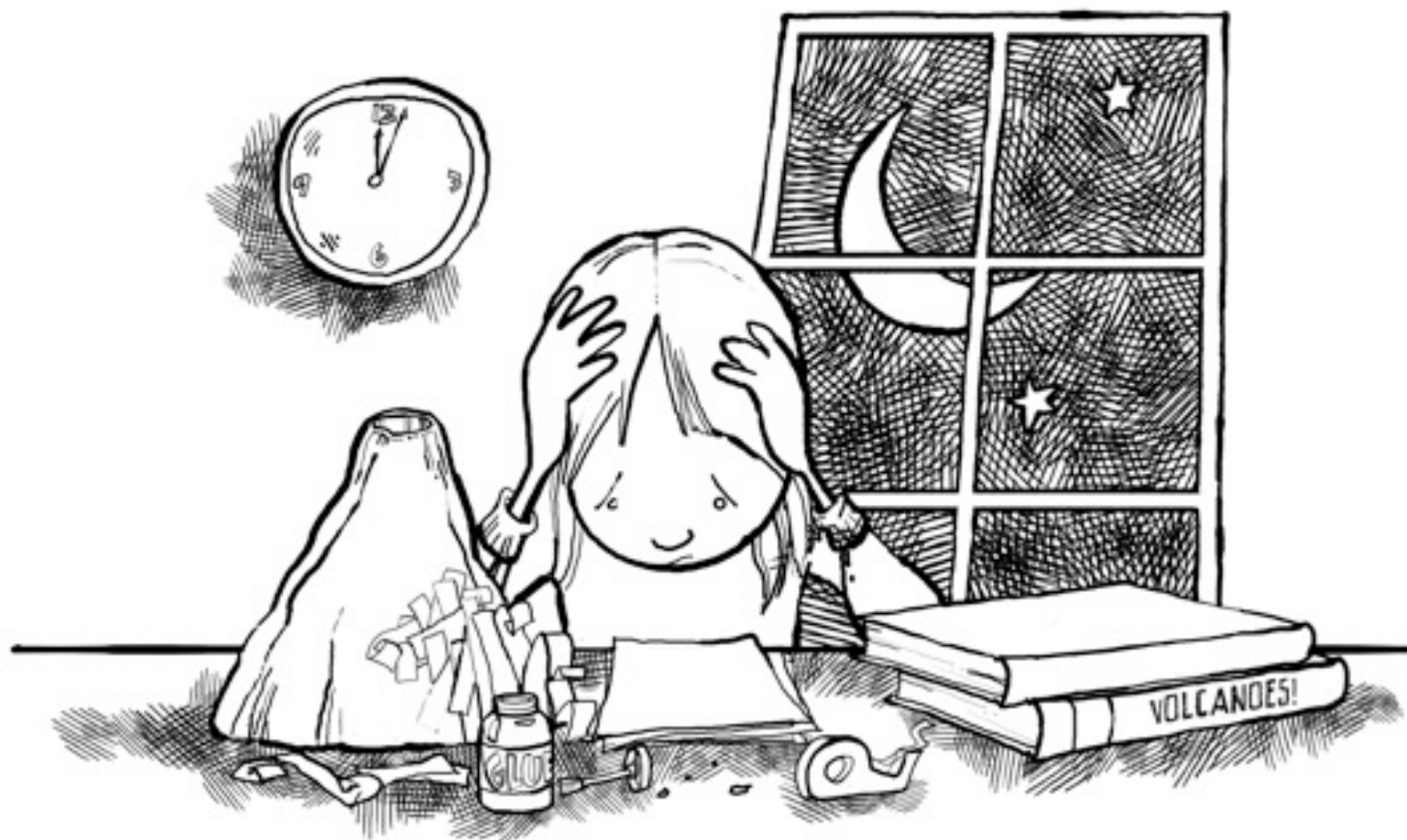
- **Agoraphobia** - anxiety about being in places or situations from which escape might be difficult (or embarrassing) or in which help may not be available in the event of having an unexpected panic attack.
- **Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)** - anxiety producing, often persistent thought or idea, that is intrusive and embarrassing. A compulsion is a repetitive, intentional behavior that is done to relieve the anxiety produced by the thought.

- **Social Phobia** - persistent fear of social or performance situations in which the person is exposed to unfamiliar people or to possible scrutiny of others.
- **Specific Phobia** - restrictive fear that is excessive and unreasonable, and triggered by the presence or anticipation of a specific object (snakes) or situation (public speaking)

- Separation Anxiety - difficulty leaving parents
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Exposure to a traumatic event where the person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with events that were life-threatening or serious injury, and the person's response was intense fear, helplessness, or horror

Perfectionism

- “***Fear of Failure***”; a constant state of anxiety about making errors. Extremely high standards and perceive excessive expectations and negative criticisms from others.



Characteristics of Giftedness

- Rapid learners, strong memory, large vocabulary, **advanced comprehension of nuances**, largely self-taught, **unusual emotional depth**, **abstract/complex/ logical/insightful thinking**, **idealism and sense of justice**, **intense feelings and reactions**, **highly sensitive**, long attention span and persistence...

Gifted Characteristics, con't

- **Preoccupied with own thoughts**, impatient with self and others inabilities and slowness, **asks probing questions** (able to go beyond what is taught), wide range of interests, **highly developed curiosity**, interest in experimenting and doing things differently, **divergent thinking (putting things together in different or unusual ways)**, keen and unusual sense of humor.

Overexcitable?

- Kazamierz Dabrowski explained the sensitivity and intensity experienced by many gifted individuals in terms of overexcitabilities (Oes) - **a greater capacity to be stimulated by and respond to external and internal stimuli.**
- **Overexcitabilities** fuel creativity, passion, talent, and personality

Types of OEs

- **Psychomotor** - movement, strong drive, energy, extended bouts of activity
- **Intellectual** - insatiable curiosity, voracious appetite and capacity for intellectual effort and stimulation; mental activity is intensified and accelerated
- **Sensual** - heightened experiences of seeing, smelling, tasting, touching and hearing
- **Imaginational** - active imaginary and fantasy life
- **Emotional** - capacity for emotional depth, empathy, deeply feels own and others emotions

Twice-Exceptional (2e)?

- 2e (twice-exceptional) youth are both gifted and have a learning or emotional disability/difference/challenge
- Therefore, 2e youth have many of the aforementioned characteristics, in addition to the following...

Types of 2e Challenges

- ADHD/ADD
- Aspergers Disorder
- Dyslexic
- Dysgraphic
- Sensory Processing challenges
- Auditory Processing challenges

2e Challenges

- Writing, taking tests, showing academic competence and mastery, public speaking, reading, tying shoes, completing schoolwork, turning in schoolwork, meeting new people, socially appropriate behavior, participating in sports, standing up for themselves, attempting new activities, riding a bike, driving a car, getting a job, and/or going to college

What does anxiety look like?

Physical

Headaches, stomachaches, backaches
difficulty relaxing, low energy, difficulty
sleeping, nightmares, loss of appetite,
vomiting

Behavioral

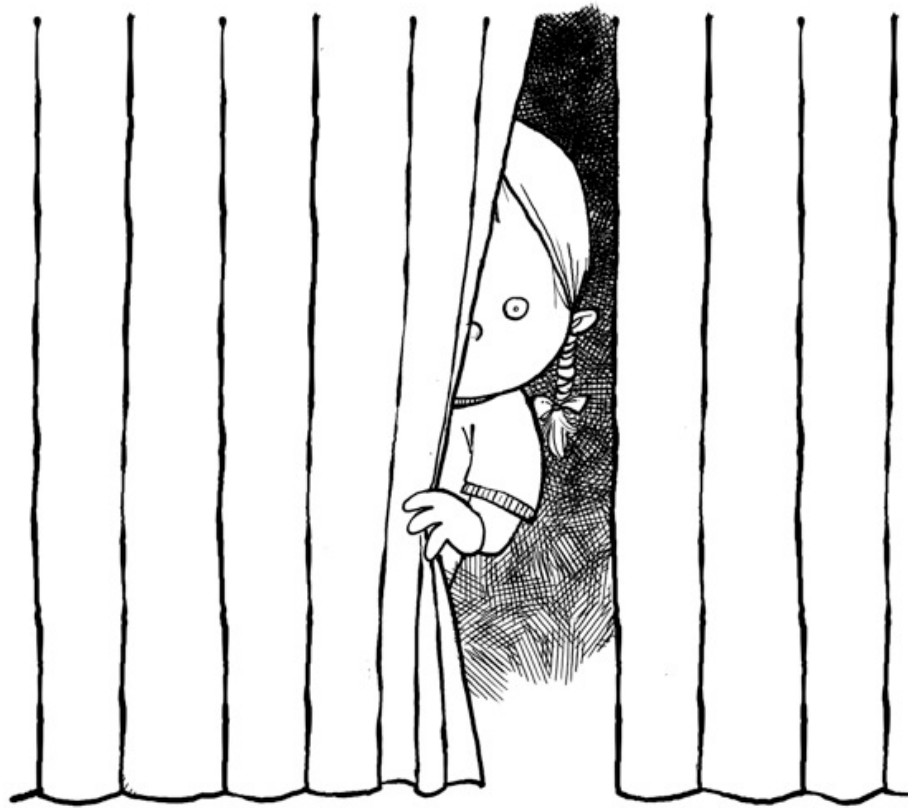
Avoidance, crying, meltdowns, oppositional
behavior, disruptive behavior, withdrawal,
social isolation, nail biting, clinging, excessive
concern about competence, excessive need
for reassurance, significant behavior change

Cognitive (Thinking) Model of Anxiety

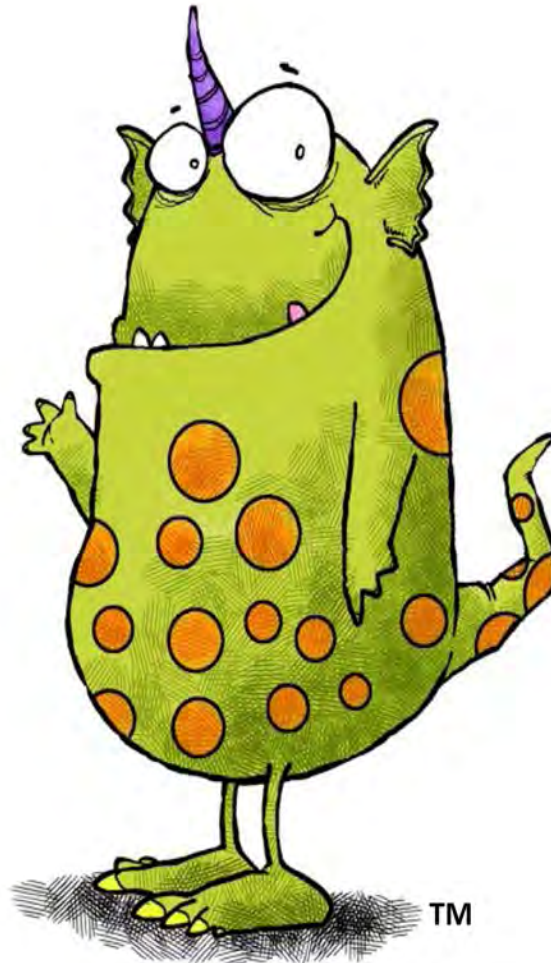
- Our thoughts determine our emotions and hence, our behavior.
- Our anxious thoughts are always lies, exaggerations, and catastrophic

Slay the Worry Monster!

- **Avoiding** the feared stimulus, situation, or feeling reinforces the fear and **makes it stronger**
- The fear **must be faced** and conquered in order to reduce its power
- We must use our **thinking brain** (frontal cortex) to over-ride our primitive brain (amygdala)



The Bully

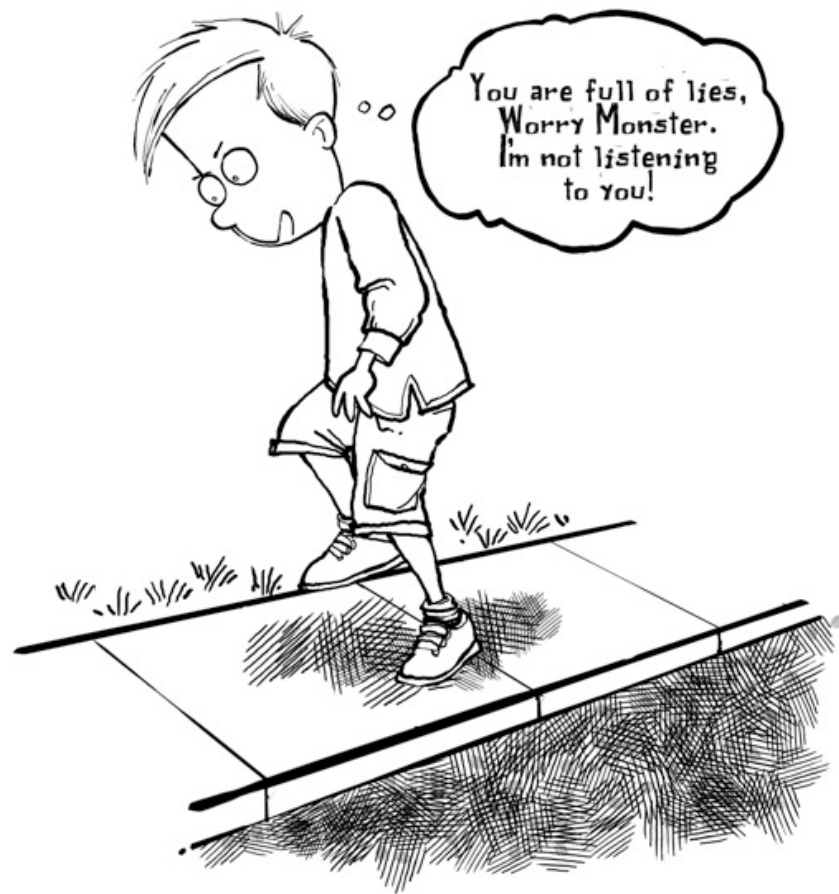


What the Worry Monster tells us...

- “What if....”
- “What will people think...”
- “What will happen if...”

Cognitive (Thinking) Strategies

- **Identify the thought** - “What am I thinking about?”
- **Challenge the thought** - “Is it true that I always fail?”
- **Modify the thought** - “The test is going to be hard, but I am prepared.”
- **Replace the thought** - “I am going to do fine.”

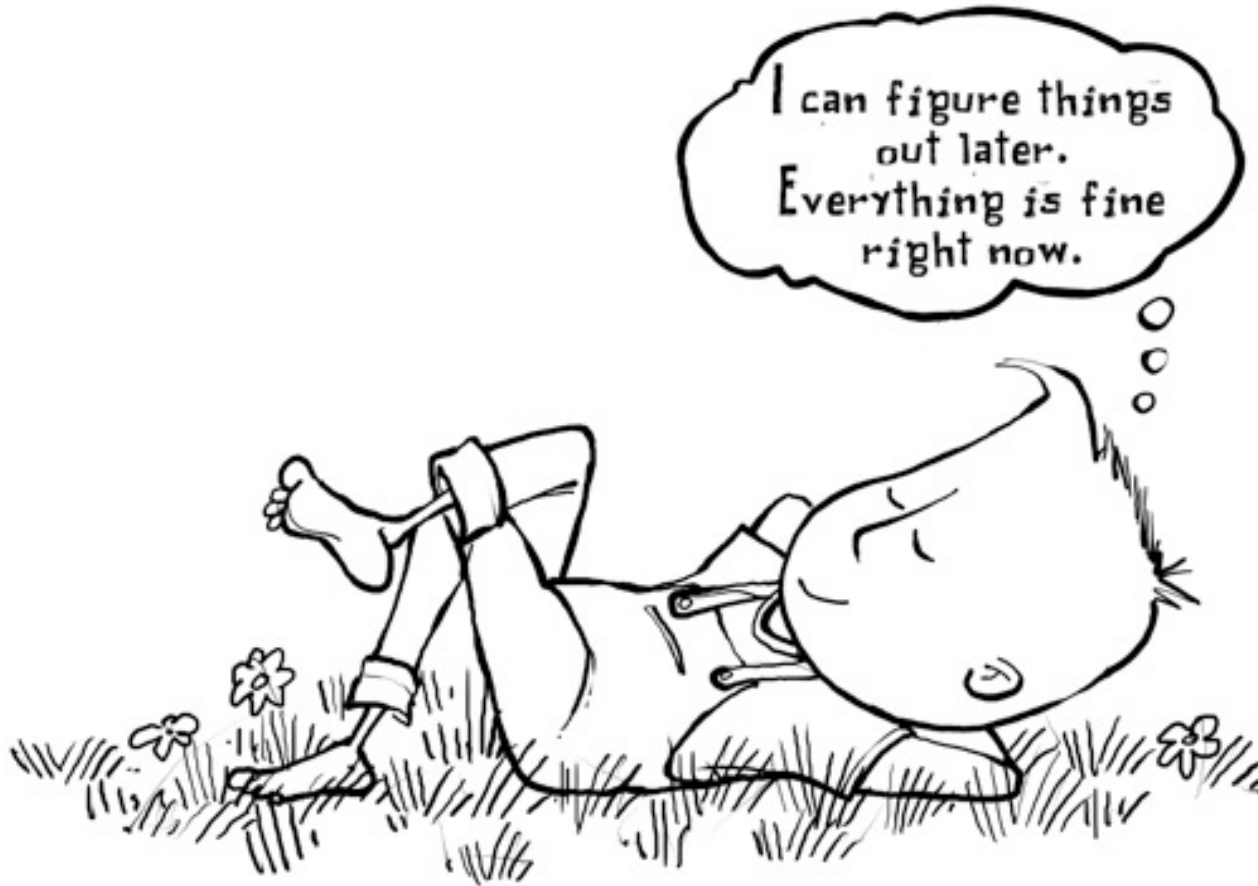


Positive Self-Talk



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Mindfulness- Stay Present



Mindfulness – Let thoughts pass



Mindfulness - Breath

- Let's breath together...

Behavior Strategies – Baby Steps



More Behavior Strategies

- Fake it to make it
- Pleasure Predicting
- Behavioral Rehearsal – Practice!

Battle Perfectionism

- Take a risk
- Prescribe failure
- Make a plan and stick to it!
- Realize there are many ways to do things
- Good enough is good enough
- Focus on having fun vs. winning and being the best

Make Your Tool Box

- How will you talk back to the Worry Monster?
- What will you practice doing?
- How is your “go to” person?
- Breathe
- Exercise
- Distractions

Don't Give Up!



Bringing it home

1. Anxiety is **NOT** powerful when it is understood.
2. Remember how the brain works. Scary thoughts activate the amygdala which sends for too much adrenalin
3. Remember the power of thoughts - they are responsible for our feelings and behavior. We must use our **thinking brain** (frontal cortex) to over-power our primitive fear brain (amygdala)

4. Learn strategies for **identifying** thoughts, and **modifying** them or **replacing** them with more adaptive ones
5. Set up behavioral rehearsals or **practice** to become competent in the area of fear and worry
6. Always remember, anxiety is a monster that is trying to trick you, keep you from maximizing your abilities, from enjoying what life has to offer, and being happy

Bye Bye Worry Monster



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