Anxious Youth: Integrative Strategies for Self-Regulation, Growth Mindset, & Psychological Resilience

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Learning Objectives

Identify anxious youth’s difficulties with discrimination, self-regulation, and a fixed mindset

Learning Objectives

List two possible specific therapeutic goals for interventions with anxious youth

Learning Objectives

Explain the value of designing interventions that integrate strategies for anxious youth

Main Message

- Resilience
- Self-regulation
- Mindset

Resilience:

“Capacity of a system to adapt successfully to significant challenges that threaten its function, viability, and development”

A. Masten, 2018
Resilience: Developmental & Protective Processes

Personal Processes:
- Temperament
- Cognitive Processes
- Self-Regulation
- Self-Efficacy
- Optimism

Contextual Processes:
- Adaptive to systems
- Culture & Community

Relational Processes:
- Stable & Supportive family environment
- Harmonious parent-child relationship
- Close relationship to caring adult
- Positive peer relationships

Self-regulation:
Learned capacity to shift one’s attention and control inner states and responses

Risk vs. Resilience
Mechanisms & Processes

Brain Maturation
Temperament
Genetics
Attachment; Parenting, Expectations & Exposure
Discrimination; Appraisal
Neurocognitive Mechanisms; Info. Processing

Berger, 2011
Vasey & Dodds, 2001
**Mindset:**
Belief---a way of thinking about one's intelligence, abilities, personality, character...health...

**Fixed Mindset**
- Intelligence & ability are fixed
- It’s all about the outcome: e.g. test scores
- Looking for constant validation
- Intolerant of mistakes, criticism, setbacks
- If you fail, avoid the activity


**Growth Mindset**
- **Malleability**: Intelligence, personality, etc.
- **Self-regulation**
- **Appraisal**: Challenges, mistakes, & adversity as opportunities
- **Effort**: Hard work improves performance & intelligence
- **Resilience**: Successful learning comes with challenges & mistakes (including failure)
- **Intrinsic motivation**

Mueller, Rowe, Zuckerman. (2017)

**Contributing Processes**

**Fixed Mindset**
- N= 202 7 & 8 y.o.s
- Beliefs in stable traits predict judgments about outcomes and behaviors.
- Good/bad performance vs. effort or intention


**Strategies Fostering a Growth Mindset:**
- Praise process, not outcome
- Right strategies & good advice
- Neuroscience: Neuroplasticity
- Health is malleable

Yeager, D. & Dweck, C. 2012
Mindset in Anxious Youth: Appraisal Errors

- Perceived lack of control over events and situations
- Perceived lack of control over stress recovery

Solution-based Therapy: Underlying Issues of Anxiety

- Over-estimate risk, threat, danger
- Intolerant of uncertainty
- Under-estimate capacities & abilities
- Over-reactive psychophysiology

Risk vs. Resilience PATHWAYS

- Temperament
- Genetics
- Parenting & Early Control & Exposure
- Process Information: Appraise Situations, People, Experiences

CHILDHOOD ANXIETY

Neurobiology & Neurophysiology

Temperament

Parenting & Early Control & Exposure

Self-Regulation

Anxiety: Integrative Strategies

- Clinical Hypnosis
- CBT: Education & Exposure
- Biofeedback
- Breath Retraining

Anxiety: Integrative Strategies

- Hypnosis
- CBT: Exposure + Education
- Biofeedback
- Breath Retraining
- Mindfulness
- Parent Counseling
- Education-Information

Integrative Approaches

- Bibliotherapy
- Exercise
- Acupuncture
- Yoga, Tai Chi
- Spirituality


Richters, C. Culbert, Kaiser (2003) Integrative Approaches
Issue: Appraisal: Discrimination
Over-estimate Danger, Risk, Threat

HOW?


Assessment: Discrimination Skills
Inaccurate Appraisal

“How do you decide if something is stressful?”
…too hard?
…too scary?

Assessment: Discrimination Skills
Magnification & Catastrophic Thinking

“How do you know when your imagination is tricking you?”
“HOW do you decide which thoughts to believe?”

Assessment: Discrimination Skills
Underestimate Resources

“How do you decide whether… you can handle it?”
….you can do it?
….conquer it?

Assessment: Self-Regulation
High Reactivity

“How do you help yourself not be so bothered by that anymore?”
“HOW do you get yourself calmer?”
"Reframing" Child-Parent Goals

**Global**
- Stop being scared/panic-y
- Stop overwhelming worry
- Stop catastrophizing

**Specific**
- Learn & cue a calm and relaxation response
- Create distance from worry
- Develop positive expectations

Issue: Over-estimate Danger, Risk, & Threat

**GOAL:**
Realistic Appraisal
Aka (Evaluation/Interpretation)

Education: Explain High Reactivity & Mind-Body Connection

Threats today = Psychological...

"...tricked by your imagination!
That's all.

Just False Alarms!"

Issue: Discrimination:
Catastrophic Thinking (What if...? I can't.)

**GOAL:**
Edit Exaggerated Thinking

Issue: Preoccupation with Worry

**GOAL:**
Create Distance from & Control of Worry

- Minimization
- Compartmentalization
- Trash
Realistic Self-Talk

Just because I think a thought doesn’t make it true.

Just because I think a thought doesn’t mean I have to believe it.

Clinical Hypnosis...

- **Definition**: narrowed attention & internal absorption while considering therapeutic suggestions
- **Vehicle** to deliver suggestions for positive change, self-regulation, growth mindset, resilience, etc.

WORDS:

- “Afraid vs. Becoming braver”
- “Pain vs. Comfort”
- “Would you rather feel relaxed or CALM?”
- “Scared vs. Bothered”
- “Don’t hold on vs. Let go…”
- “Stressed out vs. temporary distress”
- “Panic-y vs. Control”
- “When you’re feeling helpless... vs. How you can begin to help yourself…”

Issue: Underestimate Coping Capacity

**GOAL:**
Build Resources for Coping & Mastery

- Jettison techniques: Worry Balloons, etc.
**Worry Channel to Coping Channel**

**Issue: HIGH Reactivity PANIC!!**

**GOAL:**
Cue Calmness &
Relaxation Response

**Panic ATTACK!!**
Reframe:
episode.

**Belly Breathing**

Breath In

Breath Out

**pace suggestions ... with the child's breaths...**

“Breathe in... Calm... Cool... Control...”

Let go... of what... you don’t need ...anymore

Breathe IN...

Comfort... Confidence... Competence...

Let gooooooooo........

**BIOFEEDBACK:**
Window into how you perceive stress

Heart Rate Variability

-.859 sec.

-.793 sec.

-.726 sec.
“HRV is an interesting and noninvasive way to identify these ANS imbalances. If a person’s system is in more of a **fight-or-flight** mode, the variation between subsequent heartbeats is **low**. If one is in a more **relaxed** state, the variation between beats is **high**.”

M. Campos, MD, 2017
Harvard Health Publishing, Harvard Medical School

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“By learning **self-regulation** techniques that allow us to shift our physiology into a more coherent state, the increased physiological efficiency and alignment of the mental and emotional systems accumulates **resilience** across all four energy domains (physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual).”

McCraty, R., 2015, p. 9

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“In other words, the healthier the ANS, the faster you are able to switch gears, showing more **resilience** (to stress) and flexibility.”

“Research has shown a relationship between low HRV and worsening depression or **anxiety**.”

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REFERENCES


- Mindset Scholars Network.


