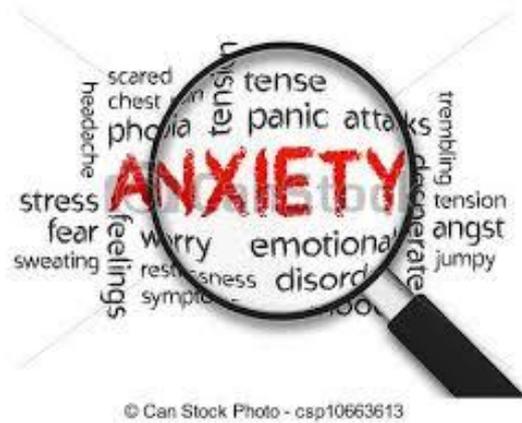




**LANDMARK  
SCHOOL**  
landmarkschool.org



LPA February 9, 2021

Who we are:

**Robb Genetelli**

Dean of Students

**Dan Larson**

High School Counseling  
Dept. Head

# Plan for tonight:

## Section 1:

Define Anxiety & Anxiety disorders, discuss process of Anxiety, and how we see it play out.

## Section 2:

How we work with it  
(Manage, not eliminate!)

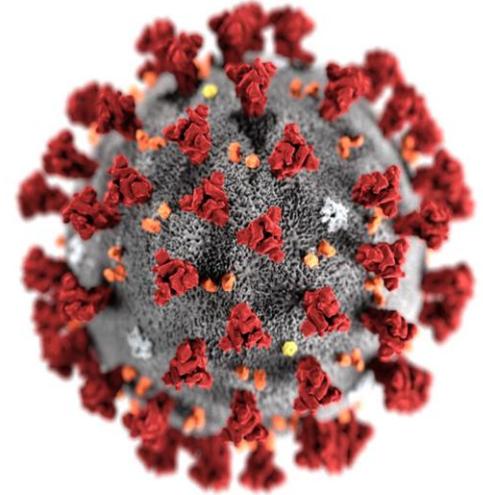
## Section 3:

Practical tips, discussion  
and questions

# Then there was Covid

## Impact of COVID 19

- As adults, our anxiety, and even fear, is elevated
- Covid hits all kinds of anxiety triggers:
  - Present uncertainty
  - Danger
  - Unknown future
  - Social insecurity, isolation



# Review definitions

**Anxiety** = *OVER*estimation of danger (potency and likelihood)

+

*UNDER*estimation of ability to cope or likelihood of getting help

- Fear vs. Anxiety:
  - I see a bear in the woods → Danger is real → Fear!
  - I have to give a presentation at school → feel worried → stay home  
Actual DANGER is not present or minimal!
- “Average” anxiety vs. clinically significant anxiety:  
uncomfortable, or debilitating?



# The Anxiety Process

Interaction between bio-physiology and cognitive process

Brain is wired for Anxiety

Fight-or-flight (or freeze) reaction to perceived threat

(autonomic nervous system response)

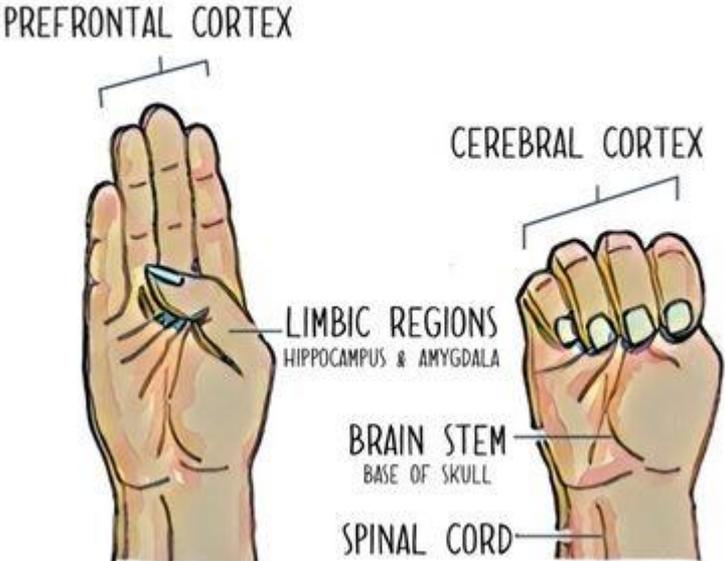
Amygdala = “fire-alarm” system

*bike skids on loose gravel – amygdala senses loss of balance – sudden adrenaline rush, heart pounds, muscles tense – breath rate increases – automatically make adjustments to maintain control – worked as intended!*



# Dan Siegel's "Hand Model" of the brain

Dr Dan Siegel's  
Hand Model of the Brain



# How we see this play out

- ❑ Avoid, shut down
- ❑ Distract
- ❑ Mask/hide
- ❑ Act out / exhibit oppositional behavior
- ❑ Hypervigilance

LBLD is associated with higher levels of anxiety

- Negative educational experiences
- Executive functioning challenges
- Locus of control - internal vs external
- Social Appraisal/evaluation



# How we tend to respond:

Debate the situation (not naming the emotion)

Reassure, Re-Reassure

Let them get out of it

Say “don’t worry”

Threaten - “you’ll fail!”

Elevate our own level of Affect  
(tone, volume, language)



*“Our maintenance crew is fixing a problem that should only take a few minutes but which will haunt you for the duration of the flight.”*

## How we tend to respond:

Debate the situation (not naming the emotion)

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VS.

## More Effective Responses:

Help identify the emotion

Reassurance can cause a paradoxical cognitive response

Gives up ground to the anxiety - reinforcing it!

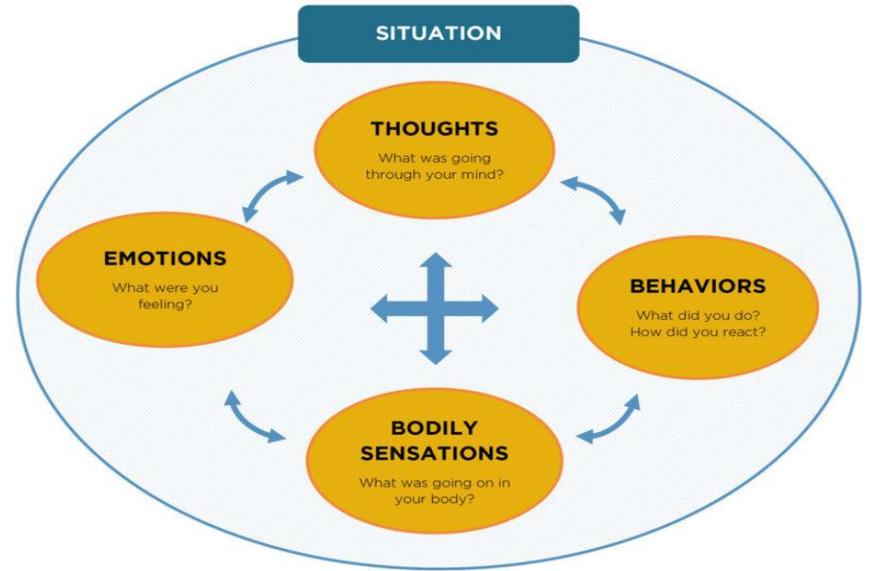
Anxiety feels necessary to the anxious person!  
Respect their feelings

express concern but don’t catastrophize

Use calm tone, take time, don’t talk at them: goal to re-regulate emotion, then start planning/problem solving.

# Anxiety Management in Clinical Settings (treatment)

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Exposure Response Prevention (ERP)
- Mindfulness and Relaxation Practices
- Psychopharmacology



# Tips for supporting anxiety management in our kids:

Avoid “safe” language, watch for “global” language (always/never)

Don't tell kids how to feel - model how you manage your own anxiety/emotions

Don't fear discomfort - need to step out of comfort zone, worry will take more territory if it can!

Our homes are echo-chambers for emotion - down-regulate our own affect!

Parent vs. Teen+Worry, or Parent+Teen vs. Worry? Praise and reward progress!

Goal is not zero anxiety: Goal is to prepare our kids to step out into the world and know that they can manage it!

- If you **don't** struggle with anxiety, what is your reaction to this image?
- If you **do** struggle with anxiety, how do you interpret this image?

There are all these moments  
you think you won't survive.  
And then you survive.

- David Levithan



## An example of a tip-sheet a student and I created together:

<b>DO:</b>	<b>DON'T:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• DO focus on the <b>present</b>, stay in the moment. (example: focus on the question in class, not on my anxious feelings)</li><li>• DO practice Relaxation <b>Breathing</b> (slow, paced breathing)</li><li>• DO <b>accept</b> that I'm experiencing some anxiety</li><li>• DO practice physical <b>relaxation</b> using stretching, muscle relaxation, staying active</li><li>• DO use my <b>five senses</b> to bring my attention to the present (and away from my anxious thoughts)</li><li>• DO talk to myself <b>positively</b> ("It's a little anxiety but I'm getting better at handling it")</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• DON'T focus on the fear ("Is my anxiety getting worse?")</li><li>• DON'T Hyperventilate by breathing too fast</li><li>• DON'T fear my anxiety, or constantly focus on it</li><li>• DON'T hold physical tension in my body</li><li>• DON'T get stuck in anxious thought "loops"</li><li>• DON'T talk to myself negatively ("Oh no I'm sure this anxiety is going to be really bad")</li></ul>

## Other Tips:

- Carry and use a **water bottle** frequently
- Try carrying and using “**fidgets**”, small hand-held items such as a toy, putty, even a pen or eraser that can keep your hands busy
- Pay attention to your body **temperature**, and remove layers if you feel hot; maintain a comfortable body temperature
- Excuse yourself to **walk** to the bathroom for a break, and try putting **cold water** on your face to cool down and feel refreshed
- Avoid caffeine and too much sugar



As you try out these methods, use a “1 to 10” scale a few times a day to help figure out what strategies might be helpful. Remember: no strategy is likely to work perfectly, but if you combine a number of approaches, you will see that you can effectively cope with anxiety whenever it occurs.

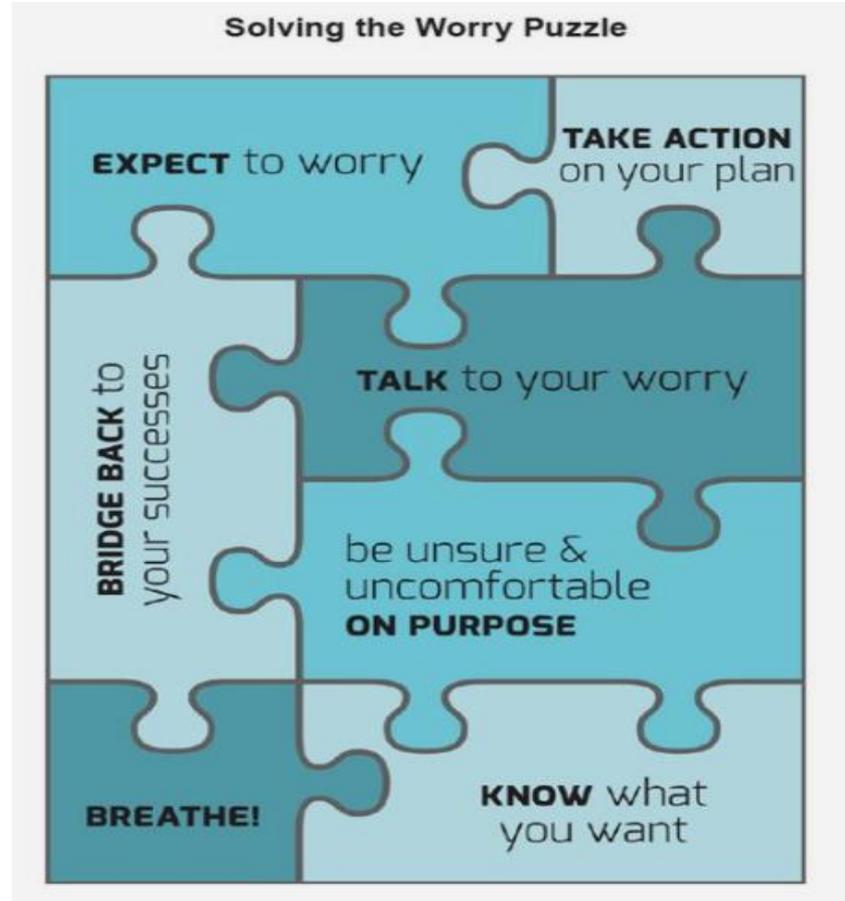
## In Sum:

Mantra:

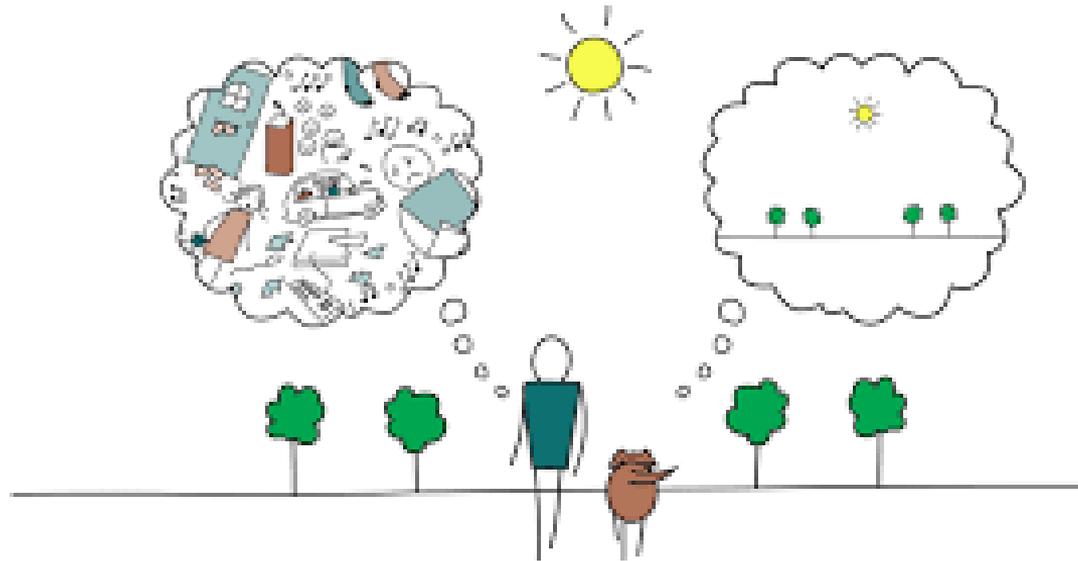
“I’m doing the best that I can;

*and,*

I can do better”



# Power of Being in the Moment



Mind Full, or Mindful?

# Resources

- Wilson, R. Lyons, L.(2013) *Playing with Anxiety: Casey's Guide for Teens and Kids*
- Bourne, E. J. (2010) *The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook, 5th Edition*. New Harbinger Publications, Oakland, California
- Biegel, GM (2009) *The Stress Reduction Workbook for Teens*. Instant Help Books, a Division of New Harbinger Publications, Inc. Oakland, CA
- Childmind Institute [www.childmind.org](http://www.childmind.org)
- Headspace, Calm apps

# Treatment Demo video clip

Video clip on ERP treatment in action: <https://vimeo.com/312850590> (4 min)