



Anxiety in School-Aged Children: Why Worry?

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Overview of Today's Presentation

- Anxiety 101
- Spiritual Issues and Anxiety
- Child Anxiety Signs
- What Parents Can Do



What is Anxiety?

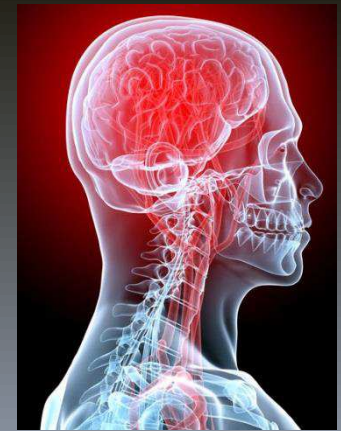




Anxiety is a natural and intended emotion, mental, and physical response...for protection.



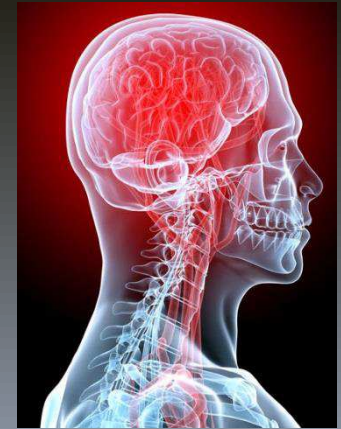
In our early human history, WE were the prey
The animals were after us.



Overview of Our Nervous System:

- Sympathetic NS energizes brain, muscles, etc. for action
- Parasympathetic NS calms the body when there is no threat
- They are complimentary: do not function at the same time
- They generally work on auto-pilot...

...but **they can be mentally controlled**



Overview of Our Nervous System:

- Chemicals are released in the brain
- Blood circulation, respiration, and other physical changes
(these can be mentally controlled)
- Stress takes a toll on the body over time if there's no relief



Anxiety then is...

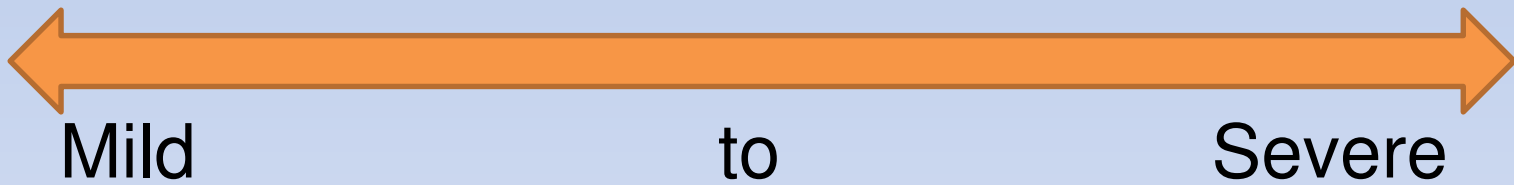
...a normal emotion not to be feared or rejected

- Parents can teach children to manage emotions
- Parents can be good models for them

This is one of the key points for this evening.



Range of Anxiety:



Mild

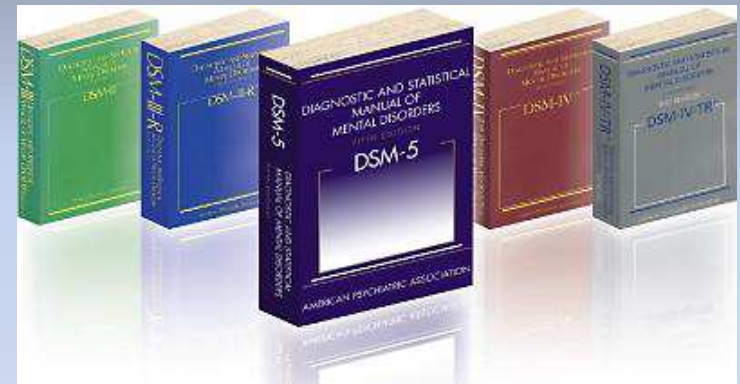
to

Severe



Main Types of Serious Anxiety Problems:

- Separation Anxiety
- General Anxiety
- Social and other Phobias
- Panic Disorder
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder*
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)*



*removed from Anxiety section in DSM V & given their own sections



Many Possible Reasons for Anxiety Problems:

- Physical/Biological: illness; medications; genetics
- Psychological: self-talk; the “avoid-dance”
- Environmental: stress/pressure caused by others or situations; may be learned
- Traumatic events: physical/sexual/verbal abuse; porn; disasters; accidents; crime



Studies have found that anxiety in children has significantly increased over the years.



There seem to be 2 general reasons...



Low social
connectedness

High perceived
environmental threat





Why It's Important to Address Anxiety in Kids:

- It may not go away on its own
- It may interfere with school, work, & quality of life
- It can prevent us from serving others
- Our enemy can make use of it to get us off track (sin)



How Can the Enemy Use Anxiety?

- To distract us from Christ and His mission by having us overly focused on ourselves and things of this world
- To cause us frustration, discouragement, and despair
- To divide us internally
- To divide us externally



During His 3 year ministry,
Jesus taught us frequently about anxiety...



Matthew 8:23-27

Mark 4:35-41

Luke 8:22-25



Our heavenly Father knows well our fears...

Psalm 23:4

Even though I walk through
the valley of the shadow of
death, I will fear no evil, for
you are with me;



We include mention of anxiety in every Mass:

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
graciously grant peace in our days,
that, by the help of your mercy,
we may be always free from sin
and **safe from all distress**,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

(the old translation used the word “anxiety”)

The Embolism



Earthly Failure

vs.

Eternal Failure



The world of a child
can be just as stressful
as the world of the adult.



Children may be more stressed
than you realize.



Parents can be watchful
for anything that may stress children.



Parents can provide the best intervention,
one that is quick and effective.

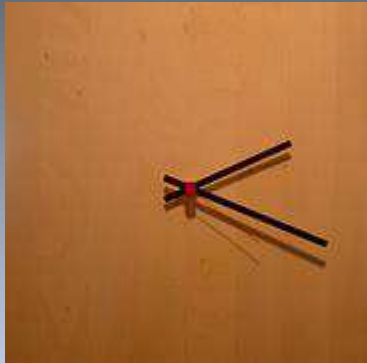


Signs of Anxiety in Children 6yo-11yo:

- Isolate themselves
- Become quiet
- Nightmares (other sleep)
- Irritability
- Anger, starts fights
- Disruptive behavior
- Bed wetting (esp. younger)
- Eating changes
- Difficulty concentrating
- Refuse to go to school
- Physical complaints
- Develop unfounded fears
- Excess guilt
- Feels numb emotionally
- Poor academic performance



A child's reactions to stressful events are strongly influenced by parental reactions to the events.



Children's reactions to stressful events
can be immediate
or
may occur much later.



Helpful for Children after Stressful Events:

- Return to safety, sense of control, routines
- Understand what happened & what is being done
- Be patient with child behavior issues
- Focus on meeting the child's needs
- Don't force to repeat story, but instead listen
- Don't probe for personal details
- Be careful of "bright side" talk
- Don't make promises that you can't keep



What Parents Can Do (in general):

- Rule out physical illness
- Increase social support
- Back off on the hovering
- Watch overscheduling
- Encourage action/activity
- Check yourself
- Decrease perception of threat
- Promote spiritual growth
- Build healthy coping skills
- Counseling, if needed
- Medication as a last resort



What Parents Can Do (some specifics):

- Share about anxieties/fears
- Tell your own school stories
- Praise/encourage target behaviors when you see them
- Arrange for good sleep, good food, and good exercise
- Do your “home work” together with their homework
- Ask your child to teach you something learned at school that day
- Share about favorite teachers
- Use humor: teach how to laugh at self to diffuse anxiety
- Set realistic goals
- Share about dreams for the future, but focus on today
- Discourage multi-tasking
- Pray with your children, nurture their faith

(most items from Paul Ashton, Psy.D., D.Min., consultant to Virtus programs)



Resources

- ADAA web site <http://www.adaa.org/>
- NIMH web site <http://www.nimh.nih.gov>
- Positive Parenting Solutions web site
<http://www.positiveparentingsolutions.com/>



Summary of Today's Presentation



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- Latin for “full of grace”
- Nonprofit 501(c)(3), sliding scale, no insurance
- Mental illness, addiction, and spiritual distress
- Faithful to the teachings, values, and traditions of the Catholic Church
- www.gratiaplenacounseling.org



Three New Small Group Offerings Starting Soon:

- Open the Door book study, 7 sessions w/Mary Kay Malicki
- “Art as Recovery” 12 sessions w/Mary Kay Malicki
- “Loving and Eating Well” ongoing with Dr. Ken Buckle



Evaluation

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/5PVPRBP>



Questions or Comments?