



CHILDHOOD ANXIETY

St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

18th October 2016

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The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of green, ranging from light lime to dark forest green. These shapes are primarily located on the left and right sides of the frame, creating a modern, layered effect. The central area is a plain white space where the text is located.

Introductions and Housekeeping

Tonight we will cover....

- ▶ Some background information about anxiety:
 - ▶ What is it.
 - ▶ Why does it exist.
 - ▶ When is it an issue.
 - ▶ Common anxieties
- ▶ How common is childhood anxiety and is it getting worse?
- ▶ Helping children with anxiety.

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Confidentiality

Parents -
You are the key!

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Anxiety

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure.

People with **anxiety disorders** usually have recurring intrusive thoughts or concerns. They may avoid certain situations out of worry. They may also have physical symptoms such as sweating, trembling, dizziness or a rapid heartbeat.

Thoughts, feelings and behaviors are connected.



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Prevalence

Prevalence

In 2013-14 data was collected around the mental health of children and adolescents. It was the second time that a survey of this kind had been conducted in Australia. The first one was conducted in 1998.

- ▶ Approximately 7% of 4-17 year olds have some kind of anxiety disorder.

Types of anxiety disorders

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Fifth Edition)
DSM-5

- ▶ Separation Anxiety Disorder
- ▶ Selective Mutism
- ▶ Specific Phobia
- ▶ Social Anxiety Disorder (Social Phobia)
- ▶ Panic Disorder
- ▶ Agoraphobia (Perceives the environment to be unsafe with no easy escape)
- ▶ Generalised Anxiety Disorder

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in separate categories of their own.

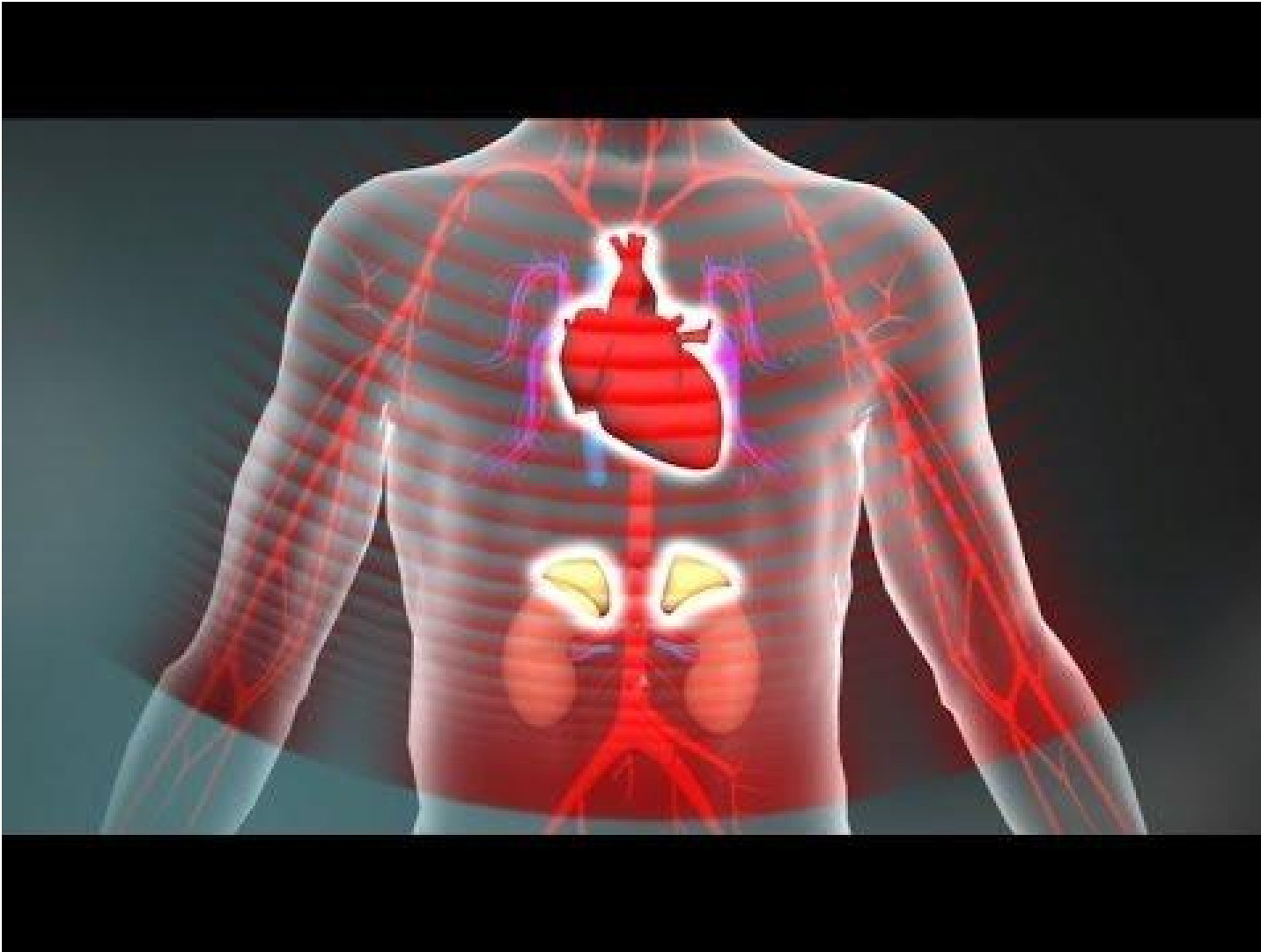
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A normal human
emotion

Anxiety is normal

- ▶ Children need to know that anxiety is not only normal but also a very helpful emotion.
- ▶ It serves as a mechanism to protect us from danger or dangerous situations.

The science behind Anxiety



Common anxieties at different ages

Ages 0-2

- ▶ Loud noises (vacuum cleaner, hair dryer, water going down the drain etc).
- ▶ Separation from parent.
- ▶ Strangers.

Common anxieties at different ages

Ages 3-4

- ▶ Loud noises (vacuum cleaner, hair dryer, water going down the drain etc).
- ▶ Being separated from a parent.
- ▶ The dark.
- ▶ Animals.
- ▶ Noises at night.
- ▶ Monsters & ghosts.
- ▶ People in costume.

Common anxieties at different ages

Ages 5-6

- ▶ Being separated from parent.
- ▶ Monsters & ghosts.
- ▶ Nightmares and bad dreams.
- ▶ Snakes and spiders.

Common anxieties at different ages

Ages 7-11

- ▶ Being home alone.
- ▶ Fear of a teacher who is angry.
- ▶ Death, illness & disease.
- ▶ Fear of failure and rejection.

Question

What are some examples in children where anxiety has become an issue?

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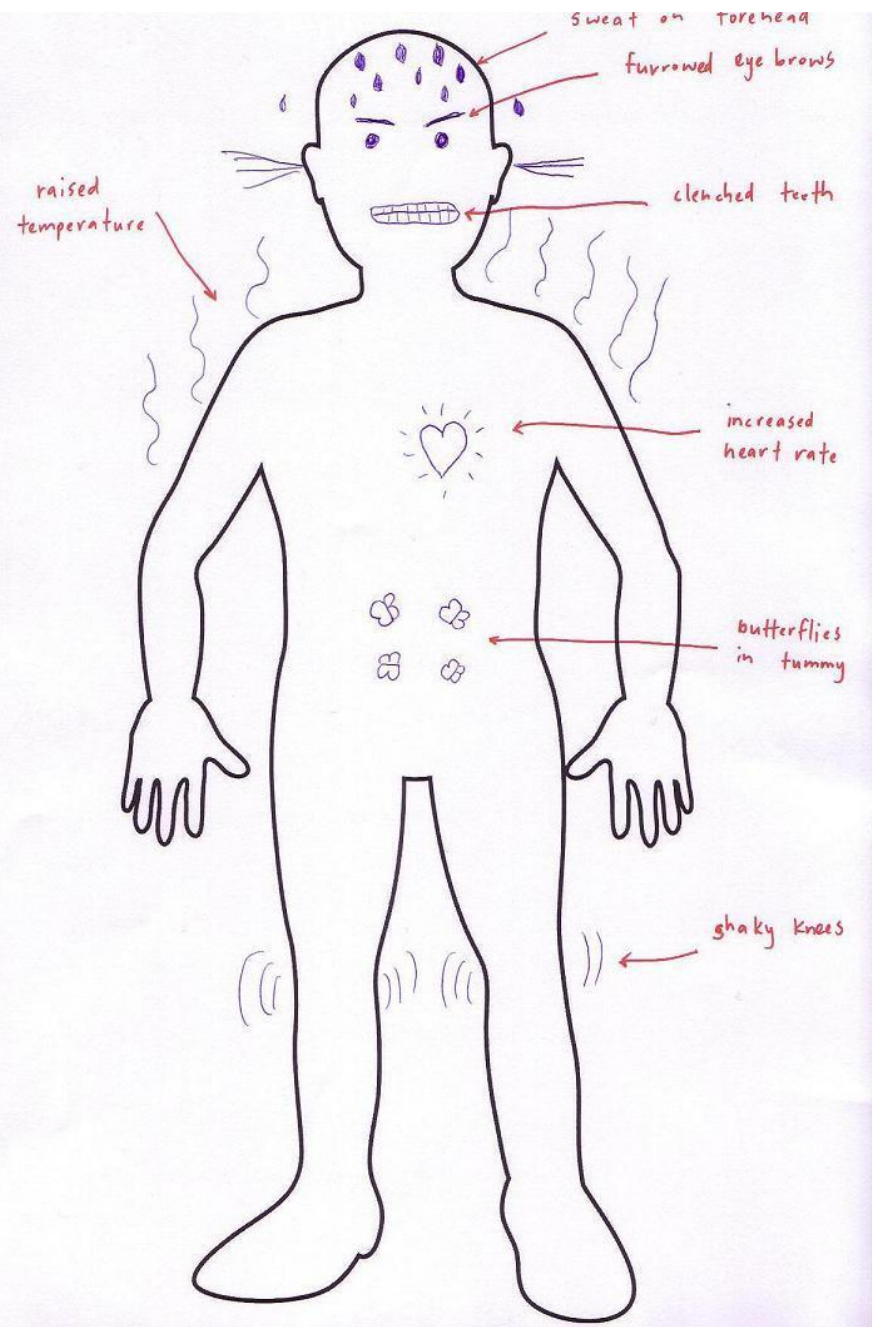
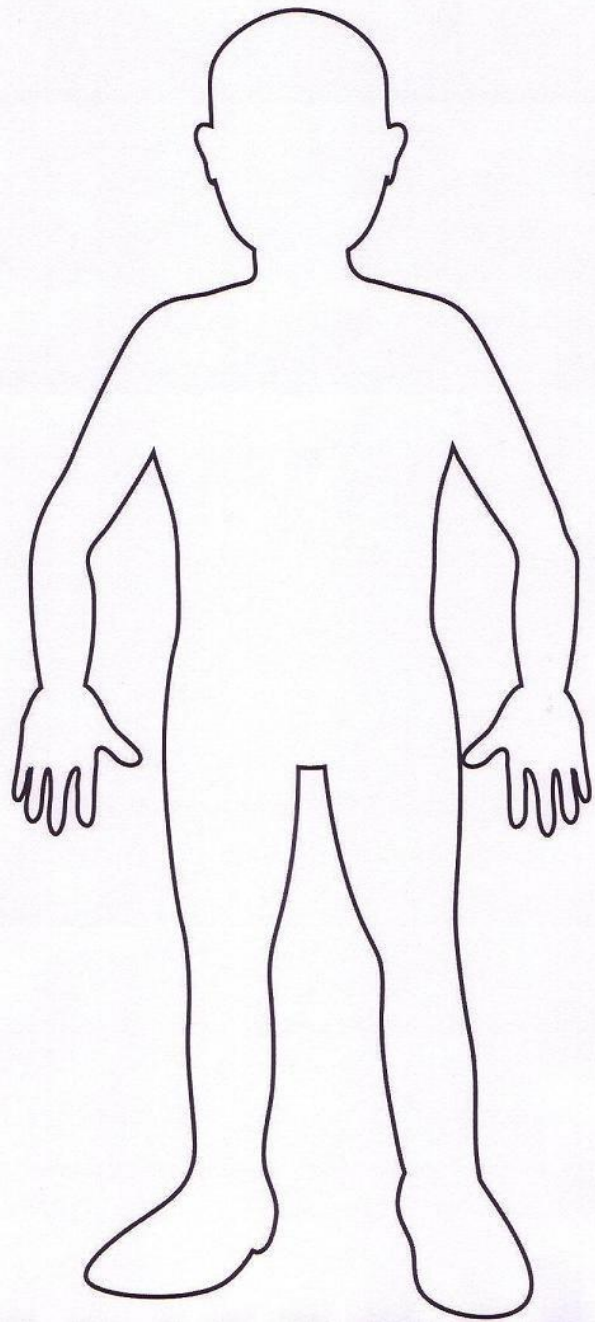
Helping children with anxiety

Strategies

- ▶ **Psycho-educational information.**
 - ▶ Explain why anxiety exists - to protect us.
 - ▶ That it is normal.
 - ▶ That it is helpful.
 - ▶ That in some people it works overtime.

Strategies

- ▶ **Physiological Awareness**
 - ▶ Teaching the child to become more aware of their body so they can pre-empt when they feel anxious.
 - ▶ If they can pre-empt anxiety then they can do something about it before it becomes full blown.



The Volcano-express how they are feeling



Strategies

▶ Breathing Exercises

- ▶ Deep breathing has a physiological effect on the body.
- ▶ 7 Breathes
- ▶ Tension and release
- ▶ Blow bubbles
- ▶ Night time relaxation
- ▶ Special memory
- ▶ Music

Music



Strategies

- ▶ **Good Modelling**

- ▶ Showing them what good coping strategies look like by using them ourselves.

Strategies

- ▶ **Problem Solving**
 - ▶ Teach your child a way to problem solving mechanism.

Strategies

► Positive Self Talk

Internal dialogue

- 1, Goal: frame the situation differently (more positively)
- 2, Learn mantras to situations - Empower!!
- 3, Pick up on negative 'frames' and 'reframe'
- 4, Look at the evidence - put cracks in their thinking
- 5, Be creative - stick new 'frames' up on the mirror/car

Positive Self Talk



Strategies

- ▶ **Mindfulness exercises**
 - ▶ Focusing your awareness on each passing moment as it occurs.
 - ▶ Used therapeutically for depression and anxiety.
 - ▶ Also shown to improve attention and concentration.

Strategies

- ▶ **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)**
 - ▶ Type of psychotherapy that helps a person to change unhelpful habits of thinking, feeling and behaving. Involves the use of practical self-help strategies, which are designed to affect positive and immediate changes in the person's quality of life (Spence, 2010).
 - ▶ Real or unreal worries 'detective'
 - ▶ Where is the evidence? (cracks in their thinking)
 - ▶ Set goals in a positive way
 - ▶ Work towards them gradually
 - ▶ Celebrate achievements

Strategies

▶ Graded Exposure

- ▶ Gradual exposure to a situation which is fearful or creates anxiety is an important strategy for helping children to overcome anxious thoughts and feelings.
- ▶ It will help build confidence.
- ▶ Gradually expose the child with small steps, but with safety nets until they reach their goal.
- ▶ Celebrate achievements

Centre for Clinical Interventions (2011).

Exposure

1. Identify the fear provoking situation or object
2. Show empathy
3. Rate the fear (0-10)
4. Plan: **PRAMS** Personal, Realistic, Achievable, Measurable and Specific
5. Step ladder
6. Celebrate



Case Study

Case Study

A child that is scared of the sky!



Resources

Mindfulness: Annaka Harris, Smiling mind

Managing Anxiety: Online BRAVE Program for children and parents

Find a psychologist: <http://www.psychology.org.au/FaP/> (GP)
Local bulk billing services

Learn more: local courses: CLAN WA

Kids' Helpline: www.kidshelpline.com.au 1800 551 800

WorryWiseKids.org



Questions?

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Thank you

Please stay for a cup of tea,
chat to other parents and do
a Feedback Sheet

Andrea and Terry