



**Child Mind
Institute**

Helping Your Child Manage Back to School Stress

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School and Community Programs



About the Child Mind Institute

The Child Mind Institute is an independent, national nonprofit dedicated to ***transforming the lives of children*** and families struggling with mental health and learning disorders.

Our teams work every day to **deliver the highest standards of evidence-based care, increase understanding and fighting stigma through education, and pursue the cutting-edge science needed for tomorrow's breakthrough treatments.**

Together with our supporters, we're helping children reach their full potential in school and in life.

We share all of our resources freely and do not accept any funding from the pharmaceutical industry.

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Breaking down barriers to care, we deliver a suite of services to support student mental health in school and community settings.

Since 2012, our programs have reached over 67,000 students, educators, and caregivers in over 1,000 schools.

Available Nationally

Professional Training

Training for educators and clinicians to deliver interventions independently

Available in New York and California

Direct Care – Prevention

Classroom-level services to facilitate productive learning environments for K-12 students

Direct Care – Intervention

Evidence-based treatment for students requiring support for trauma, behavior, mood, and reading



Agenda

- Setting the stage at home
 - Relationship building
 - Positive attending and validation
- Understanding anxiety
- Concrete skills for managing stress and anxiety
- Care for the caregiver





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Setting the Stage at Home

The Power of Your Relationship

Relationship is Key

What do kids need?

Support

Validation

Non-judgement

Flexibility

Understanding

To know someone cares



They need relationship.

Behavioral Support



Clear routines & expectations



Preview and practice routines and activities



Set realistic goals



Model flexibility and adaptability

Build in Quality, One-on-One Time

- Spending **quality time** with your child is the best way to know her and to communicate your values.
 - The amount of time is less important than your state of mind, level of engagement and your openness to communication (Milkie, 2015)
- Just **5 minutes** per day is a sufficient “dose”
 - Provide your child a chance to be in the lead
 - Let her choose the activity or lead the conversation
 - Accept/validate his interests and choices
 - Focus on giving positive attention to behaviors you like
 - Ignore minor misbehavior
 - Avoid commands, lots of questions, and critical statements

Foster Your Relationship with Validation

- What is validation?
 - Validation communicates to another person that his or her feelings, thoughts, and actions make sense and are understandable to you in a particular situation
 - Validation does NOT mean agreement
- What is invalidation?
 - Invalidation communicates (intentionally or not) that another's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors do not make sense, are manipulative or stupid, or are not worth of your time
- Why validate?
 - Validation is essential to building a trusting relationship
 - Shows we are listening (without judgment) and understand
 - Opens up lines of communication
 - Helps to reduce negative reactivity/anger
 - Invalidation hurts!



Validation Examples

Situation	Invalidating Statement	Validating Statement
Your child expresses worry about how he will do on his math test	“Don’t worry, you’ll do fine! You’re a great math student!”	“It’s understandable that you’re worried about it. I know how hard you’ve been working in that class”
Your teen is upset about the curfew that you have set and says “It’s so unfair, my friends all have later curfews!”	“Well I’m not their parent! What I say goes!”	“I can see that you are very upset. I know how important time with friends is to you <i>and</i> this is the curfew that I am comfortable with”
Your child shares a recent conflict with friends at school	“They’re not worth your time anyway”	“That’s got to be so frustrating for you!”

Attend to Positive Behaviors with Specific Praise

- Be Specific
- Be Consistent
- Be Sincere
- Occurs *immediately* after the behavior
- Occurs when you are *physically close*
- Use non-verbal reinforcers
- Use at a high dose (4:1 ratio)
- Focus on behaviors you want to increase

“Great job finishing your work!”





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What is Anxiety?

Typical Anxiety vs. Problem Anxiety

- Anxiety is a physical and emotional response to a situation or event
- We all experience fear and worry- it is normal and adaptive
- Anxiety becomes problematic when it interferes with a child's ability to function

Situation	Typical Anxiety	Problem Anxiety
First day of school	Child feels nervous about going back to school, meeting new teachers and friends	Child is very distressed about leaving home, or refuses to attend school
Trying a new activity	Child feels nervous about trying something new, questions if they can do it or what might happen	Child refuses to try at all, or thinks only about the uncomfortable, embarrassing, or bad things that might happen

Avoidance

- **Avoidance** is one of the hallmarks of anxiety
- Initially it seems adaptive
- Avoidance **maintains anxiety** in the long run because kids do not learn that their fears may not be as bad as they imagine and that they can tolerate their anxiety.



Difficulty Tolerating Uncertainty

Reassurance Seeking



A form of accommodation frequent in children with anxiety



Provides short term relief from anxiety, but maintains it in the long run



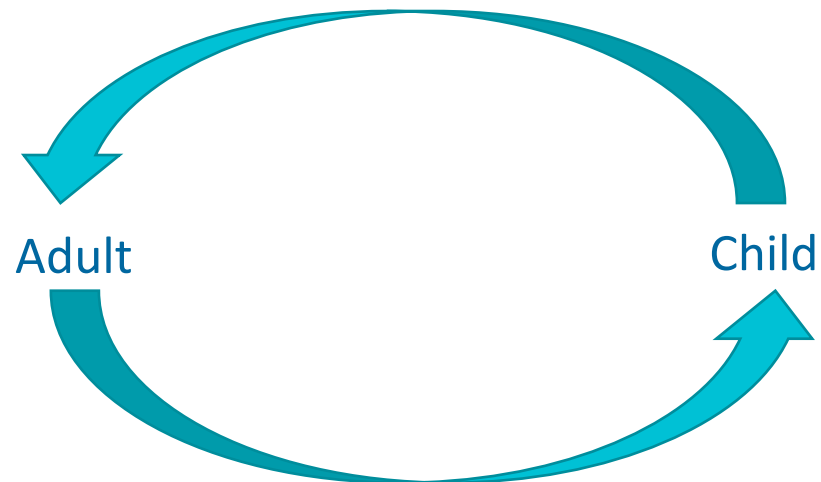
Seeking comfort that their fears won't come true, or that everything will be ok



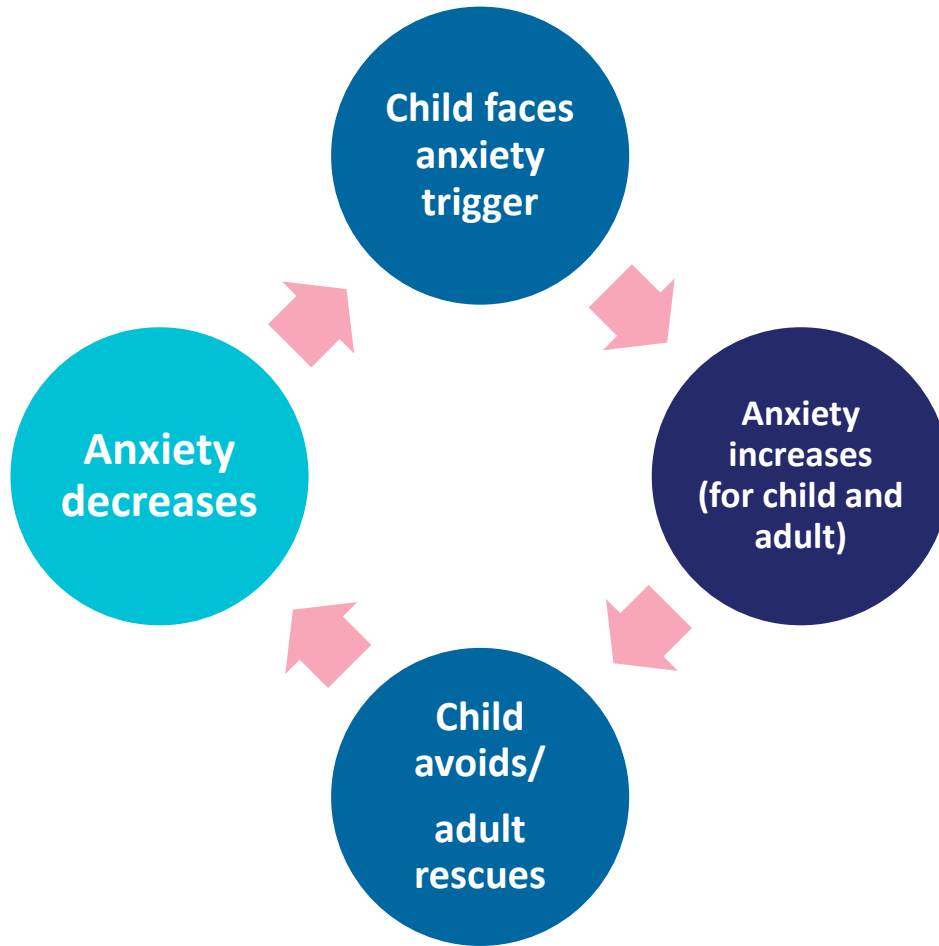
Repeatedly asking questions that have already been answered, or that they know the answer to

Interpersonal Nature of Anxiety

Anxiety affects the system, and
the system affects anxiety



Negative Reinforcement of Anxiety



How to Help Anxious Kids: The Power of Relationship



- Lean into the relationship
- Establish and maintain **routines** & **expectations**
- **Normalize** & **validate** reactions
- Model **coping** & **resilience**
- **Empathy** over education
- Balance between **acceptance** and **change**
 - Accept Feelings
 - Change Behavior

Empathize and Encourage



Validation

DO

Listen
Reflect
Connect

DO NOT

Cheerlead Out
Turn to Logic
Fix Right Away

Approach Behavior

Avoid Avoidance

Scaffold

Positive Reinforcement

“It’s okay to feel scared and how can I help you get through it?”
“I hear that it feels uncomfortable. Tell me what you’re worried about.”
“It’s hard to not know what will happen and here are the things we do know”

Coping Strategies

- Coping skills to help kids handle tough situations
- Caregivers can introduce and practice variety of coping strategies with kids:
 - Belly breathing practice
 - Taking a break
 - Distracting with an activity
 - Positive self-talk
 - Relaxation techniques
 - Self-soothing using the 5 senses
- Cope Ahead
 - Anticipate stress or difficulties
 - Plan for what kids will do

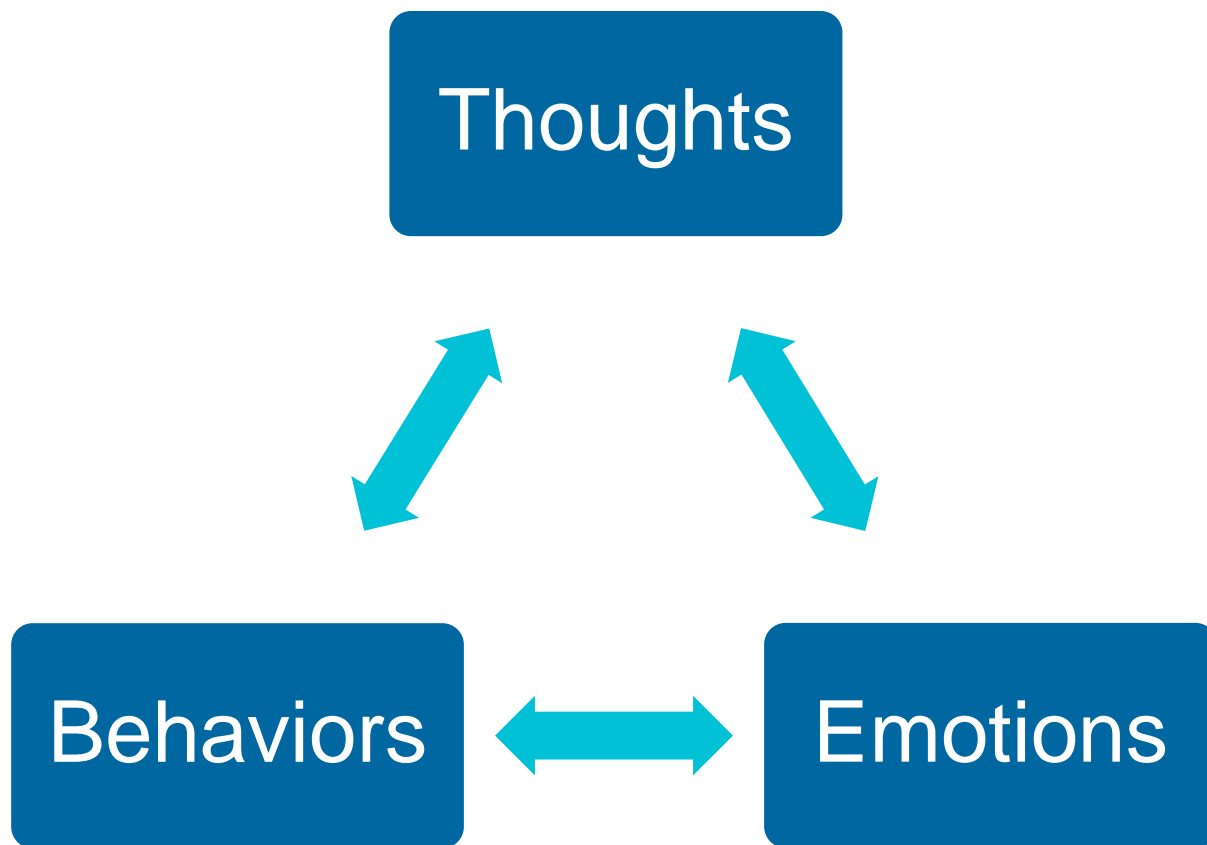




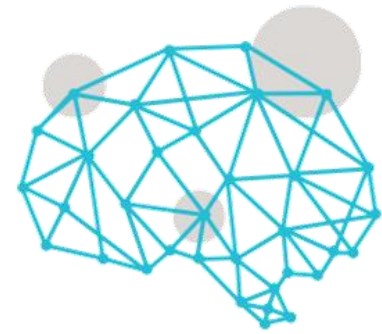
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Skills to Help Children Manage Anxiety

The Cognitive Triangle



Managing Thoughts

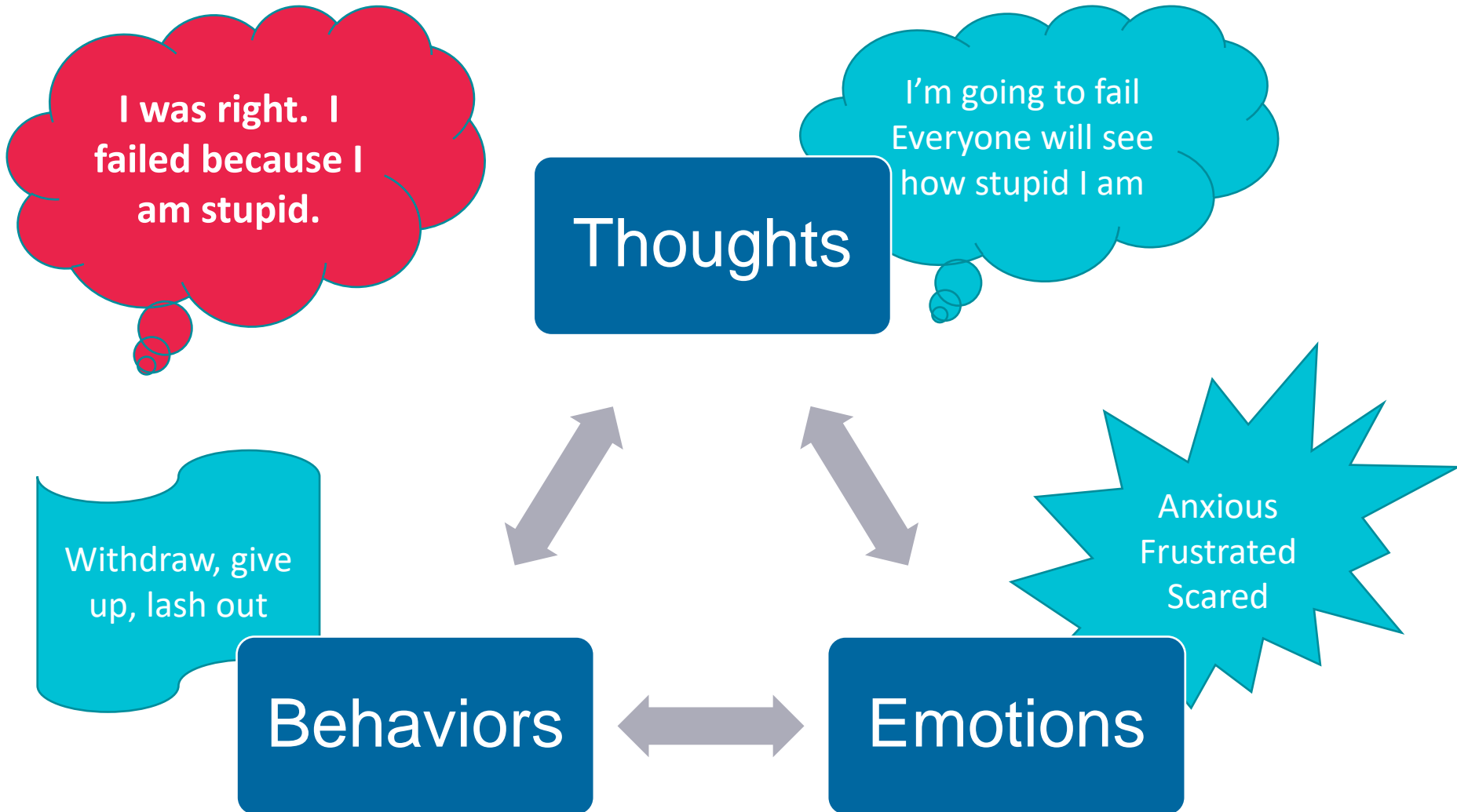


Noticing and thinking about thoughts helps kids observe when their thoughts are increasing their stress and anxiety

- Thoughts, feelings and behaviors are all connected
- Thoughts are automatic
 - They happen quickly
 - Kids don't question them
- The first thought kids have might not be the most helpful/realistic/kind
- Kids can change thoughts to change feelings
- **You can help your child:**
 - Recognize when they may be engaging in unhelpful or unrealistic thinking
 - Come up with more accurate or helpful thoughts (aka coping thoughts)

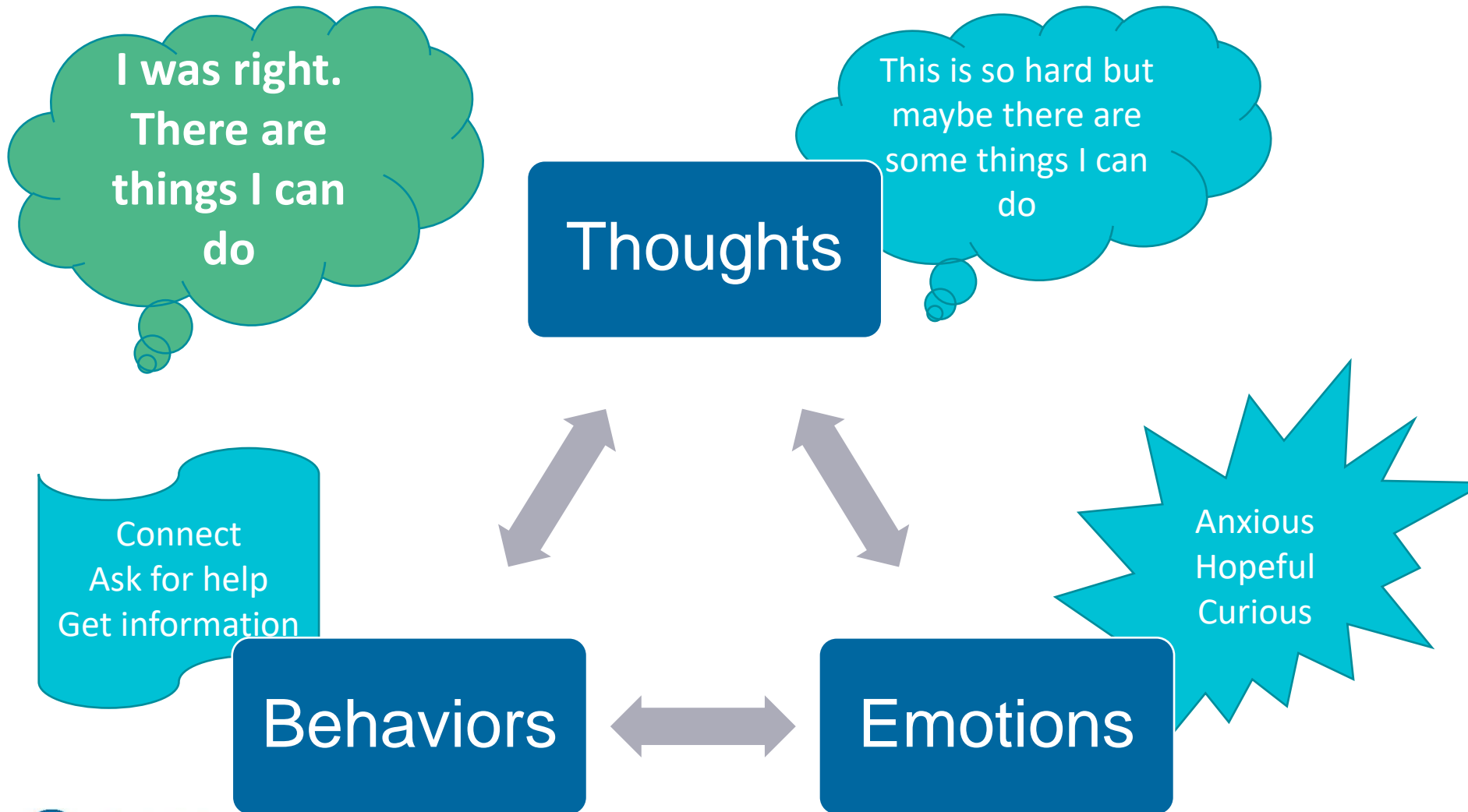
The Cognitive Triangle Example

School Anxiety



The Cognitive Triangle Example

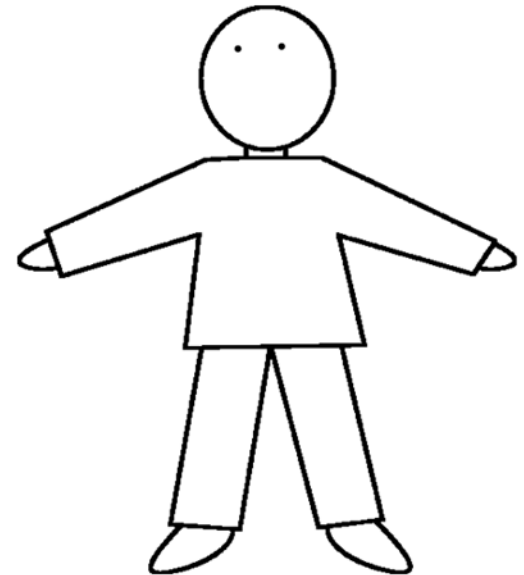
School Anxiety



Emotion Identification

Understanding how they are feeling helps kids feel more in control and less overwhelmed by their emotions.

- Identifying/labeling emotions helps kids to manage them
- Kids experience emotions in different intensities
- Kids can feel their feelings in their bodies



Help your child with feelings identification

- **Encourage discussion** about feelings (vocabulary, intensity, physical sensations)
 - Ask questions
 - Listen
 - Reflect and validate
- Use **specific praise** when your child identifies feelings in themselves and others
- **Share** how you are feeling (when appropriate)

Using Behaviors

Kids can DO things to reduce their stress. They can relax their bodies, engage in fun, pleasurable, meaningful, or helpful actions

- Learn and practice relaxation skills
 - Relaxing the body can help turn down the intensity of emotions
 - Cope ahead- discuss when your child might need relaxation strategies and practice using them
- What do I do?
 - Service activities
 - Fun activities
 - Social activities
 - Mastery activities
 - Physical activities



Help your child with using relaxation skills

- 3 evidence-based relaxation strategies
 - Belly breathing
 - Progressive Muscle Relaxation
 - Guided Imagery
- Use **specific praise** when your child:
 - Practices one of these skills
 - Plans ahead for a time when he/she might need to use a skill
 - Uses one of these skills when experiencing intense or uncomfortable emotions
- Practice using these skills together
- Model use of relaxation skills and planning ahead for when you might need to use a skill

Mindfulness

“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; n purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally.”

- Jon Kabat-Zinn

Your body is present.



Is your mind?



Classroom Resources: Healthy Minds, Thriving Kids



Making preventative mental health skills accessible to every family

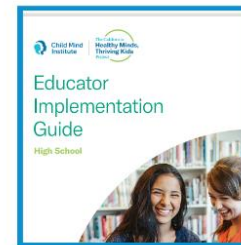
- Teach skills children can use for the rest of their lives
- Normalize conversations about mental wellbeing
- Available in English and Spanish
- Provide parent with wellness tools that truly help free of charge

TOPICS COVERED

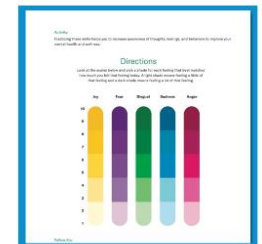
- **Understanding Feelings**
Building a foundation for healthy coping
- **Relaxation Skills**
Skills for Stressful Situations
- **Understanding Thoughts**
How thoughts impact feelings and behavior
- **Managing Intense Emotions**
Skills for coping with uncomfortable feelings
- **Mindfulness**
Improving self-awareness and decision-making



34 Videos
In English & Spanish



6 Implementation
Guides



60 Downloadable
Worksheets



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Care for Caregivers

What is Self-Care?

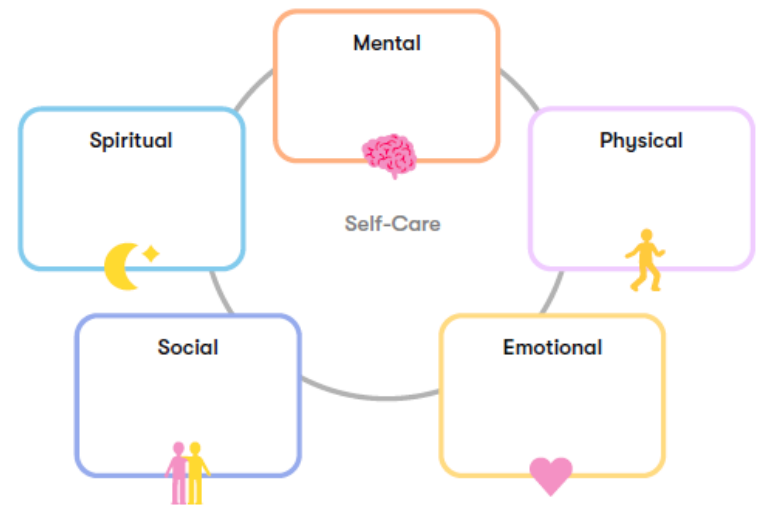
Taking care of yourself:

- Mentally (self-compassion, acceptance, relaxation)
- Physically (adequate sleep, eating healthy, exercise)
- Emotionally (identify, process and manage emotions)
- Socially (connect with friends, family, community)
- Spiritually (spiritual practices, reflection on meaning)

Developing a Self-Care Practice

DIRECTIONS:

Write down self-care activities that you think will be helpful in each of the labeled boxes below.



Self-Care Practice


- Schedule it
 - When?
 - Where?
 - What will you need to make it happen?
- Assess barriers
 - Didn't happen?
 - Why not?
 - What changes do you need to make to ensure it happens?

Self-Care Calendar

Name: _____ **Month:** _____

Suggestions for use:

1. **Make a plan:** write down a self-care activity for each day. Check it off if you did it. If you didn't, consider what got in the way and any changes you can make so that you can do it next time.
2. **Keep a log:** write down what you did every day you do a self-care activity. Notice patterns. How much self-care are you engaging in? Are there days you regularly practice self-care and days you don't?



1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Reflection

Connecting Values and Self-Care:

- Are there things I do when I am stressed that are in opposition to what my values are?
- How can a self-care practice help me live out my values?

What Are My Values?

DIRECTIONS: Read the list of values below. Circle three that are most important to you. Use the blank box to write in any that might be missing.

Contribution	Connection	Compassion	Integrity
Respect	Courage	Wealth	Education
Health	Open-Mindedness	Dependability	Fun
Determination	Responsibility	Creativity	



Reflection

- What is my goal for my relationship with my child(ren)?
 - How do I want to feel about them?
 - How do I want them to feel about me?
- Is there anything about the way that I currently respond to their stress that gets in the way of that goal?
- What's one takeaway from today's webinar that I can put into action?
- When will I do it?
- What supports will I need?



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Transforming children's lives

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