

# Working with Anxious Parents, Staff and Students

Kelly Curtis, EP Rock Elementary School Counselor  
Aria Krieser, Hudson Prairie Elementary School Counselor  
Chris Strop, North Hudson Elementary School Counselor

1

## Philosophy-The Why's

- Anxiety and mental health issues continue to become more prevalent
- Continued strong focus in Wisconsin and throughout the country on trauma sensitivity, compassion resilience and social-emotional learning
- School safety concerns are often linked to mental illness
- Our work as school counselors is fundamental in all things mental health, and early intervention is key
- It isn't just about students - parents and teachers have a higher incidence of anxiety too - our impact can expand if we see it as a part of our role

2

## What does anxiety look like in our schools?

Partner share:

- What do you see in your students?  
In their parents? Staff?
- How do you think this has changed over time?



3

Students

4

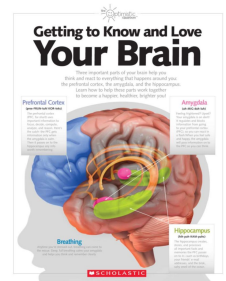
## Students

- Tier 1: SEL/Classroom lessons, mindfulness and the brain, fixed versus growth mindset
- Tier 2/3: Small group lessons, individual strategies, CICO internalizing students

5

## Anxiety

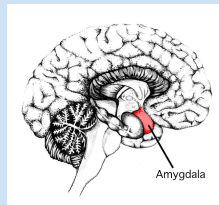
- Key players: Prefrontal Cortex, Amygdala and Hippocampus



6

## Amygdala

- Fight or flight
- Regulates and blocks information
- Safe and Happy? Information passes to Prefrontal cortex
- Frightened or Upset? Information will not pass



7

## Prefrontal Cortex

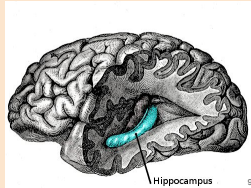
- Uses information to decide, compute, analyze and reason
- PFC gets information only when amygdala is calm
- Passes information to hippocampus to remember



8

## Hippocampus

- Creates, stores, and processes important memories and facts
- PFC passes information to it
- Learning center



9

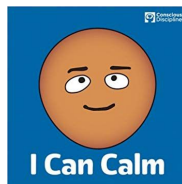
## Universal Classroom Resources

- **Books** - Worry Says What, Hey Warrior, Worry Says What, Mindful Monkey, Happy Panda, Felix and the Worrier, Breathe Like a Bear, Captain Snout and the Superpower Questions
- **Life Skills Lessons** - Mindfulness, ANTs, Wilma Jean
- **Apps** - Breathe 2 Relax, Smiling Mind, Breathe, Super Stretch Yoga HD, Fluidity, Settle your Glitter
- **Calm Corners/Safe Spaces**
- **Classroom Mindfulness** - Calm Classroom, Go Zen, MindUp, MindYeti, Go Noodle

10

## Classroom - I Can Calm

[I Can Calm - Video](#)



\*Conscious Discipline

11

## Calm Classroom



- Reasonably priced (\$25)
- Uses research-based techniques to help students develop self-awareness, mental focus and inner calm
- Focuses on breathing, stretching, relaxation and focusing
- Suggested order of implementation (11 weeks)/Teacher suggestions

12

## Calm Classroom- Student & Teacher Feedback

Gr. 3 & 4 Calm Classroom - Teacher Post survey results showed:

- Students enjoyed doing Calm Classroom (100%)
- Students were less disruptive (66.7%)
- Students were more focused (83%)
- Students more peaceful (66.7%)
- Teachers were less stressed in their classrooms (100%)



13

## Calm Down Kits/Corners

- Teachers Pay Teachers resources (Teaching in Progress)
- Glitter bottles (Pinterest)
- Stress balls (Pinterest)
- Gel timers
- Weighted blankets
- Putty
- Lazy 8/Square breathing
  - (Zones of Regulation)



14

## Calming Corner at Willow River

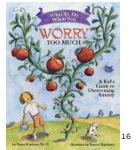


15

## Tier 2/3 Resources

### Small group -

- Worry Warriors - Counselor Keri (2-4)
  - HP: 100% of students grew their worry warrior toolbox based on a pre/post assessment
- What to Do When You Worry too Much - Huebner (4-5)
- Don't Worry Bee Happy- Erin Nation (K-1)
- Flexible Thinking - Superflex
- Zones of Regulation
- Fixed versus Growth Mindset



16

## Tier 2/3 Resources

- **CICO** - Nurse visits, teacher recommendation, tardiness/absenteeism, parent request
- **Individually** - Coaching and teaching strategies/tools, CICO internalizing behaviors
  - Worry Workbook - Counselor Keri
  - Worry Says What - Allison Edwards
  - The Worry Whale - Counselor Keri
  - Sometimes I Worry Too Much But Now I Know How to Stop - Huebner
- **Outside referral**

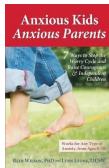
17

Parents

18

## Parent Book Club

- 4-5 week book club reading the book Anxious Kids, Anxious Parents, by Reid Wilson and Lynn Lyons
- Facilitated like a book club, where parents are sharing their experiences and the skills they are trying.
- Currently hosting online "blog" version



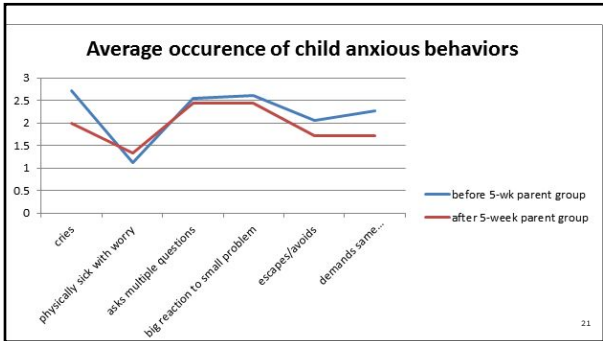
19

## Basic Concepts

- Normal and useful role worry and fear play
- Anxiety is method of seeking certainty and comfort immediately and continually
- Common parenting patterns that make sense and don't work
- How avoidance strengthens our worry, how parents strengthen avoidance
- Teaching flexibility
- Expect to Worry
- Externalize the anxious worries
- Be unsure and uncomfortable on purpose
- Brain - prefrontal cortex and amygdala
- Breathing



20



### Anecdotal Data

- Word of mouth - counselor seen as resource for parents
- Value-added service
- Parents more open to other counseling services because they trust the program
- Common language and accountability for behaviors
- Relief to teachers who are usually on the front line of parent anxiety - they can encourage parents to talk to me
- Organic coaching conversations at parent pickup. "It's okay to feel disappointment."

22

### Resources for Parents

- Parent group purchased books for us to check out to parents. Media center barcodes them. We currently have about 30 books in circulation.
- Book bags for anxiety, anger, and changing families.
- Outside resources for parents.

23

### Other related books

- The Gift of Failure, by Jessica Lahey
- How to Raise an Adult, by Julie Lythcott-Haims
- Parenting with Love and Logic, by Foster Cline

24



### Love and Logic - Classroom Strategies

- Check CESA - Essential Skills for the Love and Logic Classroom.
- Teaches a variety of skills so teachers can teach and students can learn
  - Encourages positive relationships with students
  - Focuses on empathy (use of an empathic statement), so students spend more time in the thinking mode. It prevents the fight-or-flight response.
- Helps students own and solve their problems

### Staff - Counselor's Role

Brene Brown - book clubs, videos

- Gifts of Imperfection
- Shame, perfection - how these issues can get in the way
- Creating a culture of trust and vulnerability - talking about it

**10 Guidelines for Wholistic Living**

*Letting Go of* | *Cultivating*

WHAT PEOPLE THINK	Authenticity
PERFECTIONISM	Self-Compassion
COMPARISON	Resilience
SCARCITY & FEAR	Gratitude
NEED FOR CERTAINTY	Intuition & Inner Faith
CREATIVITY	Creativity
ANXIETY	Play & Rest
SELF-DENIAL	Calms & Stillness
SHAME	Generosity
CONTROL	Boundaries

### Compassion Resilience

- Trauma Sensitive training - understanding trauma and stress - WI DPI
- Compassion Resilience "self-care" is about connecting, reaching out, trusting enough to be vulnerable, setting boundaries, feeling "enough" - appreciation and giving permission
- Tap in-tap out

## What does stress look like for your staff?

Partner share:

- What is the biggest stress for your staff?
- What would be the first step to support them?



29

## Gallery Walk -

- What ideas are you thinking of to support your students/staff/parents?
- What have you used or implemented with your populations?

\* Write them on the posters



30

## Share out/Questions



31