



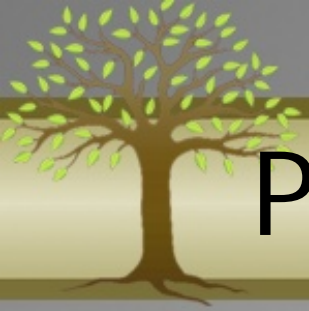
Anxiety and Self-Regulation Challenges: Strategies For the Classroom

Bev Miller M.Ed.

(November/December 2015)

pdseminar.com

(905) 977-9091



Prevalence of anxiety disorders

In an average class, 2 or 3 students may experience anxiety-related symptoms.

Manassis, 2012.

Anxiety disorders occur in 6 to 10% of youth. It is one of the most common mental health disorders. AACAP Official Action, 2007.

Anxiety disorders frequently originate during childhood or adolescence.

Keeton et al, 2009.



Anxiety is adaptive....

When we experience anxiety it triggers our “FLIGHT/FIGHT/FREEZE” response.

FIGHT – my heart beats faster, more blood to my muscles. I can put up a better fight.

FLIGHT – my heart beats faster, more blood to my muscles. I can run away faster.

FREEZE – when I freeze I might not be noticed, and the danger might pass me by.



Without intervention, anxiety challenges can significantly and negatively impact an individual's development and life-long well-being (Crawford & Manassis, 2011).



Children experiencing anxiety challenges tend to have fewer friends, and suffer from lower self-esteem than their less-anxious peers (Crawford & Manassis, 2011 and Connolly et al., 2007).



Academic performance is negatively impacted by anxiety challenges, oftentimes through avoidance behaviours (Connolly et al., 2007, Rapee et al., 2008).

Anxiety challenges are a significant contributor to school non-completion (Duchesne et al., 2008).



General Anxiety

General Anxiety challenges are characterized by excessive worry, often accompanied by somatic symptoms such as headaches, stomach aches, and racing heart.

Children with General Anxiety challenges often complain of feelings of self-doubt and worry about their future, social acceptability, and ability to perform at an acceptable level.

A child who experiences chronic worry and fear over a wide-range of issues might be diagnosed with General Anxiety Disorder.



Social Anxiety

Social Anxiety challenges are defined by excessive and unreasonable levels of fear regarding social embarrassment or negative evaluation in social situations, which interferes with everyday function.

There are often somatic symptoms such as blushing, sweating, and trembling.

Children with Social Anxiety challenges do not tend to respond well to simple reassurances or distraction.

Children who chronically exhibit these symptoms over a wide-range of situations might be diagnosed with Social Anxiety Disorder.



Separation Anxiety

Separation Anxiety challenges are characterized by excessive, unreasonable, and persistent distress associated with actual or anticipated separation from their primary attachment figure, that is not developmentally appropriate.

Children who chronically demonstrate these behaviours might be diagnosed with Separation Anxiety Disorder.



THOUGHT DISTORTIONS

Children dealing with anxiety issues are often prone to thought distortions.

1. Catastrophic Thinking – worst case scenario as the most likely scenario.
2. Ignoring the Positive – anything right I do or anything positive that happens is only a fluke.
3. Negative Self-Talk – “I am a _____”



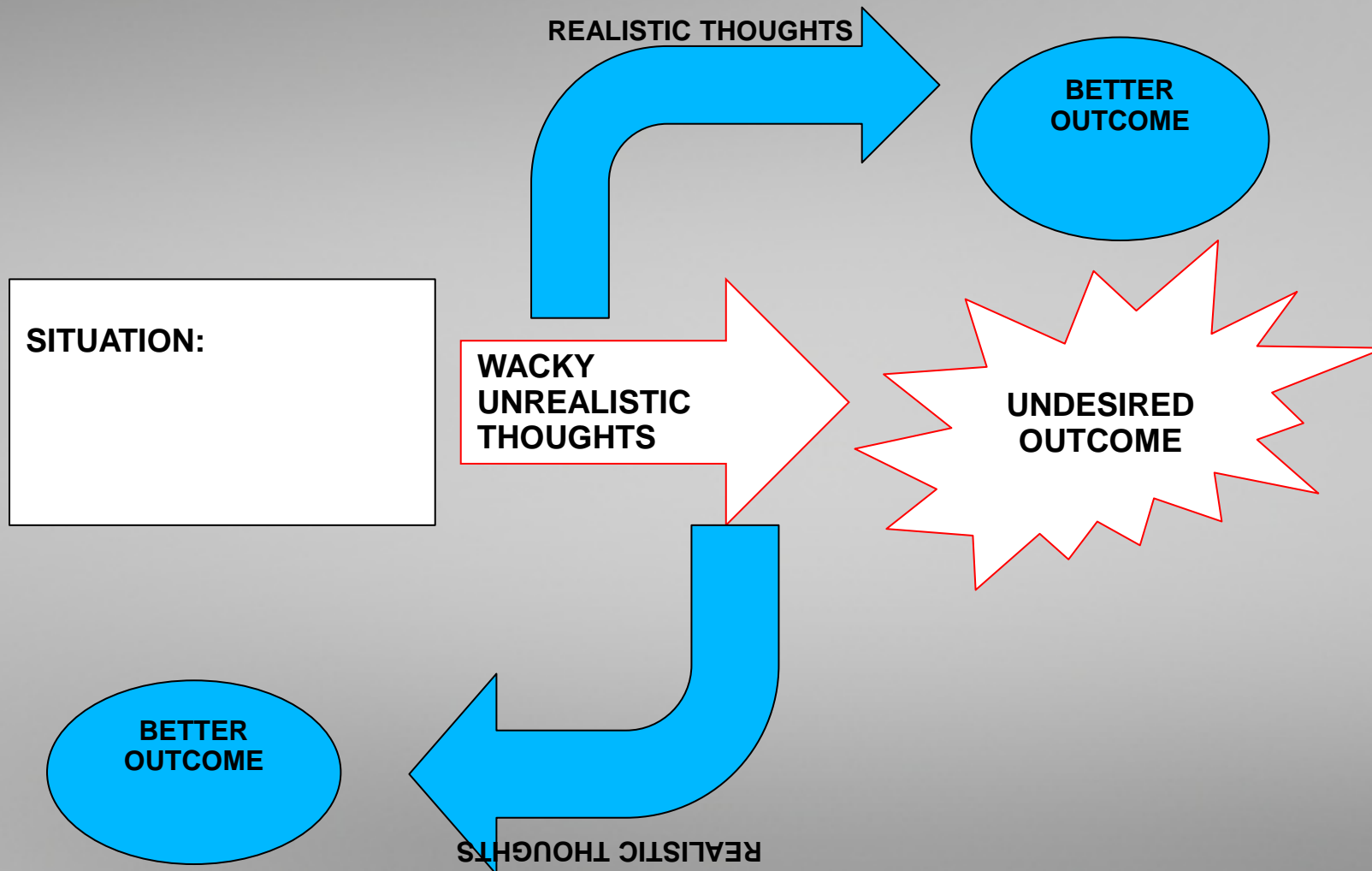
THOUGHT DISTORTIONS

4. Spotighting – preoccupied with yourself/unrelentingly self-conscious and self-aware.
5. Mind-Reading – “I know what you’re thinking about me, and it’s nothing good”.
6. Perfectionism – when good isn’t good enough.



BREAKING THE CHAIN

Children and/or adolescents can be taught and supported in looking for thought distortions, and then activities and actions that can help manage their anxiety or their response to it.





Behaviours can be described in terms of ABC – that is an **antecedent**, which is the demand or requirement of a situation....

Followed by the **behaviour**, which is what the person thinks, says or does.....

Followed by the **consequence**, which is the response to the behaviour and can either maintain or increase the likelihood of that behaviour being repeated or decrease the likelihood of that behaviour being repeated.



Antecedent

As teachers we are able to adjust activities such that students with anxiety challenges experience less worry and anxiety.

Antecedent adjustment to working in groups:

- a. Teacher creates the groups to deliberately place an anxious student with patient/kind peers
- b. Teacher creates the groups by random selection, but anxious student does not have to find his/her own group



Replacement Behaviour

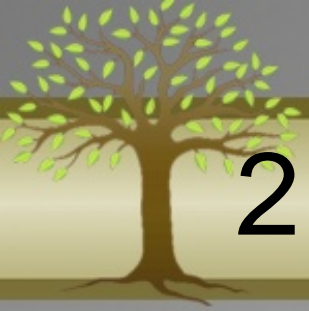
A Replacement Behaviour must be as easy for the student as the behaviour you are replacing, and lead to a more positive consequence,

e.g. rather than not answering.....

- a. Teach all students or the specific student to say “pass” in a confident voice and reinforce this with social praise.
- b. Give students the option to “ask a friend” or demonstrate the answer with a friend, and praise their joint work.
- c. Have students go to the whiteboard in pairs when asked to demonstrate an answer, and praise their joint work.

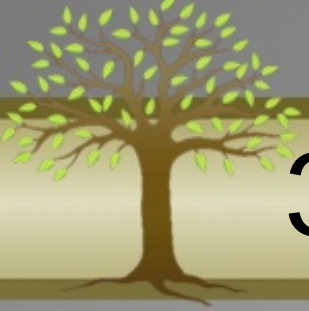


This mental health self-advocacy can take the form of Option Charts that are completed by students at the beginning of the year or semester
(or by email)



2. Relaxation & Deep Breathing

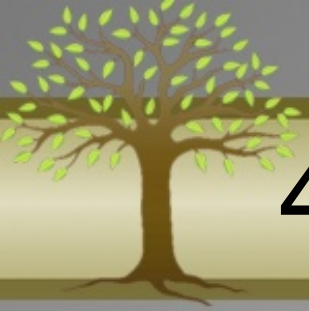
- A focus on breathing can improve concentration, promote well-being, and decrease stress, anxiety, and anger.
- Don't wait until fight or flight kicks in before controlling your breathing.
- Controlled breathing not only keeps the mind and body functioning at their best, it can also lower blood pressure, promote feelings of calm and relaxation and help us de-stress



3. Worry Time and Worry Box

Students can be taught to delay worrying until a designated “Worry Time”.

Teacher discussion with the whole class should include **accepting** and **normalizing** worry as something that we all do, and explaining that the objective is to manage our worrying so that it doesn't interfere with other things we are trying to do.



4. Calming Box/Calming Book

The whole class can participate in the creation of individual Calming Boxes and/or Calming Books.

A Calming Box contains a few items that the student pre-determines helps him/her relax and calm.

These items will be highly individual, but might include photos. of a pet, a particularly scented tea bag (olfactory associations), a memento from a trip, a piece of soft cloth (tactile associations), etc.



5. Visualization

In addition to supporting students in creating Calming Boxes and Calming Books with actual items to enhance a sense of calm and control, students can be taught to use simple visualization strategies.



Staying Connected

- Make use of the Cell Phone

BUT consider the following:

- Pre-plan the call (typically to a parent)
- Have the student call include a “success story”, as well as any concerns (if necessary, the parent can prompt for this)
- Ensure the call is supportive of the student remaining at school (or according to the accommodation plan staying for a specific length of time)
- Texting might be better



7. Movement/Sensory Intervention

- To increase attention, focus, appropriate arousal, behavioural and emotional responses.
- To obtain and maintain calm, alert state appropriate for learning activity





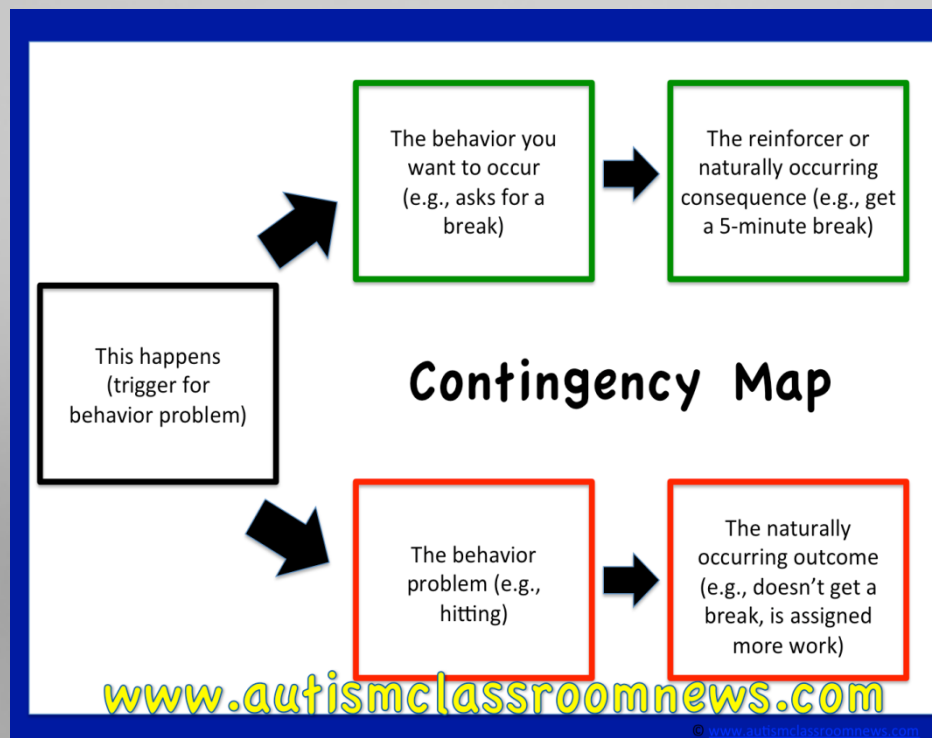
- A student may gain behavioural and emotional regulation through participation in a variety of sensory and motor activities; and by having their environment modified.





1. Contingency Mapping

- A Contingency Map provides information that will help an individual understand the consequences associated with different pathways of behaviour.



2. What are Power Cards?

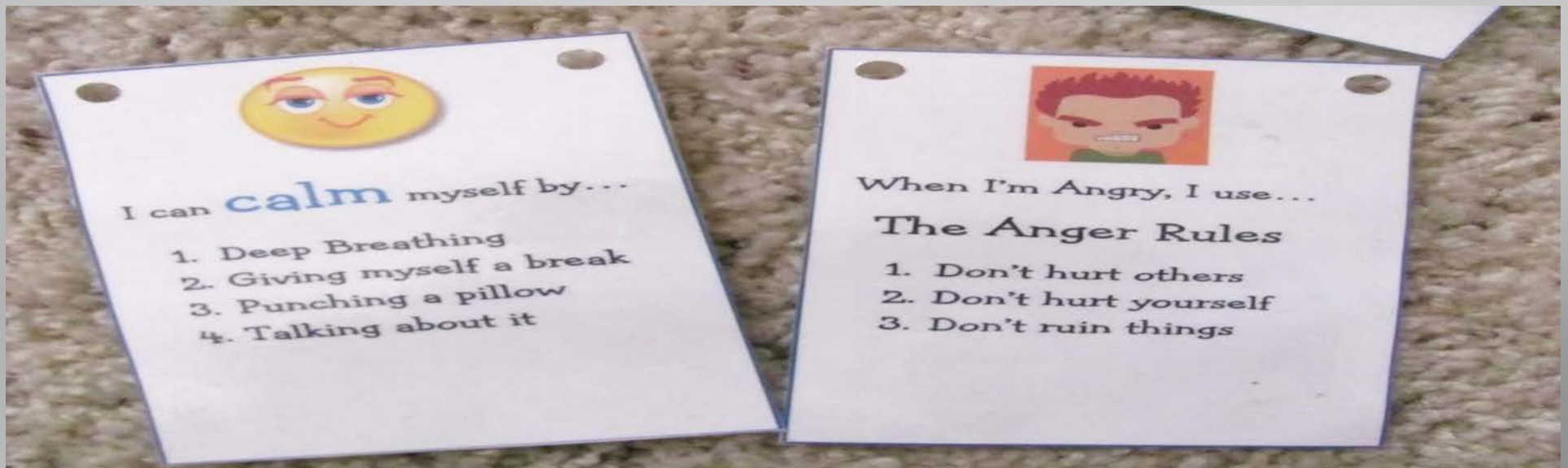
The Power Card Strategy is a visual aid that incorporates the child's special interest in teaching appropriate social interactions including routines and behaviour expectations.





Power Cards cont.

- Consists of presenting a short scenario, written in the first person, describing how the student's hero solves a problem, and a small card, the POWER CARD, which recaps how the student can use the same strategy to solve a similar problem he or she encounters












1. Shades of Grey

Copyrighted Material

My Book Full of

Feelings



How to **Control** and React
to the **Size** of Your Emotions.

AN INTERACTIVE WORKBOOK FOR PARENTS, PROFESSIONALS & CHILDREN
For All Children, Including Those with Asperger Syndrome and Other Autism Spectrum Disorders

Copyrighted Material
By AMY V. JAFFE, M.S.W., and LUCI GARDNER



THINGS THAT MAKE ME FEEL **WORRIED** . . .

LITTLE

1. Someone is using my toys.
2. The school bus is late.
3. _____.
4. _____.

MEDIUM

5. Wondering if the fire alarm will ring today.
6. Going somewhere I have never been.
7. _____.
8. _____.

BIG

9. _____.
10. _____.
11. _____.



LITTLE

1. **THINK:** It's okay. It's still mine. This is sharing.

2. Wait calmly. **THINK:** The bus will come soon.

3. _____.

4. _____.

MEDIUM

5. **THINK:** It's no big deal. I know how to cover my ears.

6. **ASK:** "What it is like there?" or "How will it go?"

7. _____.

8. _____.

BIG

9. _____.

10. _____.

11. _____.

12. _____.



Purpose of the 5-Point Scale

- Assists students in recognizing emotions at varying escalating levels.
- Assists students in developing a set of calming strategies.
- Assists students in predicting and understanding likely outcomes of behaviours.
- Assists students in engaging in problem-solving regarding behavioural choices.





| Rating | I Feel.... | Looks Like... | I Can Try To.. |
|--------|--|---|---|
| 1 | Really good. Like when I read books about science. | I am smiling I am doing my work. | Keep on doing what I'm doing. Enjoy myself. |
| 2 | I feel a little bit tired and bored. I'd like to do something else. | Breathing with a sigh. I am still paying attention and doing my work. | Think about things I like. Remind myself that I'll be finished soon. |
| 3 | O.K. but not great. Like when my ice rink melts. Like when there's too much on my desk. | I look sad. Sometimes I start making noises. I start doing lots of yawning. | Ask for finger toys. Ask for doodle time. Take deep breaths. |
| 4 | Sad and worried. Like when it's indoor recess. Like when it's too noisy. | Holding my head in my hands. I might shout. I might hide under the table. | Tell someone I need help. Read a favourite book. Get out of there & be active. |
| 5 | This is the worst day ever. Scared- like when the fire bell rings and I didn't know about it. | I will probably shout and swear. I might throw things off my desk. | An adult will walk with me to my safe, quiet place. I can rock and hum there. Mom might come to take me home. |



Building my toolbox

REMEMBER

Calm
breathing/Mindfulness
Relaxation strategies

Positive self-talk/Realistic
thinking

GET EDUCATED

[Keys to Parenting Your
Anxious Child](#), Dr. Katharina
Manassis

[Worried No More, Second
Edition: Help and Hope for
Anxious Children](#), Aureen
Wagner, Ph.D.

[Freeing Your Child From
Anxiety](#), Tamar Chansky, Ph.D.

[Helping Your Anxious Child](#),
Ronald M. Rapee

[The Shyness and Social
Anxiety Workbook: Proven
Techniques for Overcoming
Your Fears](#), M. Anthony, Ph.D.
and R. Swinson, MD

WHERE TO LOOK

teenmentalhealth.org

anxietycanada.ca

worrywisekids.org

anxietybc.ca

psychologyfoundationofcanada.com

anxietycoach.com

