Tools And Techniques For Helping Anxious Kids

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Performance
Enhancement
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Counseling Services

Anxiety Disorders
- Panic Disorder
- Specific Disorder
- Social Phobia
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
- Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
- Acute Stress Disorder
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Anxiety Disorder NOS

Anxiety Disorders
Also with kids:
- Separation Anxiety Disorder
- Selective Mutism
Anxiety Terms

- **Stress** – The general response we have to *perceived* pressures and demands.
- **Anxiety** – A natural, normal, and built-in alarm system for *perceived* future threat or danger.
- **Panic** – An alarm response to perceived immediate threat or danger.
- **Agoraphobia** – A coping skill for dealing with threat by avoiding.

3 Systems of Anxiety

- **Physical**
  - Physical sensations
- **Mental**
  - Internal change in focus
  - Worry/Mental rehearsal
- **Behavioral**
  - Avoidance
  - Escape

Theoretical Model of Panic/Anxiety

- **Physical Arousal “Triggers”**
  - Hyperventilation
  - Exercise
  - Stress
  - Drugs
- **Physical Sensation Symptoms**
  - Heart racing/pounding
  - Breathlessness
  - Dizziness
  - Sweating
- **“Faulty” Appraisal of Threat**
  - I’m dying
  - I’m having a heart attack
  - I’m losing my mind
  - I will lose control of my senses
  - etc.
**Fight or Flight**

- An anxiety response is no more than:
  - Sympathetic Arousal
  - Cognitive Attribution
  - Emotional Labeling

**Avoidance**

- Avoidance is a form of self-medication
- May develop certain rules
  - I will only go if with special person.
  - I don't go to birthday parties.
  - I don't go to the mall.
  - I am driven to school.
  - I don't wait in lines.
  - I don't ride the bus.
- Significantly effects functioning or relationships

**Clinical Example #1**

10-year-old Corey stepped off of the bus and felt his heart race, stomach become nauseous, and began having difficulty breathing. He became dizzy and his chest hurt, so he called his friend to get the principal. By the time the principal came Corey was sitting on a chair and his face was very red. He was breathing very fast. He told the principal he thought he was dying, and to call an ambulance. By the time the Corey arrived at the hospital he was scared, but all of the other symptoms were gone. Routine medical tests showed nothing.
Clinical Example #2

9-year-old Jessica has been to the family doctor six times in the last two weeks. She has insisted that her mother take her ever since she had a dizzy spell, felt like her stomach was turning inside out, and couldn't breathe. She thought she was going to die. The family doctor couldn't find anything, but she believes that the doctor missed something. Jessica becomes unable to focus on her schoolwork because she is worried about her body sensations and fearful that she will have an attack. She begins to miss more and more school with assorted physical complaints and becomes increasingly oppositional.

Tactics For Easing Anxiety

Education – Alarm metaphor

Do car alarms only go off when people are breaking in????
No.

We need to recalibrate your alarm system!

Alarm Metaphor
Tactics For Easing Anxiety

Dragon Metaphor
(DuPont Spencer, DuPont, and Dupont)

- Inform about the dragon
- Learn about the dragon
  - Make your own
  - Know it’s tricks
- Make child the Dragon Master

Tactics For Easing Anxiety

Logging Fears/Worry Time
(Huebner & Matthews)
Logging Fears/Worry Time
- Log dragons
- Identify specific fears
  - Small, Medium, Large
- Later, set aside Worry Time

Tactics For Easing Anxiety
Diaphragmatic Breathing
(EmWave, Bubble Breaths)

Tactics For Easing Anxiety
Therapeutic Stories
(spreading of fears, letting go, trying expts.)
Tactics For Easing Anxiety

Rating Scales
(how full of fear?)

Tactics For Easing Anxiety

Brain Channels
(Stormy, Sunny, Rainbow; Frank & Frank)

Tactics For Easing Anxiety

Wizard Thinking/Positive Self-Talk
Wizard Thinking

- Research on + self-talk
- Neuroplasticity
- Wizard thinking cards

Tactics For Easing Anxiety

Experiment Cards

- Encourage with + reinforcement
- Gradual steps
- Keep going
Tactics For Easing Anxiety

Visualization/Imagery

- Mental Rehearsal
- Visualize getting through feared situation
- Incorporate breathing
- Break conditioned response

Tactics For Easing Anxiety

Super Powers
Super Powers

- Helpful with intrusive thoughts
- Fun way to help with thought stopping

Tactics For Easing Anxiety

Use true Helpers

True Helpers

- Way to help stop compulsive behavior
- Parents, siblings, therapist
Tactics For Easing Anxiety

Worry Box
(waiting on worries; Huebner & Matthews)

- Initially promotes teamwork
- Later takes focus off fears
- Encourages use of coping skills

Worry Box

Treatment for Panic/Anxiety: Older Kids/Adults

- Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy
- Behavioral Therapy
- Relaxation Therapy
- Medication (SSRIs – Prozac, Paxil, Celexa, Zoloft, Luvox; Tricyclics – Desiprimine, Imiprimine; Benzodiazapines – Xanax, Ativan, Valium)
Panic Inoculation Treatment

- 4 components
  - Education
  - Cognitive Restructuring
  - Behavioral Experiments/Exposure
  - Breathing Retraining
- 80% show “dramatic improvement in frequency of panic attacks, agoraphobic avoidance, and anxiety symptomatology” (Telch, Lucas, Schmidt, Hanna, Jaimez, & Lucas, 1993)

Treatment for Separation Anxiety

- Individual Therapy
  - Play Therapy
  - Behavioral Exposure
- Family Therapy
  - Alter contributing family dynamics
- Collaboration between treatment providers, schools, etc.
  - Development of a consistent treatment/adjustment plan
- Medication
  - This is needed for a minority of children who have persistent symptoms, resistant to behavior modification and psychotherapy.
  - SSRIs (Prozac, Zoloft, Paxil etc.)
  - Imipramine (Tofranil)

Anxiety Tips

- Don’t belittle or put down the child
- Recognize that the fear is real
- However, don't cater to the fears
- Beware avoidance
  - Provide support and gentle care as you approach the feared object or situation with your child.
Thank you.

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