

## Understanding Stress & Anxiety: How to Raise a Healthy, Confident & Successful Adult™

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### Questions to Ponder

1. Are you alright with your child being AVERAGE?
2. How do you differentiate between success and perfection?
3. How do you respond when your adolescent begins to struggle or experience disappointment or even failure?
4. If I asked your adolescent what you value and focus on in your parenting, what would he/she say (hmmm: grades, achievement...)
5. What is your adolescent passionate about?
6. What are some of your greatest concerns for your adolescent?



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### What is Anxiety?

Normal, natural, built in through evolutionary processes

Response to the perception of future threat or danger

We need this to prepare for future potential difficulties

Some anxiety is actually good for performance



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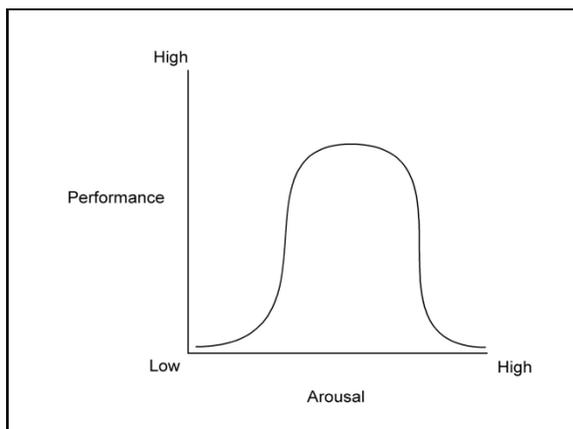
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### When are we Uncomfortable or Anxious?

Our Fight - or - Flight system gets activated by the perception of threat/danger

The perceived fear is greater than the actual threat/danger

Everyday occurrences become overwhelming

Behaviors interfere with daily functioning



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### Maladaptive Coping (Avoidance)

Based on misappraisal of the threat

Intention is to avoid fear stimulus or the danger it signals

Coping patterns develop as a way to create immediate relief and avoid experience of discomfort



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### Anxiety Symptoms

**BODY:** Fatigue, Restlessness OR Sweating

**BEHAVIOR:** Hypervigilance OR Irritability

**COGNITIVE:** Racing Thoughts OR Worry Thoughts

**OTHER COMMON SYMPTOMS**

Trembling, Overwhelmed, Poor Concentration, Shortness of Breath, Excessive Worry, Frea, Insomnia, Increased Heart Rate, Feelings of Nausea



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### What Heightens Anxiety

Avoidance

Reassurance seeking

Distraction



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### Emotional Regulation

Difficulty managing emotions

Lack of self soothing techniques

Poor impulse control



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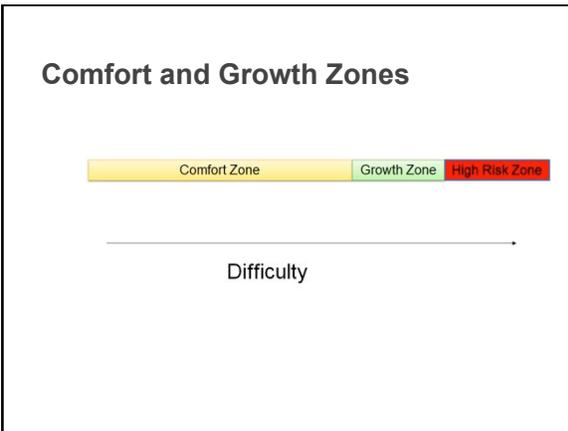
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### Distress Tolerance

Lack of crisis survival strategies

Underdeveloped skills to manage feelings such as disappointment, anger, and sadness

Difficulty applying coping strategies to stressors

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### Factors that Contribute to School Anxiety

Difficulties with...

Managing feelings of discomfort

Experiencing disappointment

Applying conflict resolution skills

Communicating needs effectively to school staff

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## Purposeful Parenting vs. Emotional Reactive Parenting

Goals for parenting that are aligned with family values  
Proactive vs. Reactive  
Self-awareness  
Healthy vs. unhealthy patterns of communication



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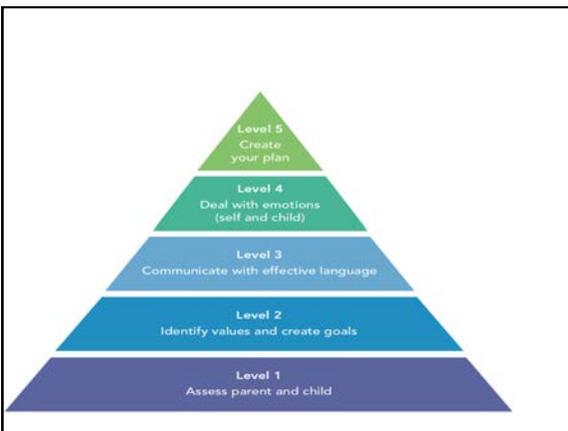
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## Emotional and Cognitive Development

Assessing discrepancy between emotional and cognitive levels of development  
Understanding different stages of emotional development  
Considering emotional development when formulating expectations  
Fostering emotional maturity



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## Coping Strategies

- Welcome humor
- Try to have a positive attitude
- Get involved
- Identify what triggers your anxiety
- Seek out supports
- Comfortable being uncomfortable!



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## Demands on Parents

- Time constraints
- Financial
- Social (lack of)
- Career
- Family responsibilities
- Self Demands



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## Common Exposures

### Social Anxiety

- Answering questions about absences
- Having a conversation with a peer
- Asking a teacher for help
- Giving a speech to a group

### Perfectionism

- Making a mistake on an assignment
- Completing an assignment "imperfectly"
- Raising hand and providing wrong answer

### Somatic Symptoms/Panic

- Interceptive exposures
- Inciting feared symptoms prior to class
- Attending school without phone or other safety objects

### Separation Anxiety

- Staying home while parent goes out
- Parent leaves and turns off cell phone

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### Parenting Strategies

Identify goals to be achieved as a result of parenting (what is non-negotiable?)

Identify patterns of behavior

Be clear and consistent (written contract may help)

Identify and strategize obstacles to following family contract or meeting goals

Evaluate progress and obstacles regularly

Aligned parenting creates expectations that increase consistency and structure

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### Parenting Strategies

Avoid enabling your child

Create home environment that fosters structure and consistency

Communicate effectively (LISTEN-keep it short and simple!)

Increase self-awareness

Learn how to allow your child to be uncomfortable-foster self-soothing skills

The goal is a healthy child!

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### Sample Family Contract

Expectations	Privileges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend School</li> <li>Be ready at 7:00</li> <li>Chores</li> <li>Homework</li> <li>Extracurricular Activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 hours of screen time</li> <li>Go out on Friday night</li> <li>Allowance</li> <li>Cell phone privilege</li> <li>Video games, lap top</li> </ul>

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### Setting a Family Behavior Contract

- Work to set goals for child based on family values
- Goals should be both long- and short-term
- Goals should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely (SMART)
- The expectations should be clear and consistent
- Avoid power struggles



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### How Do I Communicate Effectively?

- Provide child with choices
- Language such as "It is your choice" vs. "You have to"
- "What do you think you could do" vs. "You'll be ok"
- Look for teaching opportunities that work towards goal attainment
- Timing is important
- Less is more



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### Understanding Your Family Dynamics

- Stressors in the family
- Boundaries and limits
- Communication patterns
- Spoken and unspoken rules
- Family values and/or religious/cultural beliefs
- History of family mental illness
- Therapy may be necessary



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## Contact

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