

# STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT ANXIETY AND PROMOTE RESILIENCE

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# **IF IT IS AT A CONCERNING STAGE....**

- Class Teacher;
- School Counsellor;
- G.P. to check out the physiological symptoms;
- Mental Health Treatment Plan through your GP to access discounted sessions with a psychologist.

# STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THE PHYSIOLOGICAL

- Body detectives – read body clues that tell you how you are feeling;
- Practicing relaxation and controlled breathing regularly;
- Doing things they enjoy every day – decrease stress levels;
- Physical activity

# REDUCING STRESS: PHYSIOLOGICAL



# MILKSHAKE BREATHING (PAULA BARRETT)

- Breathing in through the nose – long, deep, slow, gentle breath
- Breathing out through the mouth – long, deep, slow, gentle breath (don't spill bubbles);
- Can accompany it with a single word “calm”; “relax”; “let go”

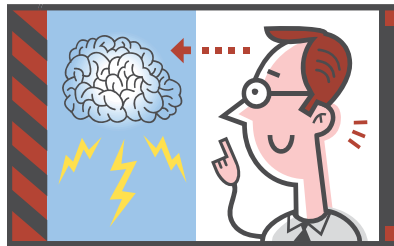


# TEACH THEM THE BRAIN STUFF AND THEN TALK TO IT! (WILSON & LYON, 2013)

“I’m going to the playground because my prefrontal cortex (thinking part) and my amygdala (alarm) need to learn that children are annoying but not dangerous to me”

OR

“My alarm system is going off but I know it’s a false alarm.”



# THOUGHTS TO HELP THE PHYSIOLOGICAL

(WILSON & LYON)

- “I understand what my body is doing”
- “I can handle what my body does”
- “I can tolerate discomfort”
- “I’m feeling butterflies in my tummy. I can cope with butterflies.”



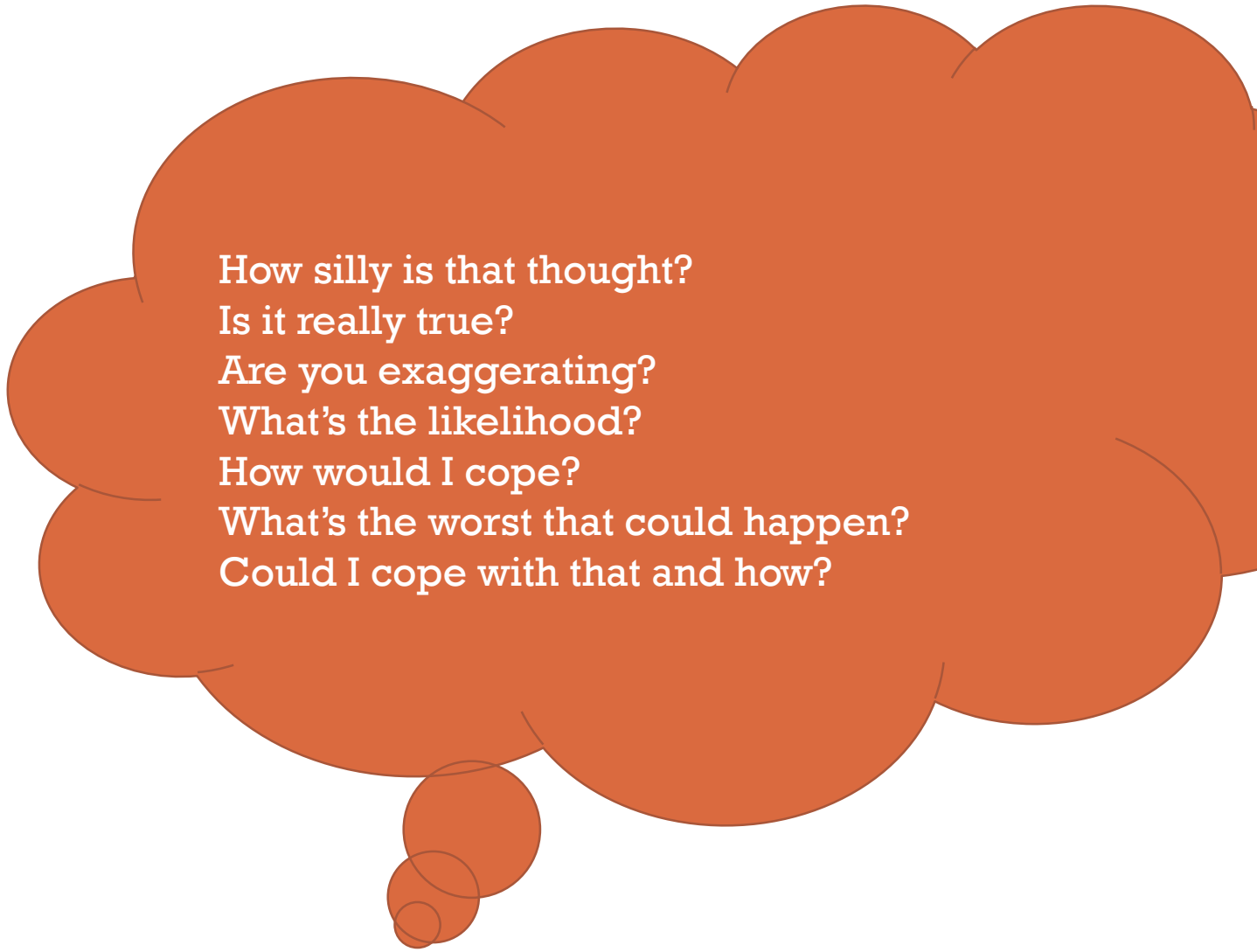
# ADDRESSING THE COGNITIVE

- Fun Friends – Red and Green Thoughts (Barrett)
- Dump the Doubts, Downers and Disasters (or the red thoughts)
- Be “Thought Detectives”





# THOUGHT DETECTIVES



How silly is that thought?  
Is it really true?  
Are you exaggerating?  
What's the likelihood?  
How would I cope?  
What's the worst that could happen?  
Could I cope with that and how?

# REPLACE WITH BELIEVABLE STATEMENTS

NOT “I can’t” to “I can”

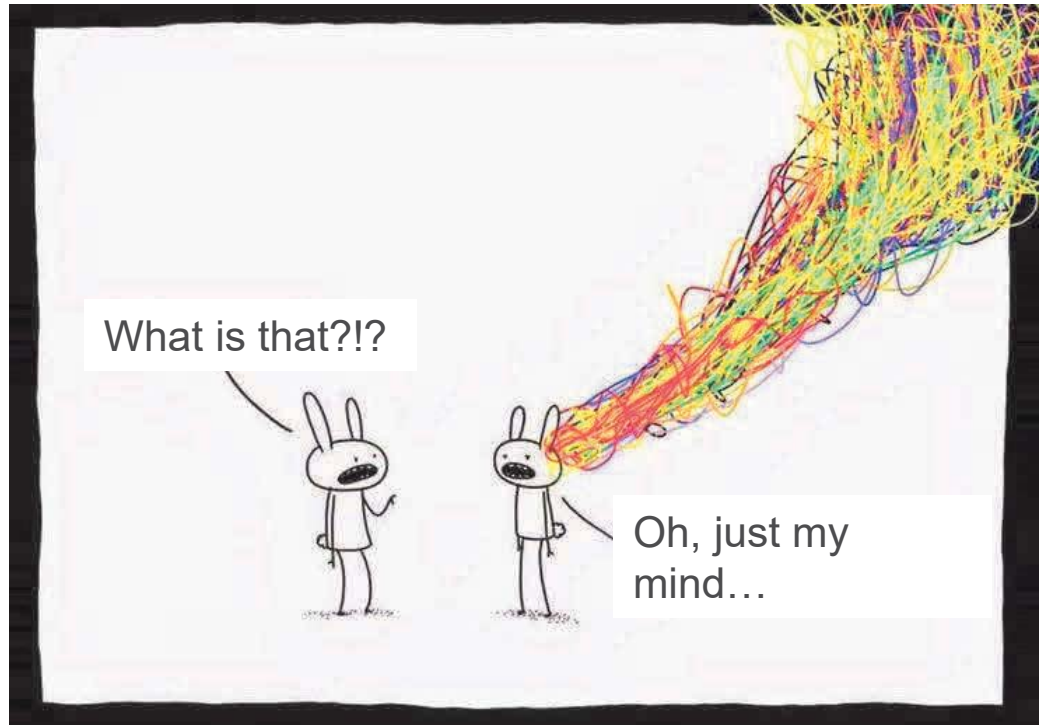
But rather.....

“I can’t” to “I can do this if I work hard, practice and  
ask for help”....

# OTHER COGNITIVE STRATEGIES

- Encouraging themselves
- Be their own best friend – talk nicely to themselves
- Have realistic expectations
- Focus on effort and improvement over time
- Families can make up a helpful thought chart

# WORRY TIME SCHEDULING



# AND SOME MORE....

- Scheduling in some “worry time” – cognitive flexibility
- Healthy distraction- mental games; environmental focus; bridging object (souvenir from a happy time); physical activity – particularly one that also engages the mind.
- Use of gentle humour to laugh at fears

# STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THE BEHAVIOUR

PICK A GOAL THEY MOTIVATES THEM!

TURN A “HAVE TO” INTO A “WANT TO”

## 1. Gradual Exposure

- Rewards for effort and achievement
- Strategies
- Skills/role plays
- Time on step

1

• Make eye contact and smile at child

2

• Play beside other children

3

• Pass toys to other child

4

• Introduce self and say something about self to other child

5

• Ask child about themselves/their name

6

• Invite child to sit with you during lunch

# ADDRESSING THE BEHAVIOURS

- Remain in the situation they fear
- Continually PRACTISE
- Expect setbacks – plan for it
- Build a support team
- **Pay attention to Positive behaviour**
- **Ignore undesirable behaviour**
- **MODEL BEING BRAVE YOURSELF!**



# ADDRESSING THE AFFECTIVE (WILSON & LYON)

Coaching the child without reassuring the worry:

1. Expect the worry;
2. Remain consistent and calm;
3. Acknowledge worry's presence and how uncomfortable feel;
4. Talk back to the worry

# EXPECT THE WORRY

Expect worrying (Don't treat it as a surprise or an emergency)

- Trying something new
- Unsure about plans/what ifs?
- Performance
- Something scary is happening (Wilson, 2013)

**REMAIN CONSISTENT AND CALM**

**Breathe!!!**

# ACKNOWLEDGE WORRY'S PRESENCE - VALIDATE

“Of course you are scared. You’re not sure if you’re going to be able to handle the situation. It’s perfectly natural to have worries. You’re **RIGHT** to be scared.” (Wilson & Lyon)

# TALK TO THE WORRY

- Talk to the worry.
- Give it a name.

“Good old predictable worry.....doesn’t know exactly what’s going to happen at the dentist today so he thinks we should slow down! Let’s tell worry to get into the car and we’ll talk to him on the way to the dentist” or “I can hear how worry makes you doubt yourself. Can you hear it talking to you too?”

# TALK TO THE WORRY (WILSON & LYON)

- Expecting it: “Worry is a part of learning. I’m supposed to feel this way”
- Take care of it: “I’m safe even though I feel scared. I can handle it.”
- Boss it around: “I know you’re there but I’m busy. Knock it off.”

# BRIDGE BACK TO PAST SUCCESSES (WILSON & 2013)

- Worry blocks memories of past successes i.e. worry for a moment and then immediately bridge to my successes and move on.
- “I really want to..... That reminds me of how.....That reminds me of how I can handle”
- We want them to come to two important conclusions: 1) I have experience with this kind of event 2) I think I can handle it.

# **TRICKY PARENT TRAPS** (WILSON & LYON)

These make sense but DON'T work:

- Rescuing, reassuring, overprotecting;
- Providing too much certainty;
- Identifying a child as a worrier because it runs in the family;
- Requiring others to accommodate the anxiety;
- Allowing “misbehaviour” because it’s part of the anxiety;
- Modelling with your own anxious behaviour;
- Pushing too hard or becoming angry/explosive.



# PROMOTING RESILIENCY TIPS (GROSE; WILSON)

- Emotion coaching;
- Problem solve TOGETHER;
- Aim to make yourself REDUNDANT;
- Value your children “as they are”;
- Develop faith and hope for the future;
- Identify and develop strengths
- Help them to realise that the things they do CAN make a difference

# PROMOTING RESILIENCY TIPS

- Daily gratitude journal
- Support network: playdates
- Consistent strategies for behaviour
- Let go of unrealistic expectations
- Don't "rescue" and don't allow them to give in too easily
- Model making mistakes and being OK with it

# PROMOTING RESILIENCY TIPS

- Show your kids how to work through conflict respectfully;
- Become tolerant of their distress and ignore it when appropriate;
- Routines – without rigidity;
- Daily quiet time;
- Slower weeks;
- Good sleep habits

# PROMOTING RESILIENCY TIPS

- Reduce overprotectiveness;
- Model “approach” behaviours;
- Manage your own anxiety;
- Take care of yourself;
- Take care of your relationship;
- Be persistent: Slip ups will happen

## **Problem solving – TOGETHER – Don't solve it for them!**

- Get facts: what is bothering them; listening to others
- Brainstorm ALL possible solutions – there is always more than ONE way to solve a problem!
- Evaluate options (what might happen if?)
- Try out the best solution
- Review how well it's worked – if it didn't work the first time, have another go or try something different.

# WHO TO TURN TO . . . .

## Support Options

- Guidance counsellors
- Community centres
- Mental health professionals – psychologists/social workers
- Family and friends
- Library resources

## Helpful websites

- Kidsmatter/Mindmatter websites
- Dan Siegel "Flip Your Lid" <https://youtu.be/gm9CIJ74Oxw>
- Jeanette Yoffe Hand Model of Brain [https://youtu.be/H\\_dxnYh](https://youtu.be/H_dxnYh)

# REFERENCE LIST

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