

Building Resilience in your Anxious Teen



Dr. G. W. Williams Secondary School

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- Registered Psychotherapist, providing evidenced-based and trauma-informed practice.
- TF-CBT, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy (EMDR), and Structured Intervention Trauma-Child and Adolescent (SIT-CAP).
- Specializes in trauma assessment and treatment, grief and loss, stress and anxiety issues for children, adolescents and adults. Additional areas of expertise include a sub-specialty with first responders and their families, and other professionals who are in the helping profession who may be experiencing PTSD or secondary traumatic stress.

Janice LeBlanc,

R.P., R.C.A.T., B.F.A. Hons, B.Ed., D.T.A.T.I

Registered Psychotherapist and Registered Canadian Art Therapist -
17 years Private practice. Currently part of the team at the Trauma
Centre in Sharon

Masters level training in Art Therapy, EMDR Therapy, CBT, DBT,
Treating Trauma in Children (current study)

Specialization in children, teens, adults with trauma, anxiety,
depression and other mental health issues, family breakdown,
domestic violence and self harm.

Specialty also with individuals with special needs: ASD, LD, ADHD,
MID.

Retired from Department Head of Special Education in YCDSB
February 2017, Visual Arts/Special Education teaching experience for
over 30 years

The Role of the School

Is NOT to provide therapy!

Role of the Guidance Department:

- To provide **academic counselling** – pathways, university and college applications, course selections, etc.
- To provide general information about local non-profit community agencies like Family Services of York Region, Addiction Services, hospitals (ATLAS program), etc.
- To look at referrals to YRDSB programs- Compass or Mental Health Nurse for consultation
- Guidance counsellors are not trained or qualified to do personal Psychotherapy or therapeutic counseling
- The role of CYWs is to work with students around BEHAVIOUR and incidental social-emotional issues, not mental health issues.
- Role of Special Education is to work with students around LEARNING, not mental health issues

Specific Supports

- ATLAS program is run out of Markham-Stouffville Hospital – combines a classroom experience with treatment for depression or anxiety
- ALERT program is a YRDSB program for students with long-term multi-dimensional challenges. Referral to the program is usually done by the School Social Worker and/or a school administrator.
- School Social Worker is in the school once per week – signed parental consent is required for a student to participate.
- Student Success Centre has a CYW who meets with students on a drop-in basis or on a scheduled basis.

Role of the School: Accommodations

- Accommodation by school may be considered in part with input from child's medical doctor/therapist
- Does not guarantee this will happen- joint discussion around what is best for the teen
- Must be weaned off accommodations or anxiety will become worse!
- Weaning off accommodations builds resilience- teen learns they can handle the discomfort and adversity

Specific Accommodations

- Accommodations available (where appropriate for the student): extra time for tests and assignments; chunking of assignments; preferential seating; etc
- Other accommodations that CAN be given (where appropriate): work with preferred classmates when doing group work or even doing very limited group work; doing some presentations in front of only the teacher outside of class time; advance notice when the student will be asked a question; lots of advance notice of tests; etc.
- An accommodation that CANNOT be given: Not doing (Grade 12) exams/final summatives

Resilience

Resilience is the ability to “**shake off**” negative events, “**bounce back**” after major, even minor disappointments, to “**find a way**” to survive, to smile, play, and continue to “**do okay**” during times in life when things feel as if they will never get better or change.

Resilience

Children who are not given the opportunity to fail:

- Fail to see choices
- Fear change
- Limit self as to what is possible
- Do poorly when faced with a crisis
- Taught to fear failure – makes for a no-win situation (feel powerless)

Resilience. Ask yourself:

What are you doing for your teen that they could be doing for themselves?

Are you advocating for your child or are you rescuing your child?

Are you allowing your child to fail in order to build resilience?
How can you promote problem solving?

Are you allowing your child and yourself to feel uncomfortable in the process? A little discomfort is not a negative thing. It promotes change.

(Lyons, 2015)

Skills to manage anxiety

Not all strategies will work for all and some may not work all the time. Important to try different strategies.

Must target 3 areas:

- 1. Physiological : those uncomfortable bodily reactions
- 2. Cognitive : those worried thoughts
- 3. Principles (beliefs)

1. Physiological Strategies

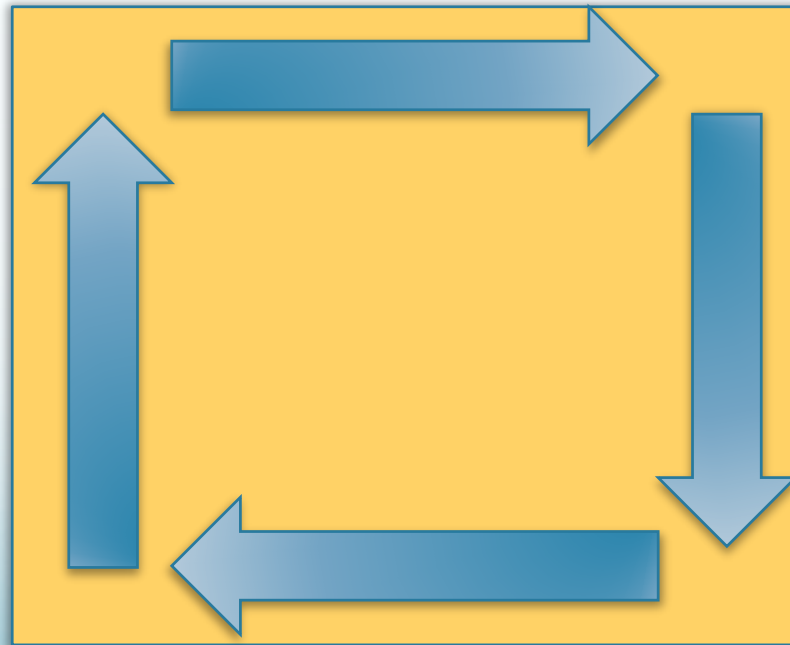
Lifestyle can contribute:

- Diet and nutrition- a drop in blood sugar can mimic anxious feelings in the body!
- Sleep*****
- Exercise
- Hormonal changes
- Sugar, caffeine

Breathing

- 4 square breathing- picturing a square, breathe in to the count of 4, hold for a count of 4, breathe out to a count of 4 and hold to a count of 4.
- The **HOLDING** between breaths is very important for calming

Timing important



Relaxation

- PMR – Progressive Muscle Relaxation



Temperature Change

- A temperature change will change what the brain is thinking about and help shift gears in order to halt the anxious thoughts and reactivate the cerebral lobe and get the rational brain back online.
- Example: stand outside in the cold air, hold onto ice or something frozen

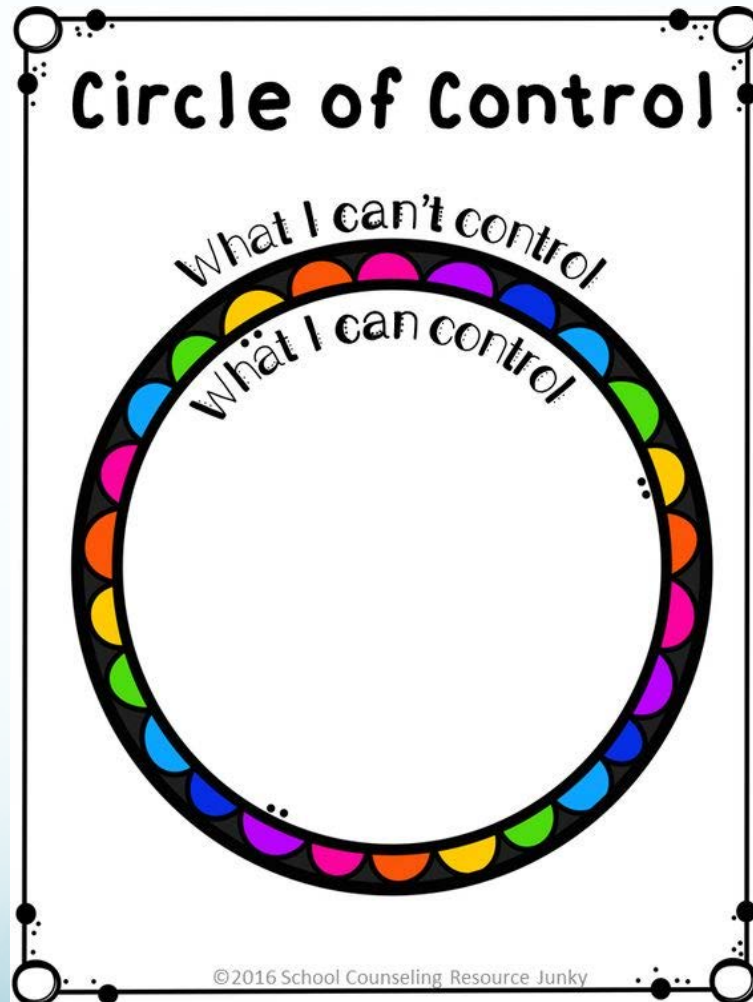
2. Cognitive strategies

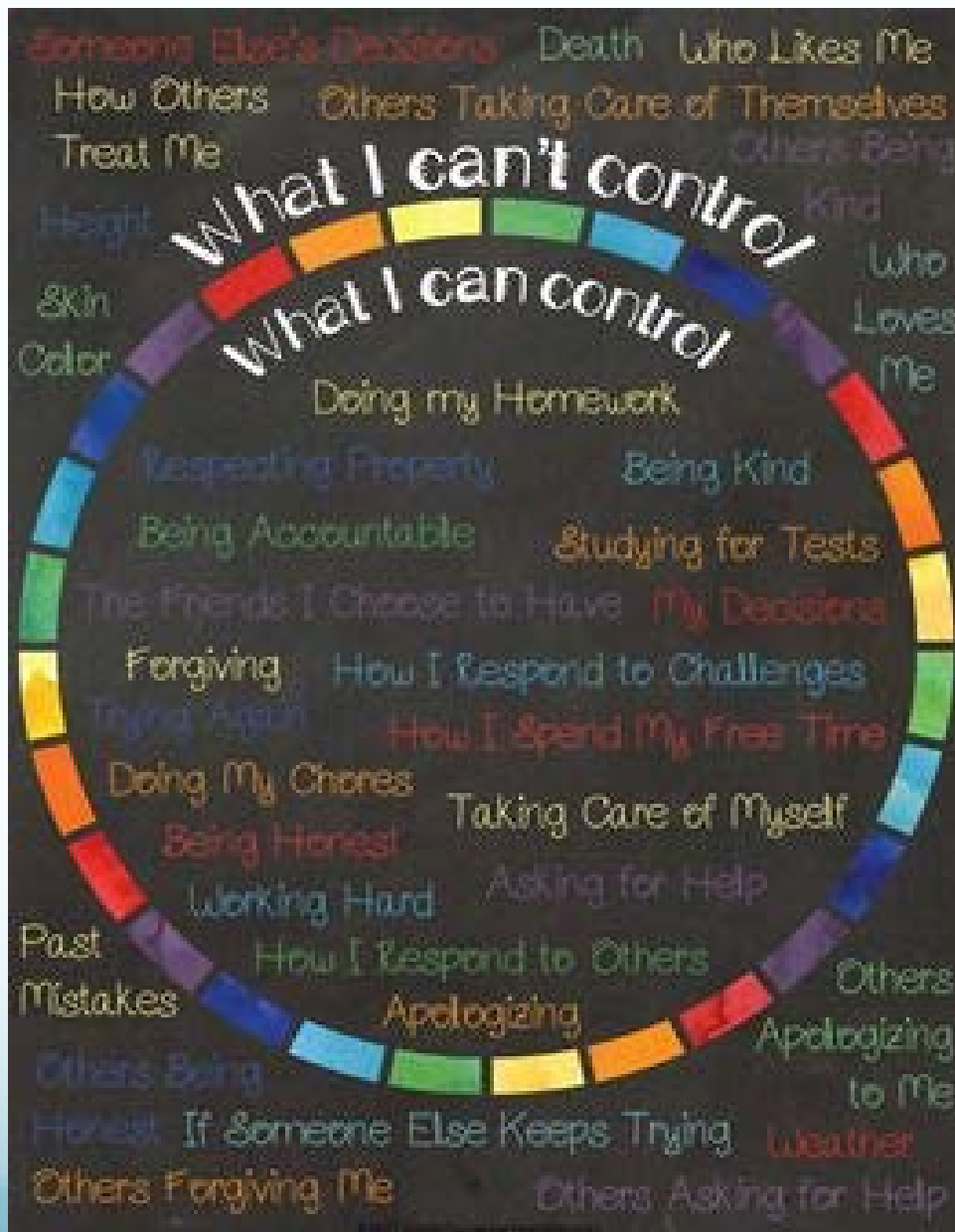
Self Talk: key component in managing anxiety

- Boss it around: “You’re not helping; I will get back to you; Knock it off, you’re just trying to scare me...”
- Take care of it: “I’m safe even though I feel scared; I’m going to feel nervous but then it will be over...”

Locus of Control

Anxious symptoms can emerge when we feel like we have no control over our environment or when we feel a disconnect between what is in our control and what is not.





Example of what a teen can control and what a teen cannot control

Helpful Phrases to Say to an Anxious teen

Many listed in parent resource package

2 of our favourites:

- “Let's find some evidence.”- often anxiety is based on perception. Evidence is important to reduce inaccurate perceptions and jumping to conclusions
- “Which calming strategy do you want to use right now?”- have ten + ready and choose one from list- come up with strategies ahead of time when teen is calm

Unhelpful (but well intended) Phrases when a Teen is Anxious

- “Stop stressing”
- “Just do it”
- “Calm down”
- “It’s not a big deal”
- “It’s all in your head”
- “Be positive”
- “What do you have to be anxious about?”
- “Other people are suffering from much worse” etc

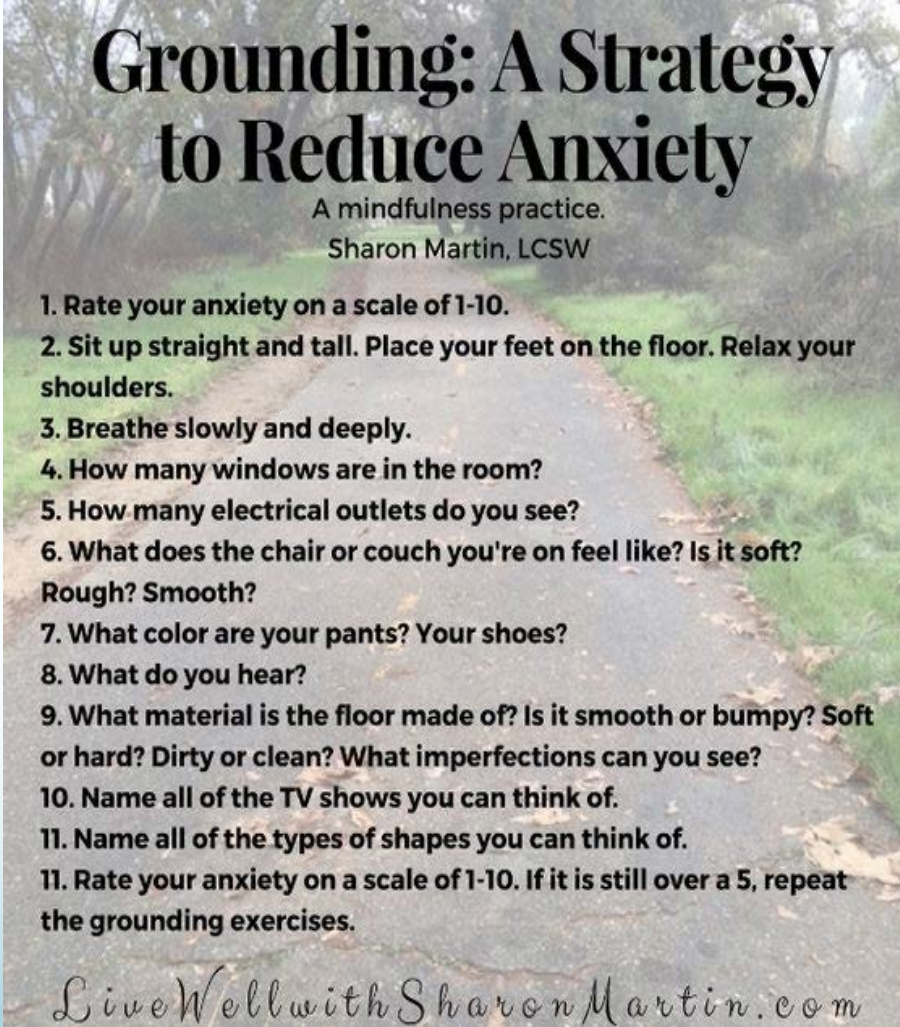
Mindfulness

Maintaining moment to moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, surrounding environment – **without judgment**

Thoughts tune into what is going on in the present, **rather than rehashing the past or rehearsing the future**

Example – colouring books available everywhere currently

Grounding Exercises



**Grounding: A Strategy
to Reduce Anxiety**

A mindfulness practice.
Sharon Martin, LCSW

1. Rate your anxiety on a scale of 1-10.
2. Sit up straight and tall. Place your feet on the floor. Relax your shoulders.
3. Breathe slowly and deeply.
4. How many windows are in the room?
5. How many electrical outlets do you see?
6. What does the chair or couch you're on feel like? Is it soft? Rough? Smooth?
7. What color are your pants? Your shoes?
8. What do you hear?
9. What material is the floor made of? Is it smooth or bumpy? Soft or hard? Dirty or clean? What imperfections can you see?
10. Name all of the TV shows you can think of.
11. Name all of the types of shapes you can think of.
11. Rate your anxiety on a scale of 1-10. If it is still over a 5, repeat the grounding exercises.

LiveWellwithSharonMartin.com

Mind- calming APPS

Given most teens love technology ie their phones, APPs are a useful tool for calming and breathing

- All can be downloaded from the App Store and most are free:
- Calm: Guided meditations, breathing exercises
- Headspace: Meditations
- Hellomind: hypnosis based to address stress, sleep issues
- Aura: Mindfulness
- Relax-Lite: Stress reduction

APPS continued

- Practice for Stress: Meditation
- Breathe2relax: breathing and meditation
- Stress Check: Rate stress level, surveys, then make changes
- Buddhify: Mindfulness and meditation
- Insight Timer: 100s of guided meditations, music, lectures etc.

3. Beliefs

- Major contributor in working with anxiety is identifying the belief systems underlying the anxious thoughts. This is where a professional can be most helpful
- Conflicting belief system: Example: Parent belief system – vs child belief system:
- Example: The meaning for the parent to have child in a special academic program may be different than the teen's meaning and may cause unrealistic expectations and anxiety in the teen

Role of Medication

- Sometimes the strategies are not effective alone
- Reduce the symptom load enough to let the strategies work
- Research indicates therapy and medication are most effective in treating anxiety disorders
- Up to your doctor to determine and assess
- May include natural remedies- Naturopath/Homeopath to advise
- Should not necessarily be ruled out!

Role of Psychotherapy

- To assess and help identify the belief structures underlying anxious thoughts and behaviours
- Provide tools to manage the anxious symptoms
- Possibly work with the school if accommodation is necessary
- Provide neutral supportive environment for child to express themselves
- Allows the parent to be the parent and not the therapist!

Helpful Resources

Websites:

- <https://www.anxietybc.com/parents>
- <http://www.worrywisekids.org/node/49>
- http://www.camh.ca/en/hospital/care_program_and_services/child_youth_and_family_program/Pages/guide_moodanxiety_cyfservice.aspx
- http://www.camh.ca/en/hospital/about_camh/newsroom/understanding/Pages/mentalillness.aspx
- [www. Gozen.com](http://www.Gozen.com)- full list (72) of calming strategies

Books

- **Helping your Anxious Child: A Step-by-Step Guide for Parents:** Ronald Rapee, Ann Wignall, Susan Spence, 2000
- **Anxious Kids: Anxious Parents,** Lyn Lyons, 2013
- **Everything Parent's guide to Overcoming Childhood Anxiety,** Sherianna Boyle, 2014
- **A Boy and A Bear. The Children's Relaxation Book** by Lori Lite & Meg Hartigan

Books continued

- **Relationship Skills 101 for Teens. Your Guide to dealing with daily drama, stress and difficult emotions using DBT** by Sheri Van Dijk, MSW
- **Don't Let Your Emotions Run Your Life For Teens. Dialectical Behaviour Therapy Skills for helping you manage mood swings, control angry outbursts and get along.** By Sheri Van Dijk
- **What To Do When You Worry To Much: A Kids Gide to Overcoming Anxiety** by Dawn Huebner (author) & Bonnie Matthews (illustrator)
- **Up and Down The Worry Hill: A Children's Book About Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and it's Treatment** by Aureen Pinto Wagner, PhD.

- “Failure is the key to success; each mistake teaches us something.”

Our Contact Information

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