



LESSON # 4 – THIS IS ANXIETY

MATERIALS:

- Projector or smart board to display PowerPoint

**** Background information on the following lessons and other mental health information can be found here:

<https://mhlcurriculum.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/final-teacher-knowledge-update.pdf>

1. BREATHING EXERCISES

- begin lesson by completing the two strategies that were introduced last class (starfish breathing & box breathing)
 - Ask students if they prefer one strategy over the other
 - Do you notice a difference in how they are feeling during/after the breathing?
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2. POWER POINT

- Signs and Symptoms
 - Signs – the things that others see
 - Examples: friends not wanting to do the things they used to do, distracted, crying, angry, irritable, etc.
 - Symptoms – things the person feels themselves



- Examples: tired all the time, feeling hopeless, feeling angry or irritable, not wanting to be around others, etc.
- Walk through the slide on everyday stress vs clinical anxiety – try to use examples (there is an example provided below)

Everyday Stress

- a) Specific to a situation or problem
Example – you have an upcoming exam
- b) Usually goes away once the problem or situation passes or is resolved
Example – after you write your exam the stress decreases or goes away completely
- c) Seems adequate or acceptable to the situation/problem
Example – you want to do well in school
- d) Is a realistic response that is warranted based on the problem/situation
Example - many students become stressed before an exam

Clinical Anxiety

- a) Fear/anxiety comes up without a specific trigger
Example – walking into school and fear of school overcomes you without any upcoming exams or assignments
 - b) Anxiety/fear lasts for a long time even when the situation has been resolved
Example – for weeks after the exam you continue to worry about what you wrote on the exam (how you should have answered things differently)
 - c) Feeling of anxiousness is exacerbated relative to what is expected – it is not realistic and leans towards catastrophizing (worst case scenario)
Example – you think you are going to fail this exam and will never be able to do anything with your life
 - d) Leads to avoidance of situations/people/things that may trigger the anxiety
Example – you skip school the day of the exam
 - e) Inability to control/manage the anxiety
Example – you cannot stop thinking of the exam from the time you find out about it until you get the exam back after it has been graded
- Stress and illness – The brain has 6 domains of functioning (things that it is charge of). Mental illness occurs when there is a disturbance in one of the domains of functioning. Anxiety disorders happen when there is a disturbance in the signaling domain.
 - Signaling – dates to prehistoric times and keeps us safe from physical dangers – fight, flight or freeze
 - Anxiety happens when your body activates as if there is a physical danger and prepares the body for flight or fight and yet there is no danger present
 - Dealing with Anxiety disorders
 - There is a prescription for anxiety – $RX = n + 1$
 - Rx = the want to get better
 - N = the problem
 - $+1$ = add one more thing to the problem

*** **you must not avoid** – in fact you must face the problem head on and add more to it. Example: For a student that has school related anxiety, not only must they go to school, but they must add one more thing to it – go to class (even if they can only stay for 5-10 minutes). You keep adding on to the time they are expected to stay in class until they can stay for the full class

*** Same thing with an exam – it is important to stay and complete the exam – if they leave the exam, the brain registers that this was a good idea to leave the exam as it kept them physically safe, but the next time they go to write an exam they will have even more anxiety because the brain will remember that they stayed safe last time when they left the exam.

3. LIFE PROMOTION TOOLKIT

- Allow time to continue working on the self-care toolkit

