Treating Children, Adolescents, and Teens With Anxiety and Depression

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Why Is This Happening

- Neurobiological
- Talking to the child about anxiety
  - Being afraid isn’t the same thing as being in danger
- Explanation of the brain
  - Adolescents, teens and parents
- Caretakers’ role in anxiety
  - Parents, grandparents, babysitters, teachers
Error Detection System

- Serotonin
  - mood
  - sleep
  - appetite

Do Something to Feel Better: Avoid, Seek Reassurance, Ask lot of questions, etc.

Feel YUCKY!
Talking to the child

- **Explanations for young children:**
  - worry bully, tomato plants, annoying bug
  - Use toys/puppets to role play talking back with facts not fears.

- **Explanation for older kids/teens:**
  - alarm system sending out a false alarm
  - Use facts to turn down the volume of fear
  - Make smarter decisions about the situation
Evidenced Based Treatment

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy with a twist!

- Cognitive
  - embrace suffering
  - stay in the grey
  - choose not to know

- Exposure and Response Prevention
  - start easy
  - work towards more difficult tasks
  - chase after the fear
Other Effective Treatments

- Mindfulness
  - acceptance vs. resistance
- Somatic Management
  - breathing, muscle relaxation
- Exercise
- Family Therapy
  - involve the parents
- Medication-SSRI
Parental Behavior and Anxiety

- Overprotection
- Over control
- Modeling and reinforcing of avoidance
- Rescue from negative outcomes
- Inconsistent rewards/consequences
Involving Parents

What is not helpful

- Solving the problem for the child
- Sharing your anxiety/worry with the child
- Controlling the situation for the child
- Rescuing the child from potential suffering
Involving the Parents

- What is helpful
  - Constructive feedback
  - Skill building
  - Sharing stories about doing things even though they feel bad
  - Being courageous yourself
  - Celebrating success
Coaching Through an Exposure

- Do not reassure an anxious child
  - Validate their discomfort
  - Tolerance of discomfort
  - Skill development
- Be a cheerleader
  - Anxiety tolerance
  - Anxiety decreases with exposure
- Challenge child to feel worse
  - Look at a spider then touch the spider
Coaching Through An Exposure

• Change the emotion
  Anger, frustration, resistance give anxiety power
  Laughter deflates it!

• Rate anxiety level from 1-10
  10 = panic attack, 1 = calm
  Stay with feeling until anxiety decreases 50%
  Challenge child feel worse and tolerate it some

• Reward hard work!
  Immediate and connected to goal behavior
  Affects outcome
Questions?