




Breathing Session For Caregivers & Parents: In Times of Uncertainty

Presented By: Dr. Wanda Polzin, MA, RSW, EdD

Presented For: TSAG

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warriors



Little Warriors is a national, charitable organization focused on the awareness, prevention and treatment of child sexual abuse.

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warriors



Prevent It!
A little warriors program

Little Warriors/Be Brave Ranch Programs

Prevent It! Workshop



Awareness



Education



Advocacy

Specialized Treatment Centre

Children ages 8-12, Girls ages 13-16



Intensive
Treatment



Caregiver and
Therapeutic
Supports



Community
Liaisons



What We Will Cover Today

- Why Is There Increased Fear, Worry and Anxiety Right Now (other than the obvious!)
 - What is Happening?
 - Perceptions versus Reality
 - How is COVID-19 impacting our minds, bodies, spirits?
- Discuss 6 Key Tips to Manage Anxiety and Present Uncertainty So That We May Begin Breathing Again
- Importance of Self Care and Specific Strategies that can be “built in” daily in response to the current situation
- How to Best Support Each Other and our Children
- Further Resources For You and Others



WHAT IS HAPPENING AS A RESULT OF COVID-19

DIFFERENT REACTIONS FOR EACH OF US

- The current coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is a particular and **rare situation**. Such significant life changes impacts people physically, but also psychologically. In this pandemic context, many people experience stress, anxiety and depression reactions at their own individual degree and intensity.
- Because we lack control in this situation, for some people, it can trigger a (previous) trauma response.
- **Stress** is a normal physiological response to an abnormal situation. It helps us adapt to negative events that we experience.
- Contrary to **fear** (a response to a well-defined and very real threat), **anxiety is a response to a vague or unknown threat**. Anxiety develops when we believe that a dangerous or unfortunate event may take place and we are expecting it.



STRESS RESPONSE CONTINUUM



- **A we move toward Traumatic Stress, our Sympathetic Nervous System fails to habituate, resulting in a “revving” of our system...creating a dysregulated (or overly activated) system**
- **This can even continue to happen while we are sleeping**
- **We need a way to put the “brakes” on...**



WHAT CAN ANXIETY 'LOOK' LIKE

SYMPTOMS DIFFER FROM PERSON TO PERSON

Physical symptoms

- Headaches, neck tension, gastrointestinal problems, etc.
- Sleep problems
- Lower appetite
- Lower energy, fatigue
- Others...

Psychological and emotional symptoms

- Virus-related overthinking, worries and insecurity
- Feelings of being overwhelmed and powerlessness
- Self-verbalization that does not always reflect reality
- Negative vision of things or daily events; catastrophizing
- Feelings of discouragement, insecurity, sadness, anger, etc.

Behavioural symptoms

- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability, aggression, easily frustrated
- Crying/sadness
- Withdrawal, over-sleeping, etc.
- Increased use of alcohol, drugs and/or medication



Perspective Is Everything...

Quote from Dr. Wayne Dyer:

**LOVING PEOPLE
LIVE IN A LOVING
WORLD. HOSTILE
PEOPLE LIVE IN A
HOSTILE WORLD.
SAME WORLD.**

- WAYNE DYER

QuotePixel.com



TIPS TO DEAL WITH PRESENT ANXIETY, FEARS & STRESS:

#1: REMAIN CALM, “GROUNDED” & MINDFUL

(be present instead of having your mind FULL!)

- Before you focus on anyone else, deal with your own worry, fears, and anxiety (you can't help others if you are sinking)
- Learn and use coping skills to calm yourself; build a “toolbox” with various strategies (often we need various tools for different situations)
- Recognize that children, teens, and others around us are more likely to follow our leads...if we are able to manage and be resilient, likely so will they!
- Watch your thoughts and feelings related to the news...it's coming from all directions right now!



TIPS

#2: KEEP TALKING

- Let others know you are open to talk, but also make sure that COVID-19 is not the only thing you are talking (and thinking) about
- Remember that “stuffing” feelings can increase fears and worries
- Do not minimize your (or others’) concerns about the present circumstance; it’s OK to be feeling a bit weary right now
- Acknowledge that we do not have answers to everything...trying to control things we do not have control of often increases our feelings of despair and hopelessness
- Normalize feelings of stress
- Discuss new “rules” that need to happen at home, school, in the community



TIPS

#3: HAVE A PROACTIVE AND POSITIVE PLAN (& FOLLOW IT!)

- Be consistent with expectations and try to stay with a daily plan re: social distancing without giving mixed messages
- Focus on what IS being done to be safe
- Review and model proper safety (i.e., hygiene, handwashing, etc.)
- Avoid stereotypes and blame of people
- Encourage a positive outlook..."...we are all in this together...we'll all get through this together..."
- Stick to routines but also be flexible; keep as much predictability as possible (i.e., mealtimes, bedtimes, etc.)
- Balance school/work and "fun" activities



TIPS

#4: BUILD IN POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH

- Choose to Unplug
- Take breaks if working from home
- Create (physical and emotional) boundaries for self and others
- Connect virtually with others
- Be mindful and present...pay attention to how and what you are thinking about
- Recognize where your control ACTUALLY is
- Get out in nature if possible
- Exercise, Eat Healthy, and Get Enough (good quality) sleep
- Be mindful of attempts to 'self-medicate' (food/gaming/sex...)



TIPS

#5: FOCUS ON WHAT YOU CAN DO (& WHAT YOU CAN THINK)

- Appreciations instead of expectations
- Support others who may be in need instead of focusing on self only (i.e., donate to food banks, clothing needs in shelters, etc.). Giving can be healing.
- If you are not able to slow down because you are a medical professional, first responder, because of finances, or for any other reason, reach out and ASK FOR WHAT YOU NEED...receiving help can be a corrective one if you have a history of repeatedly not having your needs met (or if you have a trauma history that has been activated). Watch language and thoughts (“This feels like I am in jail”; “We can’t do anything anymore”; This will NEVER stop” ...)
- Be Kind To Others...COVID is not the only thing that is ‘contagious’!
- Start something that you never had time for previously (but also give yourself grace if you feel like you’re not DOING enough)



TIPS

#6: PRACTICE GRATITUDE

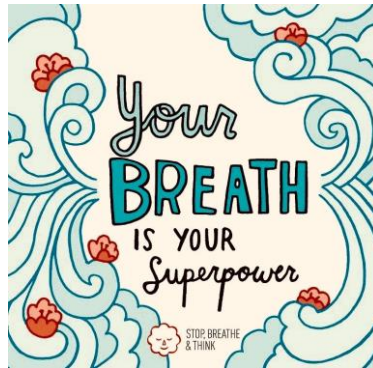
- Allow this time to be a time to reflect on what is actually important to you...health and family?
- Notice that while this pandemic is definitely creating stress and anxiety, many people have been coming together and looking out for each other like never before.
- While we are having to be ultra aware and vigilant about hygiene, keeping surfaces clean, rationing household items, etc., it's a good time to reflect on the things that ARE working and ALL THAT WE ARE GRATEFUL for.



SELF CARE STRATEGIES: Let's Begin By Breathing

YES...IT CAN ACTUALLY BEGIN WITH YOUR BREATH!...MAYBE JUST 6 Ft AWAY RIGHT NOW!

Deep, mindful breathing helps calm the body and mind. Breathing is one way to activate our vagus nerve and parasympathetic nervous system, which acts like a “brake” for slowing down anxiety.



SOME PRACTICAL STRATEGIES (try them as you learn/review them):

- **Box Breathing (also referred to as Navy Seal Method Breathing)**
- **Finger Breathing**
- **Alternate nostril breathing**
- **Breathing in Healing Light Technique**
- **Breathing/Anxiety Apps (visual and auditorily supported)**



Breathing Technique Example

Oxytocin Breath

Breathe into your belly...on the exhale make a 'pleasure' sound while saying
HAhhhhhhhhhhh

This stimulates the Vagus Nerve, raises your vibration, shifts you out of fight & flight and produces the love hormone -
Oxytocin



OTHER STRATEGIES TO MANAGE ANXIETY:

Let's Look At A Few Ways to Deal With Anxiety

- Use (healthy) distractions (i.e., singing/humming, playing/listening to music, gargling, doodling, cooking, etc.) *remember the vagus nerve needs to be stimulated!
- CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy)
- Progressive Relaxation
- Somatic/Body Awareness Exercises
- Journaling
- Smudging/Meditation/Prayer...
- Others....



Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Techniques

*“Wise Mind” (Emotional AND Logical)

Countering Anxiety

Come up with a rational counterstatement for each of the following thoughts:

Anxiety-Producing Thought	Rational Counterstatement
I can't go to the mall with my hair like this—everyone will notice me.	Example: My hair looks a little messy, but everyone will be too occupied with other things to notice. Even if they do notice, I doubt they would care.
I know I won't be able to finish my work on time.	
I can't face my boss. She's going to yell at me.	

Next, think of three examples of anxiety-producing thoughts and rational counterstatements from your own life:

Anxiety-Producing Thought	Rational Counterstatement



USE CREATIVITY TO 'SPARK' JOY FOR YOURSELF (AND OTHERS)

Spread a little happiness with
SUNSHINE STONES

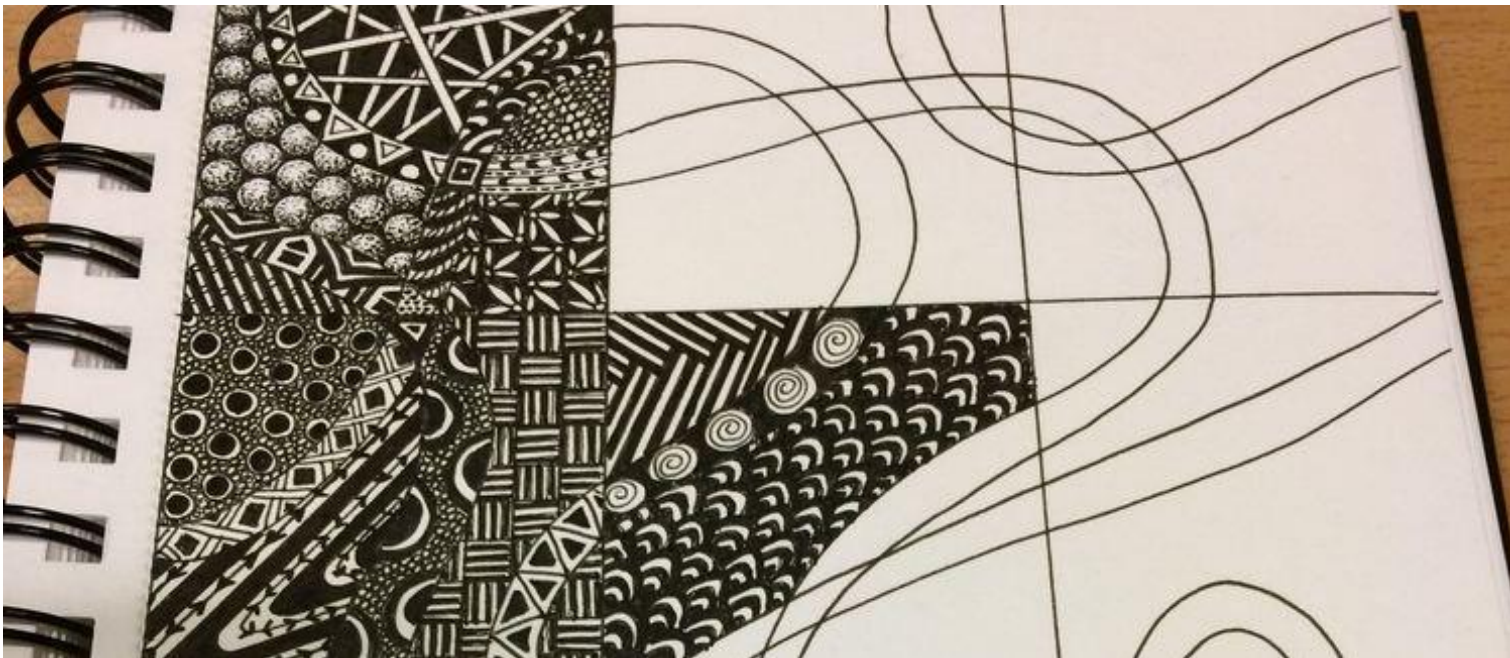


Collect some pebbles and decorate with
acrylic paints, pens, or collage.
Add a positive word or affirmation.



Art and Doodling:

- Unconscious/unfocussed drawing...healthy 'escape' but is self-soothing and satisfying
- Self-regulating experience



OTHER THOUGHTS & RESOURCES

- Know when to get professional help
- Various Support in Place across Canada (here are a few...)
 - www.albertahealthservices.ca
 - <https://heretohelp.bc.ca>
 - <https://cmha.ca>
 - <https://camh.ca>
 - Resource Hub: Mental Health and Wellness
 - <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca>
 - PAA; ACSW; etc. (many have free online sessions)
 - Anxiety Canada: <https://www.anxietycanada.com> (free downloadable resources)
- COVID-19 Resources/Crisis Canada: <https://www.crisisservicecanada.ca>
- Help Line Canada: 1-855-242-3310

