

A young girl with long brown hair is shown from the chest up, hugging a large white teddy bear. She has her eyes closed and a gentle smile, suggesting a sense of comfort and security. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

Childhood Anxiety

Misty Solt, PhD, LPC-S, RPT-S, NCC
Associate Clinical Professor, SMU
Counseling Department

Causes of Anxiety

- ▶ **Genetics**
- ▶ **Temperament**
- ▶ **Family Influence**
- ▶ **Environmental Factors**

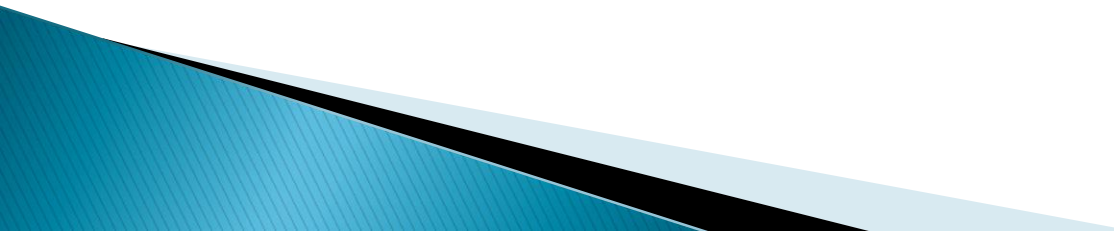
(Chansky, 2004)



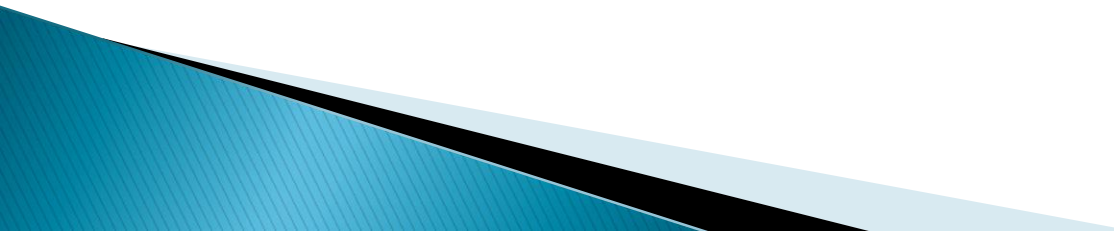
Nature of Anxiety

- ▶ Fear is essential for Survival...
- ▶ “Fear is the response that occurs in the interim between confronting a new situation and actually mastering it (Chansky, P. 19)
- ▶ “Anxiety is the tense emotional state that occurs when you can’t predict the outcome of a situation or guarantee that it will be the desired one”. (P. 19).
- ▶ (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ihzrVnZAz8>)

Nature of Anxiety

- ▶ Brain and body doing what it thinks it is supposed to do.
 - ▶ The default System
 - ▶ Expression of anxious wiring
 - ▶ Anxious person feels and knows he/she is different.
- 

Characteristics of Anxious Thinking...

- ▶ Distorted
 - ▶ Exaggerated
 - ▶ Unreliable
 - ▶ Catastrophizes
 - ▶ Ultimatum– based (all or nothing re: risk)
 - ▶ Futuristic
 - ▶ Easy to Credit/prove
 - ▶ Seems Real
 - ▶ Feels Overwhelming
- 

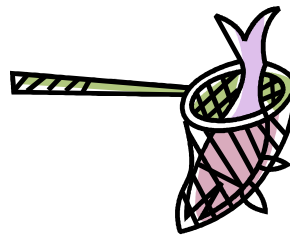
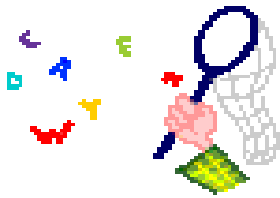
Anxious Reaction

Exaggerated Threat + Minimization of Coping abilities = Anxious Responding

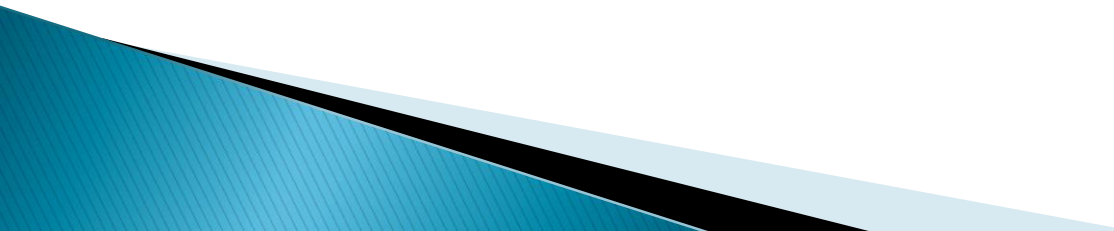
= Must Understand and Know this Thinking Glitch!

Anxiety #1 Concept: Understanding the Processing

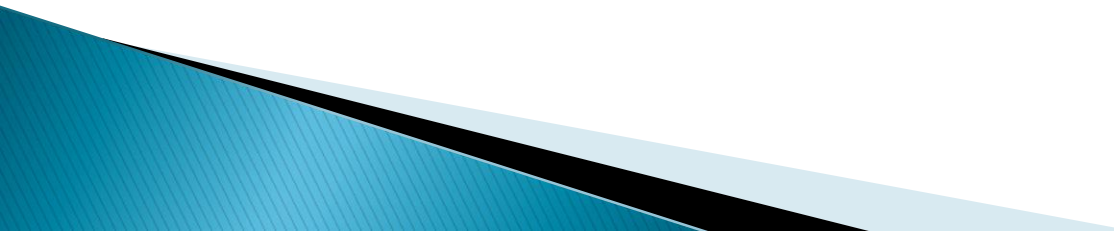
- ▶ Brain processing
 - ▶ Non-anxious Brain (process worry)
 - ▶ Anxious Brain (worries get stuck)
- (Non Anxious) Anxious



Anxiety #2 Concept: Approach vs. Avoid

- ▶ Anxiety is strengthened when you avoid or retreat.
 - ▶ Observation, Modeling, Engagement, and Experimentation are key!
 - ▶ Graduated Exposure and Systematic Desensitization
 - ▶ “GUTI” (by Dr. Chansky, 2004): “Got used to it”.
- 

Anxiety #3 Rerouting Concept

- ▶ “Survival of the busiest” (Schwartz and Begley)
 - ▶ Strengthening healthy circuits
 - ▶ Challenge worry thinking: Rerouting
- 

Goal:

- ▶ Help anxious individuals by building in a second reaction to worry by:
 - ▶ A) Externalizing
 - ▶ B) processing
 - ▶ C) Resolving

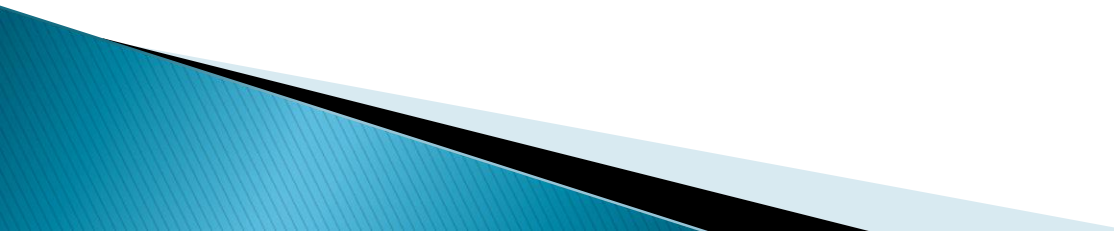
<http://www.kidsinthehouse.com/expert/parenting-advice-from-daniel-siegel-md#page=/video/helping-children-overcome-bad-experiences>

The Main Areas of Relief

- ▶ Externalization of Anxiety (identify; label; and personify).
- ▶ Immobilize Forces (predictability)
- ▶ Build Confidence (by Mastery)
- ▶ Learning to Relax

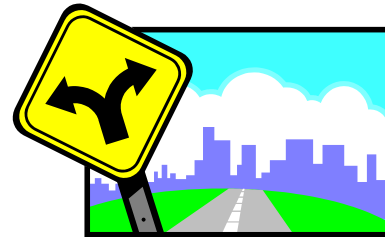


Target Interventions / Areas

- #1. Identify Automatic Messages
 - #2. Embrace Power of Worry Thinking
 - #3. Assess the Probability
 - #4. Thought Likelihood Fusion
 - #5. Focus in the Here-and-Now
- 

Identify the Automatic Messages

- ▶ “Self Talk”
- ▶ Important to challenge at the onset of worry thinking.
- ▶ Fork in the Road
- ▶ Takes a lot of practice!
- ▶ Worry Glasses



Embrace the Power of Worry Thinking

- ▶ What we think often dictates how we feel and behave.
- ▶ Often times wired deeply
- ▶ Power of Suggestion!!!
- ▶ Thinking, Feeling, Doing Triangle



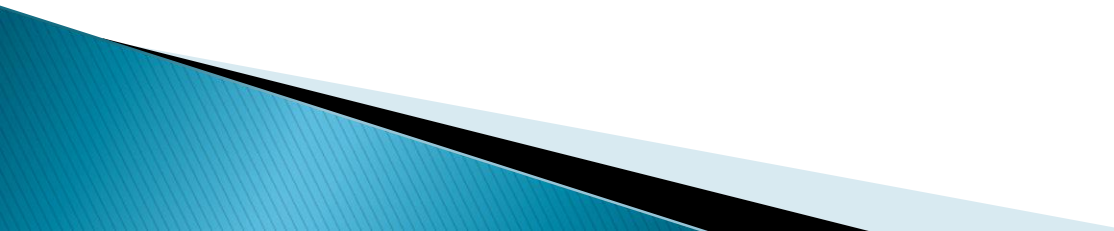
Thought Likelihood Fusion

“An event will happen because I thought about it”

–Increase of emotions is NOT correlated to likelihood of it happening!

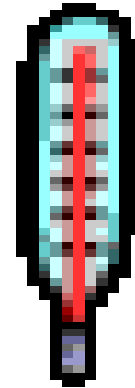


Focus on the Here-and-Now

- ▶ Definition of Anxiety
 - ▶ Something bad could happen tomorrow but it is not happening right now!
 - ▶ Set a limit on self (thought-stopping)
- 

Anxiety Gaging

- ▶ Thermometer
- ▶ Anxiety Barometer
- ▶ Worry Cup

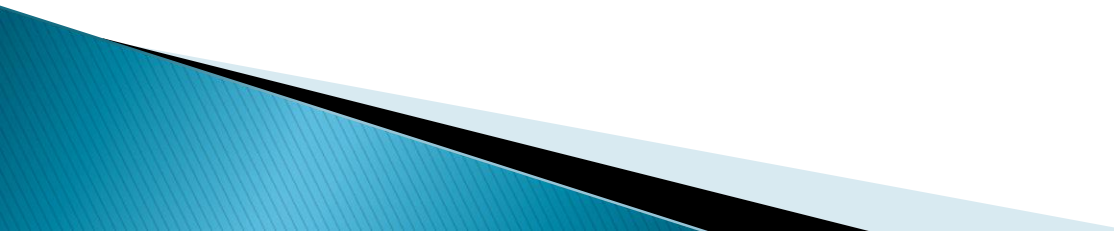


Relaxation

- ▶ Reciprocal Inhibition Principle
- ▶ Relaxation Scripts (opposing tension)
- ▶ Sensory Activities
- ▶ Practice: “What we must learn to do, we learn by doing” (Aristotle)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqPxSLRtKAw>

Small Interventions

- ▶ Unstructured Play
 - ▶ Structured Doll Play
 - ▶ Thought Stoppers
 - ▶ Worry Box
 - ▶ Transitional Object
 - ▶ Worry Journal
- 

Successful Ongoing Interventions

- ▶ Techniques
 - ▶ Therapy
 - ▶ Psychotropic Intervention
 - ▶ Neurofeedback Therapy
- 