

**LOCS PARENT
UNIVERSITY
2024**

Helping Your Child Through Feelings of Anxiety

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EDUCATION

Cornerstone University, *Psychology and Family Studies*

Oakland University, *Master of Arts in Counseling*

Starr Common Wealth, *Trauma and Resilience Practitioner Certification*

WORK EXPERIENCE

Macomb County Care House, *Clinical Intern*

Lapeer Child Advocacy Center, *Clinical Coordinator/Therapist*

Yearego Professional Counseling, *Owner/Therapist*

TODAY'S DISCUSSION

- Defining Anxiety
- Physiology of Stress and Anxiety
- Signs and Symptom of Anxiety
- Ways Parents Can Help
- Coping Skills
- Additional Tools/Resources

TOPICS TO
COVER





WHAT IS STRESS VS ANXIETY?

UNDERSTANDING STRESS

- Stress can be defined as a state of worry or mental tension caused by a difficult situation (World Health Organization, 2023).
- Stress is a generic system used to mobilize other systems in the brain and body to respond





Brain Stem

Automatic Body Functions

- breathing
- temperature
- heart rate

UNDERSTANDING WORRY

- Worry is an attempt to problem solve an issue whose outcome is uncertain.
- The worry system plans, thinks and uses words





Frontal Lobe

Executive functions

- speaking
- reasoning
- problem solving
- critical thinking

UNDERSTANDING ANXIETY

- “Anxiety is an emotion characterized by apprehension and somatic symptoms of tension in which an individual anticipates impending danger, catastrophe, or misfortune”(American Psychological Association, 2024)
- Anxiety is the intersection of our body’s psychological response (worry) and physiological response (stress)





Limbic System

Emotion/Memory

- memories
- behavior
- emotion

ANXIOUS FEELINGS

VS.

ANXIETY DISORDER

GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER (GAD)

1. Excessive anxiety and worry (apprehensive expectation), occurring more days than not for at least 6 months, about a number of events or activities (such as work or school performance).
2. The individual finds it difficult to control the worry.
3. The anxiety and worry are associated with three (or more) of the following six symptoms (with at least some symptoms having been present for more days than not for the past 6 months):
 - a. Restlessness or feeling keyed up or on edge.
 - b. Being easily fatigued.
 - c. Difficulty concentrating or mind going blank.
 - d. Irritability
 - e. Muscle tension.
 - f. Sleep disturbance (difficulty falling or staying asleep, or restless, unsatisfying sleep).
4. The anxiety, worry, or physical symptoms cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.
5. The disturbance is not attributable to the physiological effects of a substance (e.g., a drug of abuse, a medication) or another medical condition
6. The disturbance is not better explained by another mental disorder

Anxious Feelings

- In response to a stressor
- Matches intensity of stressor
- Does not persist beyond the anticipated stressor
- Periodic and temporary
- Does not have significant impact on other areas of functioning

Generalized Anxiety Disorder

- Persistent and excessive
 - No identifiable stressor
 - Unrealistic and out-of-proportion
 - Recurring feeling of dread
 - Small responsibilities can feel overwhelming
 - Interferes with every day life
- Real feelings and body sensations
 - Increase in adrenaline and stress hormones



**SIGNS TO NOTICE AND
LOOKOUT FOR**

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Physical

Stomachaches

Headaches

Fatigue

Restlessness

Appetite increase or decrease

Emotional

Irritable/Angry

Low frustration tolerance

Crying

Needing frequent reassurance

Excessive fear

Behavioral

Clingy

Withdrawn

School/Social Avoidance

Difficulty focusing

Trouble falling/staying asleep

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Physical

Stomachaches

Headaches

Fatigue

Restlessness

Appetite increase or decrease

Emotional

Snippy

Performance anxiety

Crying

“You don’t understand”

Mood Swings

Behavioral

School Refusal

Isolation

Social withdrawal

Difficulty focusing

Substance Use

HIGH SCHOOL

Physical

Stomachaches

Headaches

Fatigue

Dizzy/Lightheaded

Heart Racing

Emotional

Irritable/Angry

Self-Criticism

Crying

Catastrophizing

Panic Attacks

Behavioral

Perfectionism

Avoidant/Withdrawn

Procrastination

Substance Use

Excessive sleeping or
napping



HELPFUL VS UNHELPFUL INTERVENTIONS

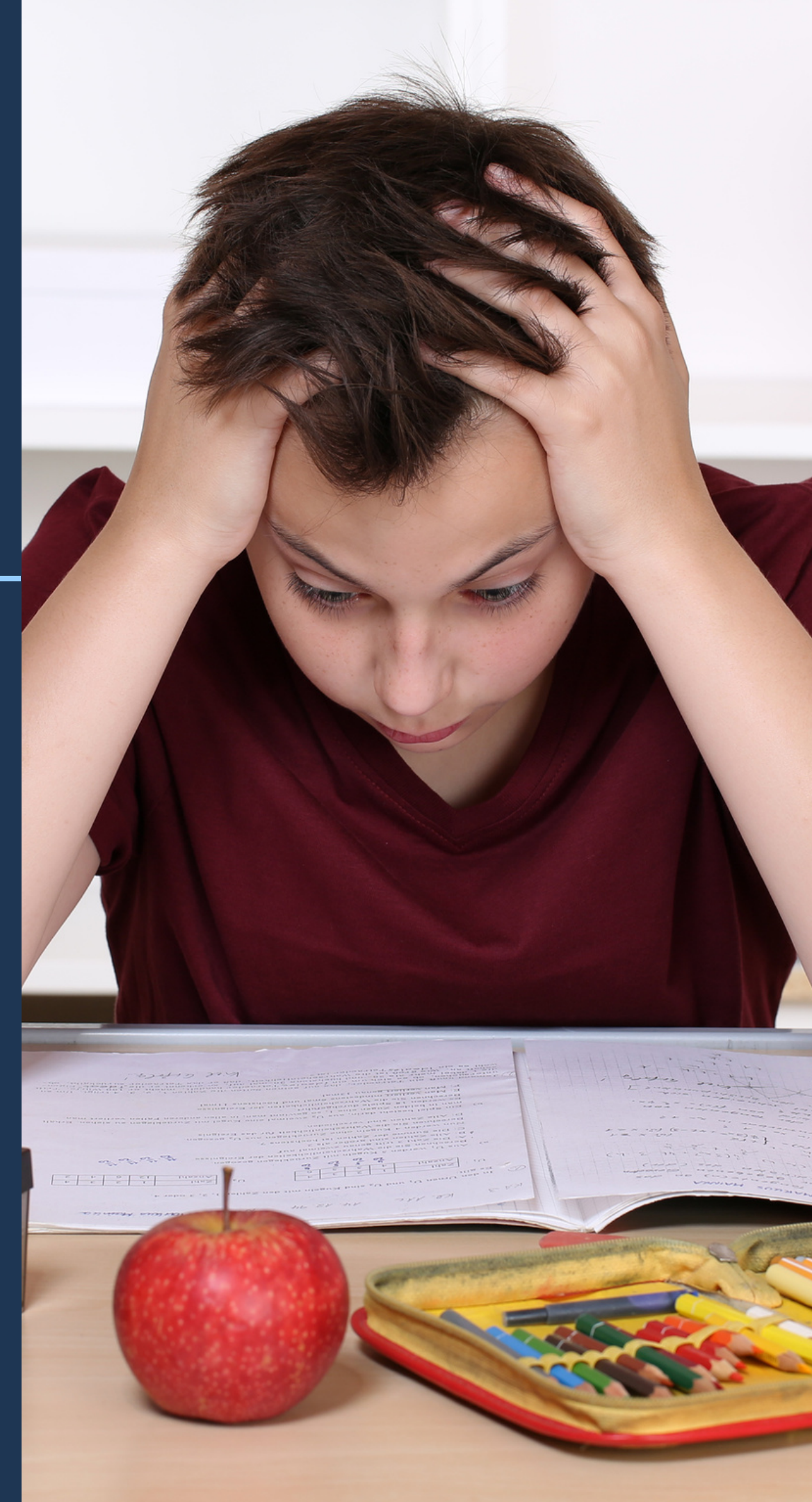
WHAT DO THE KIDS SAY?

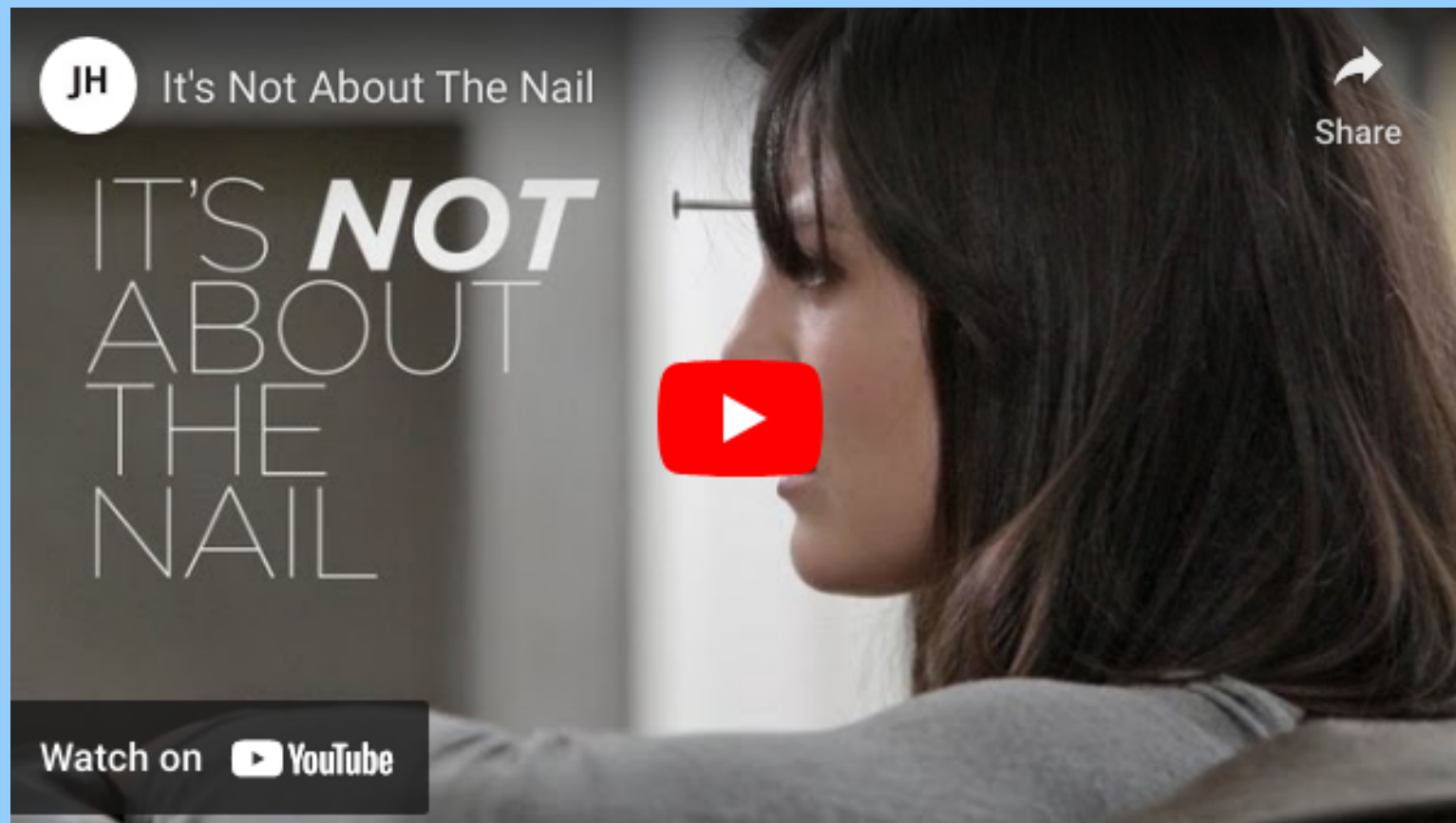
“I wish they wouldn’t always try to make me feel better or make the feeling go away”

“I just want them to listen and try to understand”

“I’m not just doing it for attention; I can’t always make it stop.”

“Them asking, ‘What’s wrong?’ a million times makes it worse”





WHAT TO DO

- Empathize
- Get curious
- Listen
- Reflect/paraphrase
- Distract
- Normalize
- Model emotion regulation
- Offer counseling
- Take care of you

WHAT NOT TO DO

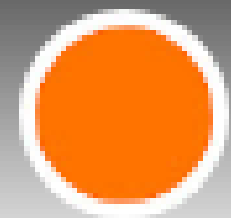
- “Calm down” or “Just breathe”
- Project our own anxiety
- Jump into fix it mode
- Lecture
- Make false promises
- Ask leading questions
- Overaccommodate
- Minimize or dismiss





COPING SKILLS

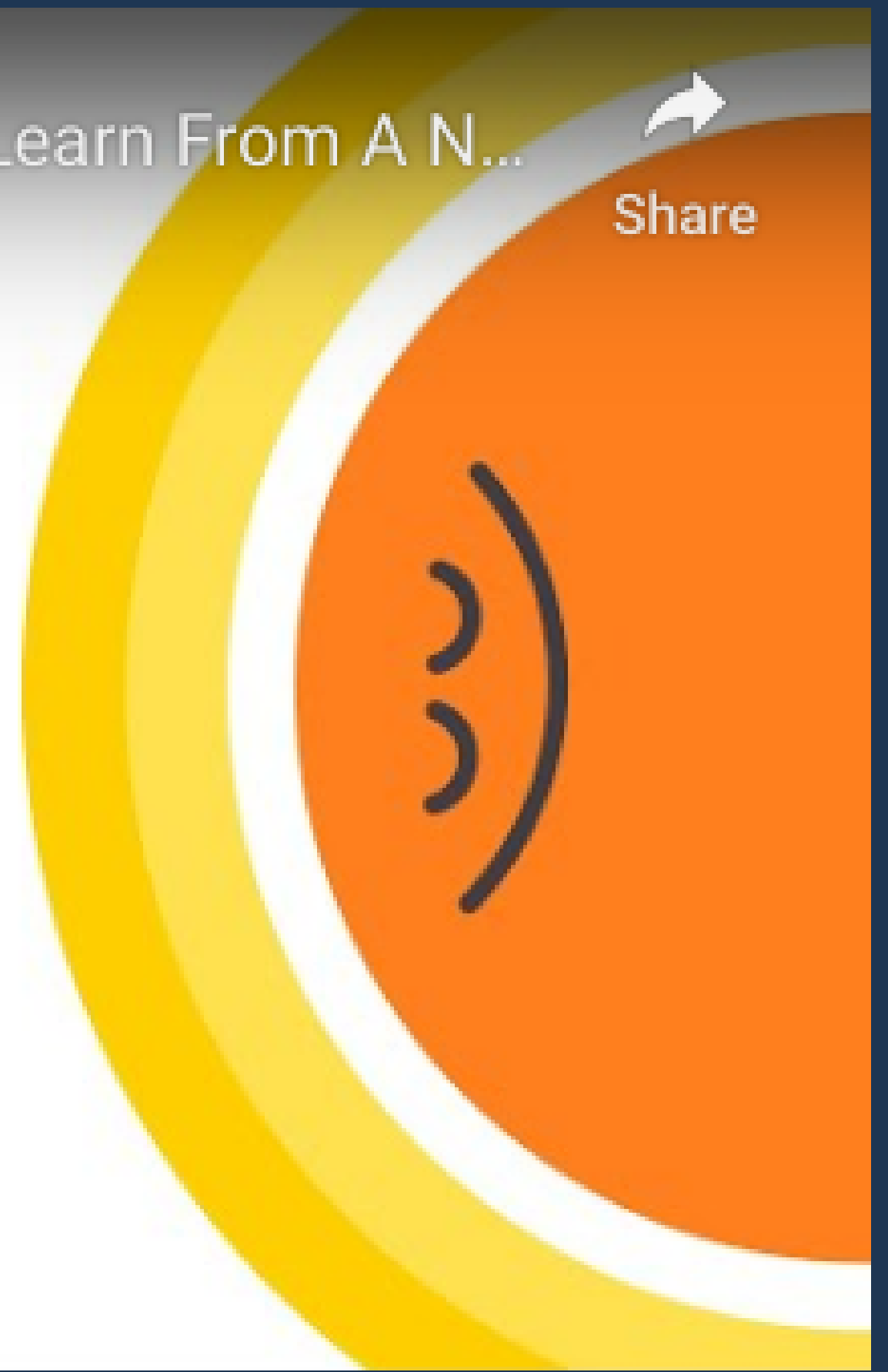
BREATHING



How Does Breathing Impact The Brain? Learn From A N...



The Science of Breathing



Watch on  YouTube

TYPES OF BREATHING



BELLY BREATHING

Inhale and expand your stomach
Exhale and release your stomach
(Try to not move shoulders or chest)

PHYSIOLOGICAL SIGH

Two inhales in,
One long exhale out
(exhale **MUST** be longer than inhales)

SQUARE BREATHING

4 count inhale,
4 count hold,
4 count exhale
4 count hold
(repeat 4 times)

THOUGHT-CHANGING TECHNIQUES

PLAY OUT WORST-CASE SCENARIO

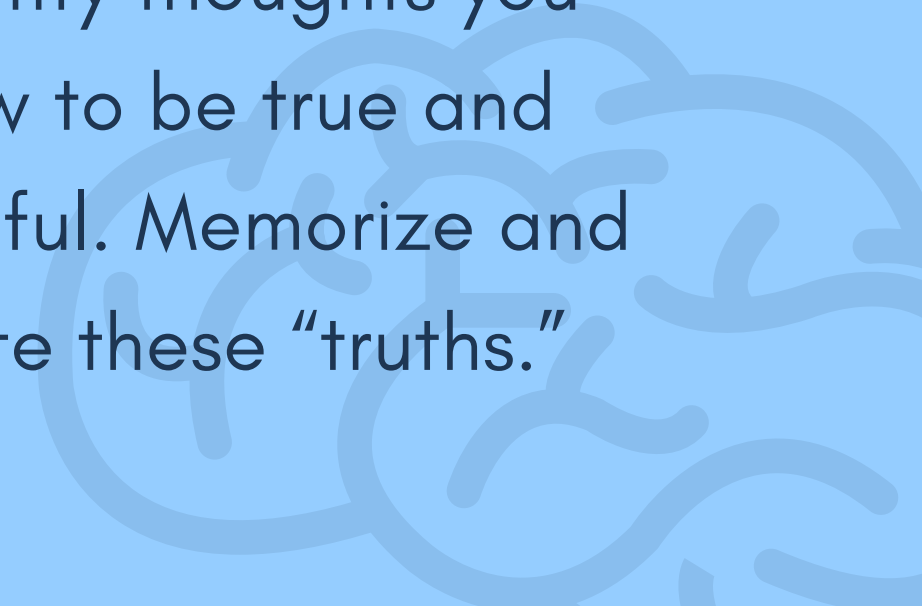
Identify what the feared outcome is. Is this outcome realistic? Can I survive/tolerate it?

RESTRUCTURE THOUGHTS

Identify causes of anxious thinking.
Reframe and replace those thoughts

REHEARSE MANTRAS

Identify thoughts you know to be true and helpful. Memorize and recite these "truths."



GROUNDING SKILLS



5-4-3-2-1

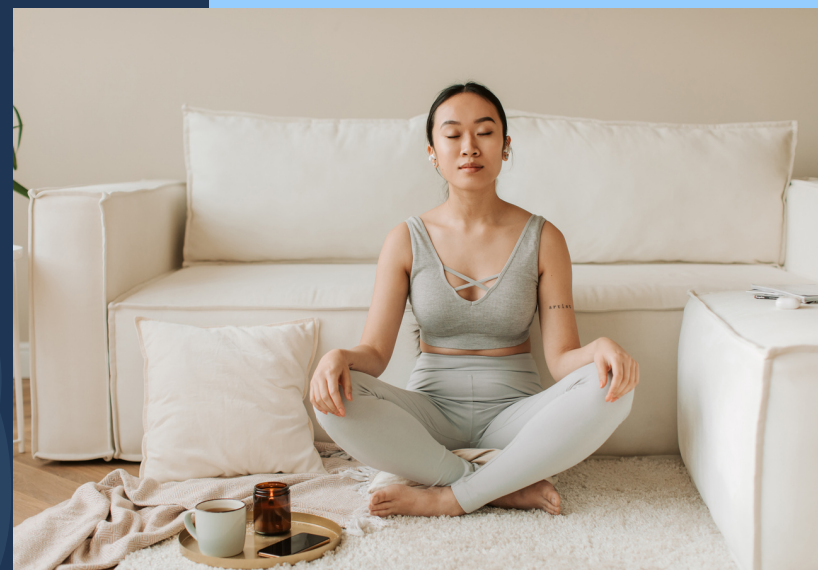
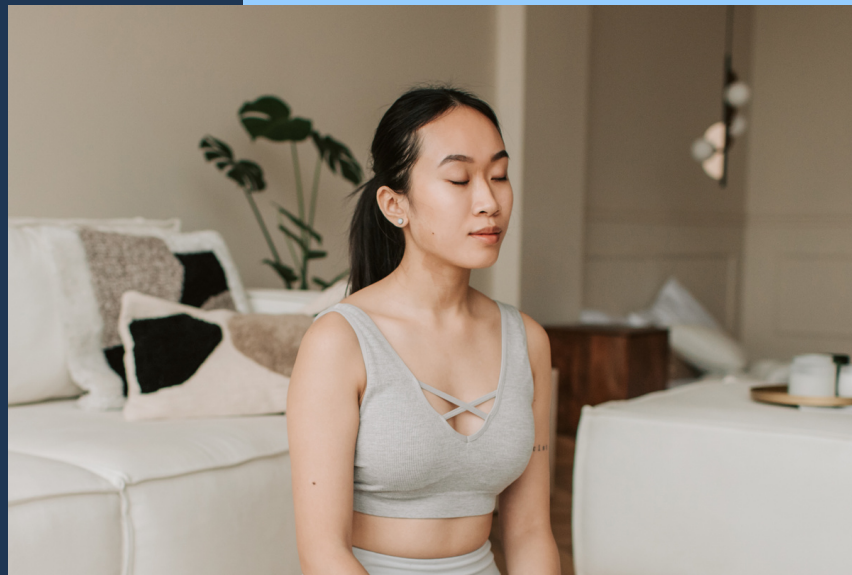


Ice Cube
Challenge



Stretching/Exercise

Additional Resources



BOOKS

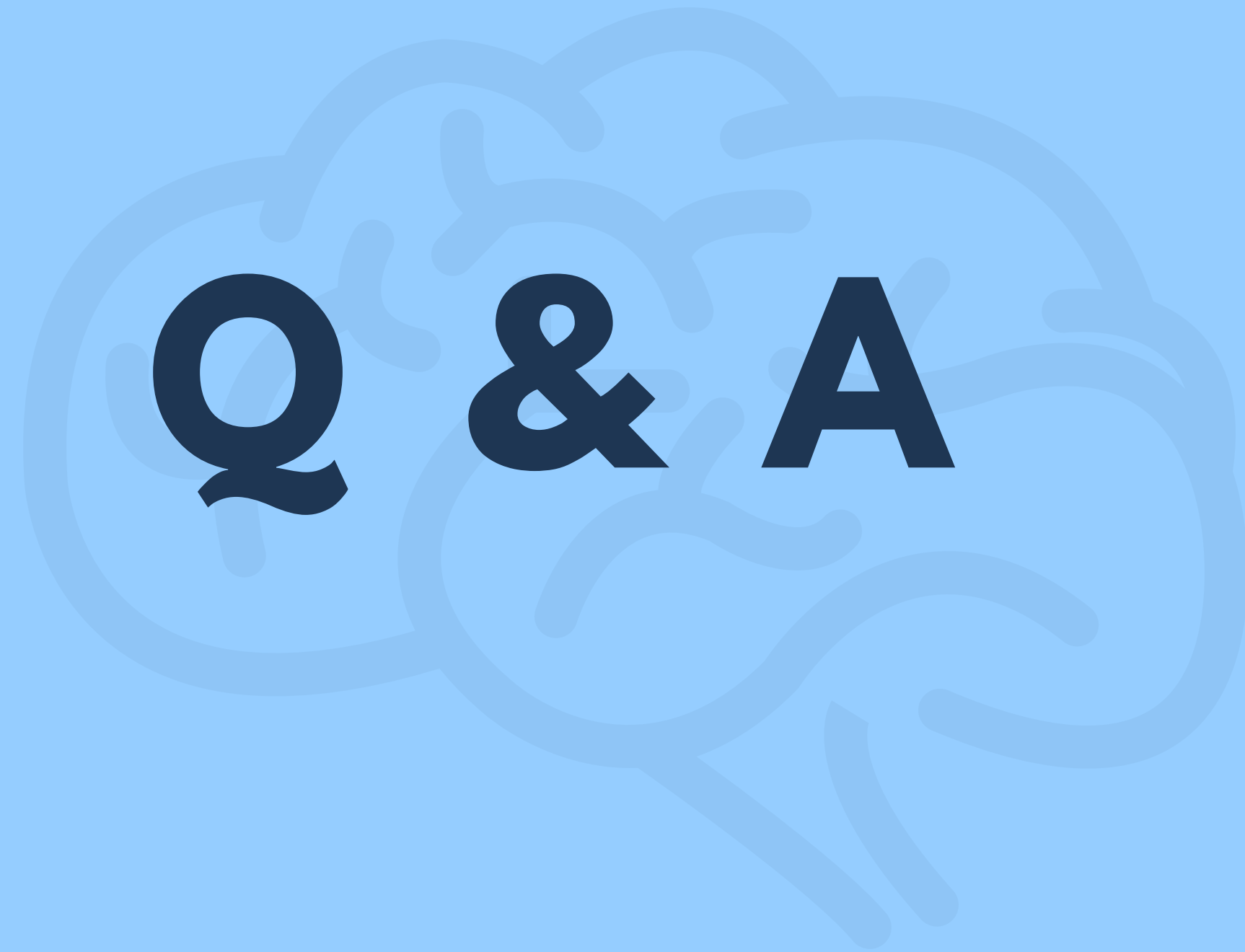
- *The Whole Brain Child*, Daniel Siegel
- *The Opposite of Worry*, Lawrence Cohen
- *How to Help Your Anxious Teen*, Sheila Achar Josephs
- *Anxious Kids, Anxious Parents*, Reid Wilson and Lynn Lyons
- *What to do When You Worry Too Much*, Dawn Huebner
- *A Little Spot of Feelings*, Diane Alter

WEBSITES

- <https://www.innerhealthstudio.com>
- <https://www.mycompass.org.au>
- <https://thiswayup.org.au>
- <https://xhalr.com>
- <https://www.sparx.org.nz/the-game>

APPS

- Insight Timer
- Finch App
- Calm
- Moshi



1. Ackerman, C. E., & Lancia, G. (2017, March 20). *CBT techniques: 25 cognitive behavioral therapy worksheets*. **PositivePsychology.com**. Retrieved March 15, 2024, from <https://positivepsychology.com/cbt-cognitive-behavioral-therapy-techniques-worksheets/>
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5. Headley, J. (2013, May 22). *It's Not About the Nail*. **YouTube**. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4EDhdAHrOg>.
6. Headspace (2022, September 27). *How Does Breathing Impact the Brain? Learn From a Neuroscientist*. **YouTube**. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2HojLhKlJto&t=209s>.
7. Huberman, A. (2023, February 19). *How to breathe correctly for optimal health, mood, learning & performance*. **Huberman Lab**. <https://www.hubermanlab.com/episode/how-to-breathe-correctly-for-optimal-health-mood-learning-and-performance>
8. World Health Organization. (2023, February 21). *Stress*. **World Health Organization**. <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/stress>