



ADHD

Learning & Development

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ADHD

Child & Family

SERVICES



ANXIETY & ADHD

ADHD is a Risk Factor for Developing Anxiety Disorders



Brain based differences

Executive function challenges

Negative social interactions

Stigma regarding ADHD

Self-limiting beliefs

Brain-Based Difference



There is an imbalance in neurotransmitters, such as dopamine and norepinephrine, which help to regulate mood and attention.

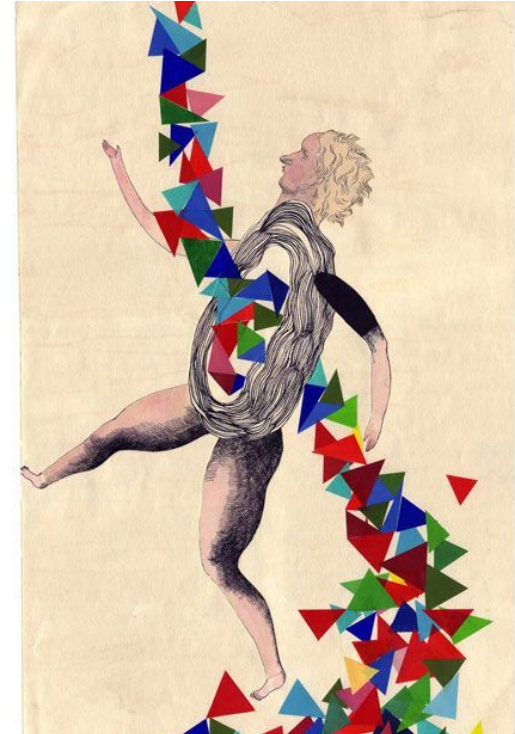
This imbalance can lead to an overactive fight-or-flight response-or, heightened emotional reactivity or volatility.

Executive Function Challenges

Executive functioning difficulties can also contribute to the development to negative self-talk, feelings of incompetence or helplessness and low self-esteem.

These problems include challenges with:

- Organization
- Time management
- Decision-making
- Memory
- Task completion
- Impulsivity or delayed gratification



Negative Social Interactions

Social challenges such as:

- difficulty forming and maintaining friendships
- understanding social cues
- managing conflicts

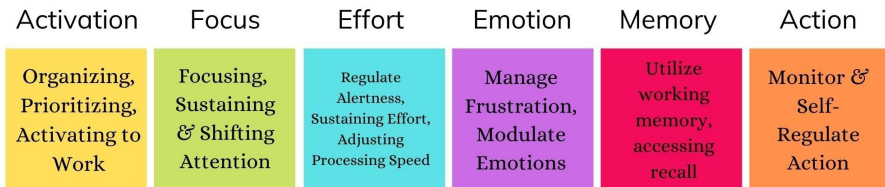
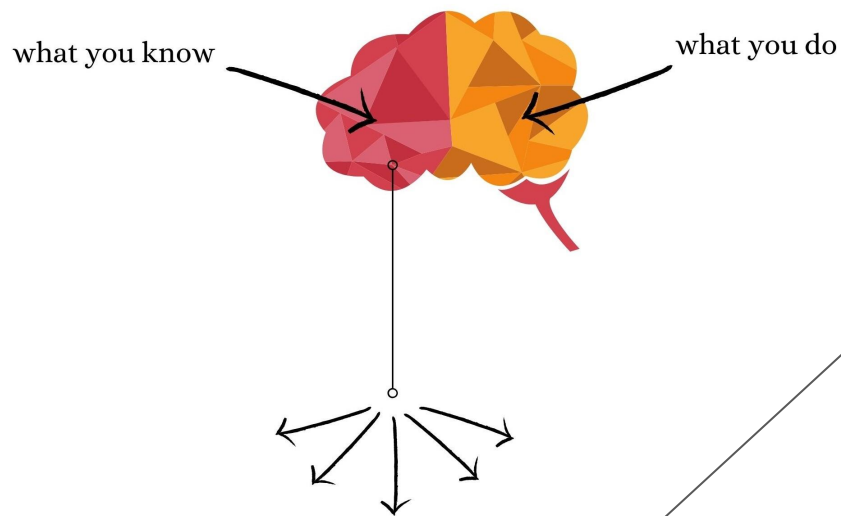
can also contribute to feelings of isolation, rejection, and loneliness.



Negative Feedback & ADHD

The stigma surrounding ADHD and negative attitudes of others can contribute to the development of anxiety disorders and self-limiting beliefs

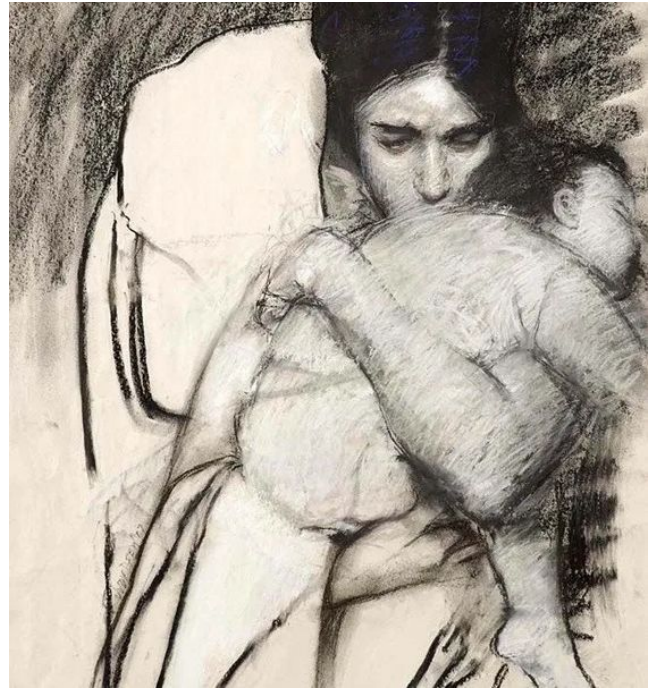




Emotions are like the weather, they change often.

- Emotions are hard to regulate.
- Emotions drive desire and fuel the prefrontal cortex.
- Our emotional braking system is located in the prefrontal cortex.
 - Which means it is weak at best, *on a good day.*

Anxiety versus Fear

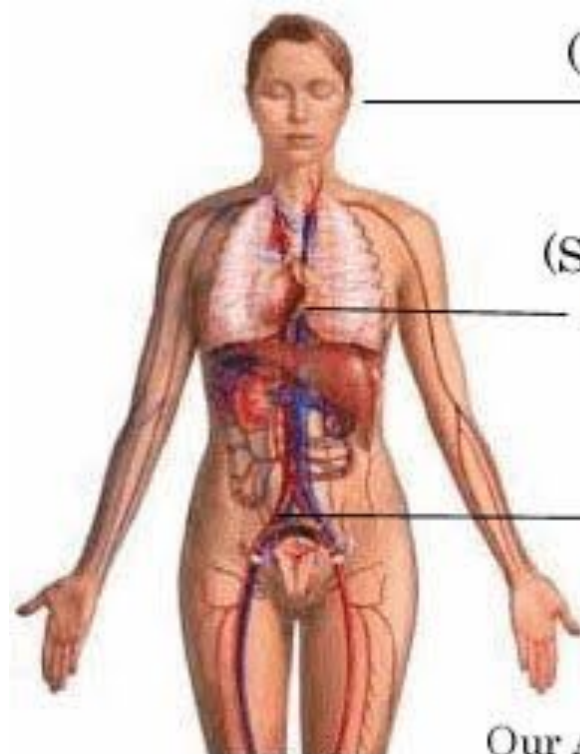


FEAR

Fear is an important part of our emotional lives.

It is a warning signal to pay attention and do something to create emotional or physical safety (fast).





(VVC) Ventral Vagal Complex: Signaling System
for motion, emotion & communication.
(Our Social Engagement System)

(SNS) Sympathetic Nervous System: Mobilization
System for Flight or Fight Behaviors.
(Our Aggressive Defense System)

(DVC) Dorsal Vagal Complex: Immobilization
System for Conservation Withdrawal.
(Our Passive Defense System)

Our Autonomic Nervous System fires muscular tensions triggered by feedback signals from the external & internal world at millisecond speeds below conscious awareness. These muscles tensions fire our Thoughts?

What is Anxiety?



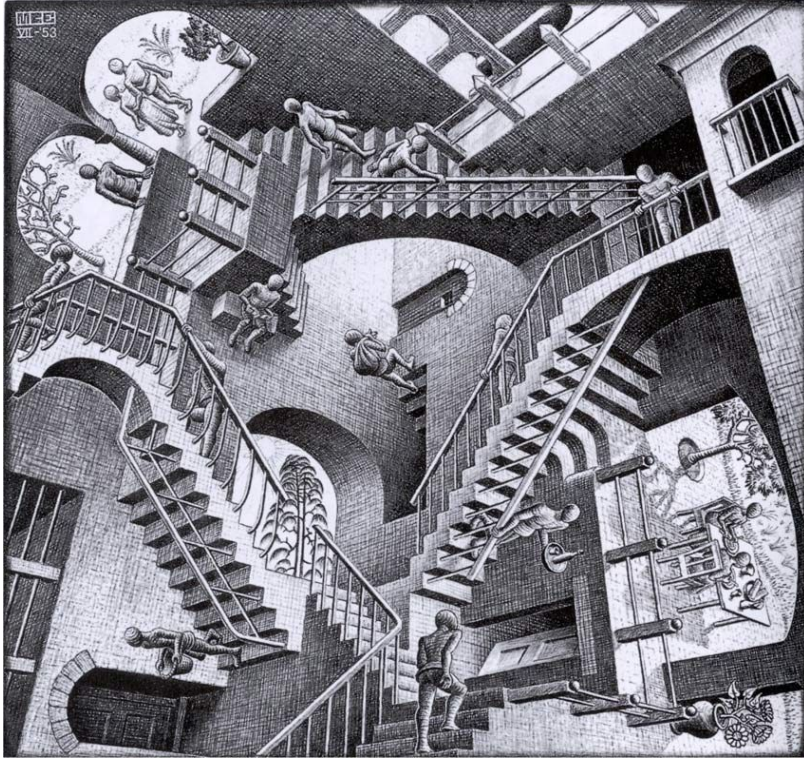
Anxiety is a form of emotional stuckness. It always grows from a thought pattern called “magical thinking.”

Magical thinking is the belief that our thoughts can change or protect against undesirable events. Or, our worries somehow protects us or our loved ones from something worse.

There are many common types of anxiety:

- Chronic worrying
- Shyness
- Public speaking
- Panic attacks
- Specific Phobias
- Agoraphobia (fear of leaving the house)
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Hypochondriasis

Common Symptoms of Anxiety



- Excessive worry
- Feeling restless or on edge.
- Being irritable.
- Getting tired easily.
- Having difficulty concentrating or feeling your mind goes blank.
- Having difficulty getting to sleep or staying asleep.
- Having tense muscles.

Comfort Zone



Our comfort zone is neither good or bad. It's a natural and comfortable state where we feel safe and secure.

In our comfort zone, we enjoy regular happiness, low anxiety, and reduced stress. Our behavior patterns and routines minimizes our stress and risk

Our comfort zone provides us with a comfortable head-space in which we can process the changes we create when we leave it.

Leaving our Comfort Zone



Immediately outside our comfort zone is a place of fear and uncertainty. This is the most difficult barrier to cross and the most uncomfortable.

In this zone, we experience a sudden change from a steady comfortable place and expose ourselves to increased risk and anxiety.

Leaving our comfort zone can have both positive and negative results.

Fear Zone & Negative Thoughts



In this space we can experience a great deal of non-productive anxiety. There is no direction here. It is just uncomfortable and even scary.

In this zone, our thoughts about have a big impact on our performance and our ability to think.

Common Negative Thoughts in the Fear Zone

Our negative thoughts in the fear zone do not reflect reality, but they feel real!

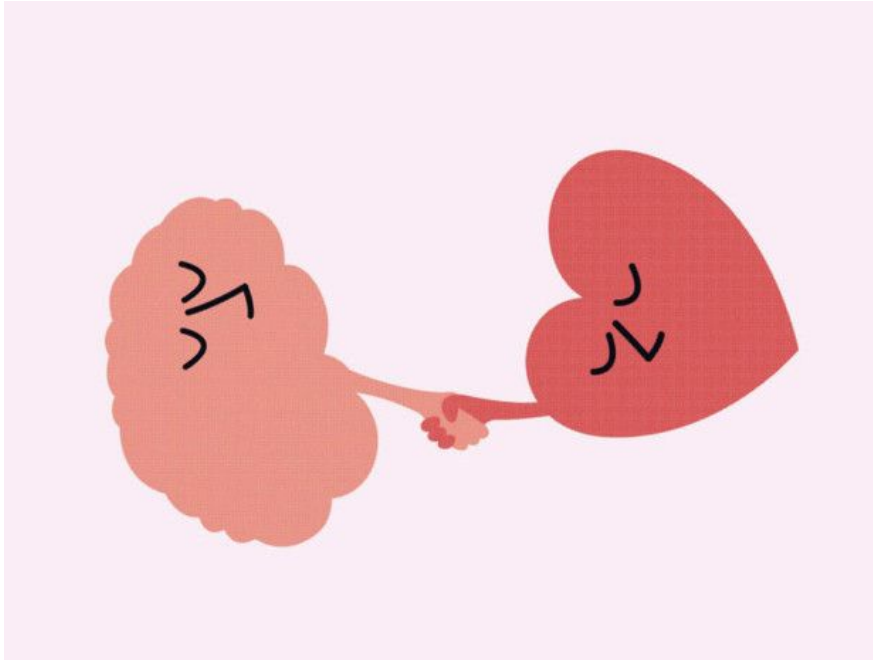


- I feel afraid so I must be in danger!
- If I make a mistake, I am a mistake.
- I feel worried, so that means something catastrophic is about to happen.
- I feel like a total failure, so it must be true.
- Because I feel hopeless, that means nothing will improve.
- I never get anything right.
- I will always feel this way.
- Other people will judge me.
- There is something wrong with me if I feel worried or insecure.
- I should be perfect and never make mistakes.

Common Types of Magical Thinking



Embracing the Wisdom of the Fear Zone



Identifying the perceived "benefits" of the fear and having compassion for this belief is important before trying to challenge it.

Warning: Pushing too hard or too quickly can have a negative result and prevent us from wanting to challenge ourselves in the future.

Learning Zone

In order to experience some relief from our fear zone, we need to move into the “Learning Zone.”

In the learning zone, our emotions shift from panic to curiosity. At this level of arousal, our energy becomes more productive and focused. We are more able to put our energy to good use and focus our attention on problem solving and learning new information.

This is where we are when emergent things happen.



Growth Zone: Entering New Territory



As we move further away from our comfort zone things start to look less familiar. We are challenged to create new innovative ways to address new and unfamiliar issues.

This is our "Growth Zone." In this space, we are able to set and act toward new goals and dreams.

In this zone, we push and challenge ourselves to get to the next level or accomplish something new. This is where amazing results happen.

Warning: Pushing too hard or too quickly can have a negative result and prevent us from wanting to challenge ourselves in the future.

Helping Children with ADHD Manage their Fears & Anxiety



Reframing the fear as an expression of the child's strengths and core values

Working with magical thinking (e.g. believing their fear protects them in some way)

Teaching children how to identify thought distortions and replace them with more helpful and realistic thoughts

Exposure therapy: Confront fears directly. When children face their fears, their chances of overcoming them are almost 100%. However, if they avoid the feared situation, the odds of recovery are close to zero.

Key Takeaways

- ADHD is a risk factor for developing anxiety disorders
- When it comes to anxiety & worries our thoughts matter
- Facing fears and moving out of our comfort zone builds confidence and leads to growth and resilience
- When we feel afraid teach your child to find something they can do, learn or change to feel safe.

