

### COFFEE WITH MR. KRAMER AND MRS. KOERNER



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# COPING WITH CHILDHOOD STRESS AND ANXIETY







#### CHILDHOOD ANXIETY

- Affects I in 8 children (according to ADAA)
- Children who suffer from anxiety are at higher risk to perform poorly in school and miss out on important social experiences if they don't receive support
- Anxiety disorders often co-occur with depression and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

#### **TYPES**

- Separation
- School Phobia
- Change/Transitions
- Death/Grief
- Bullying/Social
- Environmental (Fire Drills, Storms, Clowns)

#### SOME WORRY/ANXIETY IS NORMAL

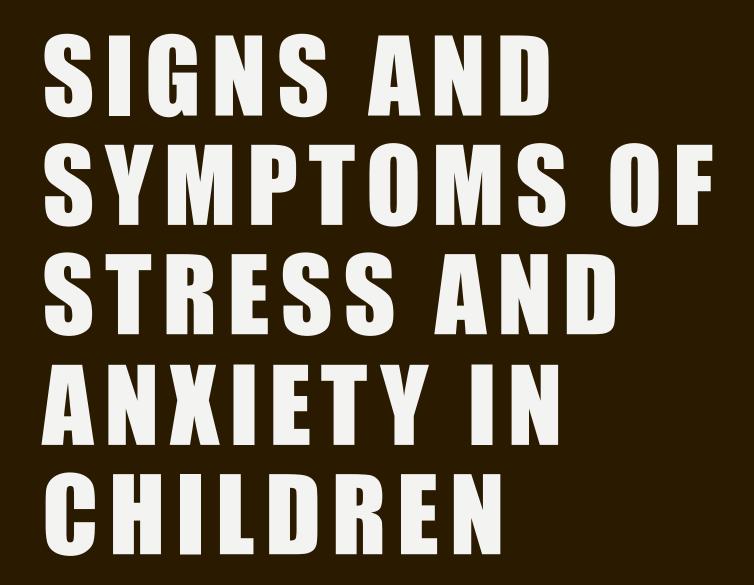
- \*Fear has a protective function.
- Fear and anxiety are different.
- \*Kids often feel a little nervous or anxious about an upcoming event- this is normal.
- \*When the anxiety is strong, lasts a long time and begins to impede your child from being able to perform daily routines, that's cause for concern.

### KIDS HAVE A LOT ON THEIR PLATES THESE DAYS!

What do kids have to worry about?!

- Children are experiencing far more stress and anxiety than any previous generation
- Families face many different challenges/stressors
- Environmental Dangers/Media exposure
- ❖ Digital world/social media
- Peer relationships
- School problems

Kids are especially vulnerable to these stressors since they have less control over their lives.



#### SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY IN CHILDREN

- Tense muscles, sweating, heart pounding, difficulty sitting still
- Somatic complaints- stomachache, headache
- Consistent trouble with falling asleep and/or staying asleep; nightmares
- Serious distress and panic when separated from parent or caregiver (ie, going to school, day care or other places)
- ❖School refusal
- Losing interest in normal activities
- Intensely afraid of social or performance situations that involve unfamiliar people or being evaluated by others

- Trouble concentrating, complaining of their mind "going blank"
- Restless, jumpy and on the lookout for something bad to happen
- Feeling irritable and upset; outbursts of anger
- Feelings fatigued or out of energy to cope
- Withdrawal- avoiding places, people and situations
- Changes in school performance and poor grades
- Aggressive behavior and/or not obeying adults in charge
- Excessive worry and needing to do things perfectly

### WHAT NOW?

HELPING OUR CHILDREN COPE

# SELF-HELP COPING STRATEGIES FOR CHILDREN

- Deep breathing/Belly breathing
- Transitional object (aka, "Comfort item")
  - Stuffed animal
  - Family photo
  - Worry stone
- ❖ Positive self-talk statements
- Calming visualizations
- ❖ Talk to the anxiety
- ❖Worry jar or journal
- \*Relieving tense muscles- progressive muscle relaxation, yoga

# STRATEGIES TO HELP YOUR ANXIOUS CHILD

- Model self-confidence and calmness
- Show that you have confidence in your child
- \*Talk out their fears
- Convince your child that they don't need to be afraid
- Make your child do difficult things and face their fears
- Consider community resources

# SCHOOL ANXIETY- WHEN YOUR CHILD STRUGGLES COMING TO SCHOOL

- Empower your child
- Offer them an incentive/motivator
- Point out times in which they overcame difficulties before
- Ease performance/test anxiety
- Have your child go to school

#### RESOURCES

- ❖ Feel free to borrow resources!
- Worry Wise Kids- <a href="http://www.worrywisekids.org/">http://www.worrywisekids.org/</a>
  - ❖ Normal anxiety vs. red flags
  - ❖ Types of anxiety and treatments
  - Dos and Don'ts for parenting an anxious child
- Anxiety and Depression Association of America<a href="https://www.adaa.org">https://www.adaa.org</a>
  - Descriptions of types of childhood anxieties
  - ❖ Tips for parents and caregivers
- 49 Phrases to Calm an Anxious Child<a href="http://blogs.psychcentral.com/">http://blogs.psychcentral.com/</a>
- Strategies for kids
  - Sesame Street: Common and Colbie Caillat -"Belly Breathe" with Elmo (on Youtube)
  - \* Kid's Relaxation: Progressive Muscle Relaxation exercises- <a href="http://kidsrelaxation.com/?cat=21">http://kidsrelaxation.com/?cat=21</a>