

Regulating Stress and Anxiety

Teach them that there is a worry part of the brain (amygdala) and a smart, thoughtful part of the brain (prefrontal cortex - PFC). The worry part is useful sometimes but many times it gets stuck on one idea and won't let it go. Tools to deal with worry brain:

1. Talk back to it with the smart brain and tell worry brain why it is wrong.
2. How often is the worry brain correct? Help the children to ask themselves that question because the answer is "almost never"
3. Ask the panel of experts: Ask child "what would your friends say is going to happen in this situation? What would your grandparents say?"
4. Put the worry in a shrinker. Talk through what will happen. Ok, what if you fail the test? Through your questions, let them see that the problem is not as big as first thought. There are other tests. Your family will still love you. You can talk to your teacher about a retake, or make up work, you will still get promoted to the next grade, still go to high school, still be able to go to college, still get an interesting job
5. Movement/Physical exercise - most kids need far more movement and exercise than they get. It helps calm them and grows their brain.

What We Teach In School:

1. **Stop** - Use a stop signal. "Hold on" "Wait a Sec." "Stop" "Ok, Cool It"
2. **Name Your Feeling:** My face is warm, my breathing is increasing, my mind is racing, my heart is pumping faster - I am getting angry (or worried, or jealous, or frustrated)
3. **Calm Down:**
 1. Breathe slowly
 - a. In through the nose (smelling bowl of soup)
 - b. Hold it
 - c. Out slowly through the mouth (cooling soup)
 2. Count
 - a. One to ten
 - b. From ten backwards
 3. Positive Self Talk
 - a. This question is pretty hard, but I will just do the best I can do
 - b. My family will always love me, it's ok if this grade is not an "A"
 - c. I will just try a few strategies and give the best answer I can give. I don't have to get them all correct.
 - d. He just broke my pencil, but I have others, no big deal.
 4. Go to Quiet Place
 5. Get Exercise - walk, run, sports, Go Noodle (web based child movement breaks)

For Children Who Are Acting Out or Verbally Aggressive

1. Avoid arguing while they are venting. Don't feed the angry wolf inside them.
2. Listen calmly, empathize. Ask them questions about the worry.
3. Help them find a way to calm: (quiet room, walk outside, read, play quietly) where they can just relax and calm themselves (not a timeout).
4. Once they are calm, you can listen and ask questions to help them to problem solve a better way to handle it.
5. Suggest that the next time, a better way is to calm themselves first (help them remember how) and then a more productive talk can occur.

Good Book: Freeing Your Child From Anxiety by Tamar Chansky

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