

Stress, Anxiety, and Coping Skills

A Parent Education Presentation - April 17, 2018

Who am I?

Lauren Alexander

6th and 8th Grade School
Counselor

650-312-7265

laalexander@smfcsd.net



Who are you?

Why this topic, why right now?

Difficulties of brain development

HORMONES

Managing multiple demands in multiple areas of life

Social Media

Current events

30%

A 2014 American Psychological Association survey found that teens report feeling even more stressed than adults, and that this affects them in unhealthy ways.

Approximately 30 percent of the 1,018 teens surveyed reported feeling sad, overwhelmed or depressed.

What is stress?

The emotional or mental strain or tension that comes from being involved in overwhelming circumstances

GOOD STRESS = motivator

BAD STRESS = paralyzer

TOXIC STRESS = traumatizer

What is anxiety?

A feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an upcoming event or something with an unclear outcome

TYPICAL

CLINICAL

1/3



Anxiety is the most common mental health disorder in the US, affecting nearly $\frac{1}{3}$ of adults and adolescents

*According to the National Institute of Mental Health

What are our kids stressed and anxious about?

— — —

Identity

Their futures

Home life

Pressure to conform

Social acceptance

Pressure to be the best

Body image

Appearance

The world around them

Basic necessities

Self-worth

...what else?

One key to addressing
anxiety/stress is helping
kids see **WHAT THEY
CAN CONTROL**

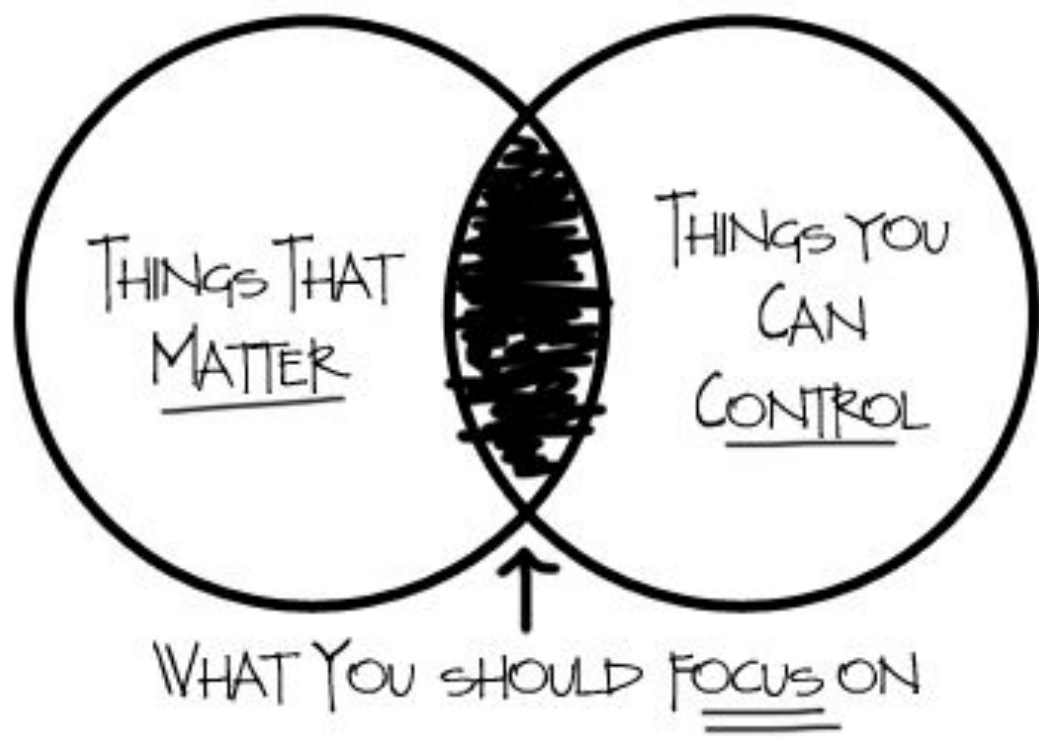
**You can control what
happens**

ASSUMING YOU CAN CONTROL WHAT HAPPENS...

- Focuses on action rather than freezing
- Encourages problem-solving and creativity
- Helps kids feel like they can be the authors of their lives

What are scenarios they can control?

- Worry about the huge social studies test on Friday!
 - ACTION PLAN: take a breath, review my notes, make a list of questions to ask the teacher about, put together a study guide and timeline
- Anxiety caused by seeing the shiny and pretty lives of celebrities on Instagram
 - ACTION PLAN: spend the evening purging Instagram (and other social media) of people that make me feel BAD about myself for any reason
- Stress of not getting along well with mom lately
 - ACTION PLAN: work with my friend to come up with a letter of what I'd say to my mom, tell her what's up so we can work on making it better



But...there are also
plenty of things **THEY**
CAN'T CONTROL

**You can't control what
happens,
BUT you can control how
you react to it**

ASSUMING YOU CAN CONTROL HOW YOU REACT...

- Helps kids feel empowered
- Focuses on action rather than freezing
- Encourages emotional awareness

What are scenarios where they can control how they react?

- Parents argue constantly at home
 - ACTION PLAN: set yourself up for success by finding a spot that gets you away from the arguing, journal about what makes a positive relationship and good communication, buy earplugs, make a playlist of loud music to listen to while they argue
- People were talking smack at school and it was just a lousy day
 - ACTION PLAN: do my breathing exercises, spend the evening doing nice things for myself, know that I get a fresh start tomorrow

The theme is

- (1) ACKNOWLEDGING the emotion and**
- (2) DECIDING what to do with the energy caused by that emotion**

Are You AWARE of How You Are Feeling Now?



AGGRESSIVE



AGONIZED



ANXIOUS



APOLOGETIC



ARROGANT



BASHFUL



BLISSFUL



BORED



CAUTIOUS



COLD



CONCENTRATING



CONFIDENT



CURIOUS



DEMURE



DETERMINED



DISAPPOINTED



DISAPPROVING



DISBELIEVING



DISGUSTED



DISTASTEFUL



EAVESDROPPING



ECSTATIC



ENRAGED



ENVIOUS



EXASPERATED



EXHAUSTED



FRIGHTENED



FRUSTRATED



GRIEVING



GUILTY



HAPPY



HORRIFIED



HOT



HUNGOVER



HURT



HYSTERICAL



IDIOTIC



INDIFFERENT



INNOCENT



INTERESTED



JEALOUS



LOADED



LONELY



LOVESTRUCK



MEDITATIVE



MISCHIEVOUS



MISERABLE



NEGATIVE



OBSTINATE



OPTIMISTIC



PAINED



PARANOID



PERPLEXED



PRUDISH



PUZZLED



REGRETFUL



RELIEVED



SAD



SATISFIED



SHEEPISH



SHOCKED



SMUG



SURLY



SURPRISED



SUSPICIOUS



SYMPATHETIC



THOUGHTFUL



TURNED-ON



UNDECIDED



WITHDRAWN

Once we know:

- Whether we have control over the situation or our reaction
- What emotions are coming up

Then we can come up with an action plan!

If we don't teach our children how to help themselves calm down and cope with their stresses and worries,

we set them up to fail

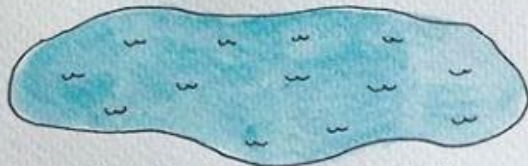
RESILIENCE



I SWAM ACROSS THIS



I SWAM ACROSS THIS



I SWAM ACROSS THIS

I CAN SWIM ACROSS THIS.

Art by Mari Andrew -
follow her on
Instagram!
[@bymariandrew](https://www.instagram.com/bymariandrew)

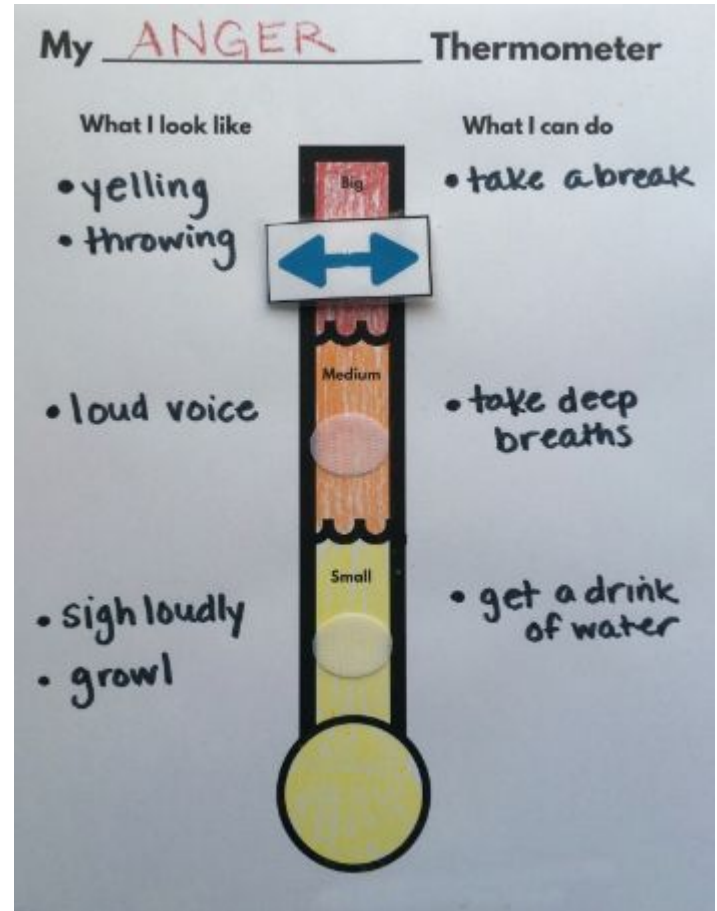
Create a MENU of coping skills

“When I feel this way, what can I do?”

- Develop the menu in a moment of calm
- Post it on your fridge
- Encourage your child to keep a copy in their wallet or take a photo on their phone
- Reference the menu when you know your kid needs it
- Use their suggestions for YOUR own moments of need and tell them that you're doing it

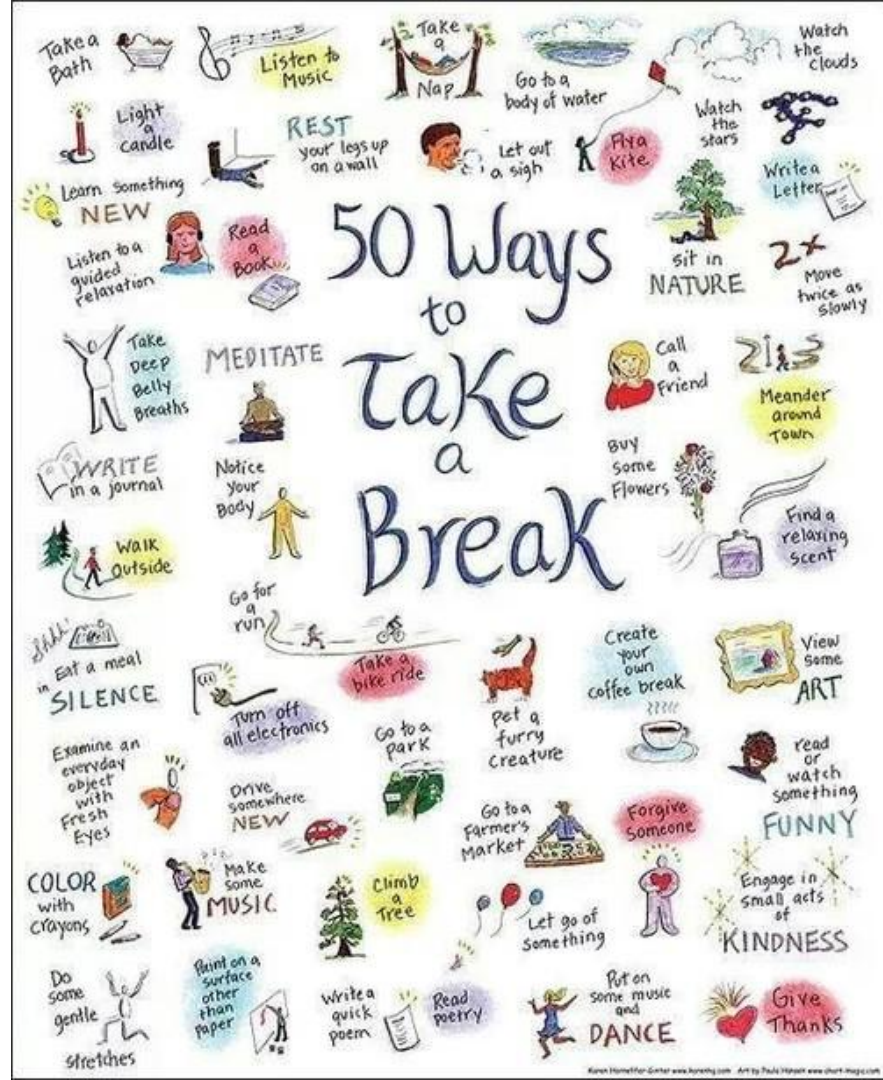
How you can organize the menu

By understanding what the emotion is, what it looks like, and ideas for each step



How you can organize the menu

By making a list!



How you can organize the menu



Distraction

Conversation - call, text, or facetime a buddy

Read a book or a magazine, listen to an audiobook

Do puzzles, crosswords

Clean or organize something

Plant a garden

Draw, color, paint, do a craft project, knit

Emotional Release

Make an angry, sad, and POWERFUL playlist and let yourself be pissed, cry, and then be rebuilt

Take a cold shower

Throw ice at the concrete

Scream into or punch a pillow

Jump on bubble wrap

Go for a run, use the punching bag in the garage, write a letter and rip it up

Self Love

Give yourself a massage with great smelling lotion

Take a hot bath or shower

Get a manicure or pedicure

Buy a small treat and really enjoy it

Bake or cook something

Write yourself love notes or mantras

Thought Challenge

Write down negative thoughts and list all the reasons they might not be true

Imagine someone you love had these thoughts - what would you tell them to do?

Think of other times you've felt this way - how did you get out of it?

Access Your Highest Self

Help someone else

See how many smiles from strangers you can give and get

Pray

Volunteer

Do randomly kind things for others

Grounding - use the body and the senses to center yourself

TOUCH - find your softest blanket; wear your comfy clothes; ask for a backrub; ask for a hug; walk barefoot on grass/sand; play with putty or clay

TASTE - make a cup of tea; take several minutes to eat a square of chocolate;

SIGHT - find the most beautiful view in your neighborhood; look a photos of peaceful places; make a pile of your favorite photos of yourself

Grounding - use the body and the senses to center yourself

SMELL - find your favorite scented lotion; make the food that smells the best; find the most comforting smell in your house

HEAR - play thunder or running water recordings off YouTube; listen to your breath for five minutes; lie in bed and listen to the sound of your house settling; sing to yourself

The Importance of Controlling Breath

Birthday Candles (“Take 10”)

Color Breathing

Tension Release Breath

Stretch and Breathe

Breathing during panic attacks

A few other tried and true tips

- Eating right and sleeping right is the foundation for stress management
- The Mindfulness App/Headspace/Calm
- Debrief on coping skills: How did it make you feel? I noticed that when you _____, you are _____. Why do you think that works for you? When does this not work for you?
- Parents/adults are the models!

**Kids are very good at calming themselves -
we just need to help them know how!**

Questions?
Comments?

Get in touch with me!
Lauren Alexander
laalexander@smfcsd.net