Objectives

- Understand the prevalence of anxiety in children and the need for timely intervention
- Identify common types of anxiety disorders and how they present in children
- Describe play therapy interventions that will help children manage anxiety

Anxiety

- Natural human reaction involving mind and body
- Alarm system activated when a person perceives danger or threat
- Being scared of being scared

Anxiety in Children

- Most common psychological disorder of childhood
- Play therapy researchers have devoted more attention to studying anxiety than any other childhood disorder
- Consequently, a variety of evidence-based play interventions are available for resolving anxiety (Schaefer, 2010)

Prevalence of Anxiety in Children

- 1 in 8 children are affected by anxiety (adaa.org)
- 8% of teens have an anxiety disorder with symptoms commonly emerging around age 6 (nimh.nih.gov)
- 80 percent of youth with an anxiety disorder are not getting treatment (speakupforkids.org)

Risk Factors for Anxiety

- Genetics
- Being female
- Temperament - Personality
- Life Events - Trauma
- Having another mental health disorder (mayoclinic.org)
5 Things Never to Say to an Anxious Child

- It's going to be OK. Trust me.
- There's nothing to be scared of.
- Let me tell you all the reasons you don't have to worry.
- Stop being such a worrier!
- We don't understand why you're so worried.

(Renee Jain, psychcentral.com)

Anxiety Disorders DSM-5

- Separation Anxiety Disorder
- Selective Mutism
- Specific Phobia
- Social Anxiety Disorder
- Panic Disorder
- Agoraphobia
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Obsessive-Compulsive and Related Disorders DSM-5

- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Body Dysmorphic Disorder
- Hoarding Disorder
- Trichotillomania
- Excoriation (Skin Picking) Disorder

Trauma and Stressor Related Disorders DSM-5

- Reactive Attachment Disorder
- Disinhibited Social Engagement Disorder
- Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
- Acute Stress Disorder
- Adjustment Disorders

Separation Anxiety

I really have to get to work today, so there'll be no crying when I drop you off, okay honey?
Okay, mom. I know I can do it.
Causes of Separation Anxiety

- Change in environment: new home, school
- Stress: illness, death of a loved one or pet
- Overprotective parent: manifestation of parent’s own anxiety

Selective Mutism

www.selectivemutismcenter.org

Causes of Selective Mutism

- Manifestation of an inhibited temperament
- Genetic predisposition to anxiety
- May have one or more other anxiety disorders

Zelinger Fortune Teller

www.drzelinger.com

Specific Phobia

- Animal: dogs, snakes, insects
- Natural Environment: storms, water, dark
- Situational Phobias: flying, tunnels, bridges
- Blood-Injection-Injury: blood, needles, medical procedures

Causes of Specific Phobia

- Traumatic events
- Panic attacks in the to-be-feared situation
- Observing others undergoing trauma or demonstrating fearfulness
- Informational transmission: repeated warnings
Causes of Social Anxiety Disorder (Social Phobia)

- Genetic
- May follow a stressful or humiliating experience: teasing, bullying, rejection
- Environmental: learned behavior after observing anxious behavior of others

Causes of Panic Disorder

- Connection with major life transitions
- Severe stress: death of a loved one, divorce can trigger panic attacks
- Medical conditions and other physical causes: Mitral valve prolapse, Hypoglycemia

Causes of GAD

- Brain chemistry: abnormal levels of certain neurotransmitters in the brain such as serotonin, dopamine
- Genetic
- Life experiences: stress, trauma

Causes of OCD

- Blocking flow of serotonin causes brain’s “alarm system” to overreact and misinterpret information
- Genetic
- PANDAS - Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal infections

Causes of PTSD

- Traumatic or terrifying past experience
- The more extreme and prolonged the threat, the greater the risk of developing PTSD
- Extent to which the event was unexpected, uncontrollable, and inescapable also plays a role

Intervention Models for Treating Anxiety

- Psychoeducational – understand the nature of the anxiety
- Strengthen parent-child relationship
- Calm the physical response of anxiety
- Externalize the anxiety with CBPT

(Goodyear-Brown, 2010)
Intervention Models for Treating Anxiety

- Child needs to articulate their unique set of worries
- Describes how the worries show up in their physical body
- Identifies anxiety producing thoughts

(Goodyear-Brown, 2010)

Once a child understands the way anxiety works, has learned how to calm the physiology and can fight the fear through various coping strategies..... a precise set of graduated exposures can be structured.

(Goodyear-Brown, 2010)

Butterflies in My Stomach

(Loewenstein, 1999)

Anxiety Thermometer

All Tied Up With Worry

(kimscounselingcorner.com, 2012)
Worry Dolls

Worry Stones

Worry Monster

Anxiety Airplane

Dreamcatcher

Calming Cream

Worry Monster

Bubble and Pinwheel Breathing

(Goodyear-Brown, 2010)
Thought Stopping

(Goodyear-Brown, 2010)

The Power of a Clipboard

What I Know – What I Don’t Know

(lynnlyonsnh.com)

References


FREE E-BOOK

Favorite Therapeutic Activities for Children, Adolescents, and Families: Practitioners Share Their Most Effective Interventions

www.lianalowenstein.com
Child Therapy Toys will give DFW Center for Play Therapy Training attendees a discount on their purchases. Enter “Dyson” in the coupon box on the checkout page and you will receive a 15% discount. Code expires September 2020.

Play Therapy Supply will give DFW Center for Play Therapy Training attendees free shipping on ANY order. Simply enter the coupon code PAM2017 in the box on the check out page.