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ANXIETY-REDUCING PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN/TEENS

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Your 5-Step Anxiety-Reducing Program

Welcome!

The issue of anxiety can be a confusing and scary one for children/teens, let alone their parents.

Anxiety is one of the leading mental health concerns for children aged 4-17 years.

You could look up research on why this is and every paper will tell you a different reason. When it comes to children and anxious feelings or behaviours, there are many variables to consider.

This program is not designed to show you WHY your children/teen are anxious, it is to show you a few simple processes that help the child/teen brain and body understand anxious feelings and navigate through them instead of feeling stuck there.

This 5-step process is meant to be simple and effective and **REPEATABLE**.

For best results, do one activity per week. The more you can repeat the activity during the week the more effective it will be.

If you commit to this process you will see something shift in your child/ren or teen.

Each week's task has instructions and a PDF you can print. If you don't have a printer, you can easily copy the task on a piece of paper at home.

I'm excited to have you here taking part in this process and don't forget to have some fun with it too!

Good luck!

P.S. To receive more resources and information around anxiety, don't forget to join my Facebook group - **Parent Support Collective**

To a Happy Home,
Jessica Mcilveen



Week 1

It's time to ignite new perspectives!

Welcome to Week 1,

During our childhood we are operating from from the emotion centre (Limbic System) of the brain which involves **NO logical reasoning**.

How many times you have tried to reason or explain ideas to your child/teen, only to have them stare at you blankly or yell back?...my guess is a lot!

Week 1 of this process is all about the difference between 'good' and 'bad' emotions and most importantly, that they are **TEMPORARY**. A scary aspect for children/teens is that they are unaware the anxious feelings will end.

If we highlight this point consistently, we are able to help children/teens feel safe during times of uncertainty.

The most effective time to do this activity with your child/teen is when they are feeling calm, safe and most importantly - not hungry.

Finally, become curious into the mind of your child/teen. This process will create discussion opportunities with them and the reasons why they feel anxious may become clear to you both.

What a wonderful outcome that will be!

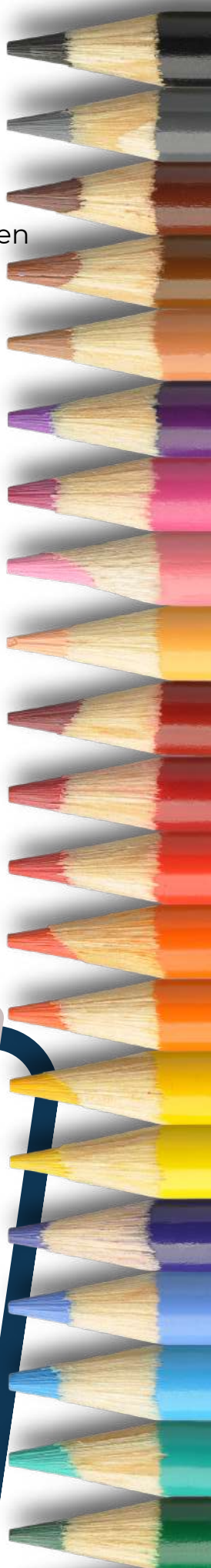
Week
1

Naming 'it'

It's time to let your child/teen ponder on the difference between feeling 'good' and feeling 'bad'. In order to move past the uncomfortable emotions we experience, it is important to first acknowledge they exist.

When I feel good I...

When I feel bad I...



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Week
1

There is an end

A tormenting aspect of emotions is that we feel the 'bad' ones will last forever and we expect the 'good' ones will fade.

Anxiety is reduced when children understand that the 'bad' or uncomfortable emotions do NOT last forever!

How long do my 'GOOD'
feelings last?

How long do my 'BAD'
feelings last?

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Week 2

Let's **EMPOWER** your child/teen!

Take a moment if you will, and think back to a time you felt a true sense of empowerment? Where were you? What were you doing? How did it make you feel? What did you think you could achieve?

Empowerment is such a powerful state of mind and one which we need to help create for children and teens. As adults we can be quick to jump in and solve the problems facing children/teens, however the most helpful thing we can do is take a step back, and **support them to solve the problem themselves.**

In doing so, self-confidence increases, resilience improves, and a sense of empowerment is felt.

Week 2 of this process will help your child/teen see that they have the power to **CHOOSE their thoughts and give them a sense of control OVER their mind.**

In doing this, we can help children/teens to feel safe in their perceived unsafe world and therefore **reduce their anxiety.**

By the way, I think you're amazing for continuing on with this process. I know you probably have washing to do, lunches to pack, dishes to wash and homework to help with, but here you are!

P.S. What comments surprised you in Week-1? Come over to the Facebook group **Parent Support Collective** and share it with us!

Choosing our focus

Chances are, you are someone who has figured out that life does not always place the fluffy white door in front of us to simply walk through to find our 'perfect' life. The **ONLY** aspect we have control over is what we **CHOOSE** to **FOCUS** on.

Print the following page and cut out each sentence. Have your child/teen decide if the thought/emotion is one they want to include (inside the brain) or delete (outside the brain) from their mind.

Once you get the hang of it, you can create your own sentences too - or even better, your child/teen can.

Week
2



1. Mistakes help me learn and grow

2. I think i am a good person

3. I cheer myself up when things get hard

4. I am a mean person

5. Angry

6. I can learn anything

7. I want to feel calm



8. If people say mean things about me, I choose to ignore them

9. I am loving and kind towards my family

10. I am stupid



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Week
2

Name: _____



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Week 3

Setting an Intention

I hope you're as excited about Week-3 as I am!

Fun fact: You are 42% more likely to commit to a task or goal if you write it down....wow right?!
Pens, get ready.

Setting an intention is so powerful for our brains, especially when it's repeated over and over again. One of the biggest learning for me in the last few years has been that our mind does not know what is real or fantasy.

Our mind simply believes whatever it's being told to be true - and the ideas that stay with us throughout our lives are the ones which were repeated, either by us or the people around us when we were young.

We all know what happens when a child is constantly told they are stupid right? **THEY BELIEVE IT.**

You don't need to be a child/teen to do this. If you have a constant limiting belief holding you back in your own life, then write an intention statement to combat this and place it everywhere!

I have them written on mirrors (get that red lippy out you never get to wear), my phone, my fridge and my diary. I even get my family involved and have them say it to me when they feel I'm choosing thoughts that do not serve me in a positive way.

HINT: If you do this **with** your child/teen they are more likely to stick with it.

Week-3 will allow your child/teen to choose their own intention for the day and even better, the week. The more they repeat this statement to themselves, the more they believe it and will become an innate belief.

I can't wait to hear what your child creates!

With a big smile (and no more red lippy),
Jess

Week
3

Setting an intention

Setting a daily intention can help our minds refocus. Ask your child/teen to decide on a wonderful feeling, or an awesome thought for their day.

Parents: SPAM this sentence throughout your child's day. For example, in their lunch box, in a text, next to their bowl at breakfast. They need to read it and say it to themselves at least 5-10 times during their day.



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Week 4

Bedtime YOGA

As you may already know bedtime can be a scary time for anxious children/teens. If there are special needs or trauma to consider, this is especially so.

If children/teens don't feel safe and secure then feeling calm and sleepy will be the last thing they will feel - **this is where a yoga routine will help.**

The trick to transitioning your child/teen from heightened behaviour to feeling calm and ready for bed is to bring their attention/focus inward, which is the aim of yoga.

Week 4 is for your child/teen to begin releasing the built-up tension in their body caused by their anxiety. Once tension begins to release the mind can finally **CALM.**

As children/teens with complex behaviours or needs can find it difficult to communicate, yoga has the ability to create positive change in the mind *through* the body which can **feel less intrusive or scary** than traditional methods such as counselling.

Enjoy this time of relaxation with your child/teen.

With a feeling of Zen,
Jess

Week
4

Bedtime YOGA

Preparation



1. Play relaxing background music, preferably with no words. If you are struggling with this, I can recommend Steve Halpern 'music for inner peace' which can easily be found on YouTube.

2. Dim the lights or leave a soft lamp on.



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Week
4

Reach for the Stars

(adapt if needed as every child/teen is unique, and try doing these movements with them)

1. Seated position

Begin by sitting cross-legged next to your child/teen or facing them. Place hands on your stomach and have your child/teen imagine their belly is a balloon. Ask them to focus on their balloon getting bigger and smaller with their breath.

Repeat this 5 times, SLOWLY.

2. Reaching for the STARS

Reach your hands high above your head with an inhale breath, asking your child to "catch as many stars as you can" and exhale, reaching as far in front as possible and placing their stars in a magical box or just on the ground. Repeat this 3 times.

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Week
4

3. Rainbow side bends

Similar to step 2, reach your hands high above your head with an inhale, and on the exhale, ask your child/teen to paint a rainbow with all the stars they have caught or just lean to each side (if they are too cool for rainbows).

Repeat 2-3 times on each side

4. Sleeping dragonfly/butterfly

Place your feet together so your knees fan outward (butterfly pose). Reach as far forward as you can and take 3 breath's here. If you are facing your child, you may like to hold hands and help each other stretch further.

5. Time to lie down

Lie on your back in 'corpse pose' and have your child/teen place their head on your belly. Take 3-5 breaths here and ask them to feel and focus on your belly going up and down.

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6. Move to bed

Ask your child/teen to move into bed and challenge them to move as slowly as they can and lie on their back, 'corpse pose'.

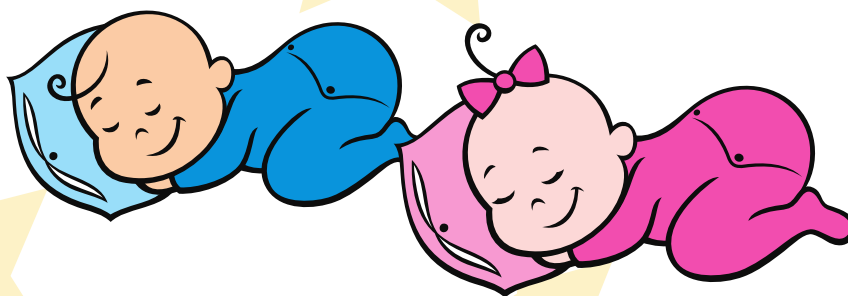
7. Goodnight body

Ask your child/teen to inhale and tense/harden each body part and exhale to release, starting with their legs and finishing with their face.

One the exhale, say goodnight to the body part.

8. Drift off

It's now time for your little, or big one to drift off to sleep.





It's time to breathe!

If you have attended any yoga class you'll know how important mindful breathing is. Using our breath is the **FASTEST** method to influencing our mind and in effect, our bodies.

If you remember from my previous email, I mentioned that our brain doesn't know what is fact or fantasy.

If we breathe slowly and deeply during a time of stress or anxiety, we are essentially tricking our brain to believe we are safe and calm.

If we teach children/teens breathing techniques, their oblivious nature to the 'trick' leaves their mind open to the effects - more so than adults.

Week 5 is for you BOTH...

So, get breathing and enjoy this process together.

With a big exhale,
Jess

Breathing is KEY

Pranayama, the practice of consciously regulating the breath, is one of yoga's most powerful and effective tools for managing stress, anxiety and fear. Teaching children/teens breath awareness and breath control is one of the most effective ways to encourage relaxation and safely regulate their emotions.

For younger children, they can use a bubble making toy if sitting or laying down does not work, and older children can place their hands on their stomach.

1. Take a slow breath in through the nose (for about 4 seconds)
2. Hold your breath for 1 or 2 seconds
3. Exhale slowly through the mouth (over about 4 seconds)
4. Wait 2-3 seconds before taking another breath (5-7 seconds for teens)
5. Repeat for at least 5 to 10 breaths

DON'T FORGET - In order for your child/teen to use this skill in times of anxiety, they need to PRACTICE, PRACTICE PRACTICE!



It's not a race...

This process has been designed so you can go back and re-do the activities as you need. It was also designed so you could tweak it depending on what challenges your child/teen is facing.

If you completed the 5 steps, CONGRATULATIONS!

To a Happy Home,

Jessica Mcilveen
Child Behaviour & Family Dynamic Specialist

P.S: Whenever you're ready to have a calm home and understand your children/teens deeply, there are 2 ways I can help:

1. [JOIN THE PARENT SUPPORT COLLECTIVE FB COMMUNITY](#) where you'll meet other honest & friendly parents. I host a wide range of helpful trainings and events every month.
2. [RECEIVE THE DETAILS ON MY SPECIALISED PROGRAM FOR PARENTS](#) where all of the puzzle pieces come together and we get crystal clear on how to have your child's body send healthy msgs to their brain so they feel happy and calm more often.