TEST ANXIETY

TIPS AND STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS

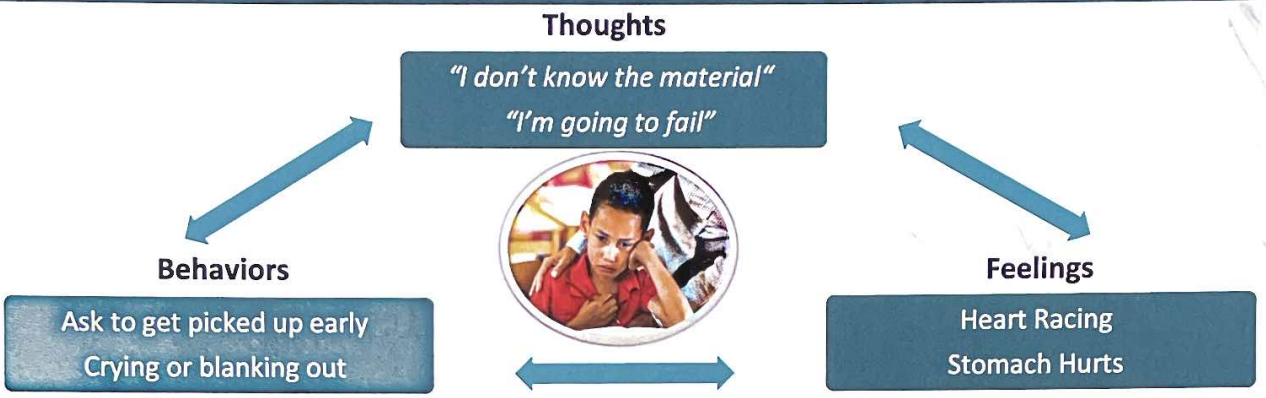
WHAT DOES ANXIETY LOOK LIKE?

Anxiety is made up of 3 parts: Thoughts, Feelings, and Behaviors.

Thoughts are usually negative/exaggerated

Behaviors include avoidance and distress

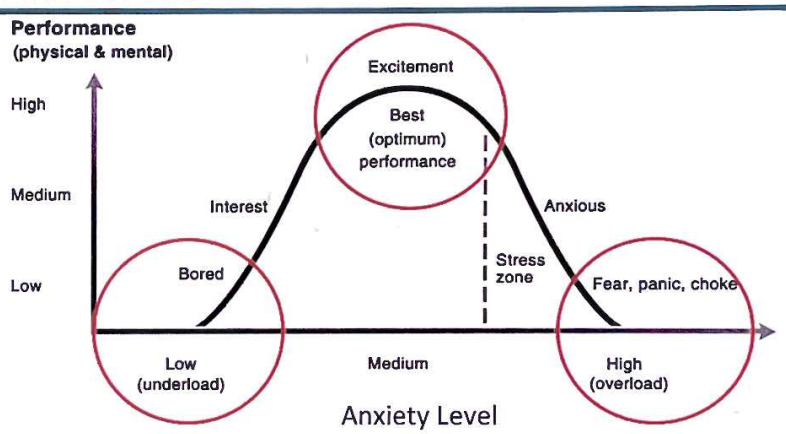
Feelings are usually bodily reactions



HOW DOES ANXIETY AFFECT STUDENT PERFORMANCE?

Anxiety is a necessary emotion:

- When there is **too little** anxiety, students may be unmotivated or disengaged.
- When there is the **right level of anxiety**, it motivates studying.
- When there is **too much anxiety** and we cross the "stress zone", this may make it difficult to study or focus on test-taking.



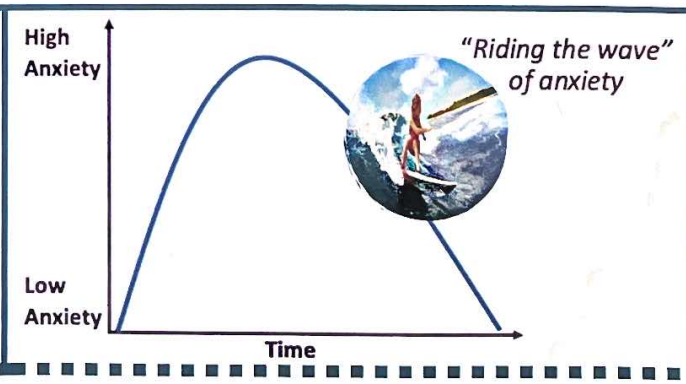
WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT TEST ANXIETY?

Step 1. Show Empathy and Warmth

- **Normalize:** Let children know that they are not the only ones feeling this way.
- **Discuss Coping:** Discuss how you coped with situations that made you nervous.
  - This can include taking deep breaths, coming up with more helpful thoughts.

Step 2. Provide Education About Anxiety

- Encourage facing fears instead of avoiding
  - The more children face their fears, the less anxious they will be over time
- Facing Fears: Riding the Wave of Anxiety
  - Anxiety rises at first when we face fears
  - When we face fears, anxiety comes down like a wave.



Step 3. Addressing the Problem

- Use the 3 Cs to help children manage thoughts
  - **Catch it:** Help children identify negative, scary, or unhelpful thoughts
  - **Check it:** Help children look for evidence for or against their thoughts to determine how realistic they are
  - **Change it:** Identify a realistic outcome or counter-thought

Step 4. Provide Positive Feedback

- Used labeled/specific praises
- Praise effort instead of mastery
  - Praise not checking the clock often rather than getting an A.
- Provide tangible rewards for effort
  - Stickers, school supplies, favorite snack, extra screen time

ADDITIONAL THINGS TO DO AND THINGS TO AVOID

THINGS TO DO

- **Space Out Studying:** The brain is like a muscle, work with children to study a little each day and not all at once
- **Use Practice Tests:** practice testing is an active study process and provides practice for test taking experiences (e.g., timed, no open notes)
- **Promote Sleep:** Creating a positive wind down routine and setting reasonable bedtimes can help reduce anxiety and improve memory

THING TO AVOID

- **Do not allow children to avoid:**
  - Encourage and praise independence
- **Do not excessively reassure:**
  - After the second time, encourage children to use the 3 Cs to manage thoughts
- **Do not guilt them out, or invalidate feelings:**
  - Validate and normalize feelings, then encourage children to gradually face fears
- **Do not compare or single them out**

CLINICAL SERVICES AND RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES AT FIU

EMU Study

- This study aims to uncover the role that sleep plays in processing emotions.
- **Provides compensation.**

305-348-5384

CARLOS Study

- For EMU Study Participants
- Examines how processing of emotions affects CBT response.
- **Provides 12 free CBT sessions.**

305-348-6892

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

- Learn to manage anxiety
- Gradual exposure to feared objects or situations
- Sliding scale clinical services

305-348-1937

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

- The Parent Club! You are not alone - come learn, share, and connect!
- For more information about child anxiety please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- For more information about improving your family's sleep, please visit the Sleep Foundation
- Banyan Health Systems provides integrated health services that bring together specialized care including, psychology, psychiatry, primary care, and pediatrics.

**Any text in green will lead you to a clickable link.

THE CHILDREN'S TRUST Parent Club

LEARN • SHARE • CONNECT

FIU | Center for Children and Families