



STRESS, ANXIETY, AND CHILDREN

PS 174 William Sidney Mount School
May 8, 2019

OBJECTIVES

- Stress
- Morning Stress
- Stress is a Part of Life
 - Types of Stress
 - Stress in Children
 - Symptoms of Stress
 - Frustration
- Anxiety
 - Types of Anxiety
 - Symptoms
- How Adults Can Help
 - Routine
 - Stress Management
 - Words of Wisdom



DEFINITIONS OF STRESS

Stress

- State of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances
- Response to a threat in a situation
- Mental, physical strain condition that occurs when a person must adjust or adapt to the environment





MORNING STRESS

It's 8:00am. Your child have to be at school at 8:20. You've already gotten a warning that your child has been late too often. As you are getting your coat on, your child is taking their time. Their backpack is in their room, their shoes are in the hallway and under the couch, they are still wearing their pjs pants and they have not brushed their teeth. "C'mon now, hurry up or we'll be late" you say, several times, but your child sits on the floor looking at your saying they are tired.

Just then a younger sibling comes up and hits them in the head with their backpack as they are walking by.....



MORNING STRESS

Imagine yourselves in the scenario.

- What physical sensations would you feel?
- What are the first thoughts you would have?
- What emotions are you feeling?
- What actions do you want to take?



MY BOYS.....



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STRESS IS A PART OF LIFE

Some Stress is just unavoidable.

STRESS IS REAL AND IT'S HERE TO STAY

- Stress comes from a primitive part of our brain that tells us to be afraid. So, some fears are worthy and some are not.
- Stress looks forward and backwards to the what if's and I should have's.



TYPES OF STRESS

- There are two types of stress:
 - Eustress (good, motivating)
 - Acute Stress- common form of stress, it is the everyday demands and future pressures. It can be exciting in small doses but exhausting. Events such as homework, school, weddings, presenting in front of people, etc.
 - Distress (bad, hard to cope with)
 - Chronic stress- This is the grinding stress that wears people away day after day, year after year. Chronic stress destroys bodies, minds and lives. It wreaks havoc through long-term attrition. It's the stress of poverty, of dysfunctional families, of being trapped in an unhappy marriage or in a despised job or career. It's the stress that the never-ending "troubles."



STRESS IN CHILDREN

- Discussion: What causes stress in children?
- To think about: What causes stress in your own children?



STRESS IN CHILDREN

- Lots of pressures on kids today
- The majority of stress stems from external situations (difference between children and adults)
- Associated with frustration and nervousness
- What is stressful to one child might not be stressful to another



BIGGEST STRESSORS IN CHILDREN

- Big Changes in Family
- Parental Instability
- Overly Packed Schedules
- Academic Pressure
- Catastrophic Event in the News
- Conflicts in School/Friends
- Popularity (fitting in)
- Bullying
- Fear of Missing Out
- Physical Stressors (weight, appearance, etc)



SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

- Physical symptoms can include:
 - Decreased appetite, other changes in eating habits
 - Headache
 - New or recurrent bedwetting
 - Nightmares
 - Sleep disturbances
 - Upset stomach or vague stomach pain
 - Other physical symptoms with no physical illness
- Emotional or behavioral symptoms may include:
 - Anxiety, worry
 - Not able to relax
 - New or recurring fears (fear of the dark, fear of being alone, fear of strangers)
 - Clinging, unwilling to let you out of sight
 - Anger, crying, whining
 - Not able to control emotions
 - Aggressive or stubborn behavior
 - Going back to behaviors present at a younger age
 - Doesn't want to participate in family or school activities



THE BIG FEELING WITH CHILDREN: FRUSTRATION

- Negative emotional state that occurs when one is prevented from reaching desired goals
- It can be external frustration or internal frustration
- The feeling of “AAARRRRRRGGGH!”
- A good emotion because when we get frustrated, we are motivated to remove the obstacle that is blocking our path toward our goals.



Reactions to Frustrations

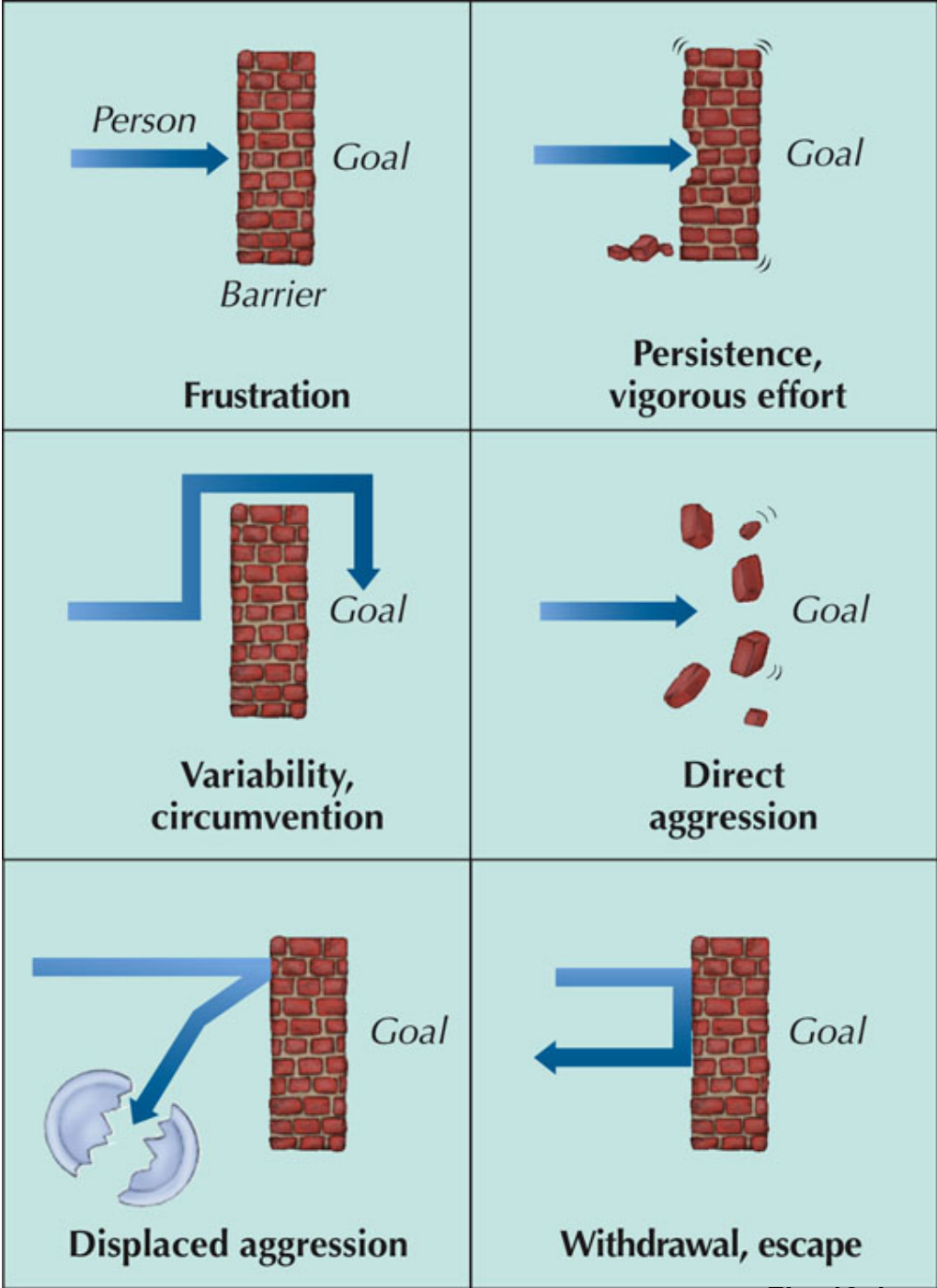


Fig. 13-4, p. 436

ANXIETY AND STRESS: THE DIFFERENCE

- “With stress, we know what’s worrying us, but with anxiety you become less aware of *what* you’re anxious about [in the moment] and the reaction comes the problem. You start to feel anxious about being anxious”
- Comes from a place of fear, unease, and worry



ANXIETY

- A state of apprehension or worry about a danger or threat that might occur
- Brain based-fight/flight system is activated
- Sense of helplessness
- Most common mental health problem of childhood and adolescence
- More girls than boys



WHY IT HAPPENS

- Environmental – witnessing a traumatic event/having a traumatic experience/watching another child be scared
- During life changes/transitions-death in the family, illness, recent move, new school, birth of sibling, etc.
- Biological-genetic predisposition- studies have shown children are more likely to develop an anxiety disorder if their parents have anxiety disorders



ANXIETY DISORDERS THAT AFFECT CHILDREN

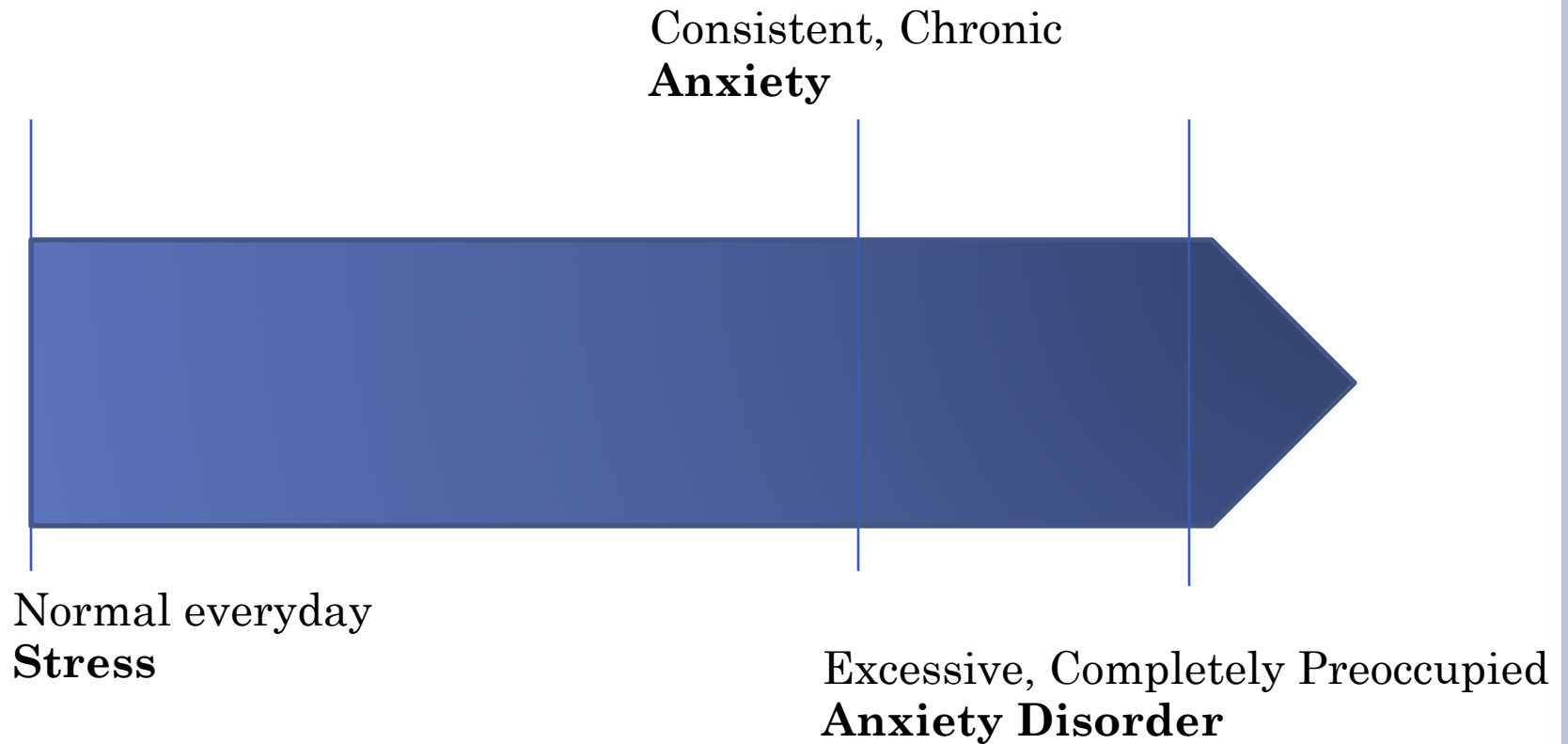
Anxiety Disorder	Symptoms
Separation Anxiety Disorder	These kids not only won't spend the night with a friend or family member without their parents, they want someone with them until they fall asleep; difficulty staying long periods of time with familiar adults such as : Family members or a babysitter. The level of anxiety is inappropriate for their age.
Social Anxiety Disorder	A strong fear of social situations, being the focus of attention and/or being around unfamiliar people. afraid to talk in class, meet new people or even walk through a crowded room. It is far beyond just being shy.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Disinterest in favorite extracurricular activities
- Problems at school and losing interest in school
- Substance abuse, including alcohol and drug (illegal and legal drugs) use
- Behavioral problems
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Sleep changes
- Changes in eating habits
- Begins to neglect hygiene and other matters of personal appearance
- Emotional distress brings on physical complaints (aches, fatigues, migraines)
- Hard time concentrating and paying attention
- Declining grades in school
- Loss of interest in schoolwork
- Risk taking behaviors
- Complains more frequently of boredom
- Does not respond as before to praise
- Changing friend groups
- Isolating from friends and family



STRESS VERSUS ANXIETY VERSUS ANXIETY DISORDER



PLEASE DO NO SELF DIAGNOSIS. PLEASE SEEK ASSISTANCE!

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HOW CAN THE ADULTS HELP?

IT'S ALL ABOUT ROUTINE

When children don't know what to expect
OR if too much of their day is filled with unstructured activities, it can cause feelings of anxiety and resistance.

- Children feel a sense of 'safety' when they know what to expect at various points during their day.
- Getting used to a particular routine means they know what to expect and could lead to less resistance when it's time to start their day.



STRESS MANAGEMENT TOOLS

- Sleep
- Eat right
- Avoid caffeine
- Exercise
- Music
- Relaxation techniques
- Prayer/spirituality
- Set priorities
- Study smarter, not harder
- Planning/organization
- Compartmentalizing



HOW TO TALK TO YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT ANXIETY

- Talk privately and tell them you notice something is bothering him/her
- Listen attentively/calmly to what is wrong
- Validate feelings & label them if appropriate
- Involve the child in the solution – help them brainstorm things that might help
- Be patient – just being there helps



WORDS OF WISDOM

- Validation
 - I hear you saying you feel really sad.
 - That sounds very painful.
- Ask open-ended questions
 - Have you ever felt really frustrated?
 - How long have you felt that way?
 - Has this happened before? How long did it last?
- Be in contact with your child's therapist and psychiatrist
- Get therapy for yourself
 - Sending only the kid gives them the message: "I am broken, and they want this therapist to fix me."
 - It is hard to watch your kids struggle!



FOOD FOR THOUGHT...

- Where do we think that children learn to manage/ handle stress from?
- QUESTIONS? THANK YOU!

