

ANXIETY REDUCTION TECHNIQUES  
FOR PARENTS  
AMID THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

CBH

Kimberly Citron, PhD

ANXIETY REDUCTION FOR  
PARENTS



# THE IMPORTANCE OF A MASK

- Literal
- Metaphorical

VIRAL

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Validate

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Intellectualize

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Relaxation / Recreation

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Affiliation / Approximation

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Learn skills for coping



# VALIDATE

- This is an unprecedented, difficult time.
- We are mostly confined to our homes and those who are not are out in the community exposed to the virus.
- People are adjusting to working from home during a pandemic, which is distinguished from our typical notions of 'working from home', as well as homeschooling their children during a pandemic, not in the typical voluntary manner in which people chose to homeschool.
- People are isolated from family, friends and co-workers.
- It is okay to validate that this does not feel okay.
- When we minimize, belittle or invalidate our own feelings, it can lead to greater feelings of depression, anxiety and inadequacy. So acknowledge your emotions, feel them, lean on others for support and learn coping strategies for those emotions.

# INTELLECTUALIZE



Like many coping strategies, intellectualization can be both a coping strategy as well as a cognitive distortion, when misused.



It is important that we intellectualize on some level, because it helps us to be logical and to avoid emotionally-driven decision-making.



By thinking with our logical or rational brain, we obtain the necessary amount of reliable, valid information to make well-informed decisions.



We want to limit the sources of information to those that are deemed accurate and reliable such as the CDC.



However, we do not want to obsess about statistics and figures presented in the media more so than is necessary to make reasonable, well informed decisions.

# RELAXATION / RECREATION



It is important that we take out time specifically for relaxation and recreation.



Relaxation techniques can include mindfulness, meditation, yoga, listening to music or taking a walk.



Recreation can take the form of more rigorous physical activity such as having a catch or playing basketball with healthy family members only, going hiking on a trail that is not heavily populated, running or riding a bicycle.



Recreation can also include activities such as board games, puzzles, reading, watching a movie, scrapbooking, baking or cooking.



It is imperative that we not go from working at home during a pandemic to homeschooling during a pandemic to watching the news about the pandemic.



It is essential to our well-being that we integrate activities for relaxation and recreation for ourselves, as well as for our children.



# AFFILIATION

- Human beings require affiliation and connection with other human beings (as well as our furry friends, chirping friends and squirming friends!)
- It is important that we maintain a sense of connection with others during this time of social distancing.
- Connections within a family are important, as well as outside of your family.
- Take time out to connect with individual family members as well as the entire family.
- In families with multiple siblings, break up into pairs or groups for certain activities, and switch who people are paired with regularly. Each parent should spend some time individually with each child, regardless of family size.
- Make sure that you are also connecting with extended family members such as grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. Finally, be sure to connect with your friends and co-workers as well as these relationships are important sources of outside support.
- Share the challenges they are experiencing with this process as well as the successes.
- Normalize the struggle for those who might not be doing as well.

# APPROXIMATION



Approximation refers to making close approximations to the activities that you enjoyed prior to the pandemic and associated social distancing.



It is beneficial for our mental health to create as close approximations as possible to our previous sources of enjoyment and pleasure.



For instance, if you enjoyed getting manicures, paint your own nails ; If you enjoy playing saxophone in a band hop on a zoom meeting and have a jam session with your bandmates.



As much as possible, try to integrate close approximations of your normal routine into your day.



It will keep you feeling more like yourself and will allow you to continue to access sources of enjoyment.

## LEARN SKILLS FOR COPING

Thought  
Stopping

Thought  
Switching

Mindfulness

Meditation

Artistic  
expression

Coping  
skills toolkit

# THOUGHT STOPPING

Visualize a STOP sign

Individualize STOP sign

- Buy In
- Cognitive Load

# THOUGHT SWITCHING



## Counting

Forward  
Backward  
Subtracting 7's from 100



## Reciting Alphabet



## Song Lyrics



## Recipe



## CBT Based Thought Replacement

## GUIDED IMAGERY

“Happy  
Place”

Visualizing  
success

Visualizing  
positive past  
experiences

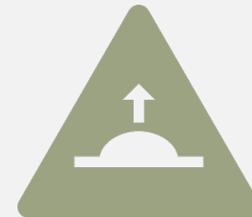
# GRADUAL EXPOSURE



Hierarchy of anxiety provoking situations



Coping skills



Gradual increase in type, duration and intensity of exposure

# MINDFULNESS



**Enhanced Awareness**



**Deliberate reflection**



**Importance of engaging  
senses**



**Useful tools**

Citrus fruit

Scented candle or diffuser rod

Objects found in nature: Rock, Flower  
Petal, Branch

Experience of nature

# MEDITATION:



**Body scan meditation.** Lie on your back with your legs extended and arms at your sides, palms facing up. Focus your attention slowly and deliberately on each part of your body, in order, from toe to head or head to toe. Be aware of any sensations, emotions or thoughts associated with each part of your body.



**Sitting meditation.** Sit comfortably with your back straight, feet flat on the floor and hands in your lap. Breathing through your nose, focus on your breath moving in and out of your body. If physical sensations or thoughts interrupt your meditation, note the experience and then return your focus to your breath.



**Walking meditation.** Find a quiet place 10 to 20 feet in length, and begin to walk slowly. Focus on the experience of walking, being aware of the sensations of standing and the subtle movements that keep your balance. When you reach the end of your path, turn and continue walking, maintaining awareness of your sensations.



## COPING SKILLS TOOLKIT

- An individualized Toolkit can be made for each class or each student to assist with coping with feelings of anxiety
- Items to include in a toolkit can include:
  - Coping skills cards
  - Positive affirmations
  - Putty
  - Stress ball
  - Kaleidoscope
  - Pinwheel
  - Pencil grips
  - Fidget
  - Stretch bands

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THANK YOU

- Be well and take good care of yourselves!
- Seek support if you feel you need help
- We are here if you need us!