MANAGING STRESS AND ANXIETY DURING COVID-19

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Learning Agenda

- Understand and identify anxiety

- Review differences and overlaps of stress and anxiety

- Learn strategies to calm your body & mind

- Explore lifestyle changes to manage stress and anxiety

- Learn to support our children during this time

- Review Resources

Anxiety & Stress

- Managing stress and anxiety is an important tool for every day life

- Anxiety can be the result of stressful situations and/or clinical disorders.

- Stress and anxiety can overlap, but differ in the duration and intensity.

- This resource is intended to provide tools to manage every day anxiety and stress, as well as coping during stressful life events, such as COVID-19.
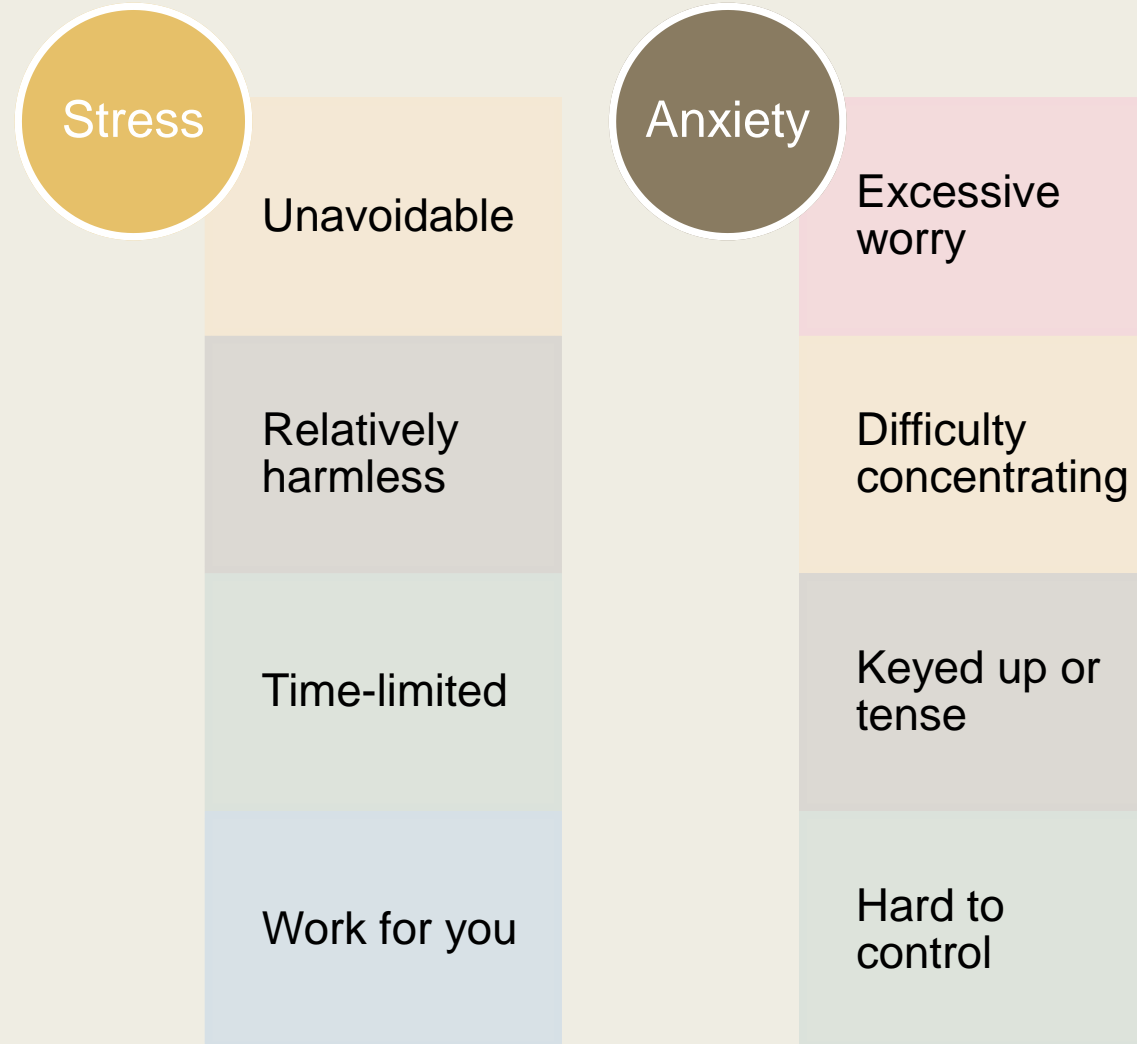
Stress & Anxiety During Life Events:

■ Stress symptoms during life events, such as COVID-19, can include:

■ Current challenges you may be experiencing at home:

General Stress vs. Anxiety

Stress

- Unavoidable
- Relatively harmless
- Time-limited
- Work for you

Anxiety

- Excessive worry
- Difficulty concentrating
- Keyed up or tense
- Hard to control

How do you know when you're stressed or anxious?

Identifying Anxiety

- Scaling helps you identify warning signs and implement earlier interventions to prevent increased anxiety

- Start to think about your own triggers and exceptions to anxious situations.
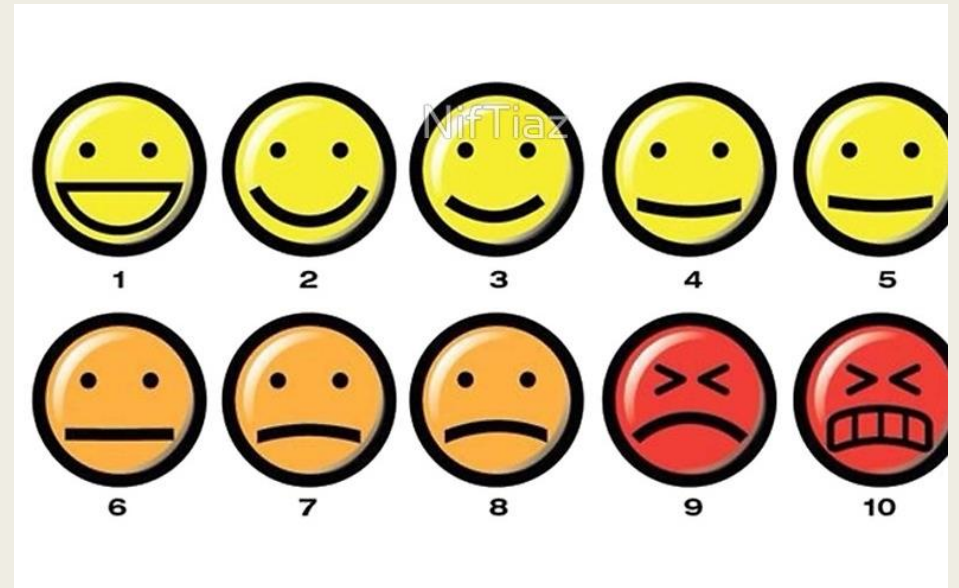
Mind-Body connection: Fight or Flight

Physical Symptoms

- Racing Heart
- Sweaty Hands
- Feeling Flushed
- Light-headed
- Shortness of Breath
- Tingling Sensations
- Tense muscles

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Diaphragm Breathing

How do we calm our bodies?

Breathing techniques

- Avoid shallow breathing and move to belly/diaphragm breathing.

Grounding exercises

- Activities that allow you to become more present in the moment and shift your focus from stressful events.
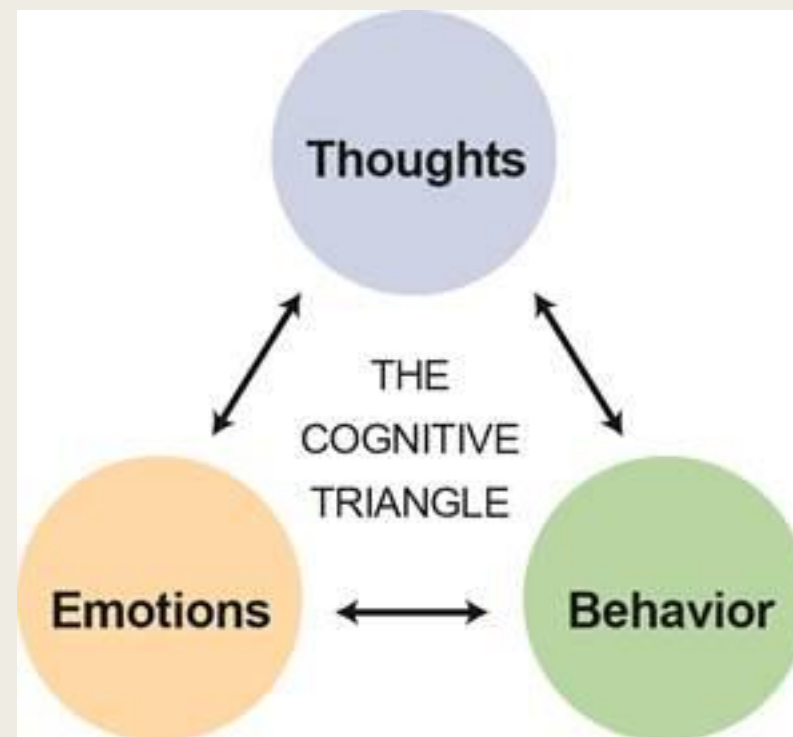
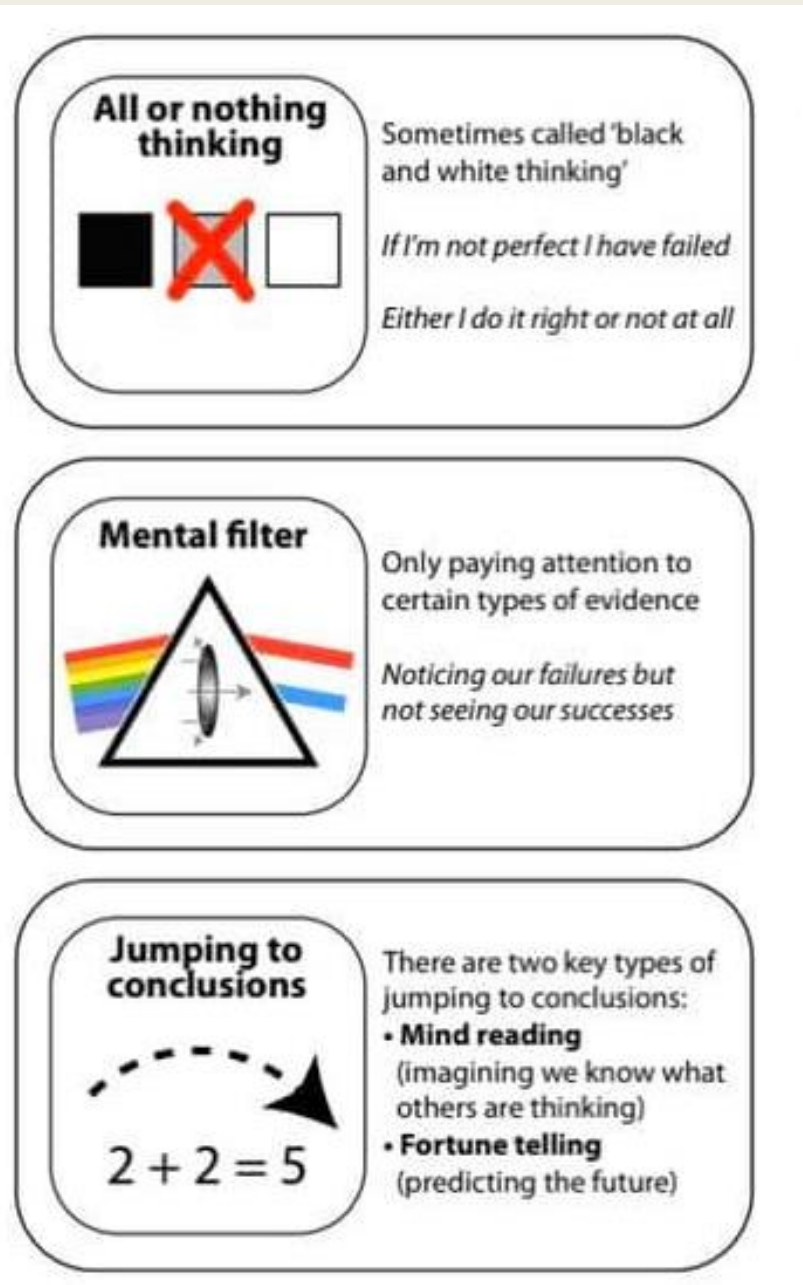*The goal here is to become less reactive.*

Cognitive Piece

- Thoughts impact feelings and actions
- Automatic thoughts become hard-wired
  - *Neural plasticity*
  - *Train the brain to rewire*

The Cognitive Triangle: Thoughts, Emotions, Behavior

All or nothing thinking

Sometimes called 'black and white thinking'

If I'm not perfect I have failed

Either I do it right or not at all

Mental filter

Only paying attention to certain types of evidence

Noticing our failures but not seeing our successes

Jumping to conclusions

There are two key types of jumping to conclusions:
- **Mind reading** (imagining we know what others are thinking)
- **Fortune telling** (predicting the future)

$2 + 2 = 5$

Cognitive Distortions: Unhelpful thinking styles

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How do we work with our thoughts?

1. Catch the thought

2. Control it

3. Challenge it

4. Change it

Anxiety is like a small fire...

We can either fuel it or contain it.

Triad of Health

EAT · SLEEP · EXERCISE

Techno-Stress

■ Describes stress related to the use of internet and electronics.

■ It can be caused by daily use of computer technology.

■ Find ways to get off-line and engage in other forms of healthy self-care activities.

CDC-Recommended activities to support yourself during times of stress

■ Take a break from the news and social media

■ Care for your body through sleep, diet, exercise, meditation

■ Unwind by engaging in activities you enjoy

■ Connect and talk with others – express your concerns and talk about how you're feeling

■ Engage in fun activities with your family that do not involve talking about the current pandemic

Kids and Anxiety

- Increase in behaviors
  - *Physical Behaviors – hitting, kicking, biting, tantrums*
  - *Self-Injurious Behaviors*
  - *Sleep Difficulties*
  - *Increased Stimming, Rocking, Hand-Flapping*
- Need for Sameness or Routines
- Expanded Obsessions or Rituals, especially around COVID-19

Tips to support your children during this time

- Try to keep or develop a daily routine or schedule – visual schedules are great!

- Consider your environmental arrangement – different activity zones

- Set technology limits

- Limit your own conversation about COVID-19

- Validate your children's feelings and experiences

- Continue to work with service providers

- Use your network

And now to illustrate some self-care...

Find unique ways to de-stress:

Ask for what you need:

You're not alone: Let others support and comfort you (even if it's via FaceTime right now)

Resources

- [Managing COVID-19 Related Stress](#)

- [Finding Local Resources for Mental Health](#)

- [Ventura County Online Support Groups](#)

- [LA County Support Resources](#)

- [Meditations/Calming Activities for Adults & Kids](#)

- [Grounding Exercises](#)

- [WHO Mental Health Considerations](#)

- [Ways to Stay Connected during COVID-19](#)

- [1-Minute Mindfulness](#)

- [Easterseals Programs](#)

References

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