D3: Reducing Anxiety Across the Tiers

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May Institute
AGENDA

- Overview of anxiety
- Anxiety and PBIS
- Anxiety in Tier 1
- Anxiety in Tier 2
- Anxiety in Tier 3
- Interconnected Systems Framework
Acronyms

- PBIS = positive behavior interventions and supports
- MTSS = multi-tiered systems of supports
- ISF = interconnected systems framework
- SEB = social-emotional behavior
- SEL = social-emotional learning
- CBT = cognitive behavioral therapy
- CBI = cognitive-behavioral interventions
- EBP’s = evidence-based practices
- ADHD = attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
- FBA = functional behavior assessment
- BSP = behavior support plan (or BIP - behavior interventional plan)
- CICO = check-in, check-out
- ODR = office discipline referral
Activity

- **How would you define anxiety?** What do you think anxiety looks like?

https://youtu.be/nCgm1xQa06c
Worrier Pose

Am I doing this right?
Am I doing anything right?
What is my life's purpose?
Is everyone looking at me?
Am I happy?
What do I want?
Do my boobs look weird in this top?
Should I get chips for dinner?
What is anxiety?

- Anxiety is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes such as increased blood pressure.

- Everyone experiences it. It is essential for survival, and prepares our bodies for the “fight or flight” instinct.

- 1 in 13 people have it chronically, only 1/3 gets treatment.

- Most common and pervasive mental disorder in the nation.
## What Fight or Flight Looks Like in the Classroom

### (Fostering Resilient Learners)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flight</th>
<th>Fight</th>
<th>Freeze</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawing</td>
<td>Acting out</td>
<td>Exhibiting numbness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fleeing the classroom</td>
<td>Behaving aggressively</td>
<td>Refusing to answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipping class</td>
<td>Acting silly</td>
<td>No action to get needs met</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daydreaming</td>
<td>Verbal refusal</td>
<td>Giving a blank look</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seeming to sleep</td>
<td>Appearing hyperactive</td>
<td>Feeling unable to move/act</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avoiding others</td>
<td>Arguing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hiding or wandering</td>
<td>Screaming/yelling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Becoming disengaged</td>
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</table>
Thoughts
What is going through the child's mind?

Feelings
What is the child feeling? What are the physical symptoms?

Behaviors
What does the child do? How does s/he respond or cope?

ANXIETY
Children Can Struggle With:

- Separation Anxiety
- Social Anxiety
- Selective Mutism
- Generalized Anxiety
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Specific Phobias
- Who does it effect?
- How soon does anxiety start?
- How does it vary across age ranges?
Comorbid Disorders

- Bipolar disorder
- Eating disorders
- Headaches
- Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
- Sleep disorders
- Substance abuse
- ADHD
- Body dysmorphic disorder
- Chronic pain
Symptoms

- Inattention and restlessness
- Attendance problems and clinginess
- Trouble answering questions or with participation
- Frequent trips to the nurse
- Not turning in work
- Avoiding socialization or group work
- Disruptive Behavior
Disruptive Behavior

- Disruptive behavior is often generated by unrecognized anxiety.

- A child who appears to be oppositional or aggressive may be reacting to anxiety.

- Children cannot always articulate effectively, or even fully recognize what they are feeling.

- Remember the fight or flight instinct?
Defining Internalizing Behavior

What do we mean when we say a child is anxious, depressed, or socially withdrawn?

What we see:
- Crying
- Somatic complaints
- Negative self-talk statements
- Asking for frequent breaks
- Wandering the halls

What we don’t see:
- Lack of participation
- Social withdrawal
- Failure to begin or complete tasks
- School refusal/absences
- Inattention/daydreaming
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedents/Triggers</th>
<th>Events that occur prior to behavior</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students may react to stimuli that have previously been paired with trauma or anxiety-provoking events</td>
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<tr>
<td>Examples:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>o Transitions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Touch/proximity</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>o Tone of voice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Nonverbal cues (furrowed brows, arms crossed)</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consequences</th>
<th>Events that predictably follow behavior</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internalizing behavior is maintained by escape or avoidance of unpleasant events (Weist et al., 2018) however, these events can be internal states or individual student perception</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Students may withdraw to avoid:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Internal states/feelings related to anxiety/fear</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>o Obsessive/dysmorphic/intrusive thoughts</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>o Social disapproval (actual or perceived)</td>
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“The trouble is that when kids who are anxious become disruptive they push away the very adults who they need to help them feel secure. And instead of learning to manage their anxiety, they end up spending half the day in the principal’s office.” - Dr. Nancy Rappaport, Harvard Medical School
So What Can We Do?

- PBIS! By implementing the core features of PBIS, we can create a more stable and predictable school environment, and features that promote healthy social and emotional functioning.

- PBIS = Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports
Purpose of PBIS

...to make schools more effective and equitable learning environments for ALL students.
Anxiety in the Tiers

Tier 1 - Supports for ALL

Tier 2 - Supports for few

Tier 3 - Individualized supports
Tier 1: Supports for All
Tier 1

Through PBIS, schools should have clear and consistent behavioral guidelines.

Positive perceptions of the school climate (including perceived order, safety, and equitable discipline) can be a protective factor.
Tier 1 Implementation

- Create a safe, predictable, & consistent environment
- Replace inappropriate behaviors with skills
- Establish & strengthen relationships
- Replaces subjectivity with data driven decision making

Overview: Tier 1 Team Training
Teaching, practicing, and reinforcing social, emotional, and behavioral skills at Tier 1 helps to prevent challenging behavior and creates a strong foundation for students who need more intensive support.
The Foundation

- Maintain usual routines and clearly communicate those routines to students
- Set clear limits and develop logical, rather than punitive, consequences
- Support all children to feel safe physically, socially, emotionally, and academically
- Provide advanced notice of changes from the normal routine
- Address students' needs in wholistic ways, taking into account their individual strengths and physical and emotional well-being
When staff notice students struggling

1. Do a self-check (e.g., feelings thermometer)
2. Practice calming breaths
3. Take a movement break
4. Give additional advanced notice of transitions
Tier 2: Supports for Few
Teaching Social Emotional Behavioral Competencies

**Teaching self-regulation routines/strategies**
- Focused breathing
- Moving to another space to regulate

**Skills-based groups**
- Self-identification of thoughts/feelings in real time
- Identifying the feeling of perceived threat
- Social skills for forming and strengthening relationships with adults and peers

**Self-monitoring**
- Identifying and adjusting appropriately
Self-Management

- What does it look like?
  - Work Completion/on-task behavior
  - Class participation
  - Initiation to/reciprocal interactions with peers and adults

- How to get there?
  - Positive self-talk
  - Self check-ins
  - Use of regulation strategies
Check-In Check-Out

- Key elements
  - Regular feedback and acknowledgement from adults
  - Regular home-school communication
  - Daily performance data used to evaluate progress
  - Self-monitoring

Research has shown adaptations of formal check-in check-out to be effective for improving academic and social behavior for students with internalizing behavior difficulties.

(Kladis et al., 2020)
Check-In Check-Out Adaptations

- **Increases:**
  - Active listening
  - Seeking help
  - Participation

- **Tools:**
  - Cognitive-behavioral strategies
  - Peer-mediation with older students

(Dart et al., 2015; Hunter et al., 2014; Kladis, 2020; Mitchel et al., 2020)
Tier 3: Individualized Supports
Tier 3: Individualized Supports

• Tier 3 is for students who require individualized supports

• As with externalizing behavior, interventions to address internalizing challenges at Tier 3 are based on defining the behavioral function (Crone et al., 2015)

• What is the student communicating through their behavior? What is the behavior telling us?

• Using Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) to help design an individualized intervention:
  • Define the challenging behavior
  • Understand the context
  • Identify the events that predictably follow the behavior
Functions of Behavior

• Escape - A behavior to avoid something they do not like
• Attention - A behavior to gain access to teacher attention
• Tangible – A behavior to gain access to an item or activity
• Sensory – A behavior that physically feels good or relieves something that feels bad

• What is the function of the anxiety? For most, it is the escape. Escaping uncomfortable thoughts or experiences.
Functions of Behavior – Example

Example
It is Mary’s turn to do her presentation in front of the class. Mary places her head on her desk and says she is not feeling well. The teacher sends Mary out of the classroom to see the nurse.

★ Define the Behavior
  ○ Mary puts head on desk and verbally says she does not feel well

★ Understand the Context
  ○ Mary is asked to present in front of the class

★ Events that follow the behavior
  ○ Mary can escape the presentation
Identifying the Function of Internalizing Behavior: Expanding our Scope

- Identifying the Function of Internalizing Behavior: Expanding our Scope
- Additional sources of data
  - More in-depth interviews
    - Under what conditions is the student successful, and engaged?
    - Peer Interaction?
    - Extra-curricular activities? Activities outside of school?
    - How does the student respond to corrective academic feedback?
    - Precursor behaviors?
  - Screening data (e.g., Student Risk Screening Scale, SSRS)
  - Parent Interviews
    - Does the student struggle at home and in the community?
    - Help in identifying ways to increase home-school communication
  - Student interview/perspective
  - Direct observation across multiple contexts
    - Positive/negative interactions, peer initiations.
Using FBAs to develop Behavior Support Plans

The primary goal of an FBA is to use information gathered through the assessment process to build a function-based individualized behavior support plan (BSP) designed to:

● Arrange the context to Prevent challenging behavior
  ○ Modify triggers and prompt desired behavior

● Teach new skills to increase student success and make challenging behavior unnecessary
  ○ Replacement behavior and desired skills
● Reinforce the use of replacement and desired skills
  ○ Minimize rewards following challenging behavior
Prevention Strategies

- Enhancing Predictability & Supporting Self-Regulation - Examples
  - Provide individualized copy of daily schedule
    - Schedule self-check-ins throughout the day
    - Include time in schedule for regulation strategies (e.g., walk and talk)
    - Consider adding people involved in activity on schedule
  - Allow extra space (e.g., around desk, lining-up, or cafeteria)
  - Strategic seating arrangements (e.g., easy exit route, not next to student who fidgets)
  - Advance notice/prompt before transitions
  - Provide student with a role/job when entering a new situation
Teaching SEB Competencies

● Teaching self-regulation routines/strategies
  ○ Focused breathing
  ○ Moving to another space to regulate

● Skills-based groups
  ○ Self-identification of thoughts/feelings in real time
  ○ Identifying the feeling of perceived threat
  ○ Social skills for forming, strengthening relationships with adults and peers

● Self-monitoring/management strategies
  ○ Positive self-talk opportunities
  ○ Identifying physiological state
  ○ Use of regulation strategies
Replacement Strategies got Students with Anxiety

● A replacement behavior is a positive alternative behavior that allows a student to obtain the same outcome
  ○ For example, a student who has anxiety and trying to escape something in their environment may ask for a break to self-calm

● Examples of replacement behaviors for anxiety
  ○ Self-regulation calming strategies
  ○ Thought stopping/thought interruption-positive psychology- replacing negative thoughts with positive replacement thoughts
Evidence-Based Curriculums To Address Anxiety

Examples of EBP
- Face your Fears Program
- Strong Kids
- Build Your Confidence
- Coping Cat
- Think Good Feel Good

What Works Clearinghouse
- Provides trusted information about the effectiveness of educational interventions and includes SEB information
Accommodations

- Emotional Thermometer
- Visual of expectations
- Change the environment
- Schedule
- Break pass
- Homework limits
Provide Professional Development in Identifying Internalizing Problems

- As a field, this is an area that needs more work.
- Schools typically identify students who need support by monitoring ODR’s (office discipline referrals) but these reflect EXTERNALIZING behavior.
- There is no consistent way as of now to screen for internalizing behavior, other than rating scales.
Current Screening Tools for Anxiety

- Screening for Child Anxiety and Related Disorders (SCARED)
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 Point Scale (GAD)
- Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale (IUS)
- Spence Children’s Anxiety Scale (SCAS)
- Revised Children’s Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS)
SEL Curriculums for Anxiety

- Coping Cat
- Strong Kids
- MATCH
- Reaching New Heights
- First Step to Success
- ERASE-ESPS
- Building Confidence
- Anxiety Workbook for Teens
- The Incredible Years
Defining Mental Health

"Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being.

It affects how we **think, feel, and act**.

It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices.

Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood."
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social</th>
<th>How we <strong>connect</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>How we <strong>feel</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral</td>
<td>How we <strong>act</strong></td>
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Why School-Based Supports?

Doll et al. (2017) identify 5 main benefits of school-based mental health supports:

1) Increased access to supports due to being free/reduced price and offered within school buildings
2) Onsite professionals/experts in mental health are employed by schools and can work easily in schools. Students get access to supports that they need from qualified providers.
3) Family familiarity with schools can be more comfortable for students and families. There can be less stigma if the services are provided at school.
4) School-based allows professionals to see challenging behaviors in the classrooms in real time, observe interventions, and gain first-hand knowledge of needs
5) Schools provide immediate and daily access to students, teachers, service providers. Easy to collaborate and integrate services between school and community

Spotlight 1: Prevalence of Mental Health Services Provided by Public Schools and Limitations in Schools’ Efforts to Provide Mental Health Services
How do we connect MTSS/PBIS with School Based Mental Health?
**Interconnected Systems Framework for School Mental Health**

**Tier 3: Intensive Interventions for Few**
*Individual Student and Family Supports*
- Systems Planning team coordinates decision rules/referrals for this level of service and progress monitors
- Individual team developed to support each student
- Individual plans may have array of interventions/services
- Plans can range from one to multiple life domains
- System in place for each team to monitor student progress

**Tier 2: Early Intervention for Some**
*Coordinated Systems for Early Detection, Identification, and Response to Mental Health Concerns*
- Systems Planning Team identified to coordinate referral process, decision rules and progress monitor impact of intervention
- Array of services available
- Communication system for staff, families and community
- Early identification of students who may be at risk for mental health concerns due to specific risk factors
- Skill-building at the individual and groups level as well as support groups
- Staff and Family training to support skill development across settings

**Tier 1: Universal/Prevention for All**
*Coordinated Systems, Data, Practices for Promoting Healthy Social and Emotional Development for ALL Students*
- School Improvement team gives priority to social and emotional health
- Mental Health skill development for students, staff, families and communities
- Social Emotional Learning curricula for all students
- Safe & caring learning environments
- Partnerships between school, home and the community
- Decision making framework used to guide and implement best practices that consider unique strengths and challenges of each school community
Interconnected Systems Framework

- Deliberate application of the multi-tiered PBIS Framework for all social-emotional-behavioral (SEB) interventions (e.g., Mental Health, Social Emotional Instruction, Trauma-Informed Practices, Bully Prevention)
- Aligning all SEB related initiatives through **one system** at the state/regional, district, and school level
- Active participation of Family and Youth as a central feature
Need to blend resources, training, systems, data, and practices to improve outcomes for youth. Critically look at outcomes rather than simply the intervention.

Prevention and early identification, not just reactionary practices

Interventions are contextualized to the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of the students and community

Family and community partner involvement is prioritized and promoted
1) Effective teams that include community health providers and stakeholders
2) Data-based decision making that includes school data beyond ODRs and community data
3) Formal process for the selection and evaluation of evidence-based practices implemented across tiers with team decision making
4) Early access through comprehensive screening for internalizing and externalizing behaviors
5) Rigorous progress monitoring for both fidelity and effectiveness across tiers and interventions
6) Ongoing coaching at systems and practices level for school and community employees
Benefits of ISF

Benefits of Intentional Interconnecting...

- Uncovering students with mental health needs earlier
- Linking students and families to evidence-based interventions
- Data tracking system to ensure youth receiving interventions are showing improvement
- Expanded roles for clinicians to support adults as well as students across all tiers of support
- Healthier school environment
ISF Resources

- MH Integration (midwestpbis2.org)
- Center on PBIS | Resource: The Interconnected Systems Framework 201: When School Mental Health is Integrated within a Multi-tiered System of Support
- Mental Health/Social-Emotional Well-Being (pbis.org)
Teaching Social-Emotional Competencies within a PBIS Framework

Susan Barrett, Mid-Atlantic PBIS Network
Lucille Eber, Midwest PBIS Network
Kent McIntosh, University of Oregon
Kelly Perales, Midwest PBIS Network
Natalie Romer, University of South Florida

https://www.pbis.org/resource/teaching-social-emotional-competencies-within-a-pbis-framework


Buhr, K., & Dugas, M.J. (2002). The intolerance of uncertainty scale: Psychometric properties of the English version. *Behaviour Research and Therapy, 40*(8), 931-945. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0005-7967(01)00092-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0005-7967(01)00092-4)


