Reducing Anxiety Across the Tiers
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The 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 intervention plan)
- CICO = check-in, check-out
- ODR = office discipline referral
What is Anxiety?
How would you define anxiety? What does anxiety look like?

https://youtu.be/nCgm1xQa06c

What is Anxiety?
WORRIER ONE

WILL I BE OK?
AND ALL THE DOGS?

WORRIER TWO

WILL MY FAMILY BE OK?
AND MY FRIENDS?

WORRIER THREE

WILL THE WORLD BE OK?

REVERSE WORRIER

SHOULD I HAVE PEANUT BUTTER CUPS FOR LUNCH?
Anxiety is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes such as increased blood pressure.

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

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

Most common and pervasive mental disorder in the nation.
# The Stress Response in Kids

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Fight</strong></th>
<th><strong>Flight</strong></th>
<th><strong>Freeze</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yelling, Screaming, Using Mean Words</td>
<td>Wanting to Escape, Running Away</td>
<td>Shutting Down, Mind Goes Blank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitting, Kicking, Biting, Throwing, Punching</td>
<td>Unfocused, Hard to Pay Attention</td>
<td>Urge to Hide, Isolates Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaming, Deflecting Responsibility, Defensive</td>
<td>Fidgeting, Restlessness, Hyperactive</td>
<td>Verbally Unresponsive, Says, “I don’t know” a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demanding, Controlling</td>
<td>Preoccupied, Busy with Everything But the Thing</td>
<td>Difficulty with Completing Tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Oppositional&quot;, &quot;Defiant&quot;, &quot;Noncompliant&quot;</td>
<td>Procrastinating, Avoidant, Ignores the Situation</td>
<td>Zoned Out, Daydreaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving Towards What Feels Threatening</td>
<td>Moving Away From What Feels Threatening</td>
<td>Unable to Move, Feeling Stuck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritable, Angry, Furious, Offended, Aggressive</td>
<td>Anxious, Panicked Scared, Worried, Overwhelmed</td>
<td>Depressed, Numb, Bored/Apathetic, Helpless</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</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 and Child Development

- Separation Anxiety
- Social Anxiety
- Selective Mutism
- Generalized Anxiety
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Specific Phobias
Co-Occurring Diagnoses

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

- Inattention and restlessness
- Attendance problems and clinginess
- Trouble answering questions or 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, flight, or freeze instinct?
Defining Internalizing Behavior

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

What is happening
- Crying
- Somatic complaints
- Negative self-talk statements
- Asking for frequent breaks
- Wandering the halls

What is NOT happening
- Lack of participation
- Social withdrawal
- Failure to begin or complete tasks
- School refusal/absences
- Inattention/daydreaming
Antecedents/Triggers
Events that occur prior to behavior
Students may react to stimuli that have previously been paired with trauma or anxiety-provoking events
Examples:
- Transitions
- Touch/proximity
- Tone of voice
- Nonverbal cues (furrowed brows, arms crossed)

Consequences
Events that predictably follow behavior
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.
Students may withdraw to avoid:
- Internal states/feelings related to anxiety/fear
- Obsessive/dysmorphic/intrusive thoughts
- Social disapproval (actual or perceived)
“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.”

When a teacher understands the anxiety underlying the opposition, rather than making the assumption that the child is actively trying to make her miserable, it changes her approach. If it sounds labor-intensive for the teacher, it is, but so is dealing with the aftermath of the same child having a meltdown.

- 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.

• The goal is never to eliminate anxiety but to better manage it.
An in-depth, longitudinal case study published by Lane et al. (2007), found that students with internalizing behaviors (such as anxiety symptoms) were the most responsive to PBIS, experiencing the greatest gains in GPA and the greatest declines in the number of suspensions and behavior challenges.

Despite these advances, school teams implementing PBIS sometimes overlook teaching important social-emotional competencies or view this domain as separate from their PBIS framework.
Purpose of PBIS

...to make schools more effective and equitable learning environments for ALL students.

Framework for Student Supports

Supports Mental Health
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, considering 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-Based Competencies

- Teaching self-regulation routines/strategies
  - Focused breathing
  - Taking a break
- Skill-based groups
  - Self-identification of thoughts/feelings
  - Identifying the perceived threat
  - Social skills for forming and strengthening relationships with adults and peers
- Self-monitoring
  - Identifying and adjusting appropriately
Activity

Robot-Ragdoll

Deep breathing

5 senses
Check-In/Check-Out

- Key elements
  - Regular feedback and acknowledgment 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.
Check-In/Check-Out

Increases:
- Active listening
- Seeking help
- Participation

Tools:
- Cognitive-behavioral strategies
- Peer-mediation with older students
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
What is the Function of the 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 anxiety? For most, it is the escape, such as uncomfortable thoughts or experiences.
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

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

- Skills-based instruction
  - 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/management strategies
  - Positive self-talk opportunities
  - Identifying the physiological state
  - Use of regulation strategies

- Exposure
Reinforcing

• 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
Next Steps
Providing 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 ODRs (office discipline referrals) but these reflect EXTERNALIZING behavior.
- In a sample of 453 students, teachers were highly accurate in identifying children with symptoms of anxiety, suggesting they should be more utilized in efforts to identify these students.
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)
- Multidimensional Anxiety Scale for Children (MASC)
SEL Curriculums

- Coping Cat
- Strong Kids
- MATCH
- Reaching New Heights
- First Step to Success
- ERASE-ESPS
- Building Confidence
- Anxiety Workbook for Teens
- The Incredible Years
Why Should We Think About Anxiety in Schools?
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, and service providers. Easy to collaborate and integrate services between school and community
How do we connect MTSS/PBIS with School-Based Mental Health?
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
ISF Key Messages

- 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
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

• ISF Resource Guide

• Interconnected Systems Framework Webinar Series

• Center on PBIS | Resource: School Mental Health Quality Framework and Tools Alignment Guide

• 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

Samantha Satterfield, Mid-Atlantic PBIS Network
Lucille E. Zeke, Midwest PBIS Network
Brenda McCready, University of Cincinnati
Kathy Penney, Midwest PBIS Network
Natalie Rewer, University of South Florida

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

INSTALLING AN INTERCONNECTED SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK AT THE DISTRICT/COMMUNITY LEVEL:
Recommendations and Strategies for Coaches and District Leaders

SUPPORTING AND RESPONDING TO STUDENTS’ SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND BEHAVIORAL NEEDS:
Evidence-Based Practices for Educators

CENTRE ON PBIS

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BEST PRACTICES IN UNIVERSAL SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND BEHAVIORAL SCREENING:
AN IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

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References


