UNDERSTANDING YOUR ANXIETY
FOR ELEMENTARY CHILDREN
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Authors
Hillary Marotta, M.Ed.
Amy Whitworth, M.A.

Board members of the Mental Wellness Awareness Association | mentalwellnessawareness.org
and the American Mental Wellness Association | americanmentalwellness.org

and

Carl Pierce, Executive President of the Path Forward Foundation

Design by Kaitlyn Unger, KTU Designs
kaitlynunger.myportfolio.com

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Wow, you did a great job. I don’t know how you can do that. I would be way too scared to talk in front of the entire class.

So would I. I think everyone would laugh at me.

Lots of people don’t like to stand in front of a crowd. The idea of public speaking makes them nervous.
I get nervous too, and that's called **ANXIETY**. Anyone can struggle with **ANXIETY**.
It only wants to keep you safe, but it doesn’t always know if there is real danger or not. The **AMYGDALA** is very strong.

It’s nothing to be ashamed about. See, there’s this part of your brain that makes you feel that way.

It’s called the **AMYGDALA** and it’s actually protecting you. It clicks into protection mode when it thinks you’re in danger.

See, there’s this part of your brain that makes you feel that way. It’s called the **AMYGDALA** and it’s actually protecting you. It clicks into protection mode when it thinks you’re in danger.
Is that what makes you feel all weird and **anxious**?

I just have to think about standing in front of the class and I start to sweat. I feel sick to my stomach and feel like running out of the room.
Either way, we feel anxious because the AMYGDALA doesn’t wait to see if the danger is real or not. It goes into action right away, which is both good and bad!

Yup, that’s how our bodies are made. We have this **FIGHT OR FLIGHT** response.

Sometimes our amygdala tells us to stay and fight the danger... ... while other times it tells us to run away from the danger.
**Cerebrum**: Located in the frontal lobe, controls movement, speech, smell, taste, problem solving, concentration, behavior, personality and mood

**Corpus Callosum**: Connects the left side of the brain (logic, reasoning) to the right side of the brain (creativity, spontaneity) and allows for the flow of information

**Hypothalamus**: Controls our cravings (for example our appetite for food)

**Pituitary Glands**: Controls hormones (related to, for example, muscle growth, hair growth, puberty)

**Pons**: Relays sensory information to the cerebellum and controls deep sleep cycles.

**Medulla**: Sometimes called the Brain Stem. Controls involuntary functions like breathing, consciousness, reflexes

**Ventricles**: Delivers cerebrospinal fluid to the rest of the brain (think of it like delivering the fuel to allow all the parts to do their job)

**Thalamus**: Control special reasoning, depth perception, alertness and sleep

**Midbrain**: Allows the brain to process visual and auditory information, helps to maintain consciousness

**Cerebellum**: Controls balance, learning, emotional regulation

**Parietal Lobe**: Controls sensations, language, body awareness, attention span

**Occipital Lobe**: Controls vision, perception

**Amygdala**: Controls our “fight or flight” response, alerts the brain to danger
Your **AMYGDALA** is good when there is a real danger. It gives you the strength and energy through adrenaline to defend yourself or run away fast. That’s **FIGHT OR FLIGHT** kicking in.

How can you decide which to do?
You have to learn to calm your **AMYGDALA** down to make a good decision. You have to keep calm to determine if there is real danger or if it just **ANXIETY**.
How do you do that?
There’s a lot of ways to do that, and people do it all different ways. If you’re already in the middle of feeling **ANXIOUS**, one idea is to focus on the present moment. Ask yourself ...

*What is one thing I can see right now?*

*What is one thing I can hear right now?*

*What is one thing I can smell right now?*

If your senses tell you that there is a real danger, you need to run away. If your senses tell you that you are actually safe from any outside danger but are simply feeling **ANXIOUS** on the inside, then you can use some coping skills to help calm your **AMYGDALA**.
You can play an instrument, play a calming game, or exercise.

Having a hobby is always good for our brains.

You have to eat healthy, too, and always get plenty of sleep. And most important, you should have a friend to talk to, like me!
Or like me!
So, it seems like your AMYGDALA is protecting you but sometimes makes you worry over nothing. Now I understand what ANXIETY is!
stress
physical
spiritual
swimming
eating healthy
financial
walking
church
prescriptions
coping
reliable
balance
hydrate
no smoking
savings
exercise
wellness
social
activities
occupational
give back
biking
emotional
laugh
hygiene
pray
intellectual
mental
yoga
debt free
volunteer
therapy
goals
What are you doing? I didn’t know you liked to draw. Rare that you aren’t on your phone or the computer.
I got the idea in school, it helps me with my anxiety.

Maybe I should start drawing, I have anxiety too. Work makes me ANXIOUS. Maybe you can help me learn to deal better with my ANXIETY! It is important to talk about our anxiety. ANXIETY is very common, and no one needs to struggle with it alone.
A Healthier Mind is a Happier Life!

Mental health problems are medical conditions and need to be addressed early by licensed medical professionals. See a doctor right away if you see any of these signs:

- Excessive fears, worries, or crying
- Extreme hyperactivity
- Sudden, hard to explain changes in behavior or mood
- Trouble sleeping
- Persistent nightmares
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Extreme disobedience or aggression
- Several temper tantrums daily
- Persistent difficulty separating from parent
- Seeing or hearing things that are not there
- Destructive Behavior
- Constantly threatening to run away
- Withdrawal from friends or family

Learn more at www.AmericanMentalWellness.org
What works for you?

- Hug a Stuffed Animal
- Play!
- Count to Ten
- Talk with an Adult
- Help Someone
- Draw or Paint
- Take a Nap
- Take a Walk
- Laugh your silliest laugh
- Sing a Song
- Read a Book
- Cry a little bit

[Preschool/Elementary Card]

Learn more at www.AmericanMentalWellness.org
Anxiety Pledge

I, ________________, understand that everyone feels anxious sometimes.

I understand that all of my feelings are okay.

I promise to be a good friend and listen to my friends about their feelings.

I understand that mental health is an important part of overall physical health.

I promise to tell a parent, teacher, or other trusted adult if my anxiety is keeping me from doing the things I normally do or would like to do.

I promise to tell a parent, teacher, or other trusted adult if one of my friends is struggling with anxiety, but has a hard time asking for help.
The American Mental Wellness Association certifies this first booklet to be semantically correct. Mental health conditions are physical health conditions.

Become a champion for mental wellness. Visit the American Mental Wellness Association website at www.americanmentalwellnessassociation.com for information and resources.