



Assessing Anxiety in School Children

Anxiety Projects Lab
University of British Columbia

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Agenda

- Social emotional difficulties
- Mental Health prevalence rates
- All about anxiety
- Formal assessment
- Studies using formal assessment
- How you can assess anxiety

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Social – Emotional Learning (SEL) in Schools

(Weissberg, Durlak, Taylor, & O'Brien, 2007)

- Quantitative analysis of 270 research studies
- Students participating in SEL programs
 - At least 15 percentile points higher on achievement tests
 - Significantly better attendance records
 - More constructive and less destructive classroom behaviour
 - Liked school more
 - Better grade point averages
 - Less likely to be suspended or disciplined

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Recent Research Findings . . .

- Changes in academic achievement in Grade 8 could be better predicted from knowing children's **social competence** in grade 3 than their **academic achievement** (Caprara et al., 2000).
- Pro-social behaviours exhibited by students in the classroom were found to be better predictors of academic achievement than were their standardized test scores (Wentzel, 1993).

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Promoting Friendship is important

Peer rejection (being disliked), and not having friends is associated with adjustment problems both concurrently and over the long term, including

- internalizing problems
- externalizing problems
- academic problems
- school drop out

(McDougall, Hymel, Vaillancourt, & Mercer, 2001)

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Main social emotional competency

- ▶ Development of strong interpersonal skills (social skills, get along with others) *[Lacking? #1 reason for job failure in N.America]*

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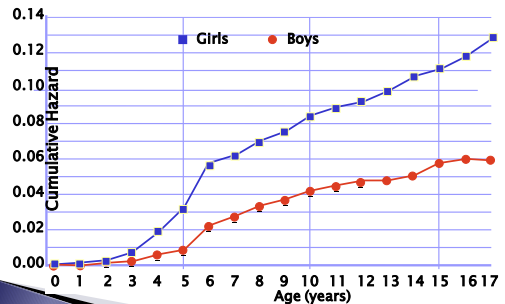
Child & Adolescent Mental Disorders* (Kutcher, S.)

Mental Disorder	6 Month Prevalence (%) Age = 9-17
Anxiety Disorder	13.0
Disruptive Behavioral Disorders*	10.3
Mood Disorder	6.2
Substance Use Disorders	2.0
Any Disorder	20.9

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When does anxiety begin?

(Lewisohn et. al., Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 1998)



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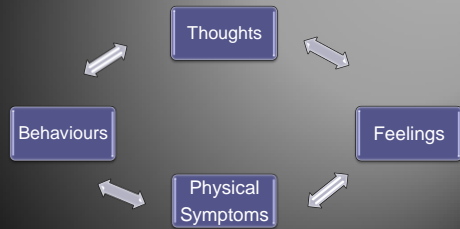
Anxiety...

- ▶ The most common mental health concern for children AND adults (by far!!)
- ▶ Can cause serious disruption to children's lives (school, attendance, peers, home)
- ▶ Often persistent over time
- ▶ If left untreated = other anxiety disorders, major depression, substance misuse and educational underachievement in later life

Anxiety is strikingly common, and strikingly disabling

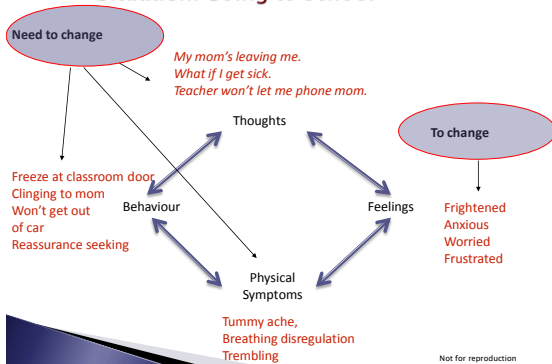
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Symptoms of Anxiety



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Situation: Going to school



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Common Associated Features

- Depressed or irritable mood; cries easily
- Fidgety; nervous habits (e.g., nail biting)
- Sleep problems
- Headaches, upset stomach, aches and pains
- Overly dependent or "clingy"
- Difficulty coping
- Perseverance; difficulty shifting tasks; resistance to change; inflexibility; easily overwhelmed
- Perfectionistic
- Difficulty demonstrating knowledge on tests or during classroom participation
- Trouble coming to school or entering school

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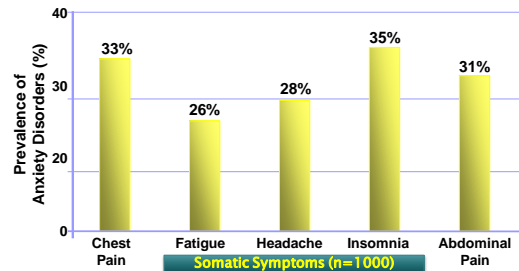
Frequently Overlooked Symptoms

- Angry outbursts, temper tantrums
- Oppositional and refusal behaviours
- Attention seeking behaviours
- Hyperactivity and difficulty sitting still
- Attention and concentration problems
- Scholastic underachievement or resistance to doing work
- Frequent visits to school nurse or physician (especially for physical complaints)
- High number of missed school days
- Difficulties with social or group activities

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Physical Symptoms as markers for the Anxiety Disorders*



*Data was collected from patients presenting at 4 primary care clinics. Adapted from Lydiard RB.

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Complications of Untreated Anxiety

- Diminished educational and vocational achievement*:
 - Lower college grad rates by 2%
 - Lower probability professional occupation by 3.5%
- Bullied more than their peers
 - (Ledley, Storch & Coles, 2006)
- Impaired relationships
- Subsequent depression, alcohol abuse and cigarette smoking
- Greatest predictor of suicide

* (Dadds et al., 1997; March et al., 1998; Muris et al., 2000; Murray et al., 1996; Sareen, 2005; Wittchen, 1998)

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Why anxiety prevention efforts?

- Empirical studies demonstrate ability to manage anxiety successfully in school settings
 - (Barrett, 2001; Dadds et al., 1997, 1999; Lowry-Webster, 2001; Muris et al., 2000)
- Deleterious effects if left untreated
- Early evidence anxiety can be prevented from becoming disordered

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Why is the assessment of anxiety in children and youth important?

- ▶ What we know about mental health services
 - Ratio of mental health professionals to number of people requiring help is 7:300 (Kazdin & Blase, 2011).
 - Majority of children and youth with mental health disorders do **not** receive professional services
 - Discrepancy is particularly prominent for youth with anxiety disorders (Merikangas et al., 2011)
- ▶ Why is there a gap?



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Rationale for my Research

- Need to evaluate prevention programs in more generalized settings (e.g., public school settings, delivered by classroom teachers)
- Inclusion of attention control condition (placebo) to account for non-specific effects

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Current Project

ABC: Anxious Behaviour in Children

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Early intervention/prevention

- ▶ Kindergarteners!
- ▶ Parents of kindergartners
- ▶ Key objective:
 - Can we find children who are showing early signs of AD in school settings? Is there a quick, effective way to find them?

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Why is there a need to develop a brief screen?

- ▶ Early identification of anxious children to prevent future adverse outcomes
- ▶ A simple, cost-effective, and easy to administer method of detection
- ▶ Streamline the process by flagging those who need further assessment

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Assessment

- ▶ Ask screening question to parents
- ▶ Interview parents with
 - Anxiety Disorders Interview Schedule for Children-Parent Version (ADIS-C/P) (Silverman & Albano, 1996)
 - The ADIS-P is a semi-structured interview that consists of a series of modules that cover all childhood anxiety disorders in accordance with criteria set out in the DSM-IV-TR (APA, 2000).
 - Preschool Anxiety Scale (PAS) (Spence, Rapee, McDonald, & Ingram, 2001)
 - 2 to 6.5 years of age.
 - Parent report measure that consists of 28 items rated on a 5-point scale that tap into symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder, social phobia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, physical injury fears, and separation anxiety disorder.

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How are we doing?

- ▶ 2008-2009 N=47
- ▶ 2009-2010 N=54
- ▶ 2010-2011 N = ?
- ▶ So far, screening questions holding up very well! Stay tuned!

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Training Graduate Students on the Anxiety Disorders Interview Schedule for Children-Parent Report

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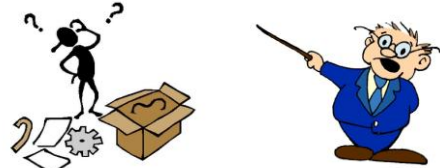
What is the problem?

- ▶ Need for graduate interns and clinicians to provide assessments, BUT...
 - Much variability in training opportunities in graduate psychology programs
 - Many internship training directors report that students do not have the skills to conduct assessments
 - Breadth vs. depth



What is the problem?

- ▶ This suggests that graduate students may not be adequately trained in their school program to perform assessments in clinical settings.



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Assessment Training

- ▶ Training in specific assessment tools should include (Child & Eyde, 2002; Krishnamurthy et al., 2004):
 1. Identifying and teaching the critical background knowledge
 2. Teaching skills and competencies for reliable assessment
 3. The use of a variety of formats to integrate theory and practice
 4. A method to evaluate competencies

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Our Study

- ▶ Part of a larger study examining the utility of screening questions for Anxiety Disorders in Kindergartners
- ▶ Purpose
 - To evaluate a training program for the *Anxiety Disorders Interview Schedule for Children- Parent Report* (ADIS-IV-C/P; Silverman & Albano, 1996).
- ▶ Recruitment
 - email to all students in the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education at UBC

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Participants

- ▶ 25 graduate students
 - Counselling students ($n = 11$)
 - School Psychology students ($n = 9$)
 - Clinical Psychology ($n = 1$)
 - Special Education ($n = 3$)
 - Measurement students ($n = 1$)

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Assessment Tool

- ▶ Anxiety Disorders Interview Schedule for DSM-IV: Child/Parent Version (ADIS - C/P)
 - Semi-structured clinical interview schedule conducted with parents (based on the DSM - IV - TR)
 - Gold standard for the assessment of anxiety disorders (Greco & Morris, 2004)

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Procedure

- ▶ Recruitment (Year 1 and 2)
- ▶ Training Program
 - 2-day training workshop
- ▶ Conducting Assessments
 - minimum of 10 hours of interviews over a 2-3 month period
- ▶ Online survey evaluating the training program following completion of the project

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ADIS – C/P Training Program

- ▶ Day 1
 - ½ day lecture on anxiety disorders
 - *Identifying and teaching the critical background knowledge*
 - Video of mock ADIS-C/P interview
 - *Teaching skills and competencies for reliable assessment*
 - *The use of a variety of formats to integrate theory and practice*

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ADIS – C/P Training Program

- ▶ Day 2
 - Practice administration of ADIS-C/P
 - *Teaching skills and competencies for reliable assessment*
 - *The use of a variety of formats to integrate theory and practice*
 - *A method to evaluate competencies*

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ADIS – C/P Training Program

- ▶ Ongoing supervision
 - role plays and interviews
 - *A method to evaluate competencies*
- ▶ Assigned to study if training was successful completed and participants deemed competent
- ▶ Total of 116 ADIS interviews conducted
 - Integrity checks (*kappa* = .82 for first three ratings)
 - *A method to evaluate competencies*



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The Survey

- ▶ Online survey (Survey Monkey)
- ▶ 8 items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale,
- ▶ Two open-ended questions
- ▶ Completed anonymously



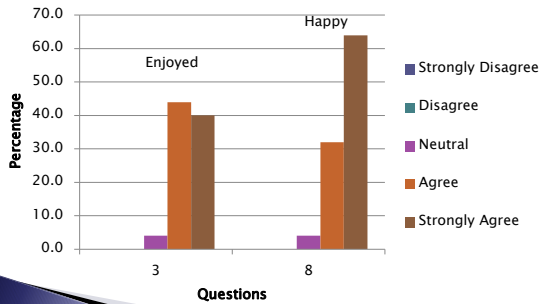
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Survey Questions

1. The training was well organized.
2. The training prepared me for conducting interviews.
3. I enjoyed conducting ADIS interviews
4. I feel that being trained to use the ADIS added to my knowledge of assessment and diagnosis of anxiety disorders.
5. Participating in this project provided me with training/information/experience that I would not have otherwise received in my program.
6. Participating in the ADIS training provided me with insight into the training that students in other programs receive (e.g., I am a School Psychology student and I now have an understanding of the training that Counselling students receive).
7. I feel that being trained to use the ADIS will benefit my career.
8. I am happy that I took part in this research project.

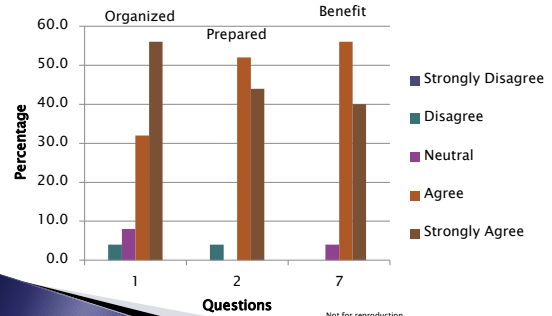
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Combined Results – Enjoyment



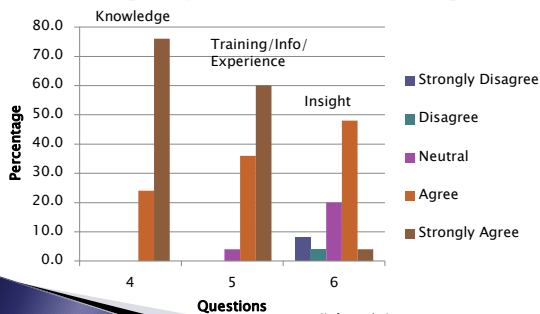
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Combined Results – Program Evaluation



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Combined Results – Contribution to Learning Beyond Academic Program



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Open-ended Questions

▶ What did you like most about participating in the research project?

- "The practice of the ADIS to build competency. I also liked [the trainer's] intro to anxiety very much."
- "Excellent teaching, practice opportunity. Fun to be learning in the group."
- "Learning about and administering the assessment tool. I now have a better understanding of anxiety disorders in children."
- "Free training..."
- "...the mock interview was interesting"

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Open-ended Questions

▶ What would you change about the research project (e.g., timing, organization etc...)?

- "In an ideal world, I would suggest a follow-up group session after everyone has done a few interviews, and after those interviews are validated to discuss diagnoses, questions etc."
- "I think it was well run. I don't think that there is anything that I would change. Maybe some more 'dry runs' to make sure we had the hang of getting the criteria straight."

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Open-ended Questions

▶ What would you change about the research project (e.g., timing, organization etc...)?

- "I would suggest a follow-up group session after everyone has done a few interviews, and after those interviews are validated to discuss diagnoses, questions etc..."
- "Scheduling [of participants] should happen right after training."
- "Communication in scheduling interviews was a little confusing and challenging."
- "More interviews being scheduled..."

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Findings

- ▶ Graduate students find training in assessment important to their career
- ▶ Specific training in assessment is not adequately included in applied psychology programs
- ▶ Opportunity to practice before conducting assessments on clients is valued by students
- ▶ Incorporating various formats to present material (eg. mock interview) is well received by students

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Take Home Summary

Anxiety disorders are highly prevalent, usually get worse without treatment, but are probably the **MOST** treatable of all mental health concerns.

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