TAGT LEADERSHIP & GIFTED+EQUITY Conference
JUNE 8-11 | ONLINE

Stress, Anxiety, and Gifted Children:
Strategies to help children thrive
Thursday, June 11, 2020
11:30-12:30

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Quick Check-in

On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being "I feel so dang amazing right now,"
and 5 being "Why did I bother getting out of bed,"

WHERE ARE YOU RIGHT NOW?

Learning Objectives:

- Learn about today's GT students
- Understand how stress and anxiety impact students
- Learn specific interventions to help strengthen student's resilience
- Receive a variety of free of low-cost resources to help students thrive

My name is Christine Fonseca

EDUCATIONAL PYSCHOLOGIST

National speaker, consultant, coach. Critically acclaimed author
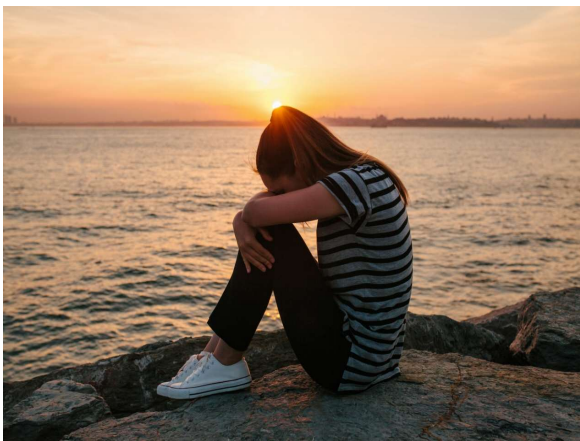
INTENSE HUMAN

Believes in a strength-based approach and embracing intensity

Who am I?

"Stress and meaning are inextricably linked. You don't stress out about things you don't care about, and you can't create a meaningful life without experiencing some stress."

-Kelly McGonigal

How do stress and anxiety impact our GT youth today?

TYPE ANSWER IN CHAT BOX

Understanding Giftedness

Gifted children are unique in every way

- Neurodiversity
- Intellectual
- Personality
- Social-Emotional

Social-Emotional Attributes

- High-performance Standards
- Internal Motivation
- Moral Maturity
- Resiliency
- Self-Actualization
- Empathy
- Emotional Intensity

Areas of Intensity

- Intellectual
- Psycho-motor
- Sensual
- Imaginational
- Emotional

- Growing up slowly
- Screen time
- Digital Me
- Insecure - a MH crisis
- What religion?
- Safety and community
- Work life
- Indefinite Future
- Independent political POV.

Research Trends in iGen

Generation Anxious

- Increased feeling of loneliness
- Increased social isolation
- Decreased self-esteem
- Increased anxiety
- Increased depression
- Increased suicidal ideations

Introducing Gen Alpha

- Increases in technology use
- More tolerance
- More "voice" in the home
- Evidence of increased stress/anxiety responses

One Word that defines "STRESS"

TYPE ANSWER IN CHAT BOX

The Biology of Stress : The Brain

- General feeling of unease
- Rapid/mumbled speech
- Reduced productivity
- Heightened or reduced attention
- Emotional upheaval
- Irritability
- Memory problems
- Difficulties learning new information
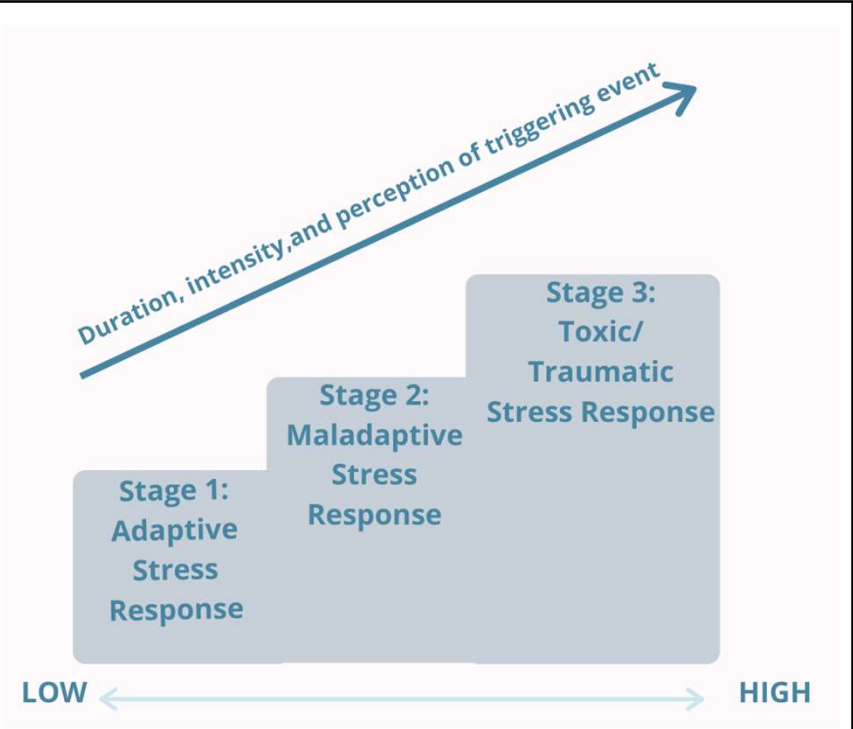- Confusion
- Difficulty making decisions

The Biology of Stress : The Body

- Headaches, jaw pain
- Grinding teeth
- Trembling limbs
- Neck, shoulder pain
- Blushing, heart palpitations
- Cold or sweaty hands and feet
- Dry mouth
- Difficulty breathing
- Changes in appetite and sleep patterns
- General fatigue or body aches

The Stress Cycle

Factors that influence how stress moves from adaptive to maladaptive to toxic

Duration, intensity, and perception of triggering event

Stage 1:
Adaptive
Stress
Response

Stage 2:
Maladaptive
Stress
Response

Stage 3:
Toxic/
Traumatic
Stress Response

LOW ←————————————————→ HIGH

STAGE 1: Fight or flight

✓ Adrenaline-based

✓ Fast-acting

✓ Brain tells body to activate oxygen and glucose in order to respond to threat quickly

✓ Reduces activities to conserve energy and increase efficiency in order to increase chances of survival

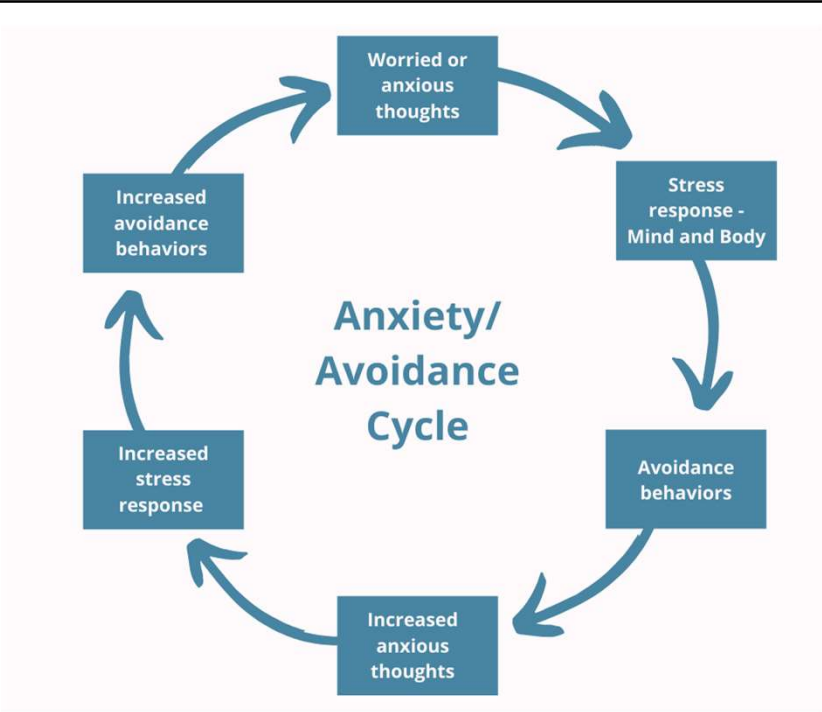✓ Generally adaptive

STAGE 2: Long-term Stress Response

✓ Oxytocin-based

✓ Happens when threat is not resolved with 15-20 minutes

✓ Body systems slow to conserve energy

✓ Increased cortex activation to facilitate

✓ Relationship-seeking for support

✓ Can easily become maladaptive

STAGE 3: Extended Stress Response

✓ Toxic stress

✓ Happens when the triggering event doesn't stop and/or there is little relief found

✓ Often related to both individual and generational or systemic trauma

✓ Body conserves even more energy:
  ▪ Routines that require little energy begin to take priority
  ▪ No new learning occurs
  ▪ Brain-body work together to resist change and maintain status quo

The Toxic Cycle of Anxiety

How anxiety perpetuates . . .

Anxiety/ Avoidance Cycle

Worried or anxious thoughts → Stress response - Mind and Body → Avoidance behaviors → Increased anxious thoughts → Increased stress response → Increased avoidance behaviors

What may trigger high levels of stress or anxiety?

TYPE ANSWER IN CHAT BOX

Defining

Resilience

"In short, resilience is the activation of your emotional intelligence to promote healthy adaptation to your environment that increases your chances of survival."

Christine Fonseca, The Caring Child (Prufrock Press, 2019), page 41

Resilience – The Key To Thriving

Optimism

Self-belief

Control of Self

Willingness to Adapt

Willingness to Be Flexible

Ability to Solve Problems

Emotional Awareness

Social Support

Sense of Humor

Resilience

Understanding Resilience

Resilience During A Crisis

✓Sense of mastery

✓Effective problem-solving skills

✓Emotional regulation

✓Effective communication skills

✓Self-confidence

✓Optimism and hope

The Resilient Mindset

✓Strong sense of belonging
✓Optimistic POV, even during a crisis
✓Regards change as normal
✓Goal-directed
✓Takes action
✓Curiously seeks opportunities for self-discovery
✓Positive self-view
✓Practices self-care

Developing EQ

Skill	Definition	Student Outcome	Instructional Activity
Cognitive Regulation: Attentional Control	The ability to attend to relevant information and goal-directed tasks while resisting distractions and shifting tasks	• Sustain attention by focusing on immediate task • Ignoring distractions when doing a task • Uses specific strategies to maintain attention • Uses listening strategies to maintain focus	• Name Games • Games that require selective attention with distractions • Explicit routines for listening to the teacher (look at the speaker, sit still, be silent, etc) • Explicit instruction for maintaining attention (self-talk) • Monitoring strategies
Cognitive Regulation: Working Memory/Planning Skills	The ability to maintain and manipulate information over a short period of time. Planning skills include identifying and organizing the steps / sequence of events needed to complete an activity or achieve a goal	• Uses strategies to plan and complete tasks of varying complexity (with assistance and independently) • Uses strategies to remembers and execute complex commands • Use strategies to remember and recall information • Plans, organizes and engages in task/goal directed behavior	• Memory board games • Name game • Creating a plan to accomplish tasks • Goal-setting activities • "Quests" in which you must make a plan

(adapted from Jones & Bouffard, 2012 and Harvard's report "Navigating SEL from the Inside Out: Elementary School Focus", 2017)

Developing EQ

Skill	Definition	Student Outcome	Instructional Activity
Cognitive Regulation: Inhibitory Control	The ability to suppress or adjust a behavioral response in order to obtain a long-term goal (i.e. "put first things first")	• Uses strategies to inhibit inappropriate automatic responses in favor of more appropriate behavior (i.e. raising your hand instead of shouting) • Uses contextually appropriate coping and self-control strategies in order to meet task demands • Uses contextually appropriate strategies to wait for your turn (inhibit responses)	• Games: mother may I, Freeze frame, Simon says, etc • Explicit strategies for self-monitoring • Explicit strategies for impulse control
Cognitive Regulation: Cognitive Flexibility	The mental ability to switch thinking about two different topics to thinking about multiple topics simultaneously; The ability to shift or redirect thinking from one important object, task, or instruction to another.	• Uses strategies to transition easily between tasks or parts of tasks • Shifts attention from one tasks, aspect, perspective or problem, to another • Compares and contrasts information • Generates and updates hypothesis • Approaches problems in innovative ways	• If-then statements • Creative problem-solving games (i.e. STAMPER) • Transition activities

(adapted from Jones & Bouffard, 2012 and Harvard's report "Navigating SEL from the Inside Out: Elementary School Focus", 2017)

Developing EQ

Skill	Definition	Student Outcome	Instructional Activity
Emotional Processes: Emotional Knowledge and Expression	Ability to recognize, comprehend and label one's own and others' feelings. Ability to express one's emotions appropriate to context	• Identity emotions in self and others • Identify intensity of emotions in self and others • Use a range of feeling words of varying intensities appropriate to context • Understands relationships between situations and emotions • Effective use of I-statements • Differentiates between feelings and behaviors	• Chart of feeling words • Emotional vocabulary games • Emotional detective games • Zones of regulation • Identify character emotions in stories
Emotional Processes: Emotional and Behavioral Regulation	Ability to use strategies to moderate emotional reactivity and behavioral responses	• Can regulate ones emotions effectively at varying times, including when upset • Uses effective strategies to cope with disappointment and failure • Distinguishes between appropriate and inappropriate expressions of emotion • Identifies and communicates behavior and emotions, including how situations make one feel	• Develop personal coping wheels or booklets • Using "Stop and Stay Cool" or similar anxiety strategies • Explicit teaching of coping skills • Using stories to build emotional vocabulary

(adapted from Jones & Bouffard, 2012 and Harvard's report "Navigating SEL from the Inside Out: Elementary School Focus", 2017)

Developing EQ

Skill	Definition	Student Outcome	Instructional Activity
Emotional Processes: Empathy and Perspective Taking	Ability to understand and accept another's point of view, opinion and/or feelings. Includes emotional matching and vicarious experiencing of another's emotions	• Identify, acknowledge and accept the experiences, feelings and viewpoints of others • Identify and acknowledge how another's feelings are similar and different from one's own • Make connections between self and other • Verbally demonstrate active role-taking • Recognize ways to respond to empathetic concern and differentiate most appropriate and effective responses • Demonstrates self-control strategies to manage distress caused by empathy	• Active listening games • Examining why characters feel and act the way they do • Discussing parallels between characters and personal feelings • Retelling stories from alternate perspectives • Generating coping skills to help a classmate or character in distress

(adapted from Jones & Bouffard, 2012 and Harvard's report "Navigating SEL from the Inside Out: Elementary School Focus", 2017)

Developing EQ

Skill	Definition	Student Outcome	Instructional Activity
Interpersonal Processes: Understanding Social Cues	Processes through which one interprets cues from the social environment, including causal attributions and intent attribution for others' behavior	• Uses social cues (body language and tone of voice, etc) in contextually appropriate ways (refers to SELF) • Responds to social cues in ways that communicate understanding (refers to OTHERS) • Correctly identifies motivation and intention of others • Uses social cues to communicate active listening and prosocial skills	• Discuss social cues of characters • Play emotional charades • Play nonverbal games • Develop social story scripts
Interpersonal Processes: Prosocial and Cooperative Behavior Skills	Ability to generate and utilize effective strategies/solutions to deal with challenging interpersonal situations	• Understands that anger and conflict are normal aspects of life. • Faces and deals with conflict in healthy, appropriate ways • Uses self-management techniques to cope with challenging behaviors • Identifies triggers and problems; generates effective responses and evaluates potential consequences. • Develops appropriate self-advocacy skills	• Explicit social skills training • Social Story games • Creative problem-solving games that require cooperative behavior • Interview a classmate about likes/dislikes • Community Building activities • Community circles • Group classroom activities

(adapted from Jones & Bouffard, 2012 and Harvard's report "Navigating SEL from the Inside Out: Elementary School Focus", 2017)

Developing EQ

Skill	Definition	Student Outcome	Instructional Activity
Interpersonal Processes: Conflict Resolution/Social Problem-Solving	Ability to generate and utilize effective strategies/solutions to deal with challenging interpersonal situations	• Understands that anger and conflict are normal aspects of life. • Faces and deals with conflict in healthy, appropriate ways • Uses self-management techniques to cope with challenging behaviors • Identifies triggers and problems; generates effective responses and evaluates potential consequences. • Develops appropriate self-advocacy skills	• Upstander activities • Explicit teaching of conflict resolution skills • Explicit teaching and use of shared problem solving skills • Restorative practices • Identifying and evaluating triggers, problems, and responses of various challenging interpersonal situations represented in books • Debriefing activities to reflect on behavior choices made during challenging interpersonal situations

(adapted from Jones & Bouffard, 2012 and Harvard's report "Navigating SEL from the Inside Out: Elementary School Focus", 2017)

Developing EQ

Skill	Definition	Student Outcome	Instructional Activity
Character	Understanding, caring about and acting upon core ethical values including respect, justice, responsibility, etc	• Verbalizes opinions about right/wrong • Weighs consequences of actions prior to acting • Accepts responsibility for one's words, actions and attitudes • Identifies and understands personality/character traits and works to strengthen core traits • Demonstrates forgiveness, compassion, patience and appreciation for others • Shows a willingness to grow from mistakes	• Strength-based practices • Identification of values and character strengths • Upstander activities • Classroom service activities • Strengths spotting • Compassion activities
Mindset	A way of thinking, attitude or belief about oneself, others and situations/ circumstances	• Understands that one's abilities (intelligence and talents) are not fixed traits but can be developed through hard work and dedication • Identifies strengths in others • Develops and maintains an optimistic outlook • Is aware of and in touch with the present moment (mindfulness) • Understands the importance of physical and mental lifestyle balance • Understands the relationship between thoughts/mindsets, feelings and how they influence each other • Understands and expresses thankfulness/gratitude	• Social skill games that promote optimism • Kindness activities • Strengths-based practices • Mindfulness activities • Growth mindset activities • Grit activities

(adapted from Jones & Bouffard, 2012 and Harvard's report "Navigating SEL from the Inside Out: Elementary School Focus", 2017)

What is the impact of intensities to EQ development?

TYPE ANSWER IN CHAT BOX

Intensities and EQ Development

Area of Intensity	Features	Potential Concerns	Potential Strengths
Intellectual	• Intense problem solvers • High levels of concentration on preferred activities • Detailed visual recall • Enjoys learning for the sake of learning	• Under-development of social-emotional skills and processes (high cog/low se) • Can result in weaker attachments, high threat awareness	• Strong learner • Good memory • Innovative problem solver • Quick thinker • Other:_____
Emotional	• Passionate approach to life • Extreme emotions • Complex and layered emotions • Physical reactions to emotional status • Ability to develop deep relationships	• Can result in under-development of cognitive regulation and processes • Can result in under-development of "theory of Mind" attributes • Can lead to enmeshment and emotional distress	• Zest for life • Empathy • Resilience • Compassion • Other:_____

Intensities and EQ Development

Area of Intensity	Features	Potential Concerns	Potential Strengths
Psycho-motor	• Loves action • Moves for the sake of movement • Animated speech patterns • Risk taker in some areas	• May struggle with emotional regulation and behavior inhibition • Can weaken appearance of attention and empathy	• Will take action when needed • Typically strong orator • Combines physical and thinking skills • Other:_____
Sensual	• Appreciation for the arts • Appreciation for nature and beauty • Highly impacted/influenced by sensory stimulation • Strong sensory memory	• Can become hyper-sensitive to environment • Can heighten threat perception leading to imbalance in empathy skills	• Appreciation for beauty and "awe" • Strong affective memory • Awareness of sensory details • Other:_____

Intensities and EQ Development

Area of Intensity	Features	Potential Concerns	Potential Strengths
Imaginational	• Strong dream pattern • Strong daydream pattern • Good facility for fantasy • Strong imagination • Will turn to imagination when bored or stressed	• Can misinterpret threats within the environment • May struggle with enmeshment, and imbalance in empathy development	• Innovative • Creative • Resiliency • Typically gifted in artistic domains • Other:_____

"There is physical and psychological pain in being thwarted, discouraged, and diminished as a person. To have ability, to feel power you are never allowed to use, can become traumatic."
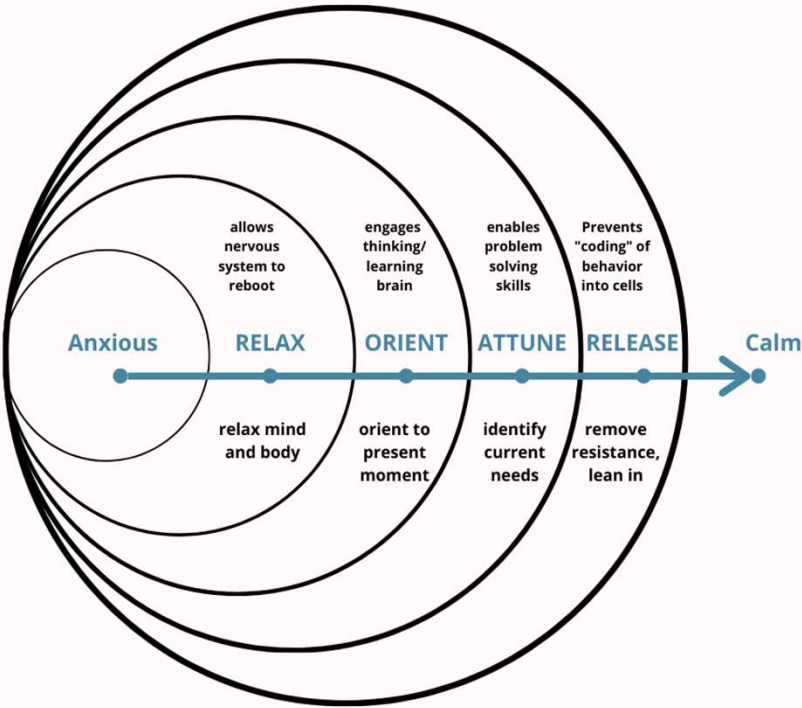-Jan and Bob Davidson

A Thought To Ponder . . .

> your *personal experience* with *stress* and *anxiety* is only one SMALL PART of who YOU are *as a* *human*. *It is not something that defines your WHOLE self* . . . at this moment, *you are just as* PERFECTLY *Imperfect as you* are meant to be.
>
> - Christine Fonseca

The R.O.A.R. Protocol™

A specific technique to release the hold of stress and anxiety

Relax

"I'm going to be okay. I just need to breathe in and out, in and out."

WHAT: Specific strategies to relax the brain and body

WHY: Allows mind and body to regain a state of calm and slow or stop the stress response from occurring

HOW: breathing exercises, tense-release, breathing colors, mini-vacations

Orient

"I may feel guilt about the past or worry for the future, but I choose to focus only on right now. It is all that matters."

WHAT: Specific strategies to bring yourself into present-moment awareness, focusing only on the here-and-now

WHY: Engages the thinking/learning brain and anchors or grounds into your current needs

HOW: mindfulness activities, 4-7-8 breathing, anchoring and grounding strategies

Attune

"What is it that I really need right in this moment?."

WHAT: The process of determining your specific and immediate needs. Includes developing agency and voice to express those needs.

WHY: Initiates problem-solving strategies.
· When successful, it combats trauma responses and rebuilds trust and safety – both internal and external

HOW: self-awareness development, emotional literacy, discernment (i.e. hula hoop)

Release

"My stress, fear, and anxiety do not define me. I release the hold and lean into all of my feelings, no matter how scary."

WHAT: Strategies to release the "hold" of stress and anxiety, and calm the stress response completely

WHY: Prevents the "coding" of the mind-body response into the cells and nervous system

HOW: embodiment activities, breathing exercises, grounding, self-talk, cognition correction

Tools to help our GT kids

NORMALIZE THEIR INTESITIES

REFRAME INTENSITIES INTO STRENGTHS

DEVELOP SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND COGNITIVE SKILLS

More Tools to Help

.

TEACH COPING SKILLS

DON'T FORGET RELATIONSHIPS

FOCUS ON COMMUNICATION

Want More Information?

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