

USING CHILDREN'S STRENGTHS IN MANAGING ANXIETY

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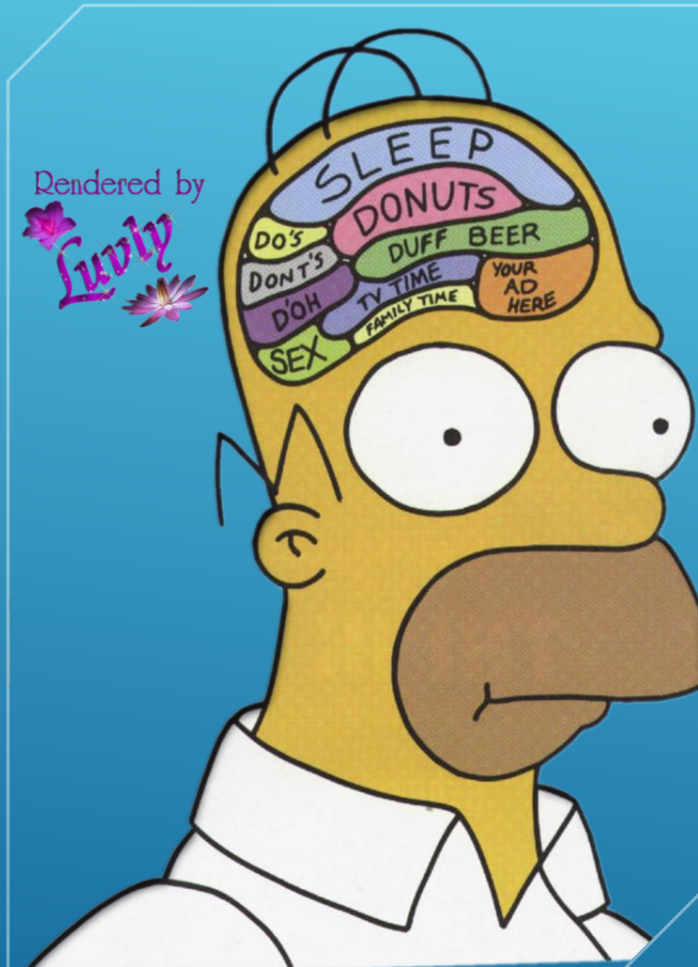


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WHAT IS ANXIETY?



Anxiety is a physiologically-based experience that occurs through activation of the HPA-axis

It is the body's natural response to threatening stimuli



Our risk as adults is to either underreact (minimize or dismiss) or overreact (rescue, enable avoidance, always do for the child)

Must find middle ground



Focusing on anxiety and avoidance slowly destroys confidence and self-belief



Kids must feel prepared and competent to approach feared stimuli

Must utilize their own strengths to build a self-belief of competence



We must build up children's belief in themselves

They need to engage in activities they are competent in and be slowly encouraged to engage in more difficult activities

This also means allowing independence and allowing failure or disappointment

When children manage adversity it makes them stronger



Every child has something they are good at and something they are interested in

If they have no interests, they have adopted a negative self-belief and we need to look harder

- ▶ First must identify kids with anxiety and validate the experience (do not minimize)
- ▶ Next identify severity of anxiety and break exposure down to what is manageable
- ▶ Determine child's strengths (don't think solely academically-cast a wide net)
- ▶ Ensure child has opportunity to engage in areas of strengths
- ▶ Focus on anxiety only in specific times as exposures are being attempted
- ▶ Do not overreact to child's distress or physical symptoms-validate but also allow the child to realize these are manageable

THE PLAN

▶ Thank You!

