

# Anxiety in Kids and Teens:

## Fear, Worry, Anxiety, Panic

Julie Lowe, MA

### Most Common Worries of Kids

- School performance
- Appearance
- Social acceptance
- Death of a parent
- Friends
- Global – hunger, war, etc.

### An Anxiety Epidemic

- #1 disorder in U.S. and many other countries (10-17 countries listed it as the #1)
- 25% of population has had it or will have it
- Confusing world - “Safe, but not safe” - airports, schools with armed officers, bomb threats, etc.

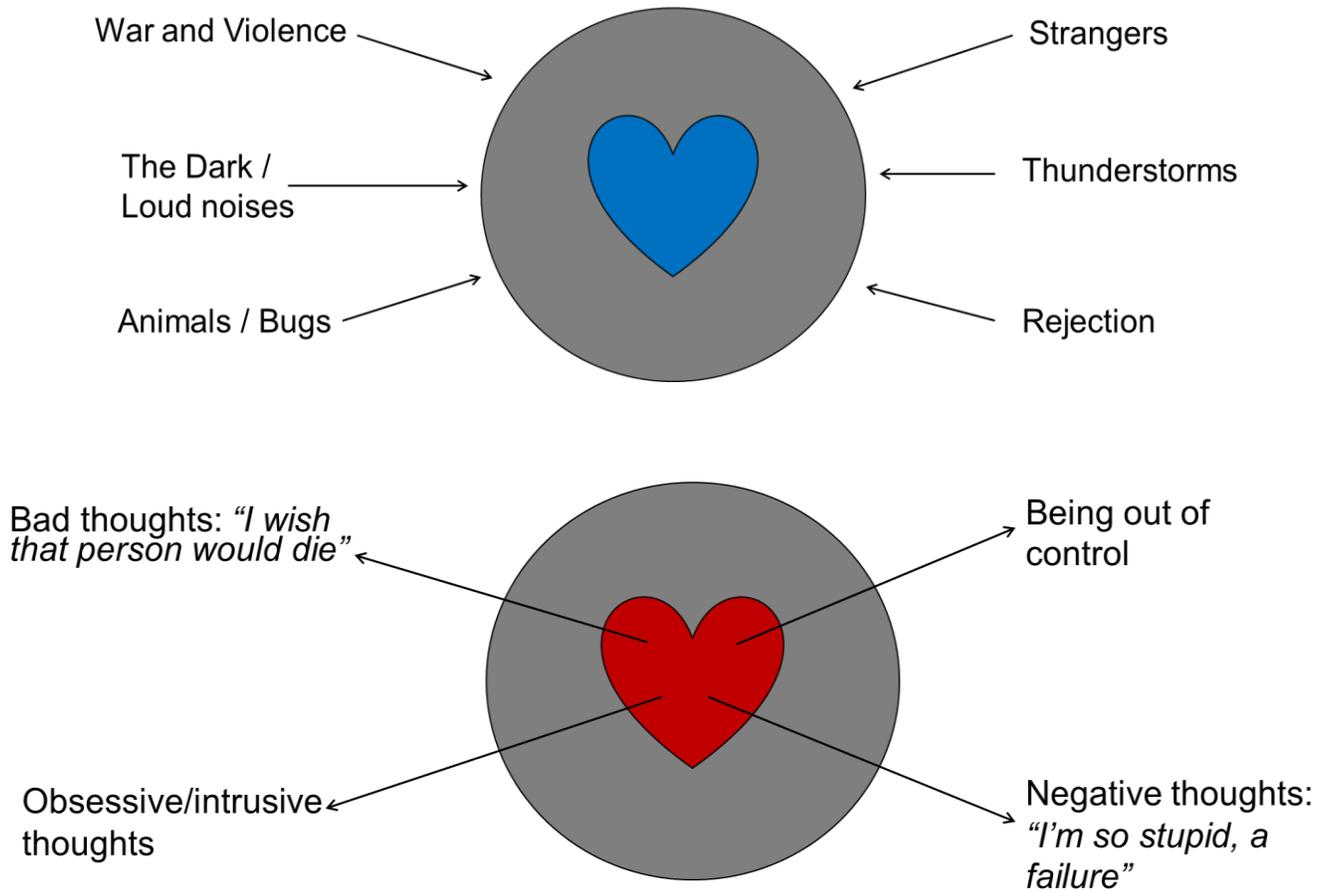
—Paul Foxman, Ph.D. *The Worried Child*

### Three Ingredients in Anxiety

1. **Biological Sensitivity** – 20% of infants are born more sensitive to external/internal factors
2. **Personality Traits** – responsible, perfectionistic, difficulty relaxing, worry, likes to please, avoids conflict, prefers structure, low assertiveness
3. **Stress Overload** – stress often creates/ fosters anxiety (lack of sleep, proper nutrition, etc.)

—Paul Foxman, Ph.D.

## External Fears vs. Internal Fears



## Separation Anxiety: Three Factors

1. Frequency
2. Intensity
3. Duration

*Measured by the degree to which it impedes daily abilities*

## Practical Approaches to Helping Kids

- Time management
- Reasonable goals
- Outdoor recreation
- Structure and rhythms
- Limit media
- Talking with others
- Relaxation
- Stress management
- Addressing fears/concerns rather than stuffing
- Diet and nutrition

*The temptation for children is to find comfort in things, behaviors, people, themselves, or relationships. The temptation for adults is to offer comfort in a parent, a behavior, or in themselves.*

### **Sources of comfort**

- People – parents, friends, siblings, etc.
- Sleep
- Fantasy, daydreaming, zoning out
- Retreat / refuse to go to school / leave the house
- Media, TV, books, computer
- Self-soothing behaviors: thumb sucking, security blankets, masturbating, sleeping with parents

*Sometimes children may not really want to get better because it may mean losing something they have come to enjoy or depend upon.*

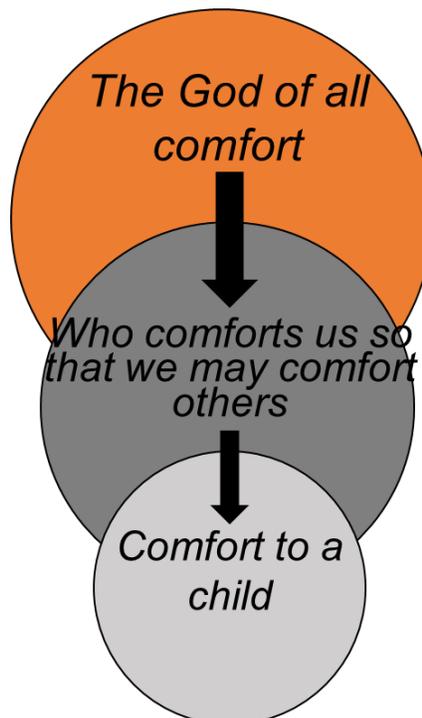
## Comfort

### A. Parental Comfort vs. God's Comfort



*There are places inside a child's head & heart that we can not go – places only God can reach.*

### B. Incarnational Comfort



### C. God's Comfort

- “Greater is He that is within you, than he that is in the world...”
- “What others meant for evil, God meant for good.”
- “Do not fear, I am with you.”
- “Have courage; don't be afraid.”
- “You are not alone.”

God offers *Himself*. *His* presence is the answer.

- Christ invades our world
- He humbled Himself and entered our experience
- He entered in to remind us that we are not alone
- He can go places in your heart and head that no one else can reach
- “I sought the Lord and He answered me and delivered me from all my fears.”
- “The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.”
- “Taste and see that the Lord is good.”
- “Those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.”
- “When the righteous cry for help, the Lord delivers them out of all their troubles.”
- “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted...”

#### **Psalm 46:1-2**

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried in the midst of the sea.”

#### **Psalm 23:4**

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

#### **Psalm 17:7-8**

“Show thy marvelous lovingkindness, O Thou that savest by Thy right hand them which put their trust in Thee from those that rise up against them. Keep me as the apple of thy eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings...”

## Practical Help

- *Allow them to pick something that represents God for them.*
- *Help them measure their growth/progress with fear – with twine, string, something that is a visual reminder of God’s work in them.*
- *Psalm 23 is a good visual reminder of how God puts our hearts at ease.*
- *Teach children how to pray, how to slow down their thoughts, and how to calm their anxious hearts.*
- *Commit to helping kids wisely and safely walk through hard things, rather than avoid them.*
- *Give children examples in Scripture of people who became overcome by fear (Jonah, David) and examples of those who overcame their fear (Abraham, Esther, Joseph).*