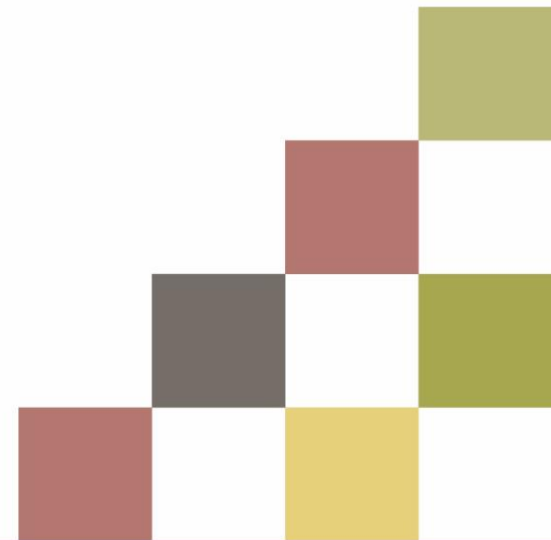


Using Supported Exposure to Enhance Student Success:

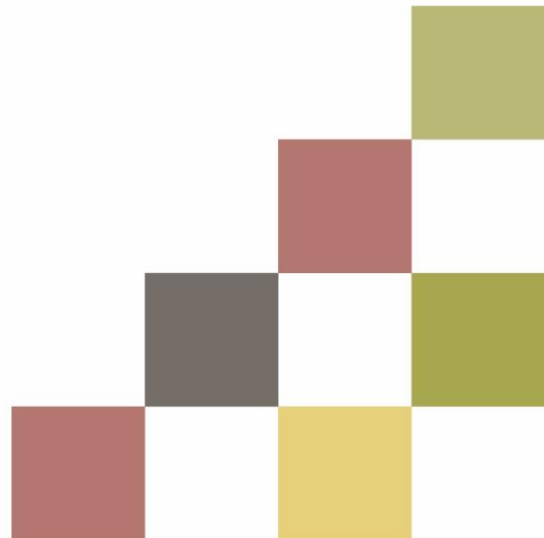
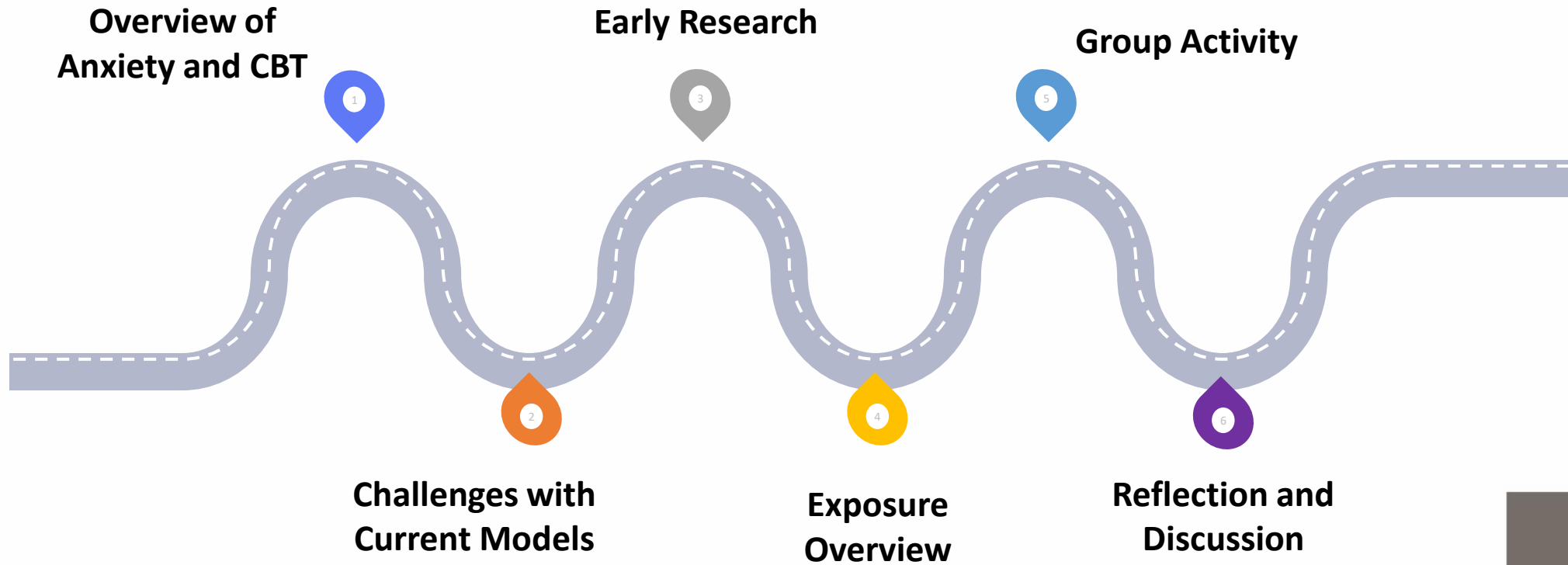
Building Skills in a Supportive Environment of Risk-Taking

Colin King, Ph.D., C.Psych & Sydney Coleman

@dr_colin_king



Agenda

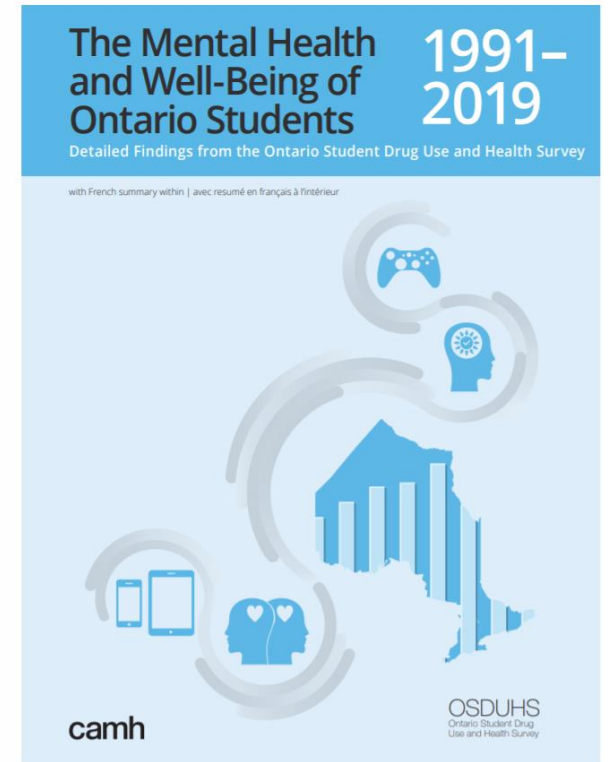


An Introduction

- Anxiety disorders are one of most common forms of mental health problems (~ 6%)
- Increase in youth seeking support (7% to 19%; 1983 to 2014; Georgiades et al., 2019; OCHS)
- Anxiety symptoms can also be effectively managed; skills increase when used across settings (Hudson et al., 2021)

OSDUHS (2020)

- 44% indicated moderate to severe psychological distress
- Over 30% report elevated levels of stress



Treatment for Anxiety



Blue Menu of Evidence-Based
Psychosocial Interventions for Youth

Problem Area	Level 1- BEST SUPPORT
Anxious or Avoidant Behaviors	Attention Training, Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT), CBT and Medication, CBT for Child and Parent, CBT with Parents, Education, Exposure, Modeling

(PracticeWise, 2020)

Table 1. Stepped care for addressing the emergence of concerning anxiety in youth

Steps	Who is responsible?	Focus	Nature of effort
Step 5	Coordinated care team	Treatment-resistant anxiety, severe impairment	Intensive programs
Step 4	Mental health professional	Moderate-to-severe anxiety	CBT (individual, family, with pharmacotherapy)
Step 3	Initial therapist involvement	Mild-to-moderate anxiety	Brief CBT, groups, Internet or computer-assisted program
Step 2	Caregivers, youth	Everyday stress, mild anxiety	Guided self-help, bibliotherapy, parent training books, and Internet programs
Step 1	Caregivers, youth, adults	Recognition	Gain knowledge, active monitoring (attend to stability, intensity, and impairment)

(Kendall, 2016)

Treatment for Anxiety

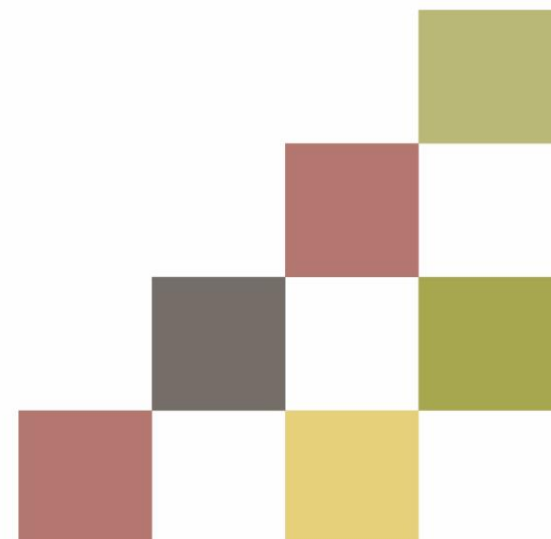
Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT):

- Active, experiential form; focus on skill acquisition
- Strongly supported evidence-based intervention

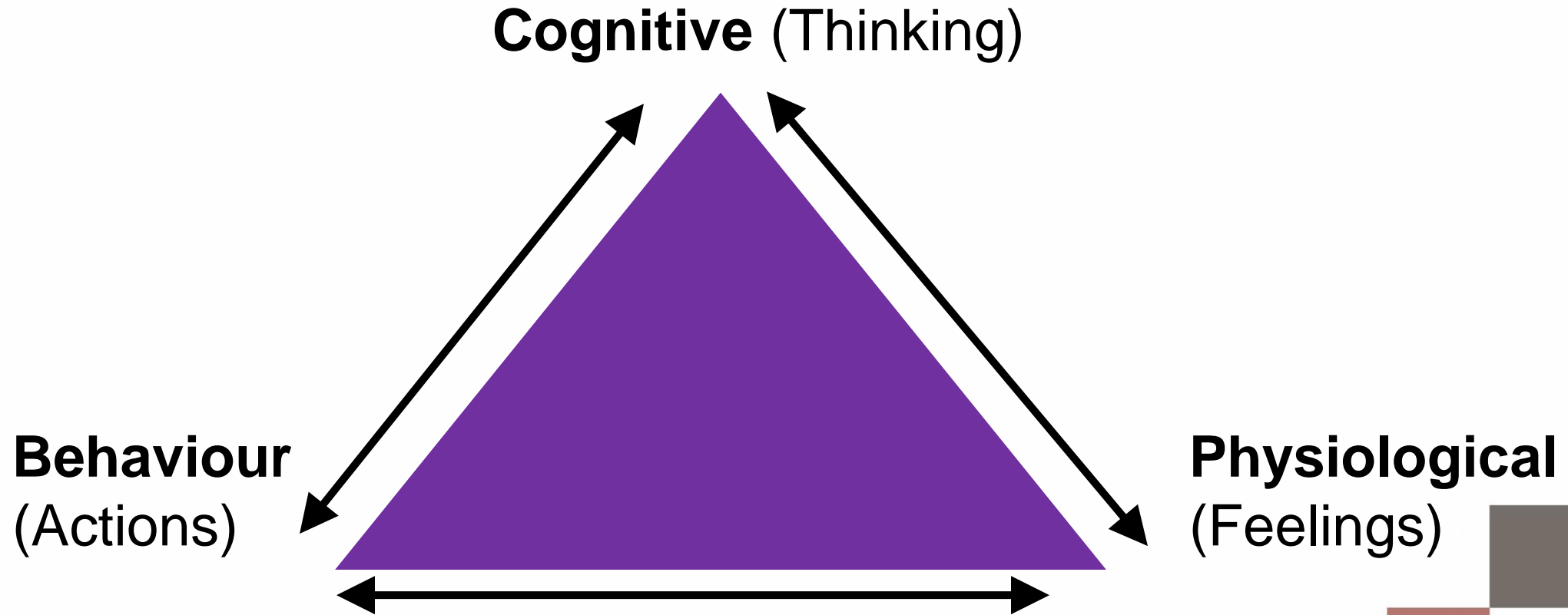
1) **Cognitive** (Thinking)

2) **Behaviour** (Actions)

3) **Physiological** (Feelings)



Components of Anxiety

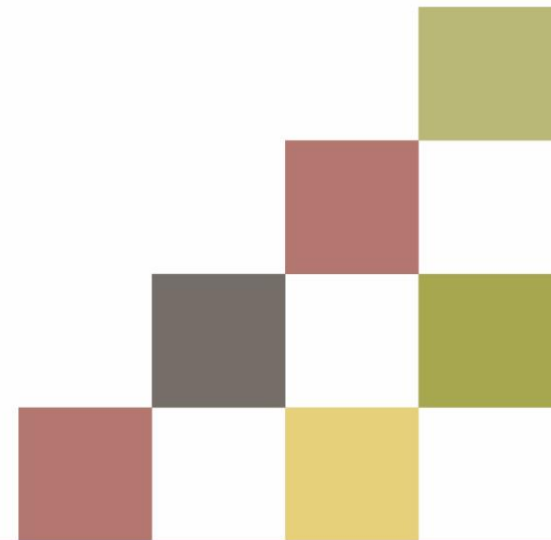
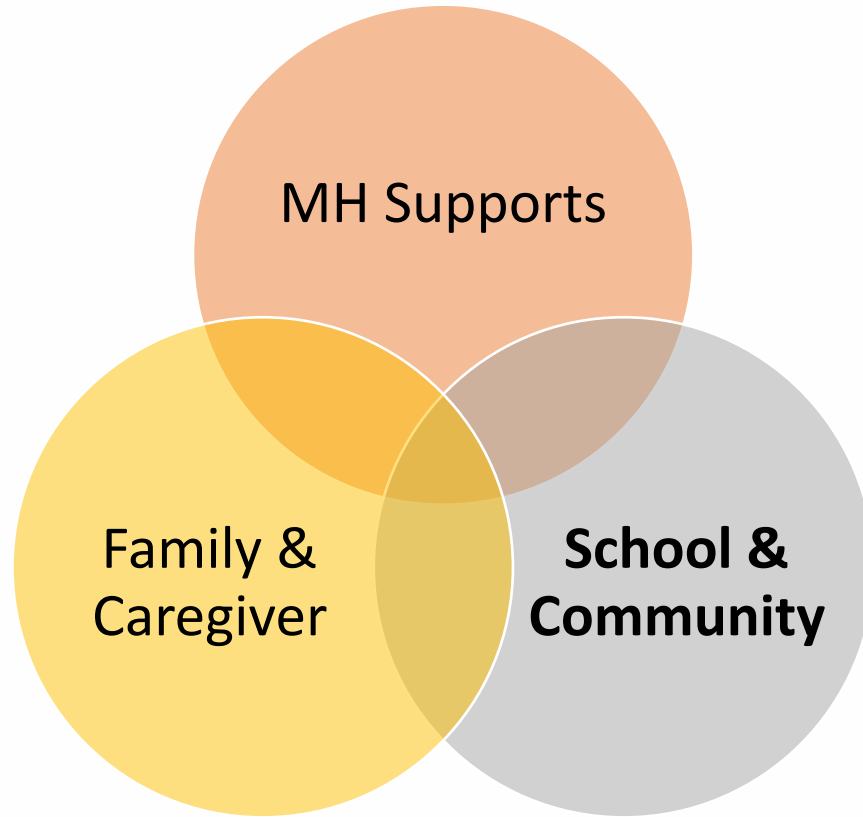


Challenges with Effective Treatment

- Access to MH services (CMHO, 2020)
- Pharmacological treatment most common (Collins et al., 2014)
- Use of evidence-based MH (Roberge et al. 2011; Flett, 2019)
- Lack of confidence in core anxiety treatment (Harned et al., 2014)
- Lack of collaboration across settings and professionals
(Alonso et al. 2018)



Building a Community of Anxiety Care and Shared Understanding



Role of Schools in Managing Anxiety

- Anxiety often interferes with academic performance (Tong & McLeod Macey, 2017)
- Anxiety management skills increase when practiced across settings (Creswell et al., 2016)
- Teachers are well positioned to support strategies that are anxiety reducing
 - Problem-solving, focus on mastery/engagement (Allen, 2017)
- Rise of everyday mental health strategies to promote positive coping (SMHO, 2021)

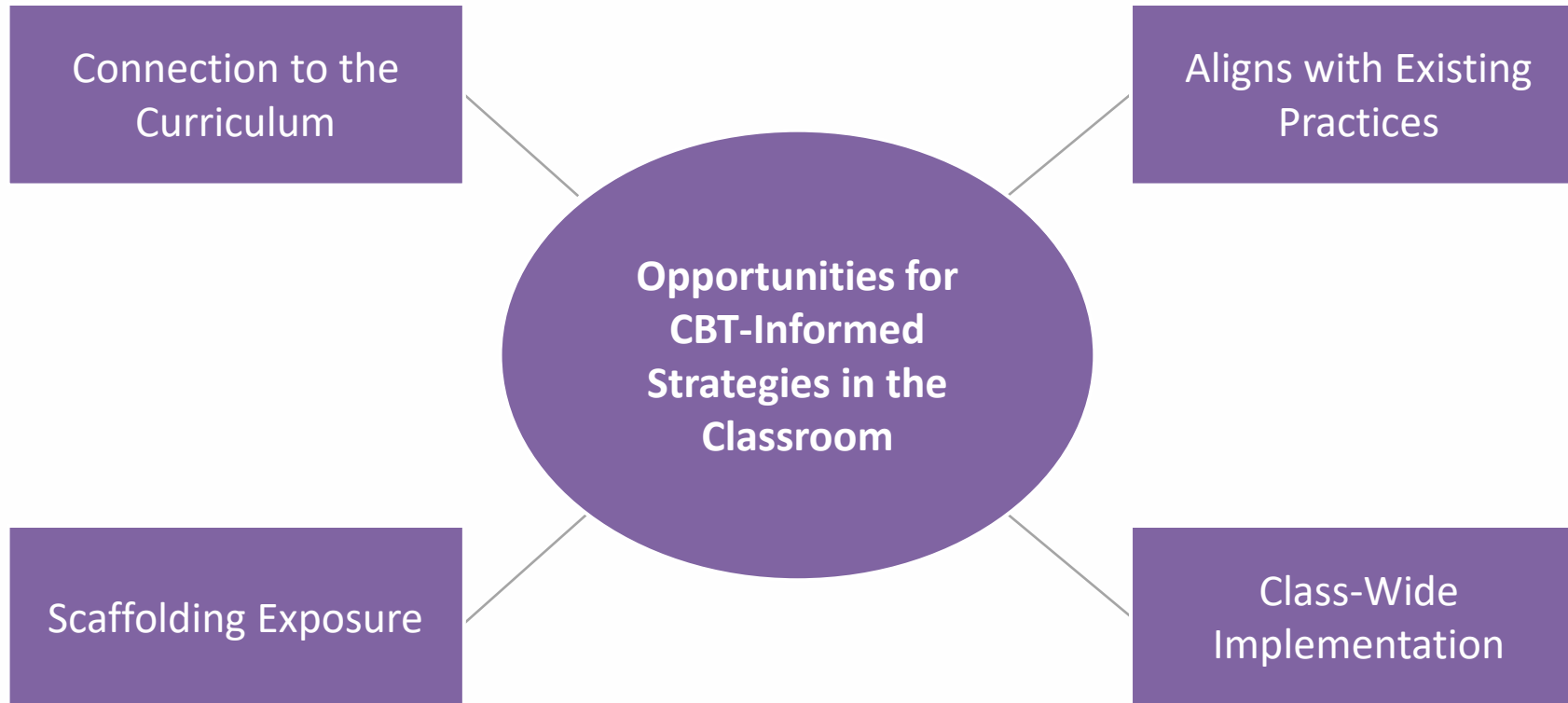
Role of Schools in Managing Anxiety

What are the opportunities for educators in using cognitive-behavioural informed strategies in the classroom?

- Educator focus groups (4) to look at opportunities and challenges for using these types of strategies in the classroom ($n = 11$)



Themes from Educators



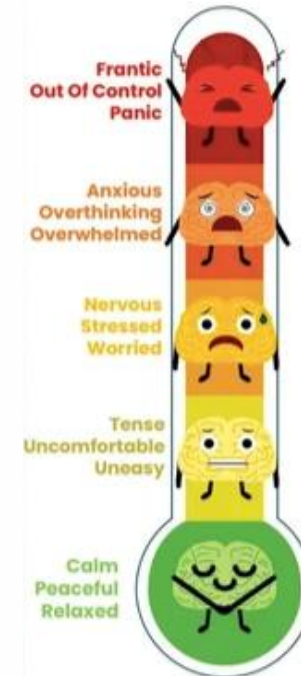
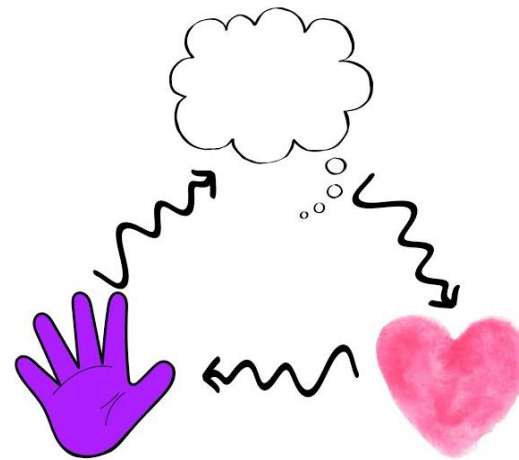
Connection to the Curriculum

- Mental Health in Health and Physical Education
- Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Skills in Mathematics
- Problem-Solving Skills

“Now that it’s part of the curriculum I can reference that it their learning skills in the math comments and teach that with intent now.”

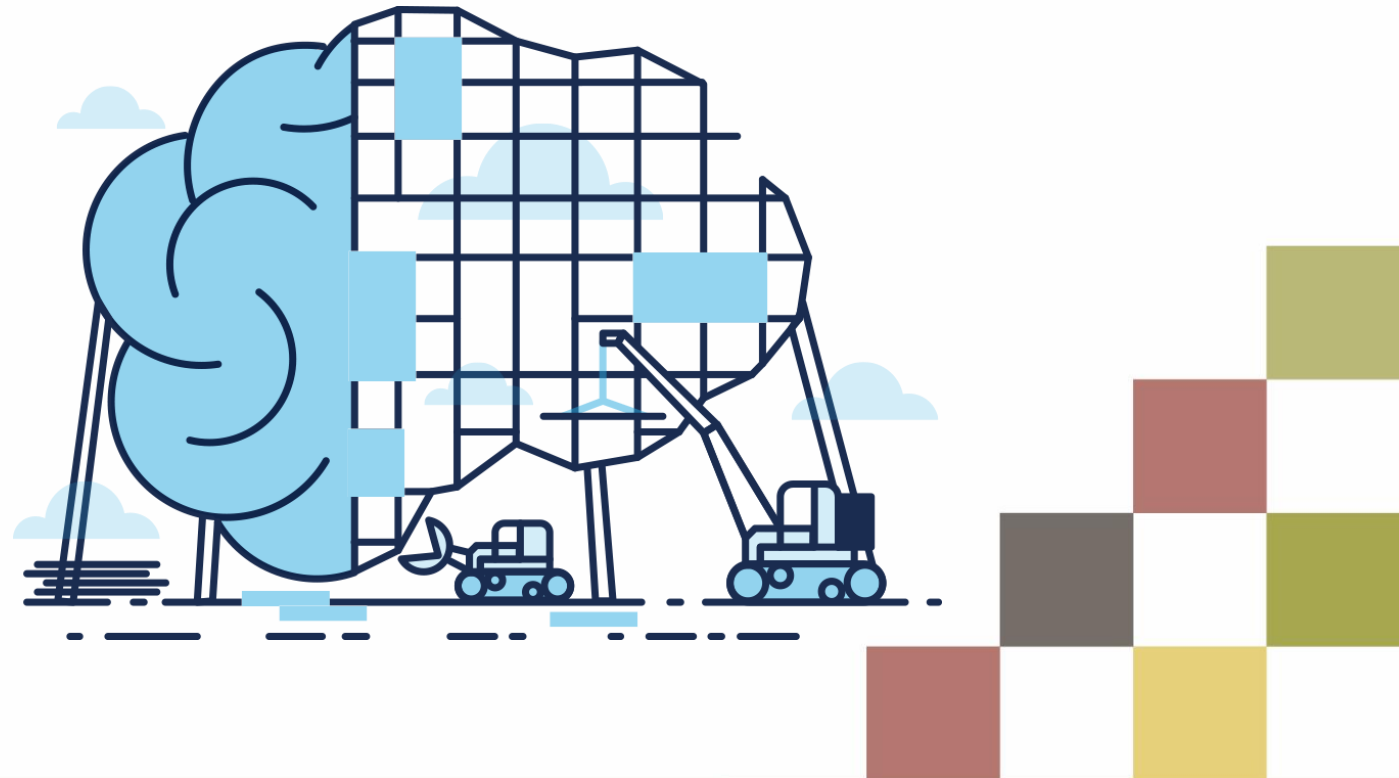
Existing Practices

- Relaxation and mindfulness techniques
- Growth mindset
- Classroom visuals



Scaffolding

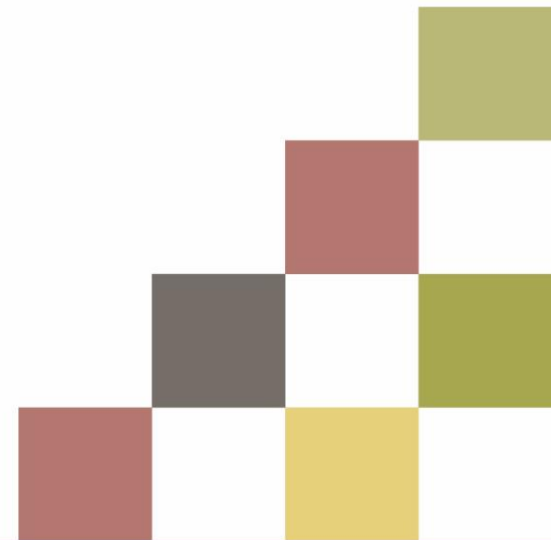
- Collaborative
- Intentional
- Individualized
- Gradual
- Autonomy and control
- Student buy-in
- Increased understanding



Class-Wide Implementation

- Class lessons, strategies, and discussions
- Benefits all students

“What’s necessary for some is good for all so while there might be one student in your class for whom doing something to help their anxiety is probably beneficial for the 29 others that are there as well.”

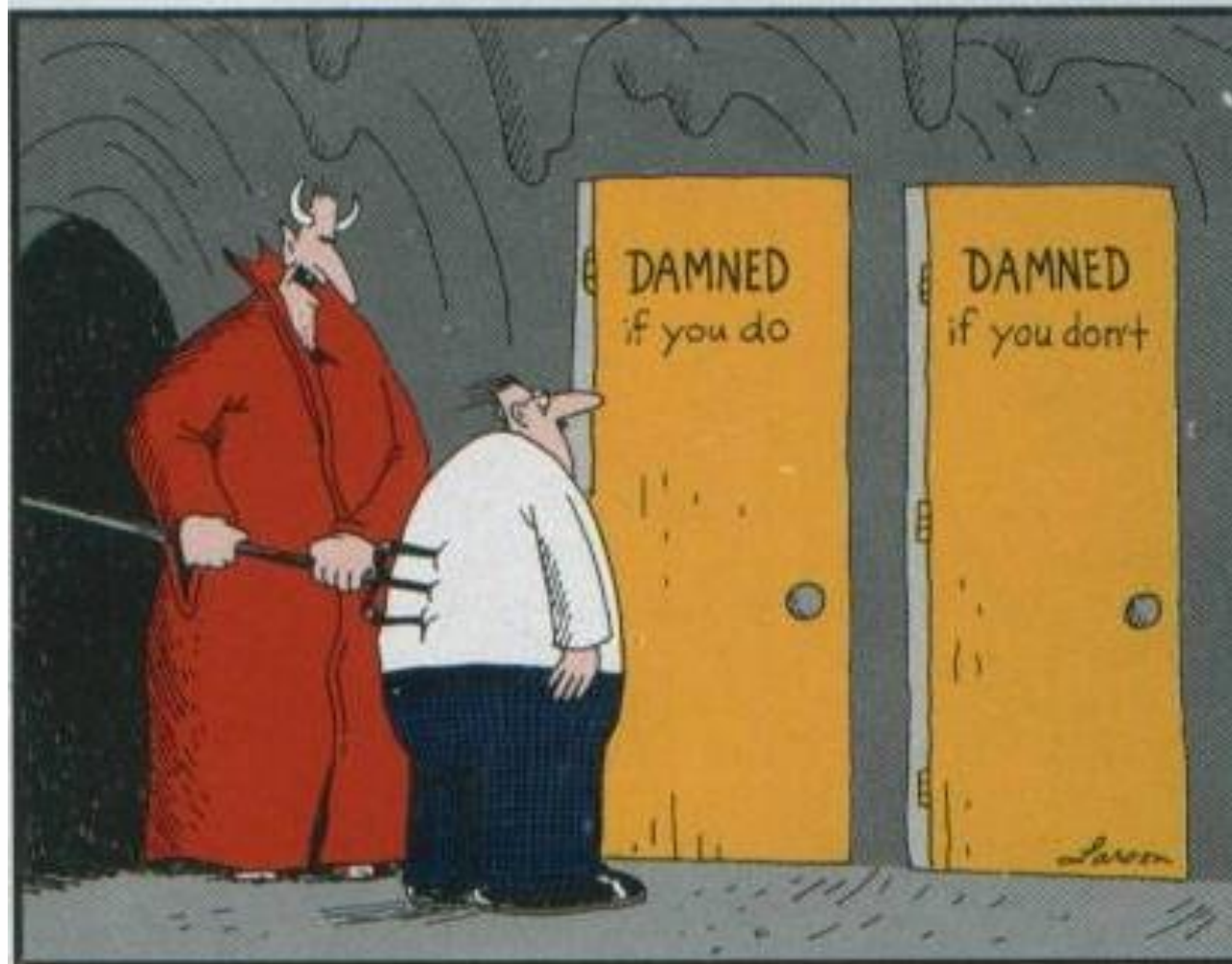


What are exposure-based strategies?

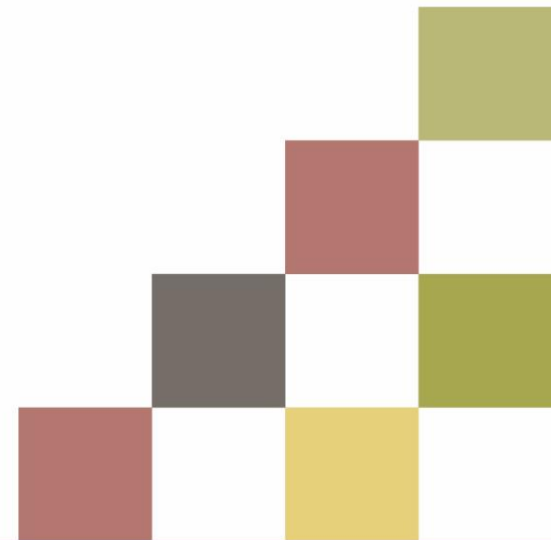
Exposure or exposure and response prevention:

Being exposed to stimuli that trigger anxiety in structured, sequential, safe ways to promote new learning and coping

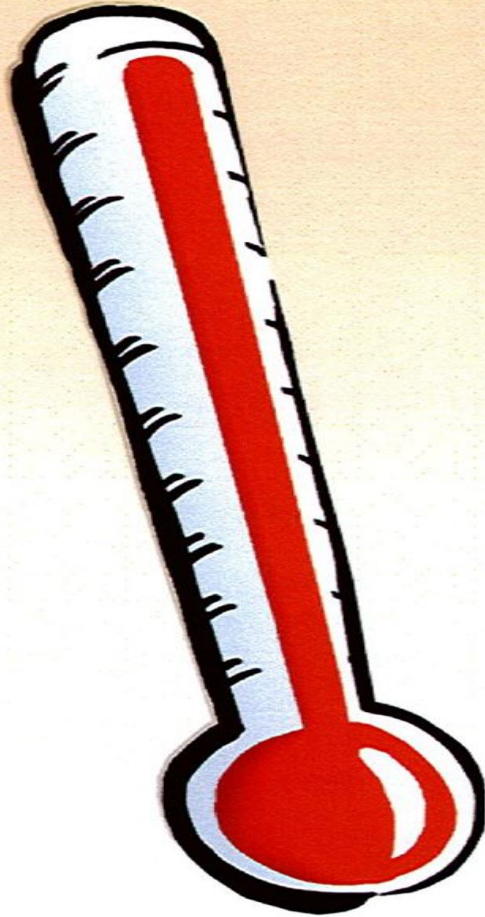
Goal: To unlearn anxious behaviour; become more comfortable/confident; promote new learning



“C'mon, c'mon — it's either one or the other.”



The Fearmometer

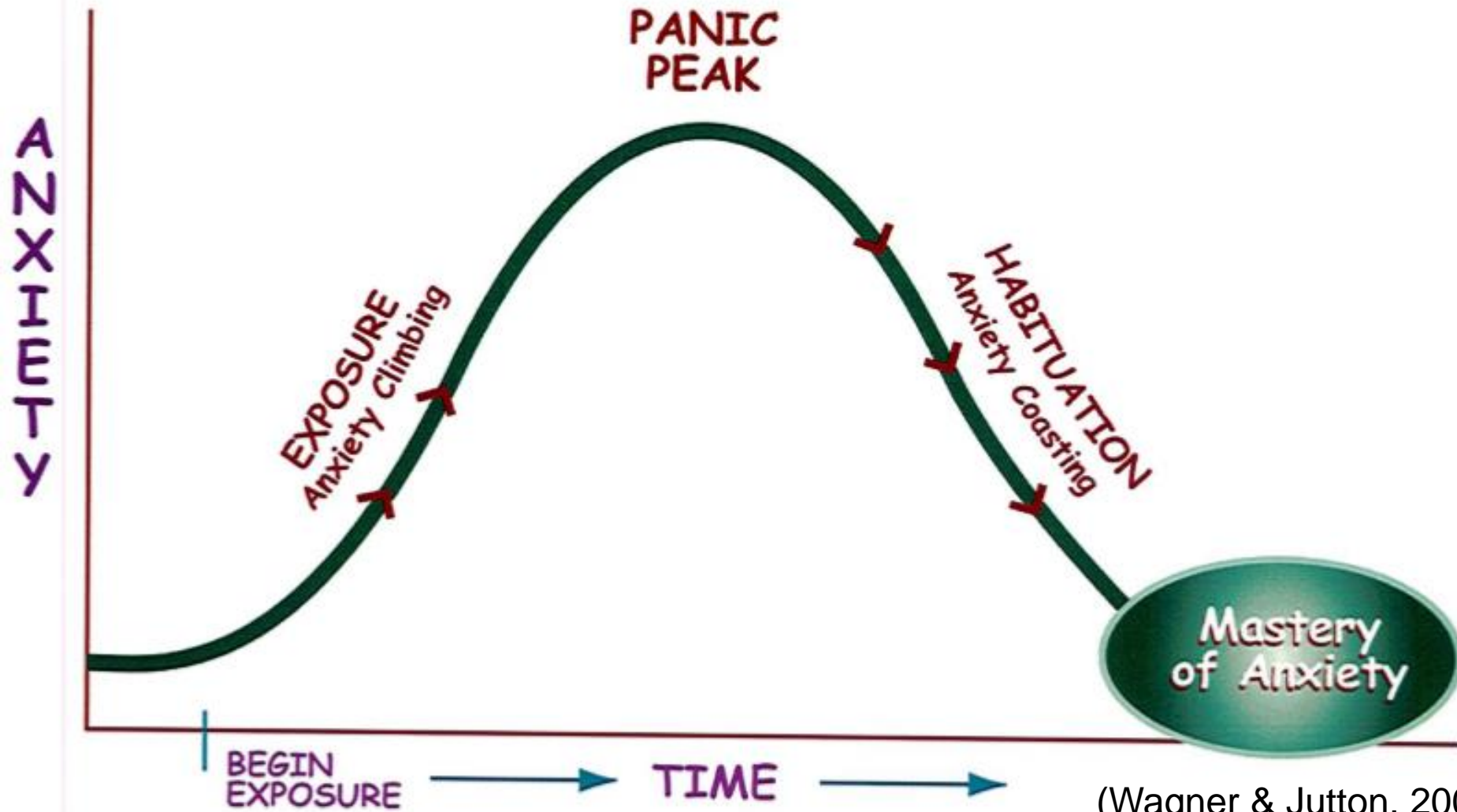


10. Out of control! **Ballistic!**
9. Can't handle it.
8. Really tough.
7. Pretty tough.
6. Getting tough.
5. Not too good.
4. Starting to bother.
3. Just a little uneasy.
2. A little twinge.
1. Piece of cake!

(Wagner & Jutton, 2004)



(Wagner & Jutton, 2004)



(Wagner & Jutton, 2004)

Common Areas of School Worry/Stress

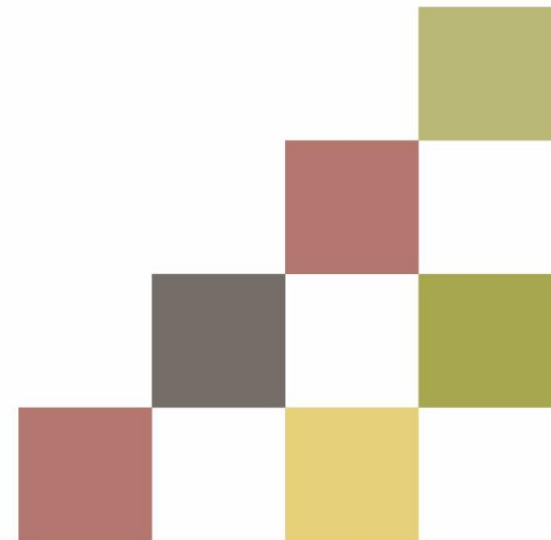
School demands can be a source of anxiety ...

- School achievement
- Tests and exams
- Oral presentations
- Peer conflict
- Workload, multiple courses/assignments



Fear Ladder

ITEM	How scary is this item today? Please give a rating from 0-10.



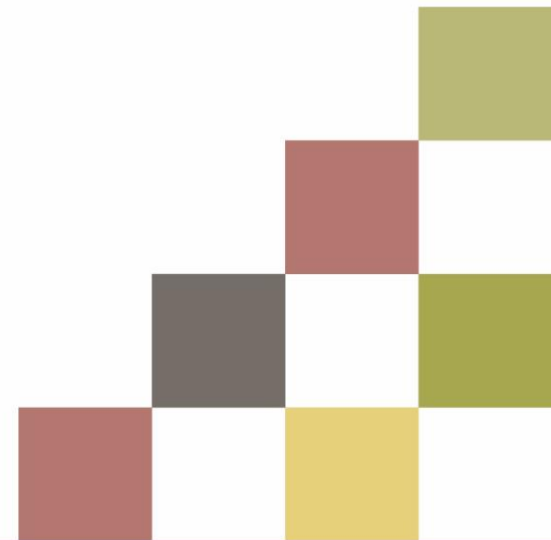
A Sample Fear Ladder – Risk Taking

“Fearmometer” Ratings

- 10 – Share his opinion about a topic in class
- 9 – Hand up in class (factual answer; not teacher checked)
- 7 – Hand up in class (factual answer; teacher checked)
- 5 – Hand up in class (nonverbal participation / survey)
- 4 – Read a book and answer opinion question (check-in with the teacher)
- 3 – Read a book and answer factual questions
- 1 – Solve math questions



Group Activity



Situation:

The student is displaying anxiety about an upcoming class presentation. The student tells you that participating in the presentation is “too much” and asks to be exempt.



Possible Worry?

The student might be worried about feeling criticized or being evaluated poorly by others.



Situation:

The student displays anxiety about taking tests. The student indicates that that they haven't done enough to prepare for the test, even though they have spent hours studying the information.



Possible Worry?

The student might be worried about making mistakes or receiving a poor grade on the test.



Implementation Considerations

- Flexibility is key; think about learning expectations –
 - What ways can this expectation be met?
- Opportunities beyond individual plans to classroom implementation
- Importance of student voice; co-collaboration; building a classroom and individual learning profile
- Select students may still require individual plans/further flexibility
- Opportunity to build mastery; skills; comfort + confidence

Reflections and Next Steps

- School contains many sources of stress/anxiety for students
 - Social; performance; situational demands
- Opportunity to meet expectations with collaborative, flexible process
 - Individual learning units; year-long process
- We can model process of resilience for students; productive struggle
 - Meet our students where they are at
- Ongoing process of learning, reflection, evaluation
- We would love to hear more about your journey!
 - cking73@uwo.ca



Resources

- Anxiety Canada - www.anxietycanada.com
- School Mental Health Ontario - <https://smho-smso.ca>
- Worry Wise Kids - www.worrywisekids.org

- Mary J. Wright CYDC: www.mjw-cydc.uwo.ca
- IAASP Lab – www.iaasp.ca
- Sydney Coleman M.A. Thesis - <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/7806>

Thank You

