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Anxiety and Its Impact on Speech and Language in the Pediatric Population

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Learning Outcomes

After this course, participants will be able to:

- Name 5 major anxiety disorders.
- List 5 effects of anxiety disorders on speech and language skills.
- Describe 3 interventions within the SLP's scope of practice to alleviate anxiety and support speech and language improvement.

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Disclosures

- Financial
 - Honorarium paid for the presentation
- Non-Financial
 - Daughter with anxiety disorder
 - Clinical practice that supports children with anxiety
 - Provider of Integrated Listening Systems, including Safe and Sound Protocol
 - DIRFloortime® Training Leader and Expert Provider

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Introduction

- My background
 - SLP for nearly 25 years
 - PhD in Infant and Early Childhood Education with an Emphasis in Infant Mental Health
 - Training Leader & Expert DIRFloortime® Clinician
 - Mother to a now 17 year old with Generalized & Social Anxiety Disorder; had Selective Mutism from age 3-8

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What is Anxiety?

- “An abnormal and overwhelming sense of apprehension and fear often marked by physical signs (such as tension, sweating, and increased pulse rate), by doubt concerning the reality and nature of the threat, and by self-doubt about one's capacity to cope with it” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

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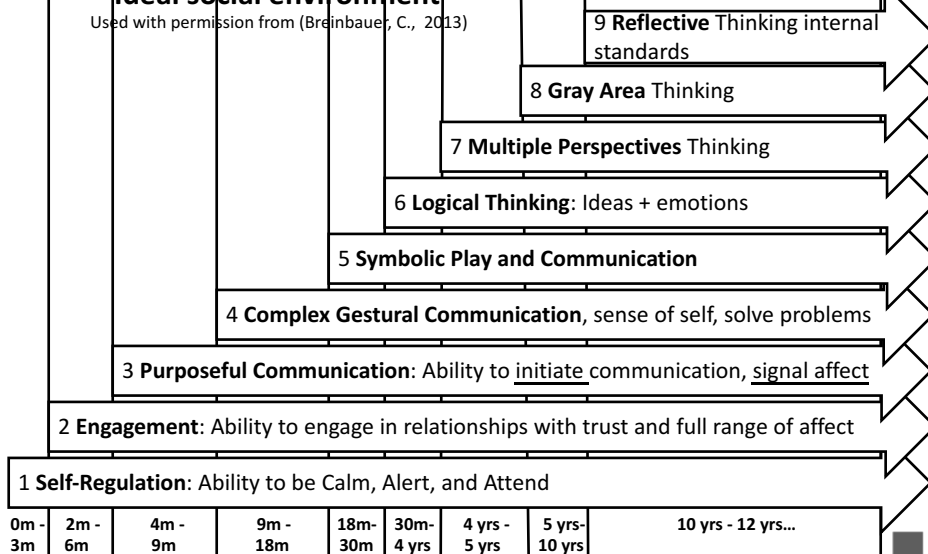
- Functional Emotional Developmental Capacity (FEDC) 1
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Functional Emotional Developmental Capacities

Ideal social environment

Used with permission from (Breinbauer, C., 2013)



Categories of Anxiety in DSM-5

- Panic Disorder
- Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD)
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)
- Selective Mutism (SM)
- Specific Phobia
- Separation Anxiety

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Other Anxiety-Related Disorders

- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Trauma and Stress Related Disorder – PTSD
- Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal Infections (PANDAS)
 - Primary cause: Streptococcal-A (GABHS) Infection
 - https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/pandas/pandas-qa-508_01272017_154202.pdf

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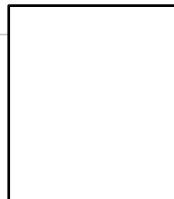
What Does Anxiety Look Like?

- Withdrawn / Shutdown
 - Cassidy
 - Cheyenne
- Perfectionistic / Type A Personality
 - Studios
 - Overachiever

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Anxious/Withdrawn

- Younger child, age 3
- Older child, age 11



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Anxiety & Speech/Language

- Causality
 - Anxiety doesn't necessarily cause S/L Impairments
 - "youngsters with speech and language problems are three times more likely to suffer from social anxiety (social phobia) at age 19 than are youngsters without such problems" (Beitchman, J.H., 2006)

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Speech Skills Impacted by Anxiety

- Pitch – typically increased as vocal folds are stressed
- Glottal Stop / Blocking / Loss of voice
- Shaky/wavering voice
- Reduced volume
- Dry throat
- Fluency / "Tongue Tie"
 - Types of disfluencies: Interjections ("uh," "er"), revisions ("I was - I am going"), Incomplete phrases.

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More Speech Skills Impacted...

- Motor planning
- Selective Mutism
- Respiration for phonation: based on the expanded suffocation false alarm theory (Klein, 1993).
According to this theory, individuals with panic attacks suffer from dysregulation of the respiratory system and experience episodes of suffocation sensitivity. In turn, this can lead to speech production difficulties (Preter et al, 2008).

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Language Skills Impacted by Anxiety

- Word Retrieval
- Pragmatics
- Comprehension / Language Processing
- Reduced cognitive flexibility – specifically, poor verbal memory (Toren et al, 2000)
- Restricted receptive and expressive vocabulary, poor prelinguistic behaviors such as attention span and eye contact, and reduced pragmatic abilities (Kaipa, 2006)

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Intervention

- Yoga / Meditation (Megan's video)
 - Improved respiration / Better cardiovascular health
 - Improved concentration
 - Reduction of stress
- Safe and Sound Protocol
 - supports a physiological state conducive to well-being, positive engagement with others, and growth in learning and therapy
- Social Stories: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

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