



# Mental Health 101

An overview of children's  
mental health and anxiety

Knowledge is Power

Consulting & Wellness Services



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# What is mental health?

Mental health is “the capacity of each and all of us to **feel, think and act** in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face.

It is a positive sense of emotional and spiritual well-being that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice, interconnections and personal dignity.”

~Public Health Agency of Canada



# The things that contribute to positive mental health:

# 5

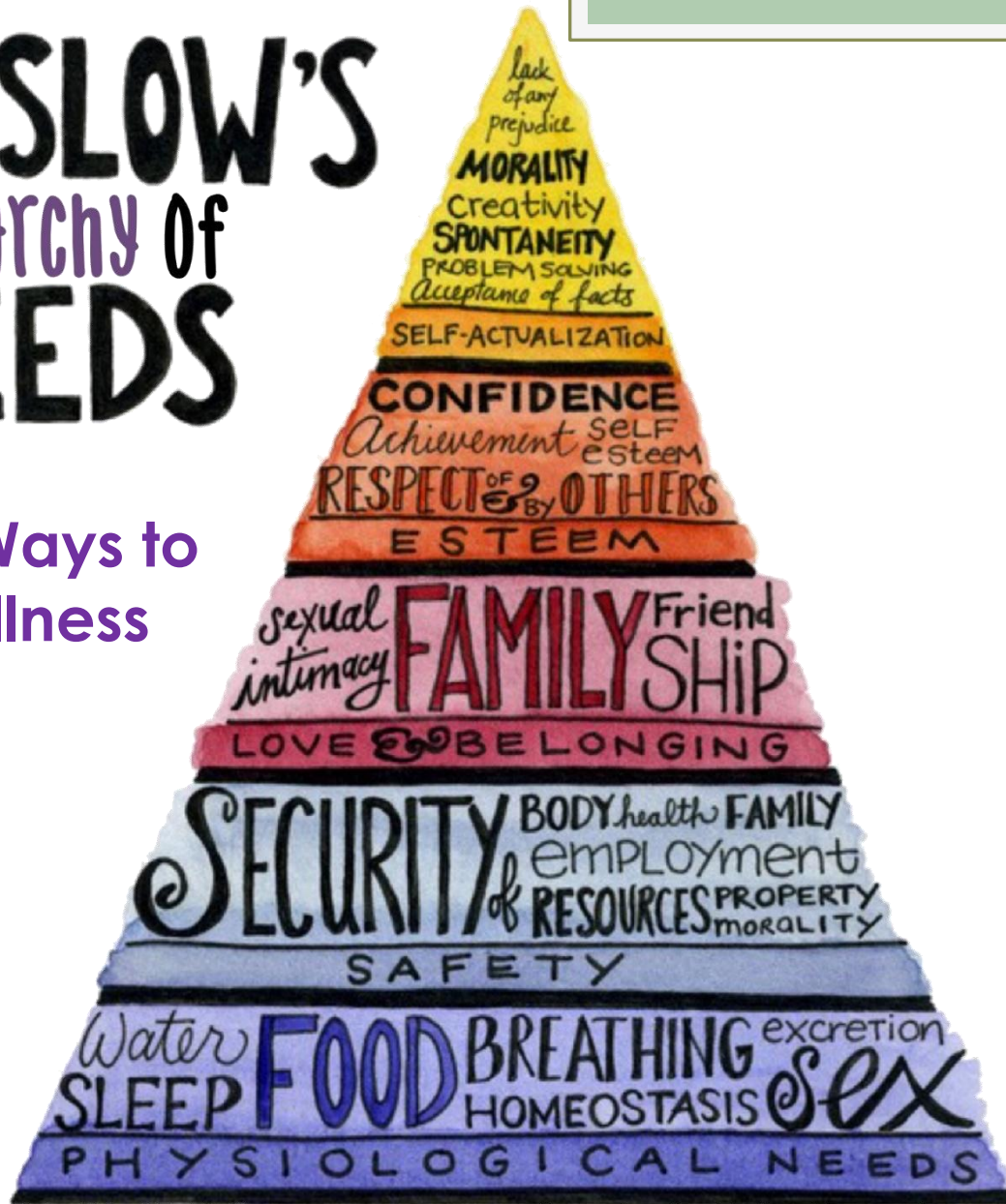
## “The Big 5”

- Healthy eating/ Active Living
- Healthy/ connected relationships
  - Hobbies & interests
- Involvement/ engaged in “community”
  - Positive thinking/ Hope/ Perspective

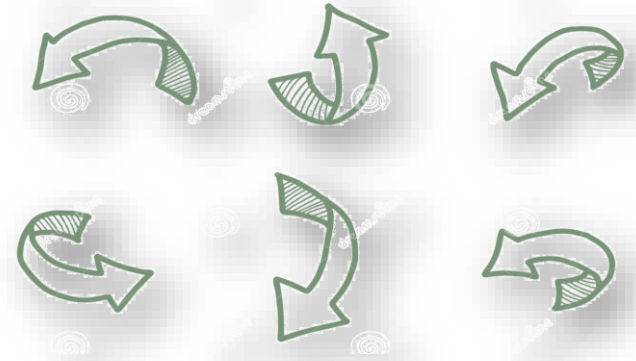
**These Big 5 are based off of Maslow’s Heirarchy**

# MASLOW'S Hierarchy of NEEDS

The Ways to  
Wellness



# Continuum of Mental Health to Mental Illness



Mental Health

Mental Health Challenges

Mental Illness



# Mental Health “Challenges”



- When the “big 5” or basic needs are in conflict, out of balance, threatened or absent
  - i.e. grief, loss, esteem challenges, relationship problems, bullying, body image, conflict, poverty, transition, stress, etc.
  - We ALL have mental health challenges/ issues



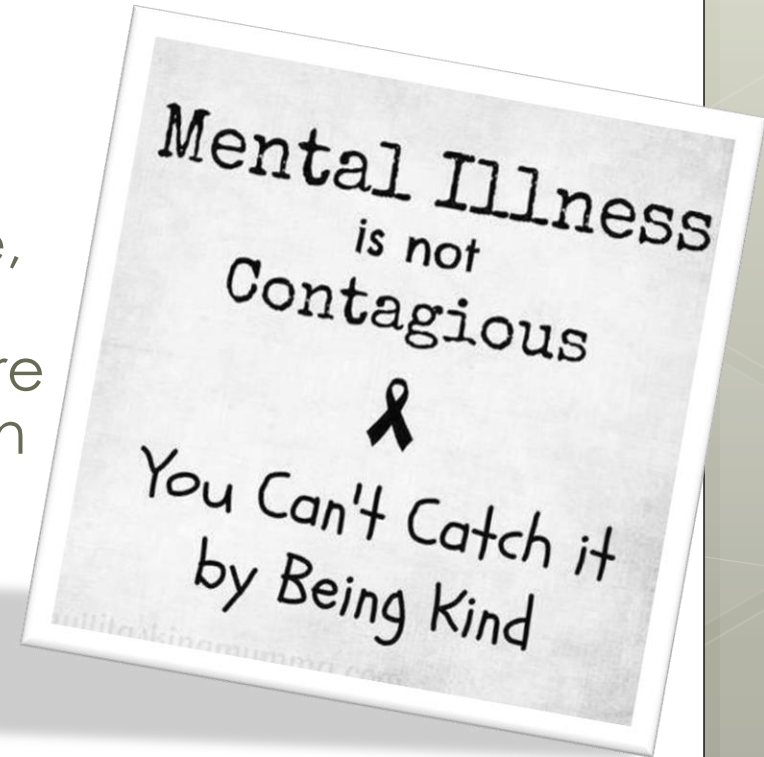
# What is the definition of Mental Illness/ Disorder?

A mental disorder causes major changes in a person's thinking, emotional state and behavior, and disrupts the person's ability to work and carry out their usual personal relationships.

- A medical condition or disease that meets specific criteria for diagnosis. i.e. depression, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Schizophrenia, Anorexia, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, etc.
- There is a diagnostic process (note how it differs from dynamics in mental health “challenges” or “issues.”)
- Consider those who are labelled with mental health “issues” and the wide gamut that entails. Schizophrenia is not the same as being bullied, and PTSD and grief are not the same; don't lump them together. and it's not fair to either dynamic to compare them.

# Some thoughts on mental illness...

- Symptoms, manifestations and impacts at each of the cognitive, emotional and behavioral are different for each individual as are the “big 5” influences or factors in their life
- The “same” situation is never actually the same
- All mental illness exists on a continuum (mild, moderate, severe), AND
- Mental illness is not “static”
  - Beware the “good days and bad days” standards/ expectations





## Common Mental Illnesses for Youth

Mood Disorders → Depression  
Bipolar Disorder

Behavior Disorders → ADD/ ADHD  
Oppositional Defiant Disorder

Autism Spectrum Disorders → Autism Spectrum  
Asperger's Syndrome  
Pervasive Developmental Disorder

Substance Use Disorders → Addictions  
Substance Induced Disorders

Eating Disorders → Anorexia Nervosa  
Bulimia Nervosa  
Binge Eating Disorder

Anxiety Disorders → Separation Anxiety  
Obsessive Compulsive Disorder  
PTSD/ Acute Stress Disorder  
Phobias  
Generalized Anxiety Disorder

What about self-harm?

# What should I watch for?

- A change in BASELINE behavior, especially among the BIG 5 and MASLOW's HEIRARCHY
- These changes show a consistent pattern of:
  - Change in intensity or duration of the emotion, thought pattern or behavior
  - Interference in daily living (ability to take care of ones self, carry on personal relationships & go to work or school)



# Where do I go from here?



- What is the difference between counselling & therapy?
- What tools does each professional use?
- How do I access them?
- The frustration and failure we have and why...
  - This child doesn't need to be medicated
  - I don't have the skillset for treating...
  - They won't see them/ waiting list
  - What do you want me to do about it?
  - Each system is clogged by the other

## Continuum of Mental Health to Mental Illness

Mental  
Health

Mental Health  
Challenges

Mental  
Illness



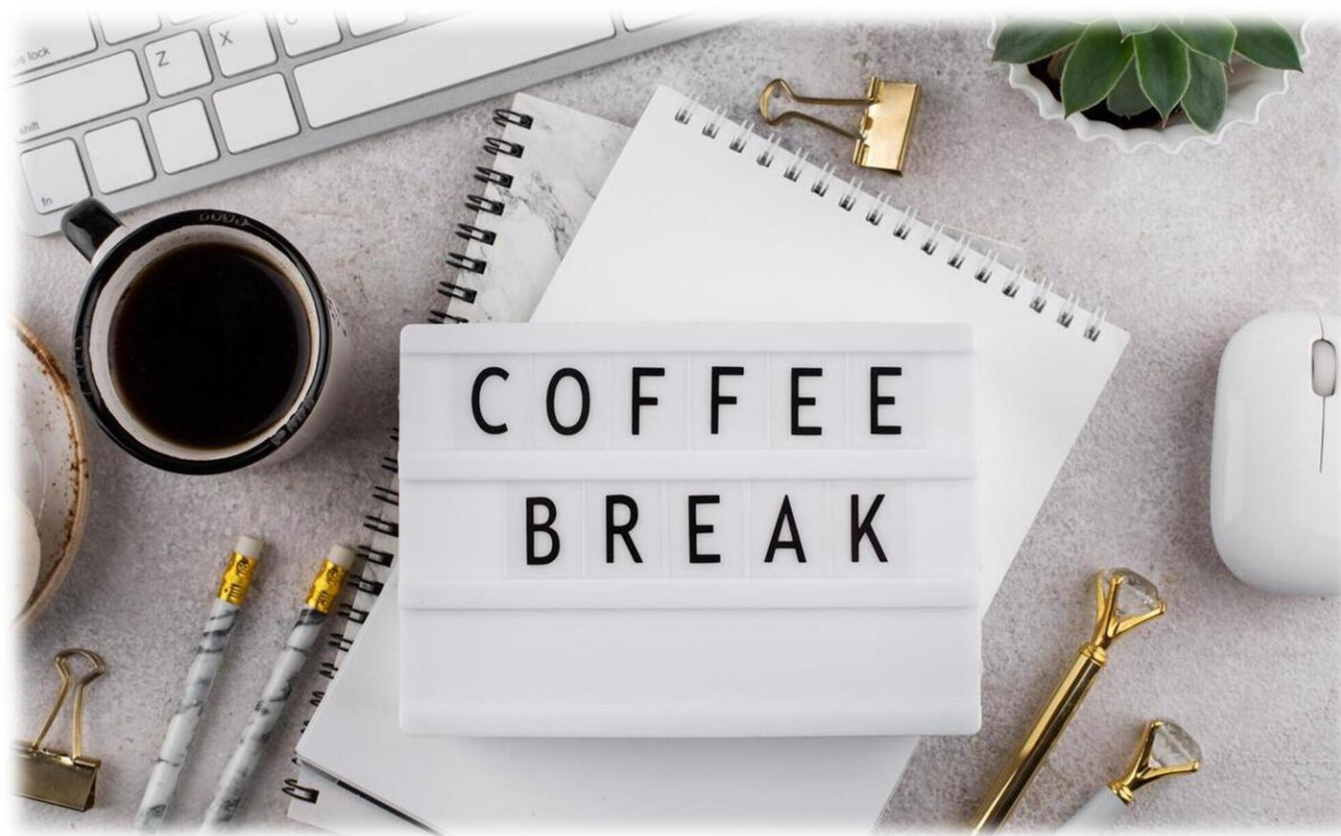
Family  
Peers  
Schools  
Communities

Community **Counselling**  
Support Groups/ Programs  
+ Previous

Medical Systems  
Hospitals  
MH professionals  
**"Therapy"**

The systems that most effectively and  
efficiently serve & support them

# BREAK!





# Hurried & Worried: Understanding Children's Anxiety

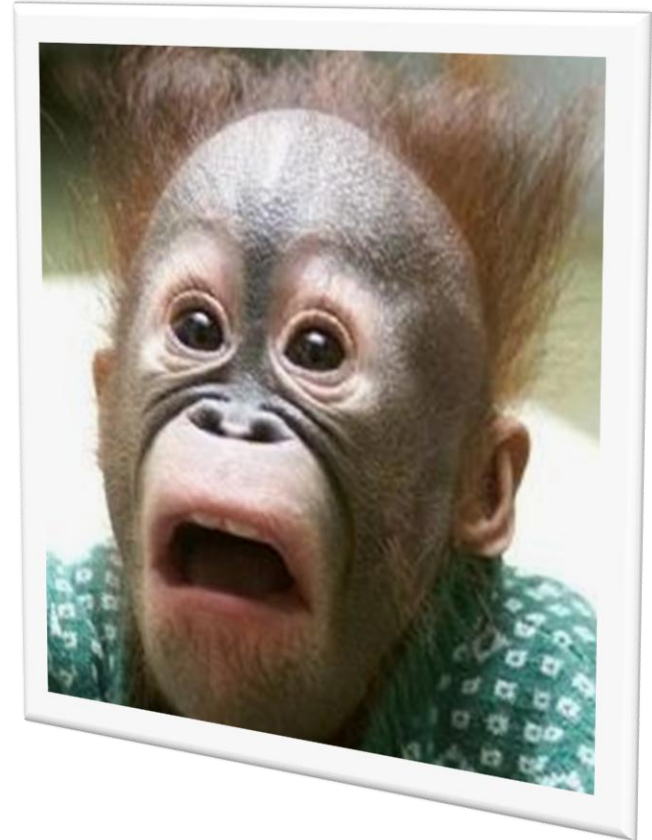
# We all have ANXIETY!!!

- What causes you anxiety?
- What caused you anxiety as a child?



# What is fear?

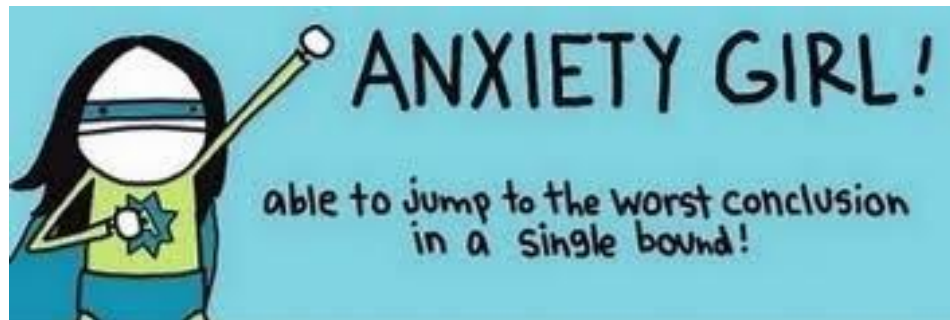
- Normal emotional response that helps us survive.
- Natural response to a stimulus that poses a threat to our well-being, safety or security.
- A physical arousal that occurs preparing us to neutralise the threat by fighting or fleeing from danger





# Fear vs. Anxiety

- **Fear** tends to be experienced in the presence of a real *immediate* danger



- **Anxiety** is a fear response in *absence* of, or out of *proportion* to a threat. Anxiety tends to be associated with worrying about the *future or past* difficulties, rather than an immediate situation.

# Anxiety is...

## **Psychological**

Emotional – fear, panic, agitation, nervousness, uneasiness, apprehension.

Cognitive – worry, negative thoughts, poor concentration, attentional biases.

## **Physical**

Increased heart rate, muscle tension, perspiration, stomach aches, sleep difficulties, etc.

## **Behavioural**

Flight (escape or avoidant behaviours)

Fight (approach behaviours)

Freeze/ Fidget

Reassurance seeking

NORMAL FEARS → ANXIETY DISORDERS

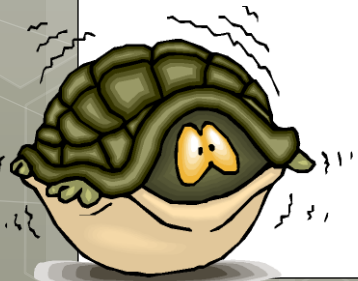
## When does anxiety become a problem?

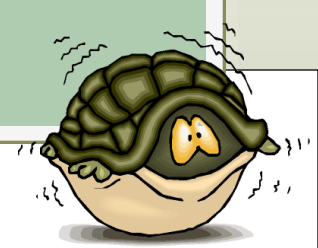
- Is the fear developmentally appropriate?
- Does the fear cause significant distress?
- Does the fear manifest longer than normal/ duration?
- Does the fear interfere with daily living & relationships?



# Different types of anxiety disorders

- **Separation anxiety disorder** (2 – 5 %)
  - Excessive anxiety concerning separation from home or from person who they are attached
- **Generalised anxiety disorder** (3 – 4 %)
  - Excessive and or unrealistic worry or feelings of general apprehension about events or activities
- **Social Phobia** (2 – 3 %)
  - Irrational and continuous fear of performing in social situations.
  - Fear of humiliating or embarrassing self and being negatively evaluated by others





- **Specific Phobia** (5 – 7 %)
  - Excessive and irrational fear of specific object or situation.
- **Panic disorder** (3 – 5%)
  - Recurrent unexpected panic attacks (discrete period of intense fear and discomfort) and concern about having attacks
- **Obsessive-compulsive disorder** (2 – 3 %)
  - Recurrent obsessions and compulsions severe enough to be time consuming

**Anxiety is highly co-morbid – 65-95% have more than one anxiety disorder (Last et al., 1996)**

# Symptoms of Anxiety

## Excessive:

- Worry (anticipatory)
- Avoidance
- Attention to threat
- Fast/sustained physiological arousal
- Psychosomatic complaints
- Difficulty in resting and going to sleep
- Shyness
- Social withdrawal
- Perfectionism
- Behavioral outbursts
- Anger



# Behaviors Associated with Anxiety & Depression

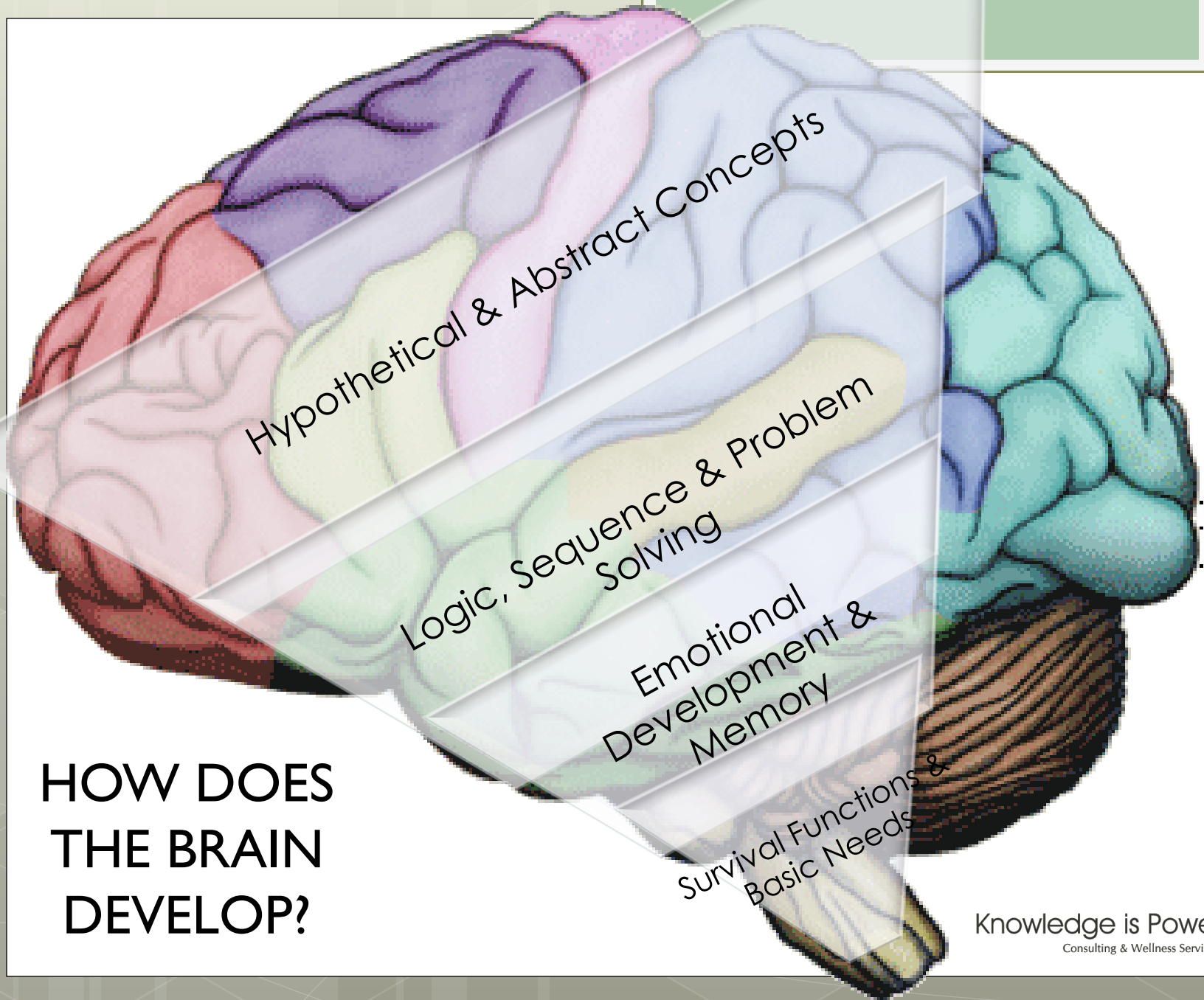
- ✓ Avoiding new things or taking risks
- ✓ Escaping from feared situations
- ✓ Frequent physical complaints and visits to sick room (especially before particular events)
- ✓ School refusal
- ✓ Distraction and attention difficulties
- ✓ Seeking reassurance
- ✓ Perfectionistic tendencies – frustrated when makes mistakes and when they can't "get it right"
- ✓ Staying close to a familiar person
- ✓ Resisting change, especially in routine
- ✓ Little eye contact
- ✓ Spending a lot of time alone
- ✓ Unwillingness to participate in class
- ✓ Withdrawal and/ or outbursts in behavior



# How Anxiety Affects Learning & Development







# HOW DOES THE BRAIN DEVELOP?

# What can we do?



# Various levels of Intervention

- Medical (physical symptoms & systems)
- Psychological (counselling & therapy – Cognitive Behavioural Therapy)
- Self-Help & Support Systems
  - The 3 C's
    - Connection
    - Competence
    - Control
  - Physical Coping
    - Sleep/ Diet/ Exercise
    - Breathing/ Heart rate and physical response mgm't
    - Rest & Recovery
    - Meditation (brain rest)
  - Behavioural Coping
    - Fight & Flight behaviour management/ replacement
  - Intellectual Coping (Mind/ Thoughts)
    - Planning/ problem solving/ researching
    - Journaling
    - Reading
  - Emotional Coping
    - Self Care
    - Talking with friends/ family
    - Processing & validating emotions



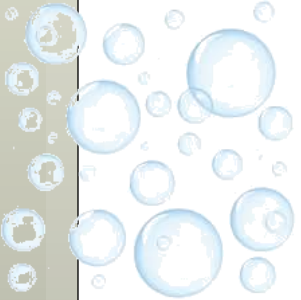
## Using CBT as a foundation, we teach:

- A positive sense of self
  - Identity
  - Self-esteem
  - I am special
- About their feelings
  - Emotional & Physical
  - Give them words and outlets
- About their thoughts
  - Red thoughts vs. Green thoughts
  - Positive Self talk
- Things they can “do”
  - Coping strategies
  - Relaxation/ Ways to feel good
  - Knowledge and a Plan



# Teaching Body Awareness & Relaxation

- Body Clues
- Bubble & Birthday Cake Breathing/  
deep breathing
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Yoga
- Pizza Massage
- Feel Good Recipes



# “Red” Thoughts = STOP!

Unhelpful, negative, pessimistic “red”  
thoughts = unhappy feelings.

**I can't do  
it! It's too  
hard.**

**They will  
laugh at  
me.**

**I'll never  
learn to  
ride a  
bike.**

**No-one  
wants to  
play with  
me.**



# “Green” Thoughts=GO!

Helpful, positive, optimistic

“green” thoughts = happy feelings



**I can do it!**

**I am a  
good  
friend.**

**I will be  
brave**

**I am good at  
lots of things.**

## Some important things to note about red and green thoughts

- It's okay to have red thoughts – everybody does. But we want to have them less often. What's important is what we do with our red thoughts (i.e. turn them into green thoughts!).
- Green thoughts need to be **realistic**. They do not mean we are lying to ourselves.
- Green thoughts don't always necessarily make you feel good, but they can make you feel better, especially in very difficult situations.
- Changing red thoughts to green thoughts *takes effort*. It requires constant **practice, persistence and encouragement**.



# PIZZA MASSAGE!



Thank you

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