

Supporting your teenager

Dr Jude Joughin, Child & Educational Psychologist

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Aims of the session

- Revisit your understanding of the origin and function of emotions
- Refresh your understanding of stress and anxiety in the teenage years
- Understand how you can help your teen in an accessible and everyday way

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What is an emotion?



- Emotions are an **accumulation of many body systems and circuits**
- The **brain's system continuously surveys** the internal state of the body, the environment that surrounds us and our thinking.
- Everything that happens to us generates an emotional response; sometimes big, sometimes little.

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Why emotions matter

- Attention, memory, and learning
- Decision-making and judgment
- Relationship quality
- Physical and mental health
- Effectiveness at school and work

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When Emotions are not Easy

- There are times in life when we might want to get rid of a feeling because it is too: unbearable, intense, disturbing, frightening, chaotic, dangerous and / or overwhelming.
- During these times we engage with 'coping mechanisms' which make the feeling more bearable and easier to manage. Some of these are helpful, some less so.
- Some people (adults and children) have learnt not to express hurt, sadness, loss, disappointment for a whole range of reasons
- They have learnt to defend themselves from having such feelings in the first place
- Instead they may express / move into another 'easier' feeling instead
- Emotions can be contagious and can influence those around us.

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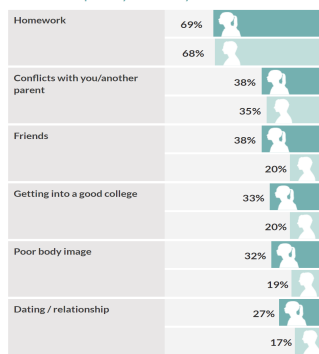
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Stress

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What are the primary causes of your teen's stress?



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- **Frustration:** blocked goal
- **Conflict:** incompatible motivations
- **Change:** having to adapt
- **Pressure**
 - Perform/conform

Major Types of Stress

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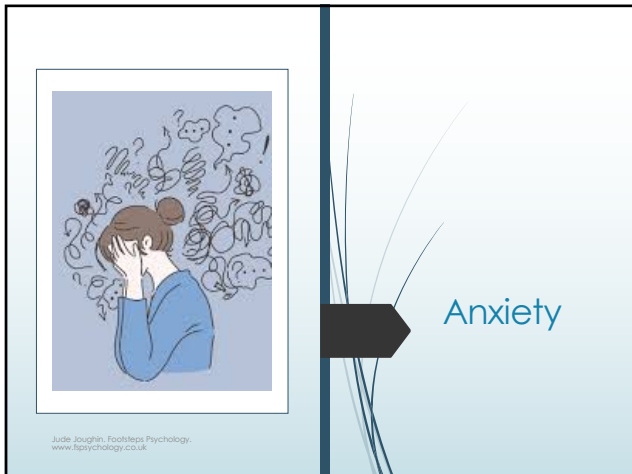
Signs

- can't sleep or are getting to bed later than usual
- seem fatigued, disengaged, panicky or down
- are saying they're tired all the time, have headaches or stomach aches
- are feeling irritable about themselves or others around them
- are having trouble concentrating
- are avoiding school
- aren't being themselves
- aren't eating very well
- are staying in their room a lot on the weekends when they usually would be out with friends.

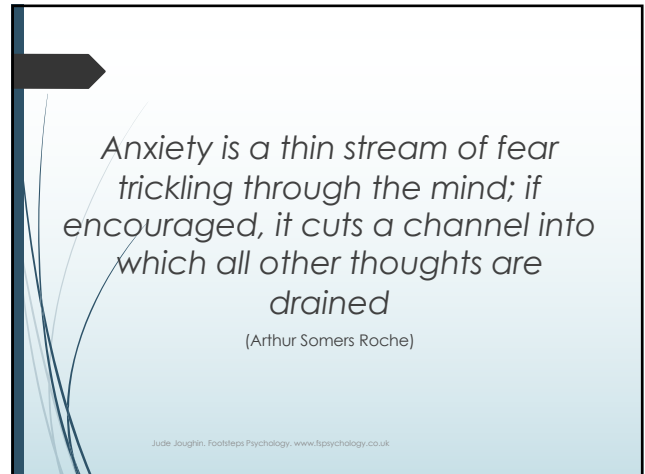


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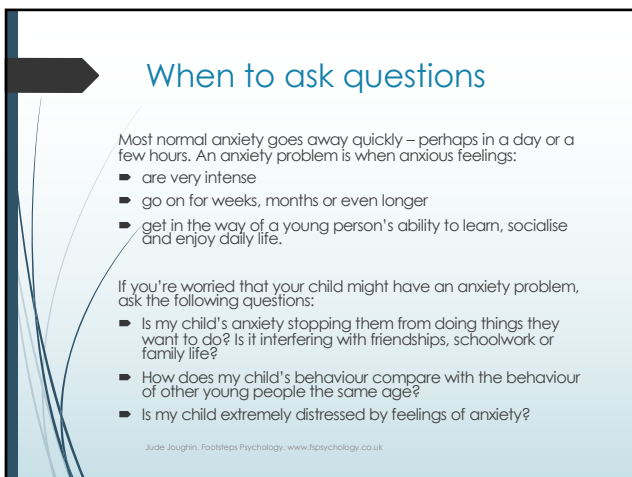
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RULER

Recognising
Understanding
Labelling
Expressing
Regulating



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Recognising

Question?

What's the difference between disappointment and anger?

- Recognising our own feelings
- Recognising the feelings in another

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Recognising

- *Don't worry. There's nothing to be afraid of.*
- *It's not a big deal that it broke. Just fix it.*
- *There's no reason to cry. Losing is part of the game.*
- *Homework is your job. Just get it done. If you focus, you'll be finished sooner.*

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To recognise emotions, families can:

- Discuss how emotions are expressed on our faces, in our voices, and bodies – use examples from work/ life.
- Notice and honour your children's and your emotions
- Acknowledge your children's and your own emotions instead – don't dishcloth or soapbox.

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Understanding

- It is really easy to 'understand' based on how we would feel (inference) or based on behaviour (guess work)
- I hate school and I'm never going back
- We've fallen out and will never be friends again
- It's always me that this happens to



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How to help with understanding

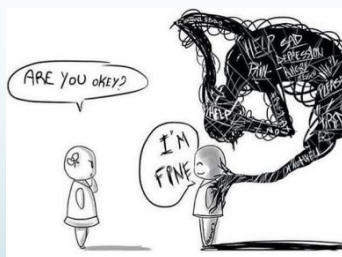
To understand emotions, families can:

- Ask your children questions about what emotions might be underlying or driving their behaviours (i.e. I notice you're feeling sick every morning before school. What's going on? My sense is that something is up)
- Timing is everything – blow out? Wait
- Be a scientist not a judge – the difference is checking out and a desire to hear, not stating

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Labelling



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Labelling

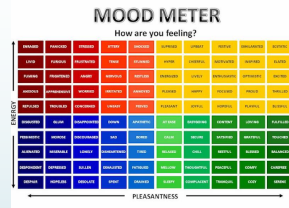
- Legitimises and organises our experiences – it gives our feeling substance.
- It helps others meet our needs. Empathy becomes more available.
- It helps us meet the needs of others
- It connects us to others

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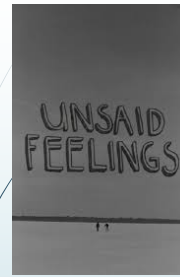
How?

- Modelling
- Mood meter
- Devote time to positive and negative emotions
- Number it
- Find the best word to describe your feelings and encourage your teen to do the same
- Build your family's feeling word vocabulary by discovering new words in books, films, or conversations



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- Shame = judgement from outside
- Guilt = judgment we make of ourselves
- Embarrassment = caught violating rules /social norm
- Jealousy = form of fear, usually a fear of loss
- Envy = wanting something someone else has
- Joy = pleasantness and high energy
- Contentment = pleasantness and low energy
- Stress- we've looked at, response to too many demands
- Anxiety = worry about the future, inability to control things
- Fear = sense of danger lying ahead
- Pressure = force from outside concerning something important at stake

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Expressing emotion

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If we....

- If we help children to talk, we help develop their social skills
- If we help children to talk, they will learn how to reflect on their feelings rather than behave their feelings
- If we help them to talk, it will help develop their brains as well as their emotional skills
- If we help children to talk, they will be able to manage stress well throughout their lives
- If we help children to talk about their feelings, they will develop more sophisticated language for their emotions
- If we help children to talk, they will be able to 'suffer well'
- If we help them to talk, we open up their capacity to take in comfort

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How?

- The key here is listening.
- Expression is a co skill
- I'm here for you, I'm listening
- Be aware of gender bias
- The role of coach here and scripts is important – how are you expressing this? Is that helpful for you? Is that unhelpful for you?
- Sharing times whereby you have got emotional expression wrong and the fallout from this.

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Emotional Regulation

- This is not 'getting rid' it's learning to 'ride the wave'
- It's not about suppression and denying the feeling
- Once we accept the feelings we can see things with greater clarity and feel less provoked by them



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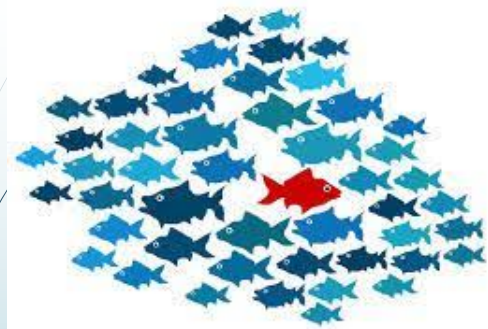
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Regulating

- Pausing to respond instead of react
- Scripts – words become thoughts
- Modelling/ real life examples
- Clear, consistent boundaries
- Blow outs happen – repair and restore
- An apology and how its given
- Reframing
- What are your strategies? Help explore their strategies.

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Be Kind to Yourself

- Recognise your 'inner critic' – that part of your personality that criticizes 'who you are' and 'what you do'.
- Recognise your own flashpoints – I wonder what I could do differently?
- Begin to 'talk back', by consciously and deliberately using kinder, more supportive, appreciative, and gentle feedback to yourself instead.
 - Try to respond to yourself with the compassionate qualities of wisdom, strength, warmth, kindness.
 - What would my best friend say to me?
 - What would a truly compassionate being say
 - What tone of voice would I need to be talked to me? In order to feel reassured.

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General format for specific scripts


- **IDENTIFY/LABEL THE ISSUE** (e.g., "This seems to be a problem; This is kind of scary; This is a big deal; I think this might be hard for you.")
- **STATE THE REASON** (e.g., "Is it a problem because...; Is it scary because ...; It's a big deal because...; It's hard because".)
- **OFFER A STRATEGY** (e.g., "We (or you) can do; that should help")
- **GENERAL REASSURANCE** (e.g., "Great; there's always something that works, isn't there?")
- Students will not internalize these critical self-regulatory scripts unless the scripts first become a **habit for adults** in their interactions with the students.
- Gradually reduce external support

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Scripts: Examples

- **Hard – Easy**
 - Useful for children who have low confidence and are anxious about their learning
- **Big Deal – Little Deal**
 - Useful for anxious children or children who 'overreact'
- **Ready – Not Ready**
 - Useful for impulsive children who start without a plan
- **Choice – No Choice**
 - Helps children to discriminate between choice and no choice situations, to make good choices & accept no choice situations



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Problem-solving script

- **Script:**
- **Identify/label the issue**
- e.g. "This looks a bit tricky"
- **State the reason**
- e.g. "It's tricky because....." **Offer a strategy**
- e.g. "We can do"
- "That should help"
- **General reassurance**
- e.g. "Great, there's always something that works, isn't there?"
- "There's always something we can do"
- "There's always a way"

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Hard to do/easy to do script

- **Script:**
- **Identify/label the issue**
- e.g. "This is quite hard/medium hard/easy to do isn't it?"
- **State the reason**
- e.g. "It's hard/easy to do because"
- **Offer a strategy**
- e.g. "O.K. so we need to make a plan"
- "Maybe you could ask for help? Or"
- **General reassurance**
- e.g. "Great; that was hard to do – but you asked for help and we did it"
- "There's always something that works, isn't there?"
- "There's always something we can do"

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Big deal/little deal script

- **Goal:** help pupils distinguish what is important from what is not important; help to avoid negative behaviours/interactions
- Introduce when students are CALM. Model in everyday situations, introduce using stories/real-life examples
- **Script:**
- **Identify/label the issue**
- e.g. "Sometimes we can get upset over little deals...."
- **State the reason**
- e.g., "This is just a little deal because we can"
- **Offer a strategy**
- e.g., "Maybe we can just wipe this milk up with a paper towel"
- **General reassurance**
- e.g., "There we go. You see, that was not a big deal. That was just a little deal. There's always something that works, isn't there?"

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