

ANXIETY



ISN'T A THINKING PROBLEM—IT'S AN EMOTIONAL ONE

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Coping skills, calming down, brain science, and bravery aren't enough

WHAT DO KIDS REALLY NEED?

When we treat anxiety as a thinking problem, we push feelings underground. When we see it as an emotional one, we make space for **rest, resilience, and relationship.**



WHAT IF ANXIETY ISN'T WHAT YOU THINK?



WHAT WE COMMONLY DO

Today we treat anxiety as a thinking problem — something to fix with logic, reassurance, or coping strategies.



BENEATH THE SURFACE

Anxiety is rooted in the body's alarm system, and is part of a sophisticated **sensory surveillance system** designed to help us survive.



AT THE ROOT

We don't have an anxiety system — we have an **alarm system** that can get stuck in overdrive, giving rise to anxiety and attention issues.

4 WAYS WE MISTAKE ANXIETY FOR A THINKING PROBLEM

APPROACH

HOW IT SOUNDS

WHY IT MISSES THE MARK

Coping

Think differently, be positive, change your approach

Focuses on symptom control instead of emotional release.

Calm down

You're safe, it's okay, calm your body

Safety can't be told — it must be felt.

Teaching the brain

Your amygdala is firing, what does brain science say?

Turns emotion into a lesson instead of a lived experience.

Focus on bravery

Be brave, you've got this, face these fears

Pressures performance when alarm has locked the system.

What emotion *drives* anxiety?

➔ **ALARM**

Hardwired in the brain and activated when facing separation from who and what we are attached to.

THINKING ABOUT ANXIETY ISN'T THE SAME AS FEELING IT

THINKING ABOUT ANXIETY

- They just need to calm down.
- They should know they're safe.
- They need to be brave.
- They should use their coping tools

FEELING THROUGH ANXIETY

- They need to unload alarm.
- Their body must feel safe.
- Courage grows after alarm moves.
- They need to rest in our care until alarm settles.

WHAT'S THE WORRY THAT IS DRIVING US?



Our rush to fix anxiety with a thinking approach makes children responsible for feelings long before they're ready to carry them.

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Most approaches to anxiety focus on thinking — teaching kids to reason, reframe, or calm themselves.

But thinking strategies 'work' best for the kids who need them the least — and least for the ones who need them the most.