



Guest speakers on Anxiety

When: Wednesday, November 18, 2015

Time: 6:30pm

Where: Winsor Hill Cafeteria

JSEAC was pleased to welcome Kerri Mowbray, LICSW and Madeline Lafleur, LICSW from [The Inner You Counseling Center](#) who spoke on [Anxiety and Your Child](#). Below are some of the topics, tips and “tricks” they discussed:

- Anxiety can occur in anyone, in different ages and in different stages of life.
- Three general classifications of anxiety are separation anxiety (usually in young children), social anxiety, and phobias.
- Parents should try to help kids name their emotions, and recognize and validate that their emotions and feelings are important to them.
- If anxiety is causing unwanted behaviors, parents can help children transition from those unwanted behaviors (e.g., chewing on clothing, tapping loudly) to ones that are more acceptable (e.g., chewing gum, twisting a rubber band).
- Give children a giant eraser to remind them that we all make mistakes: no one is perfect.
- If someone (child or adult) feels a panic attack coming on, they can hold an ice cube in their hand. This will help distract their brains and possibly halt the progression of the attack.
- Help anxious children put together a “soothing kit.” Ideas include: play-doh, slinky, sensory brush, squeeze ball, etc.
- Coloring book can often help children and adults decompress, relax, and focus on a single activity.
- Building a “worry box” with your child will give them a place to write down their worries, validate their feelings, then set them aside.

- Use body/muscle exercises to relieve anxiety at any age: tense and release muscle groups, stand up and sit down several times, do yoga, concentrate on movement and breathing, or try any type of exercise.
- Positive reinforcement can help anxious children keep building on emerging good habits: try marbles in a mason jar, incentive charts with stickers, or color coded behavior charts to work toward an earned prize when children practice good behaviors.
- Laughter is a powerful stress reducer. It is okay to joke during tense situations, or to play a favorite comedian or funny movie.
- Group therapy sessions with children experiencing anxiety or loss often show kids that they are not alone and help normalize their feelings.
- Smells and scents often carry strong positive associations and can be used to combat anxiety.
- Two specific breathing exercises to try:
 - 3, 4, 5: Breath in for 3 seconds, hold your breath for 4 seconds, and exhale for 5 seconds.
 - Younger children can pretend to “Smell the Roses”
- Teach children to “ground” themselves when they feel anxious, by physically walking around, placing 2 feet on the floor, throwing a ball back and forth.
- When your child is experiencing a high level of anxiety, the first step is always to calm them. They cannot process their emotions, behaviors or information when they are in that heightened state.
- Help children imagine a “happy place” or let them describe “the best day of my life.” Encourage them to be very specific...ask them to identify what they see, hear, smell, taste and feel.
- Partner with your child to problem solve about what is causing their anxiety, and brainstorm ways to control it. Ask their opinion about new techniques, and allow them to take an active role in managing their feelings and behaviors.
- If anxiety is affecting their daily lives, having your child speak with a trained professional is always a good first step.