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Pediatric Anxiety Disorders and their Accommodation in the Elementary Classroom

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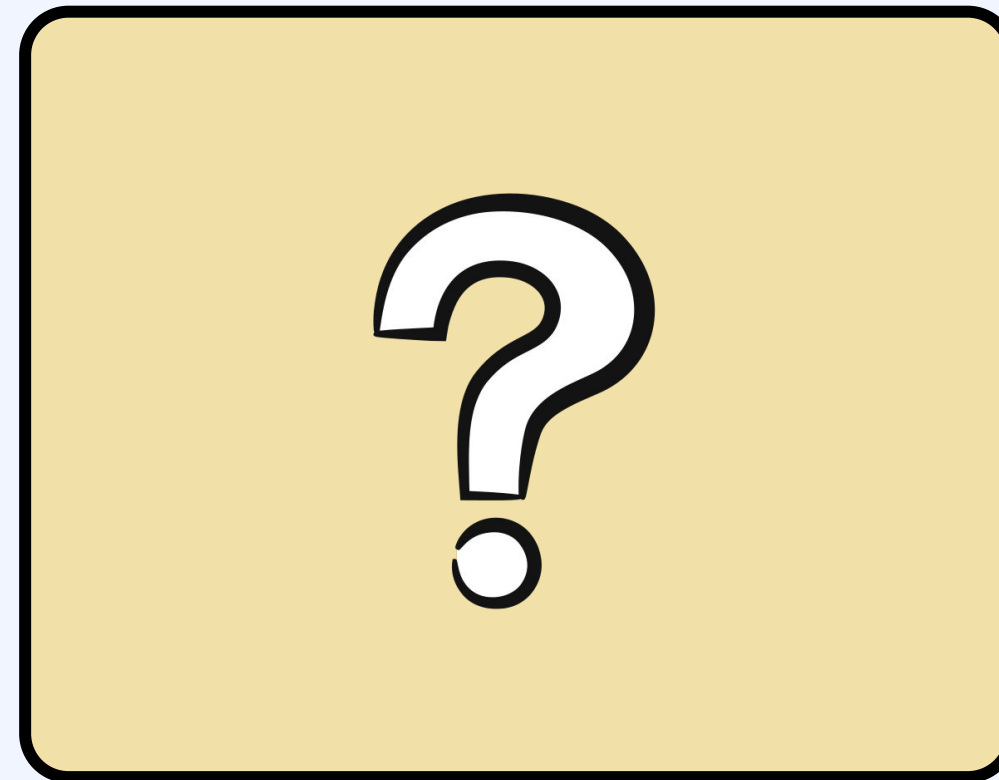
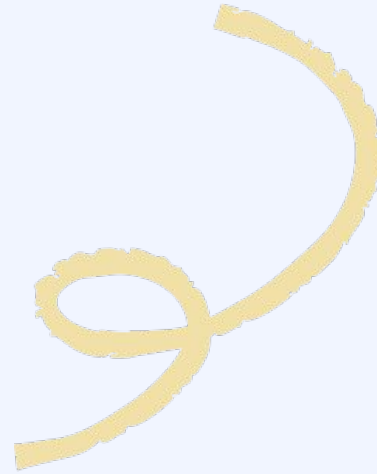
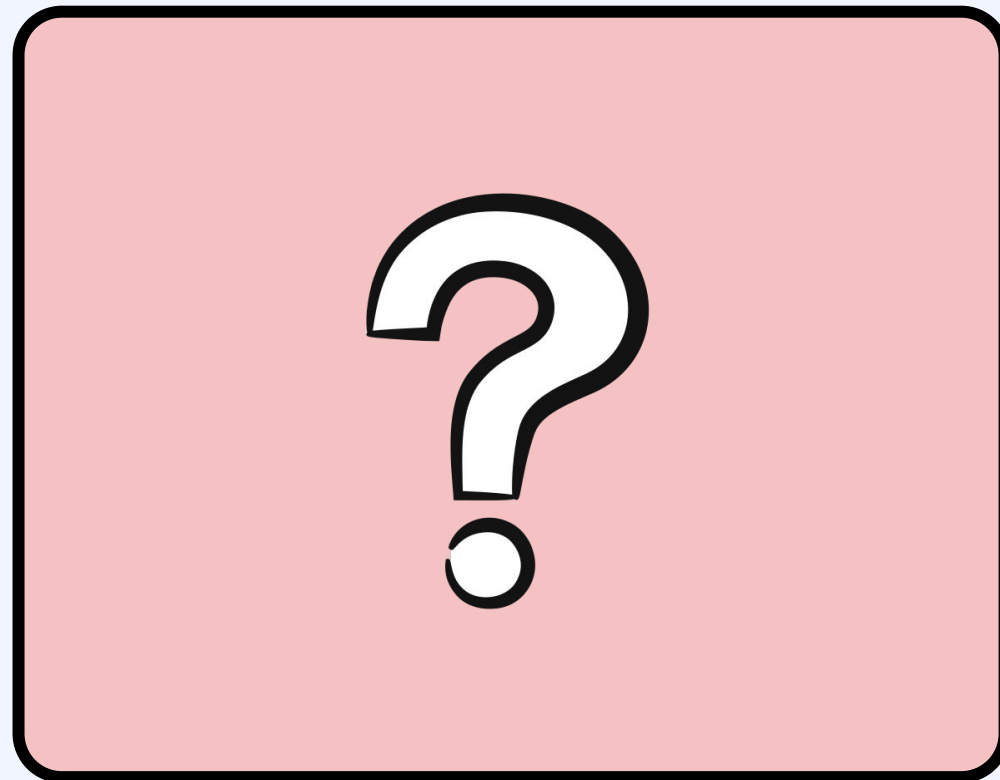


Pediatric Anxiety Disorders, and Their Accommodation in the Classroom



Olivia Hobson, Spring 2024

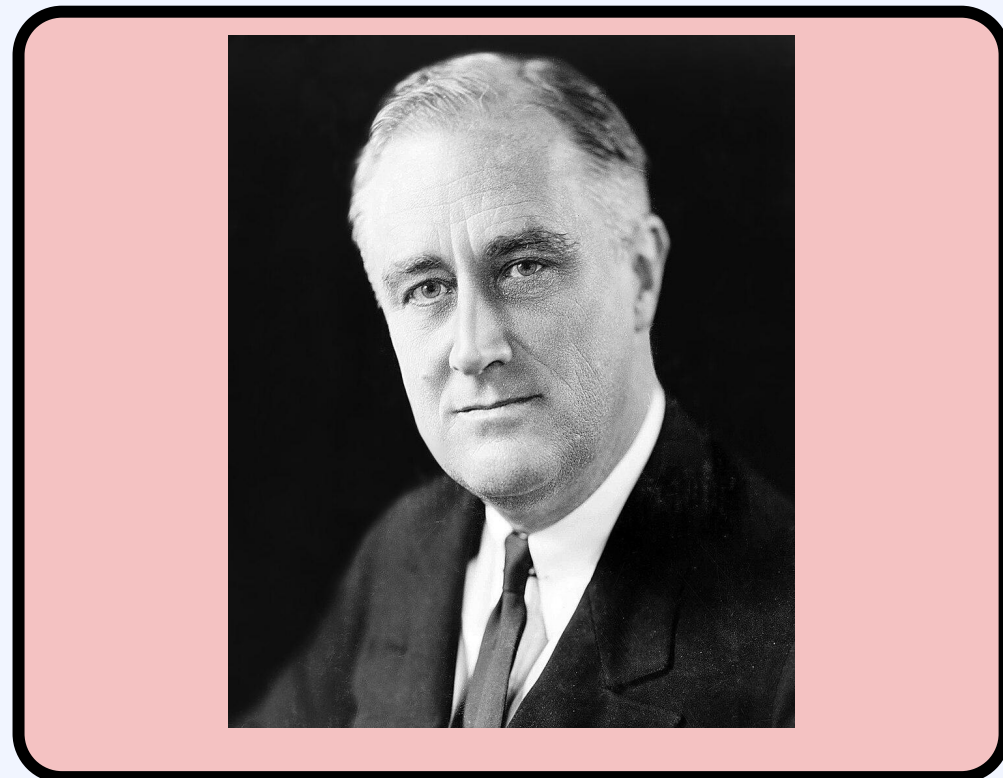
Fill in the blanks for me...



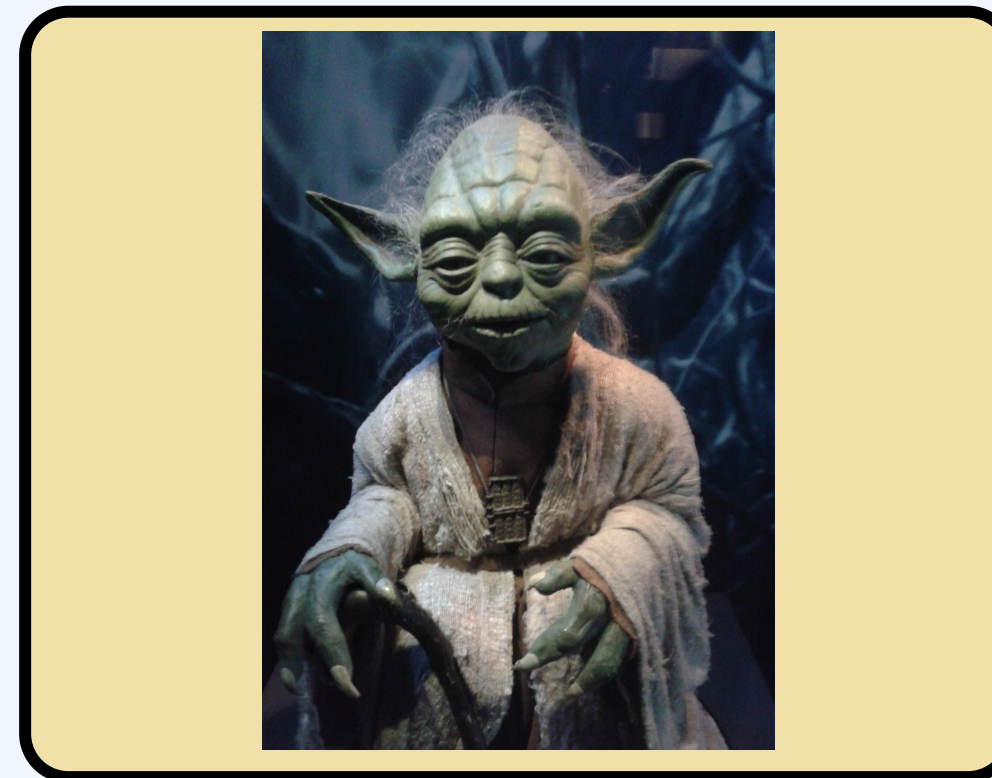
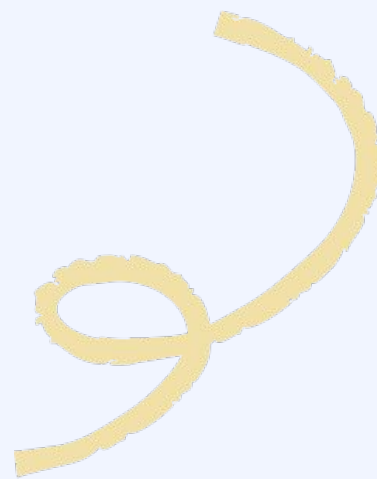
“The only thing we have to _____ is
_____ itself”

“_____ is a path to the dark side”

Fill in the blanks for me...



“The only thing we have to **fear** is
fear itself”



“**Fear** is a path to the dark side”

Let's Talk...



What are these disorders?



What is their impact?



What can educators do to help?

Q & A at the end :)

What are these disorders?



Fear

vs.

Anxiety



- Instinctive (purpose: self-preservation)
- Directed to a **clear and present** threat
- **Natural** Skill (babies are born with the capacity)



- **Subset** of fear
- Directed to a **hypothetical** threat
- **Developed** Skill (babies are NOT born with the capacity)

Standard progression of anxiety in children

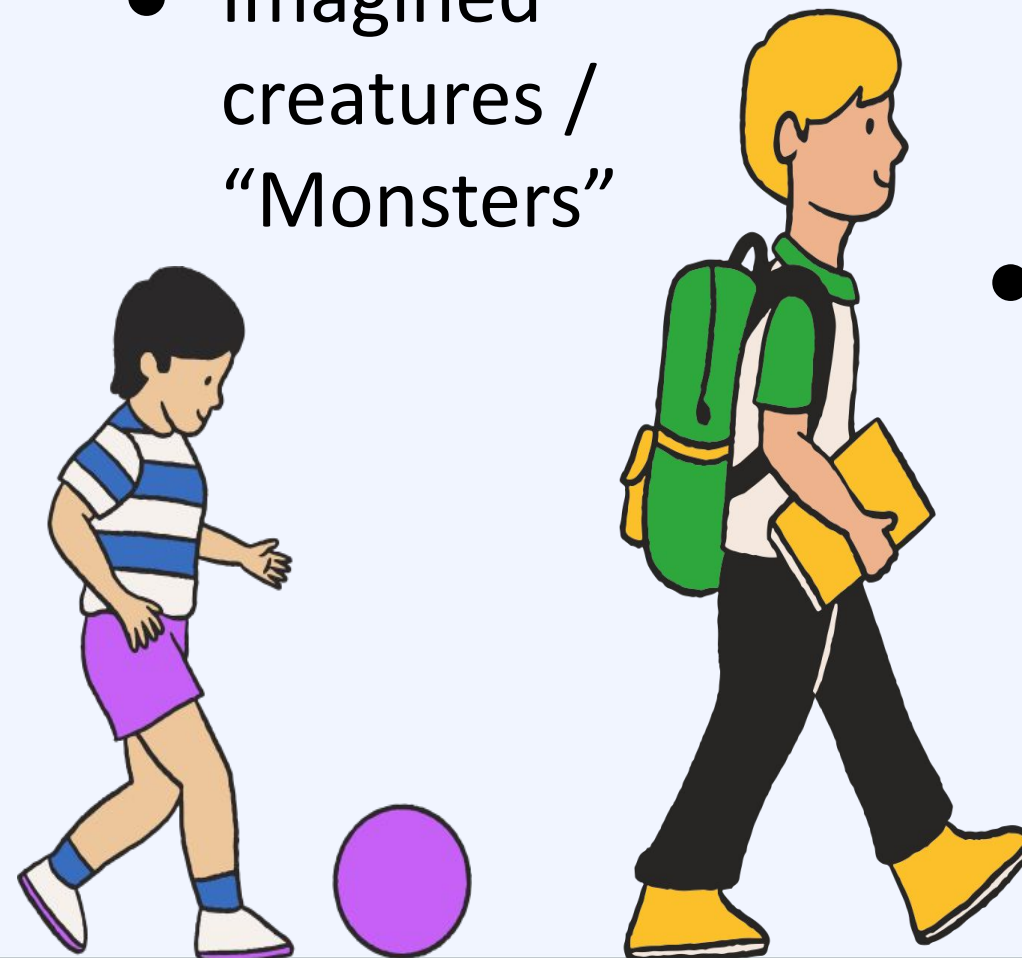
< 2 years

- Separation from caretaker



2-4 years

- Animals
- Imagined creatures / "Monsters"



5-12 years

- Real-world events (Natural disasters, accidents, etc.)
- **Anxiety for others, not only self**

13+ years

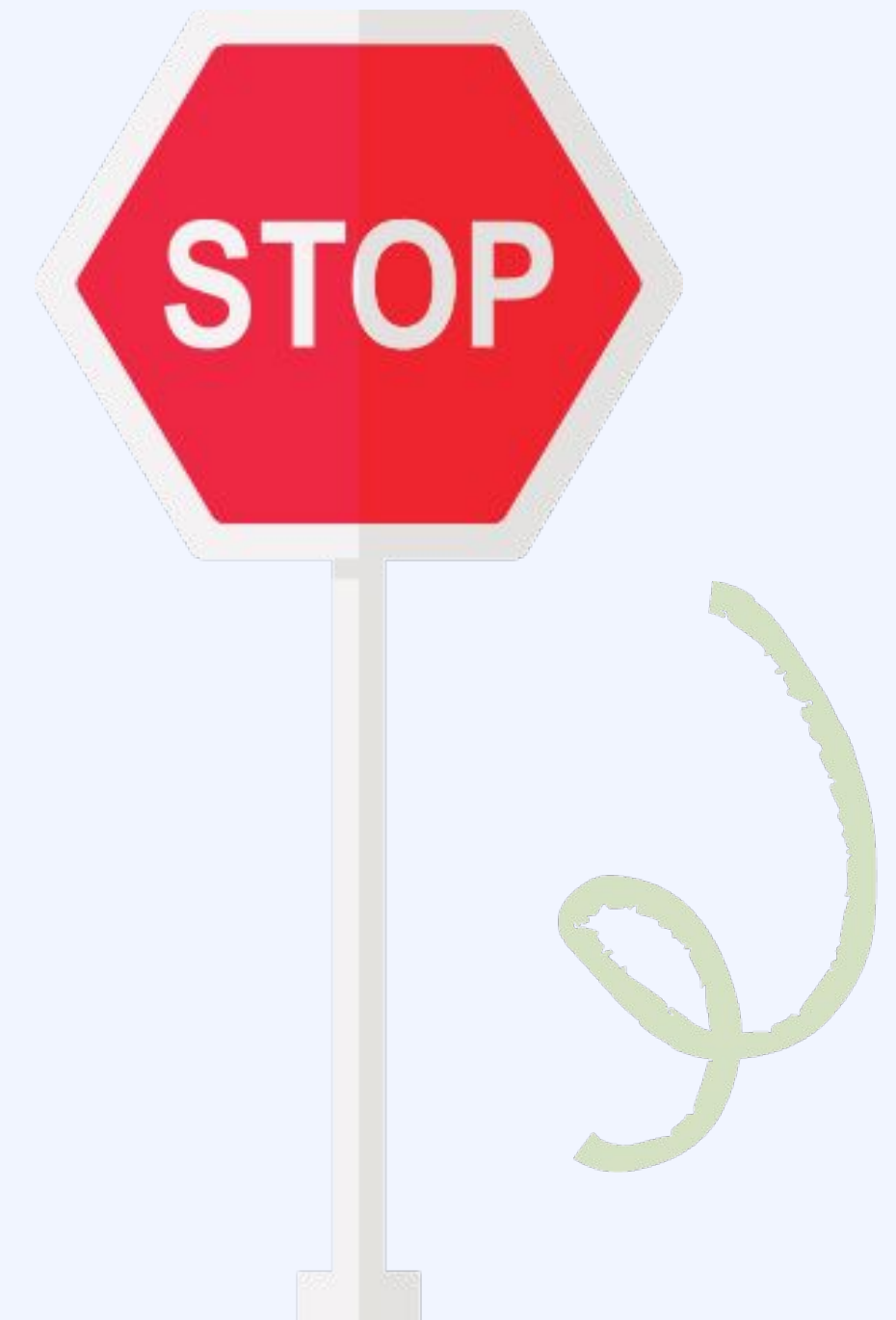
- Peer-perception
- Personal Fulfillment



When is there a problem?

Interference is the Key

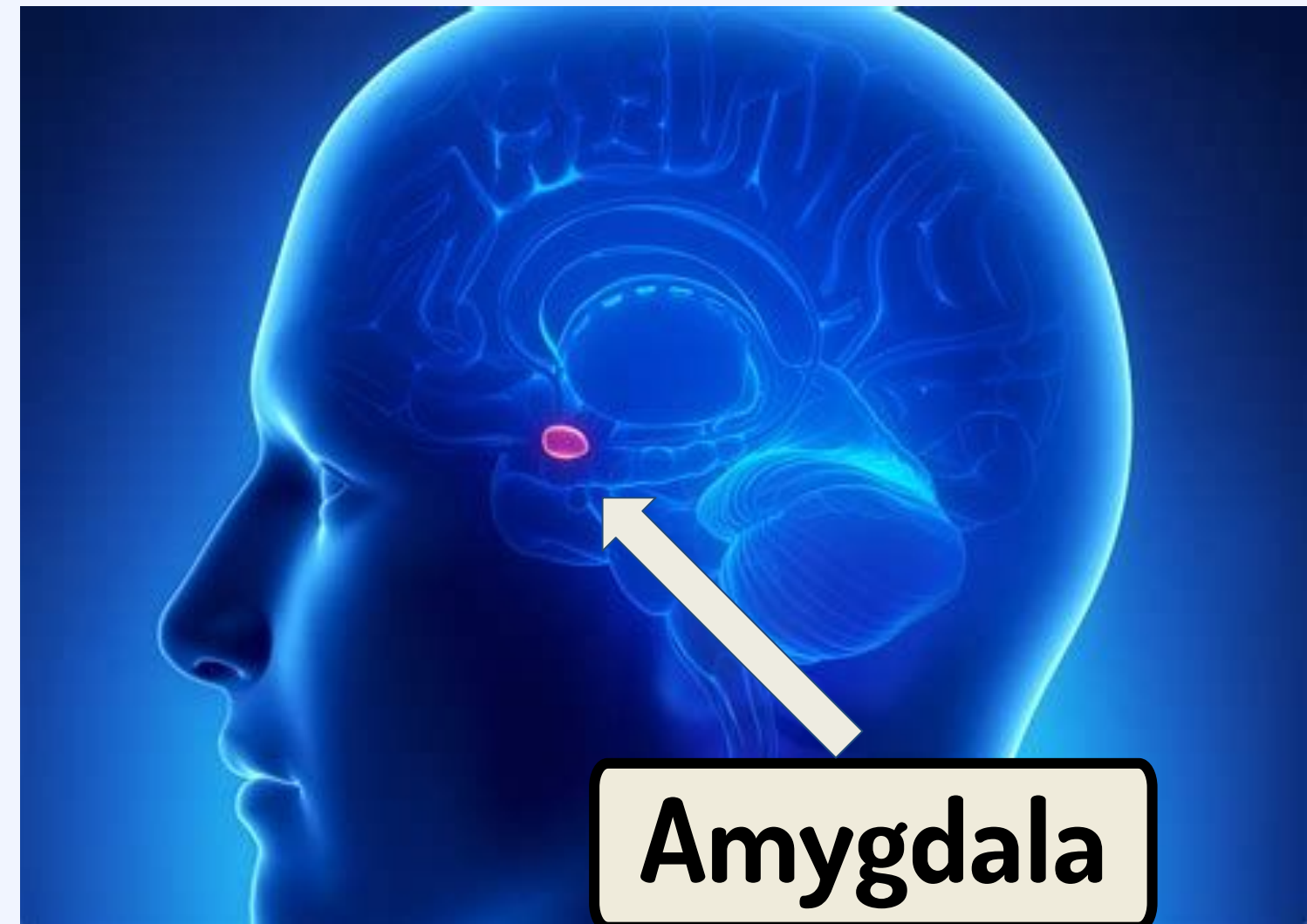
- ... In social relationships
- ... In general demeanor
- ... In attitude towards activities
- ... In school and academic performance



What's going on in the brain?

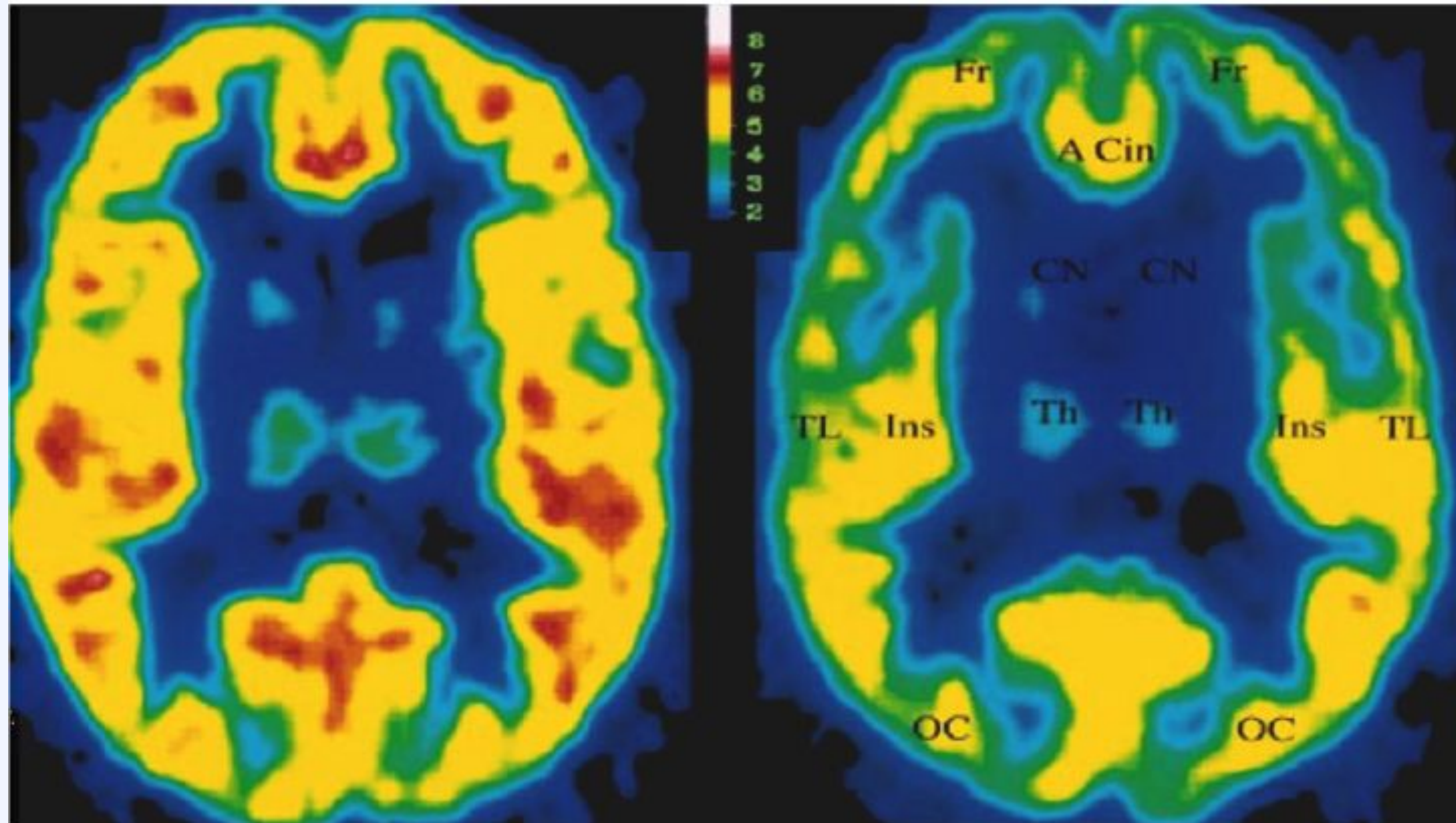
There is “a robust correlation between **responsiveness of the amygdala and the degree of anxiety symptoms**” (Thompson et. al., 2013, pp. 223-224).

Pediatric anxiety disorders present as “abnormalities in various neural structures that subserve threat appraisal, modulation of fear responses, attachment, and mentalization,” and **these may be present so early in the course of the disorder that they may even precede any external symptoms the disorder itself** (Strawn et al., 2014, p.156).



Normal control

Panic disorder

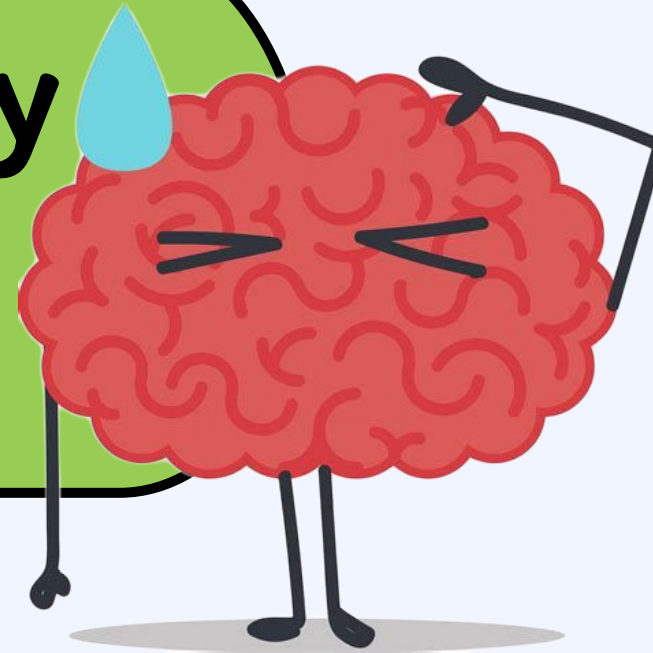


PET Scans indicate visible lack of benzodiazepine/GABA-A receptors in patients with Clinical Anxiety.

These reductions are also observed in areas of the brain where seizures occur in epilepsy patients.

Courtesy of Neurotorium

Generalized Anxiety Disorder



Panic Disorder

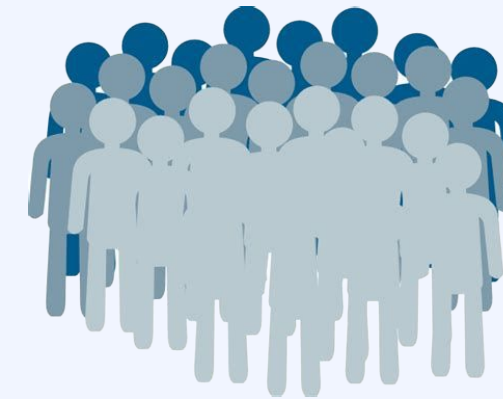


Common Types

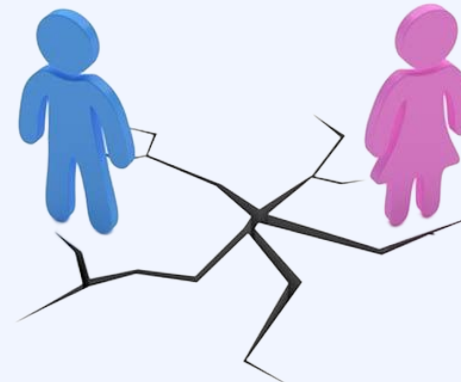
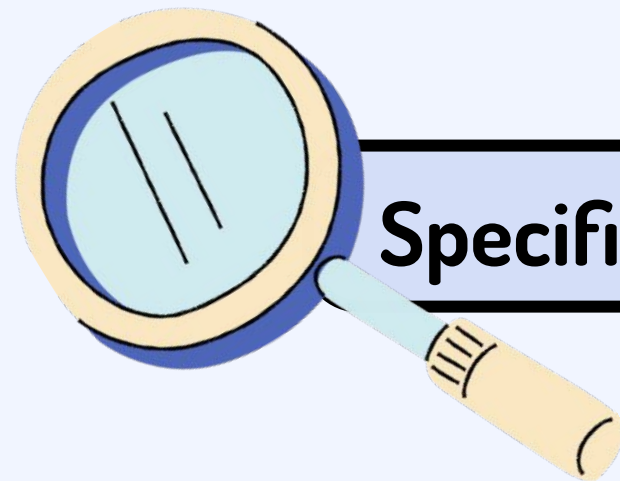
Agoraphobia



Social Anxiety Disorder



Specific Phobia Disorders



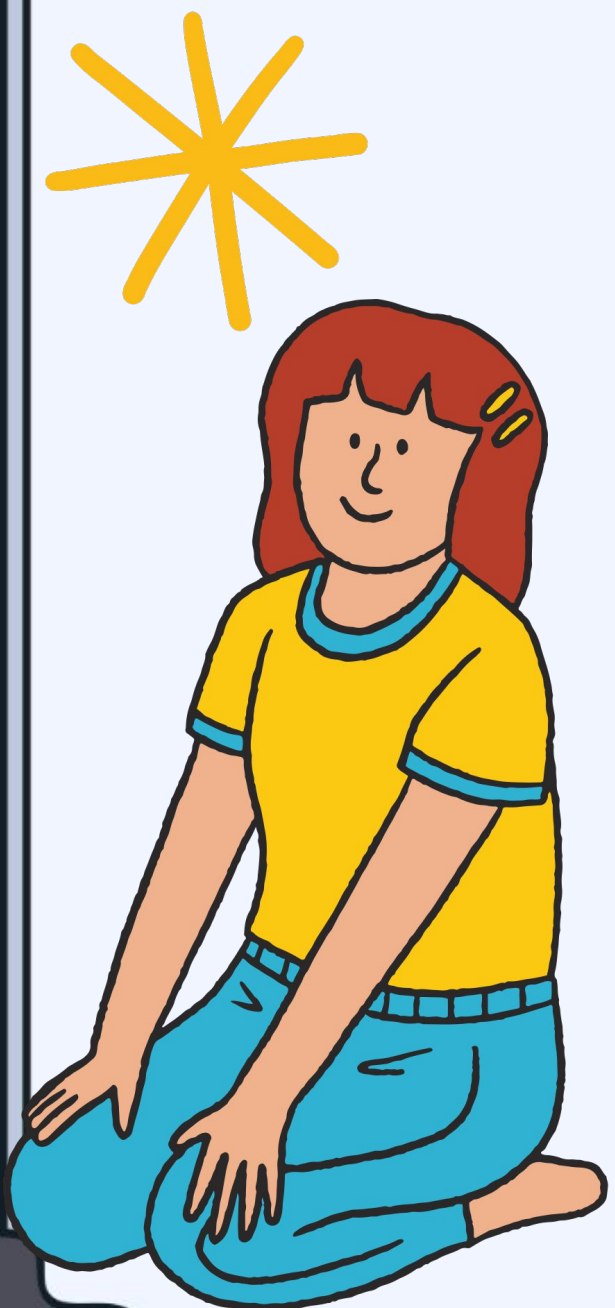
Separation Anxiety Disorder



What is the impact?



Impact on the Child

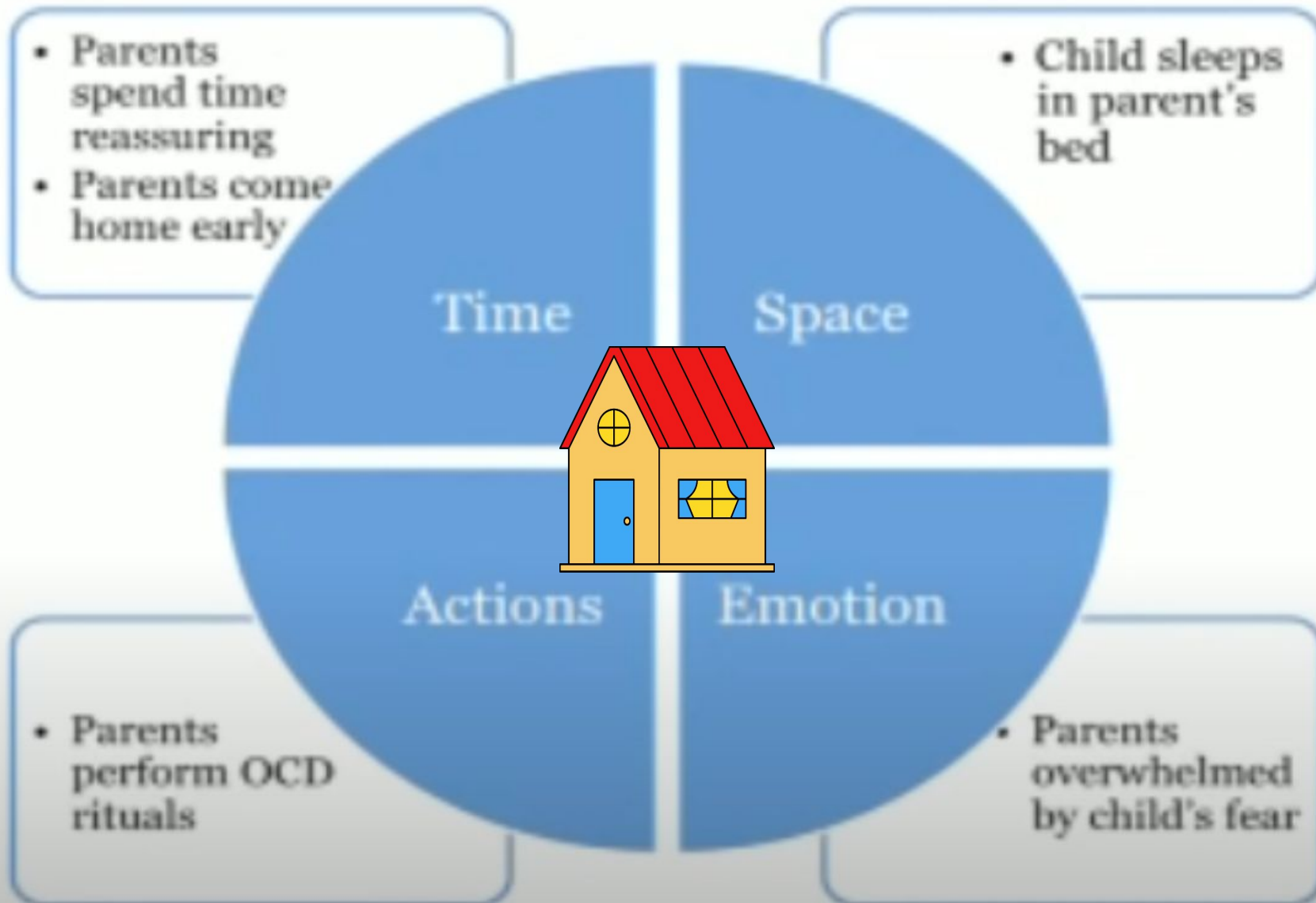


Impact on the Family Unit

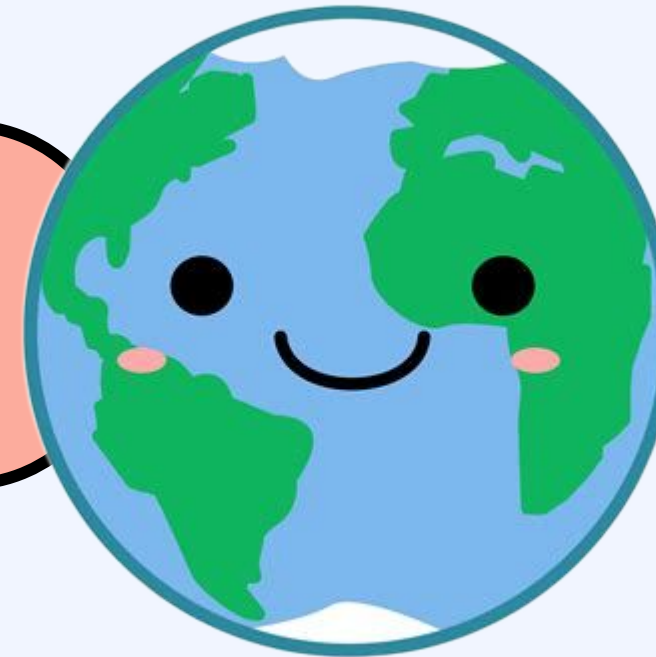


Pediatric Anxiety as a Family System: Loss of Parental Boundaries

Yale Child
Study Center
since 1971

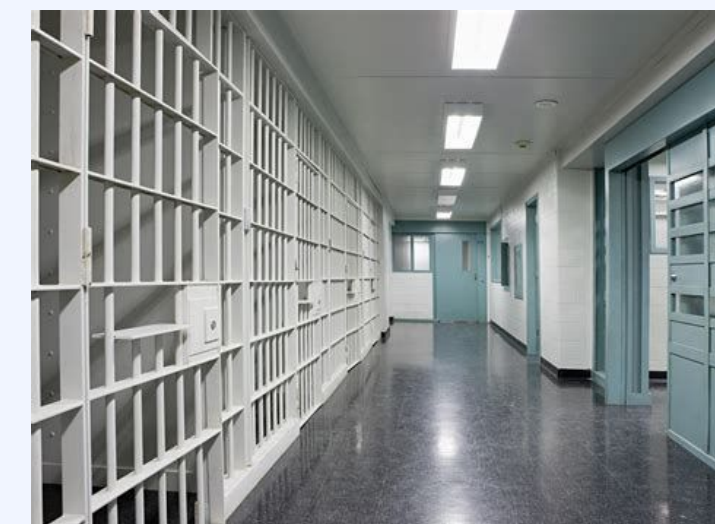
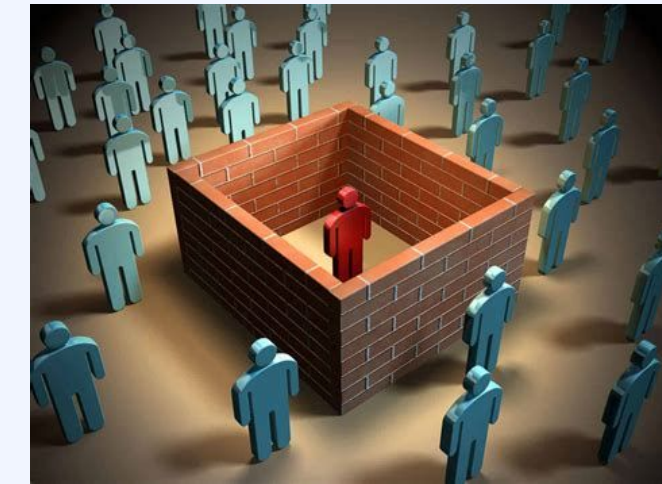


Impact on Society

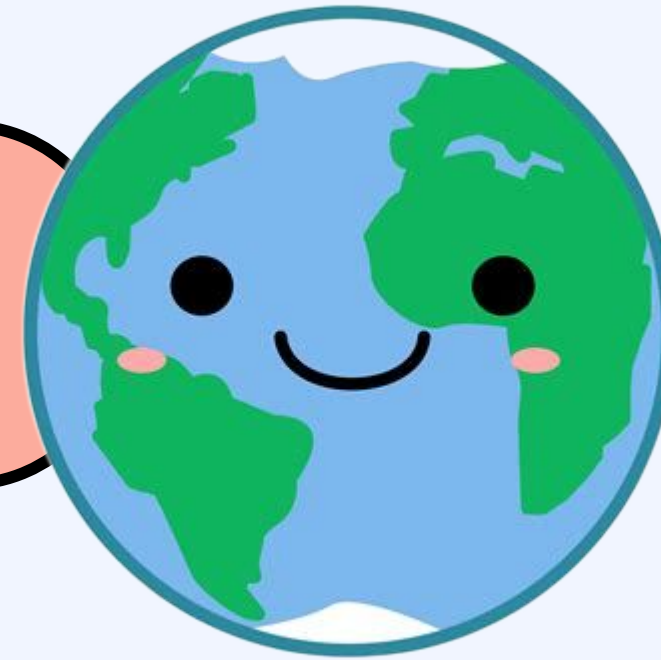


Children (age 3-17) diagnosed with a clinical pediatric anxiety disorder (According to the CDC)

2003: Approx. 3 million
2016-2019: **5.8 million**



Impact on Society



Children (age 3-17) diagnosed with a clinical pediatric anxiety disorder (According to the CDC)

2003: Approx. 3 million
2016-2019: **5.8 million**

Pediatric Anxiety disorders “have been named as one of **the greatest health problems (exceeding most physical health problems) in terms of global burden,**” and a matter of **“profound public health significance.”**

(McLoone et al., 2006, p. 221), (Strawn et al., 2014, p. 154).

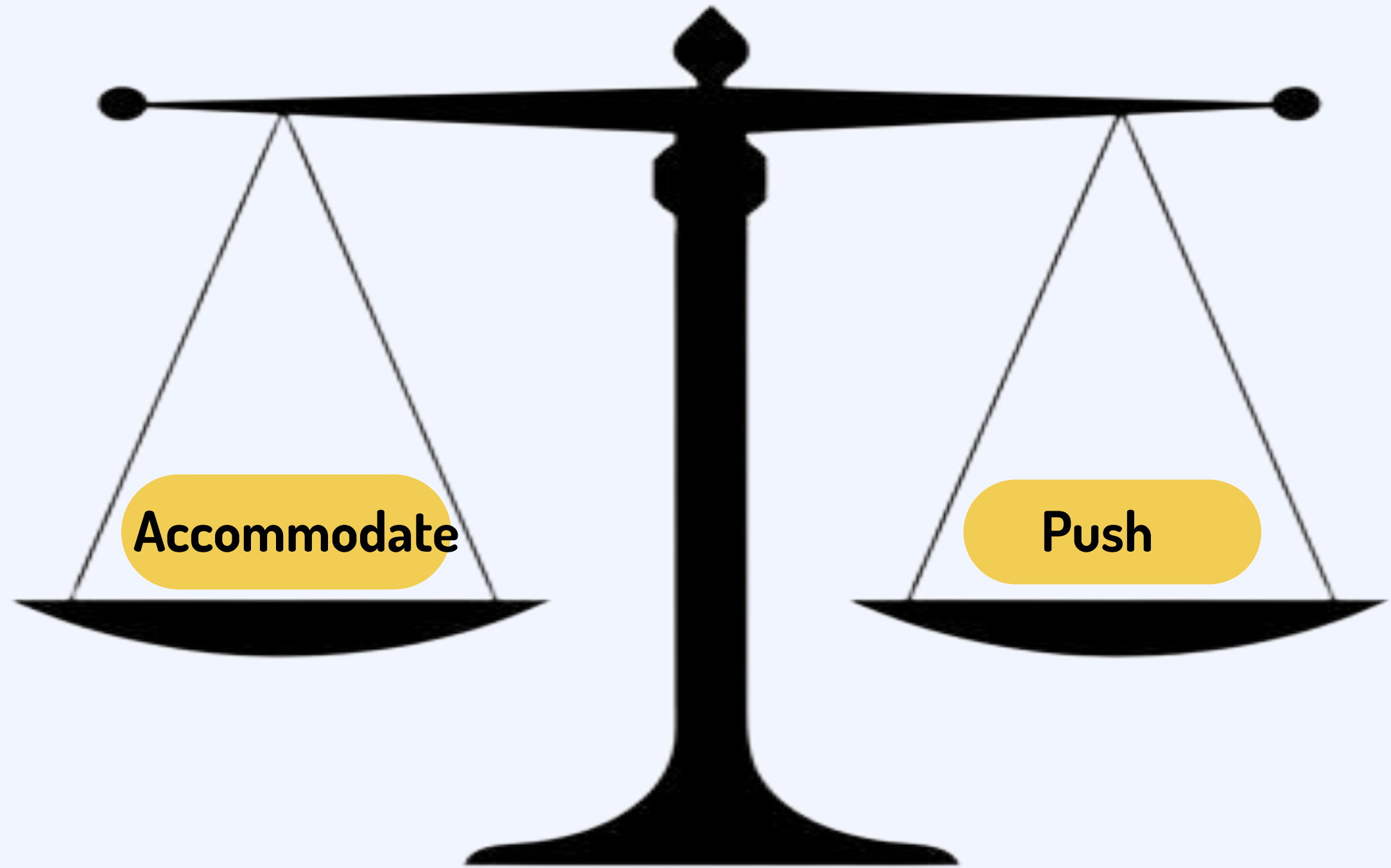


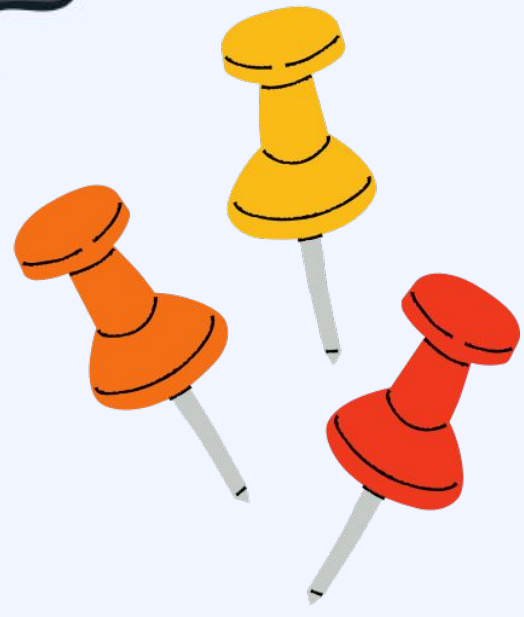
**Educators:
What can you
do to help?**



One study conducted across five U.S. school districts, involving nearly 300 teachers, reported that **“89% of teachers agreed that schools should be involved in addressing the mental health needs of children”** (Moran, 2015, p. 27). In this same study, however, the teachers admitted that they were **not adequately equipped** to help as effectively as they would like.

The Delicate Balance





A Teacher can...

Notice

The signs and symptoms early.

Foster

A calm, consistent
classroom environment.

Provide

Accommodations when necessary.



Classroom Accommodations

Fidgets

Allowing snacks/Water

Cooperative Learning

Creativity Allowance

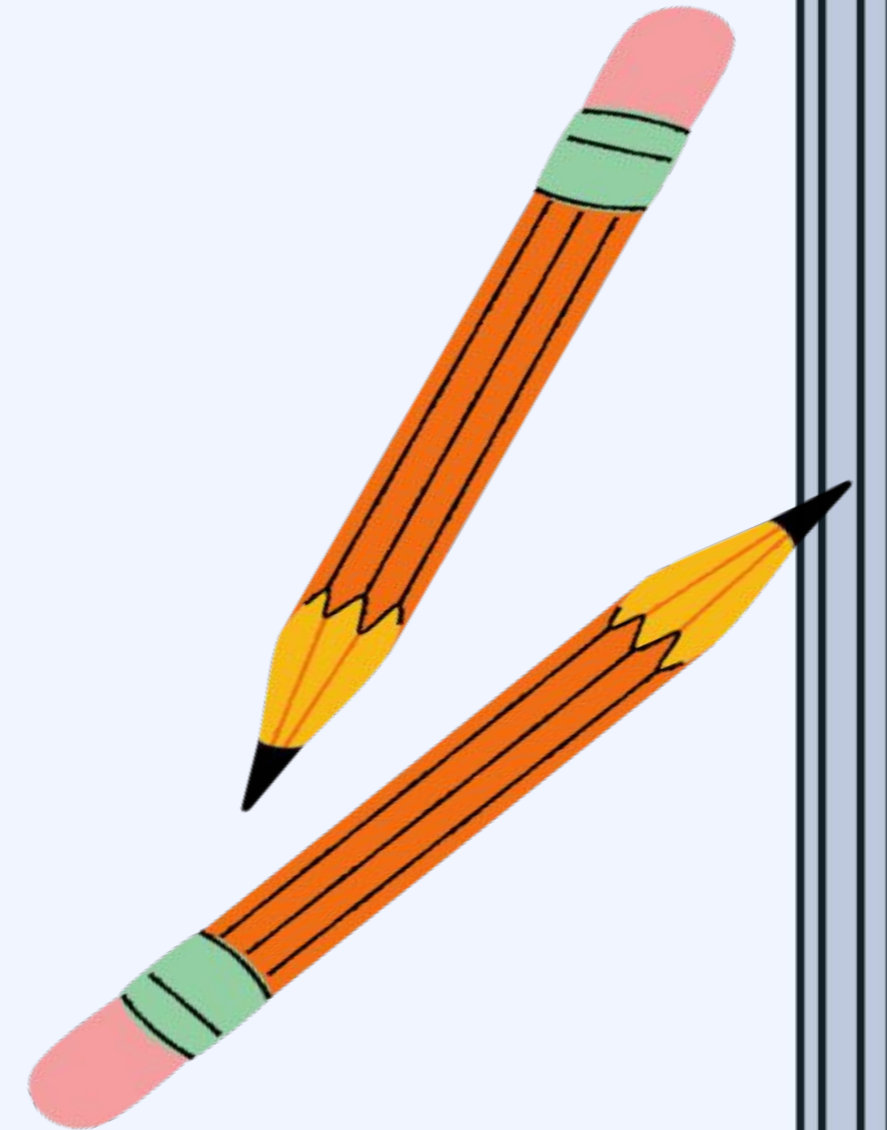
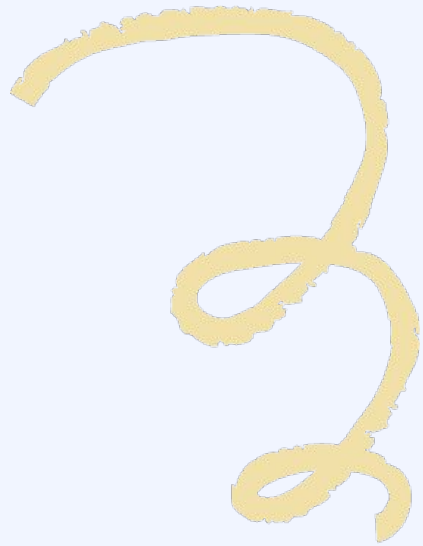
Flexible Seating

"Classroom Pass"

Warm Lighting

Calming scents (Wax melts/diffuser)

Sensory Grounding





Administrators can...

Implement Social-Emotional Schoolwide curriculum

Connect with and support families of struggling students

Open up conversations to destigmatize mental health within
the school context



The Bottom Line

Support means combining **acknowledgement**, **acceptance**, **legitimization** of anxiety with **confidence** in a child's ability to cope, and **gradual expectations** for increased coping (Lebowitz, 2023).







Any Questions?



Thank you so much for coming!