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## 20 Strategies to Help Students with Mental Health Needs

Richard Auger

Nick R. Abel

Butler University, [nabel@butler.edu](mailto:nabel@butler.edu)

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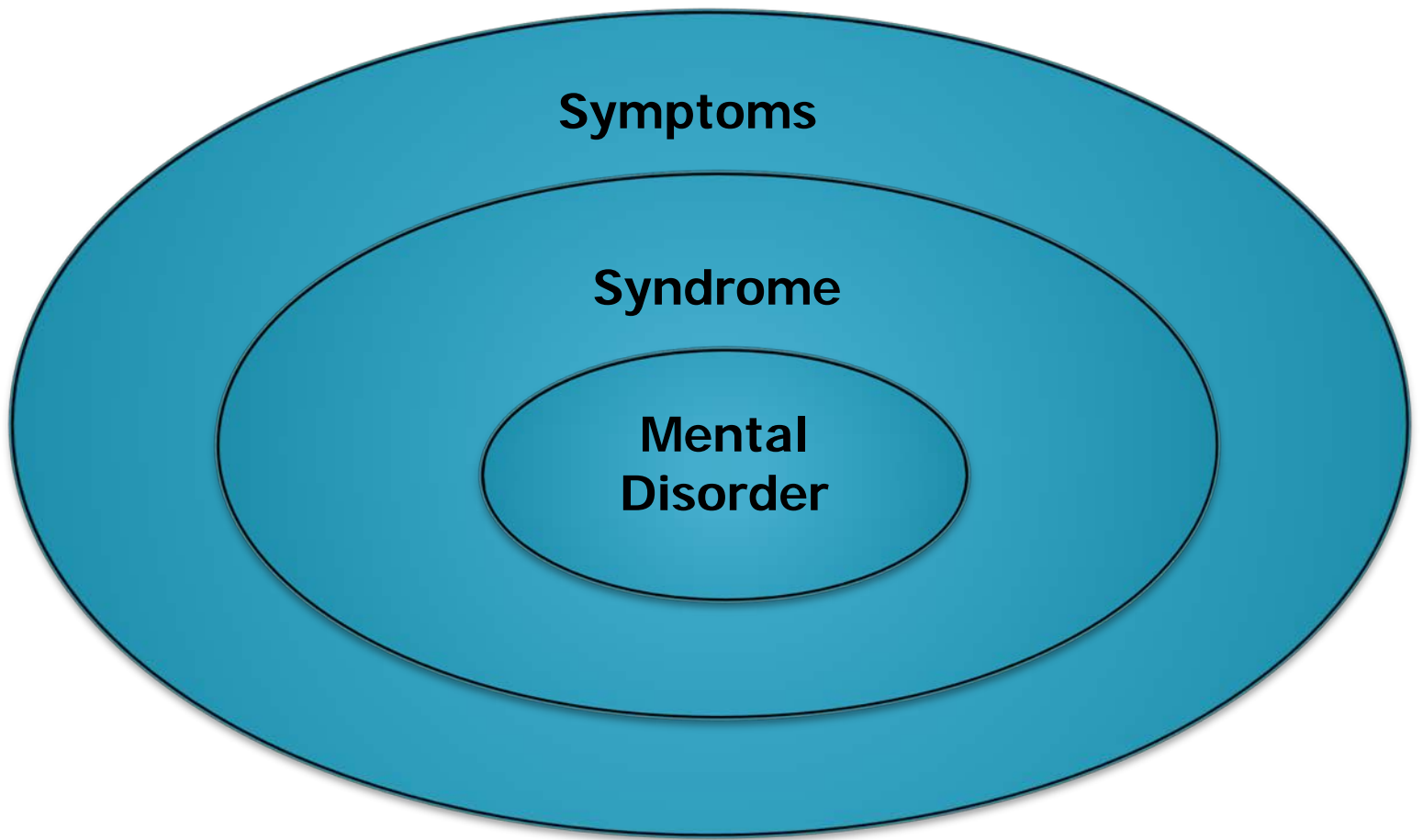
# *20 Strategies to Assist Students with Mental Health Needs*

*MSCA Annual Conference  
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*Rick Auger & Nick Abel*

*Department of Counseling & Student Personnel*

*Minnesota State University, Mankato*





## *A word about interventions....*

- Personal relationships are critical
- Do something different
- Take a problem-solving approach
- Get student & teacher buy-in



*The mental health issues we'll be talking about:*

**Mood Disorders**

**Autism Spectrum Disorders**

**Disruptive Behavior Disorders**

**Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder**

**Anxiety Disorders**



# *Mood disorders*

## *Overview*

- Core symptom: disruption of mood and affect
- Negative thinking patterns and social withdrawal are common
- Includes major depressive disorder, dysthymic disorder, bipolar disorder, and adjustment disorder with depressed mood



## *Mood disorders*

*Strategy #1 for younger students*

*Teach that perspectives can changed*

# Mood disorders

Strategy #1 for younger students

## Example: I can see clearly chart

EVENT	CLOUDY GLASSES	CLEAR GLASSES
Sitting alone at lunch	“No one likes me”	“Who can I sit with today?”





## *Mood disorders*

*Strategy #2 for younger students*

*Create a network of support*

# *Mood disorders*

*Create a network of support*





## *Mood disorders*

*Strategy #1 for older students*

*Increase engagement in pleasant events*

# *Mood disorders*

*Increase engagement in pleasant events*

**Example: Generate and assign 5 pleasant events**





## *Mood disorders*

*Strategy #2 for older students*

*Help students find a personal strength symbol*

# *Mood disorders*

*Find a personal strength symbol*





# *Autism spectrum disorders*

## *Overview*

- Two essential features:
  - 1) significant impairment in social interaction
  - 2) restricted & stereotypical pattern of behavior
- Tendency to think in very concrete and literal fashion
- Often involves difficulty adjusting to change and to new situations





# *Autism spectrum disorders*

*Strategy #1 for younger students*

*Use concrete hands-on examples to teach social skills*



# *Autism spectrum disorders*

*Using concrete, hands-on examples to teach social skills*

***Example: Using hula hoops to teach personal space***



# *Autism spectrum disorders*

*Using concrete, hands-on examples to teach social skills*

**Example: Using puppets to teach personal space**





# *Autism spectrum disorders*

*Strategy #2 for younger students*

*Use social stories*

*(See: [www.thegraycenter.org](http://www.thegraycenter.org))*

# *Autism spectrum disorders*

*Use social stories*

***Problem issue: Student does not understand personal space***

***Social story:***

I have an area around my body that is called my "personal space." This space is like an invisible bubble. Sometimes my personal space is large. When it is large, my personal space goes out to my fingertips. When my personal space is large, other people stay outside of it. When my personal space is large, I do not touch other people, and they do not touch me. This helps all of us to feel comfortable.

Sometimes my personal space is small. When my personal space is small, it is about the same size as my body. When my personal space is small, I might give my mom a hug, and she might hug me.



# *Autism spectrum disorders*

*Strategy #1 for older students*

*Make the school experience clear and predictable*

# *Autism spectrum disorders*

*Make the school experience clear and predictable*

*Example: Review exactly what to expect on a field trip*





# *Autism spectrum disorders*

*Strategy #2 for older students*

*Provide organizational assistance*



# *Autism spectrum disorders*

*Provide organizational assistance*

***Example: Help students organize their lockers***







# *Disruptive behavior disorders*

## *Overview*

- Core feature is disruptive behaviors ranging from irritating to aggressive or antisocial
- Comorbidity with other mental health problems is high
- Specific diagnoses in this category:
  - Conduct disorder (CD)
  - Oppositional defiant disorder (ODD)
  - Intermittent Explosive disorder
  - Adjustment disorder with disturbance of conduct



## *Disruptive behavior disorders*

*Strategy #1 for younger students*

*Accept anger and hostility as a real  
aspect of the student's life*

*Hanna, Hanna, & Keys (1999)*

# *Disruptive behavior disorders*

*Accept anger*





# *Disruptive behavior disorders*

*Strategy #2 for younger students*

*Gaze with adoring eyes*

*(Martha Straus)*



# *Disruptive behavior disorders*

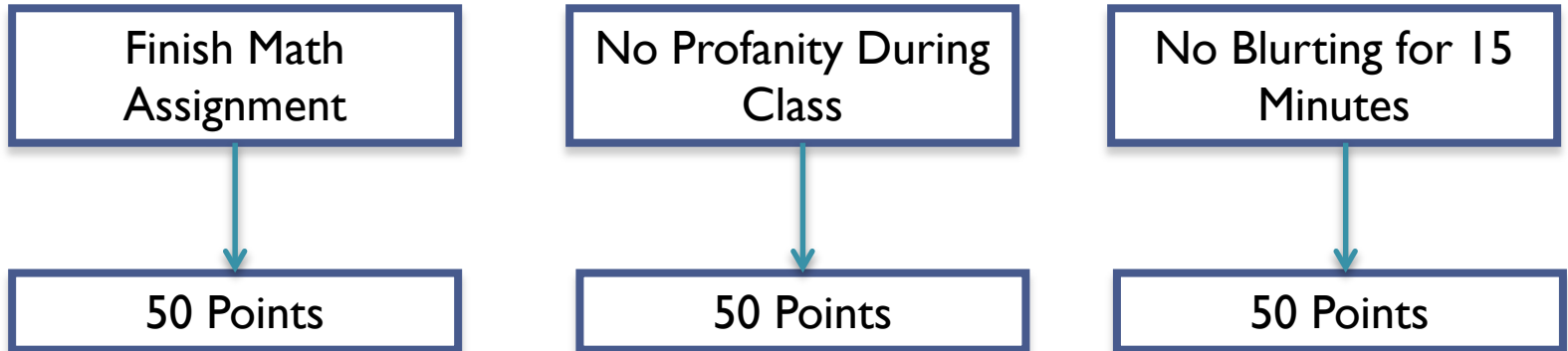
*Strategy #1 for older students*

*Make it pay to behave*

# Disruptive behavior disorders

*Make it pay to behave*

**Example: Create a menu of rewards for points earned for behavior, work completion, etc.**



150 Points=15 minutes on YouTube; Use iPod; Piece of gum

300 Points=Challenge teacher to a game; 5 extra credit points; Candy

1000 Points=30 minutes shooting hoops; Use notes on test

5000 Points=Class does activity you like; McDonald's lunch



## *Disruptive behavior disorders*

*Strategy #2 for older students*

*Address dysfunctional thinking*

# *Disruptive behavior disorders*

*Address dysfunctional thinking*

## **Example: Long-term consequences**

*“What will people think of you if you keep stealing?” & “Would your employer put up with stealing?”*

## **Example: Conversations about moral/social norms**

*“Why does our society have laws?” & “What if everyone did whatever they felt like?”*

## **Example: Foster empathy**

*“Remember that time you were the victim? What was that like?”  
& “Watch this video and tell me how PERSON A probably felt.”*





# ADHD

## Overview

- ADHD is a neurologically-based developmental disorder
- Core feature: impairment in rule-governed behavior & inhibiting impulsive responses
- Symptoms may not be evident in highly structured, high-interest, high stimulation, or novel situations
- Symptoms tend to worsen in situations that are unstructured, unsupervised, boring, or that require sustained attention



# *ADHD*

*Strategy #1 for younger students*

*Secret signal*



# ADHD

*Secret signal*

***Example: Teacher taps whiteboard marker three times when student is off-task***

***Example: Teacher clears throat when student is on-task and paying attention***



# *ADHD*

*Strategy #2 for younger students*

*Behavior charts*

# ADHD

## Behavior charts

### Sample Classroom Behavior Chart

Student's name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Behavior	Class Period			
	<i>Math (first half)</i>	<i>Math (second half)</i>	<i>Reading (first half)</i>	<i>Reading (second half)</i>
Raise hand before speaking				
Talk nicely to other students				
Pay attention to teacher				
Complete assigned work				



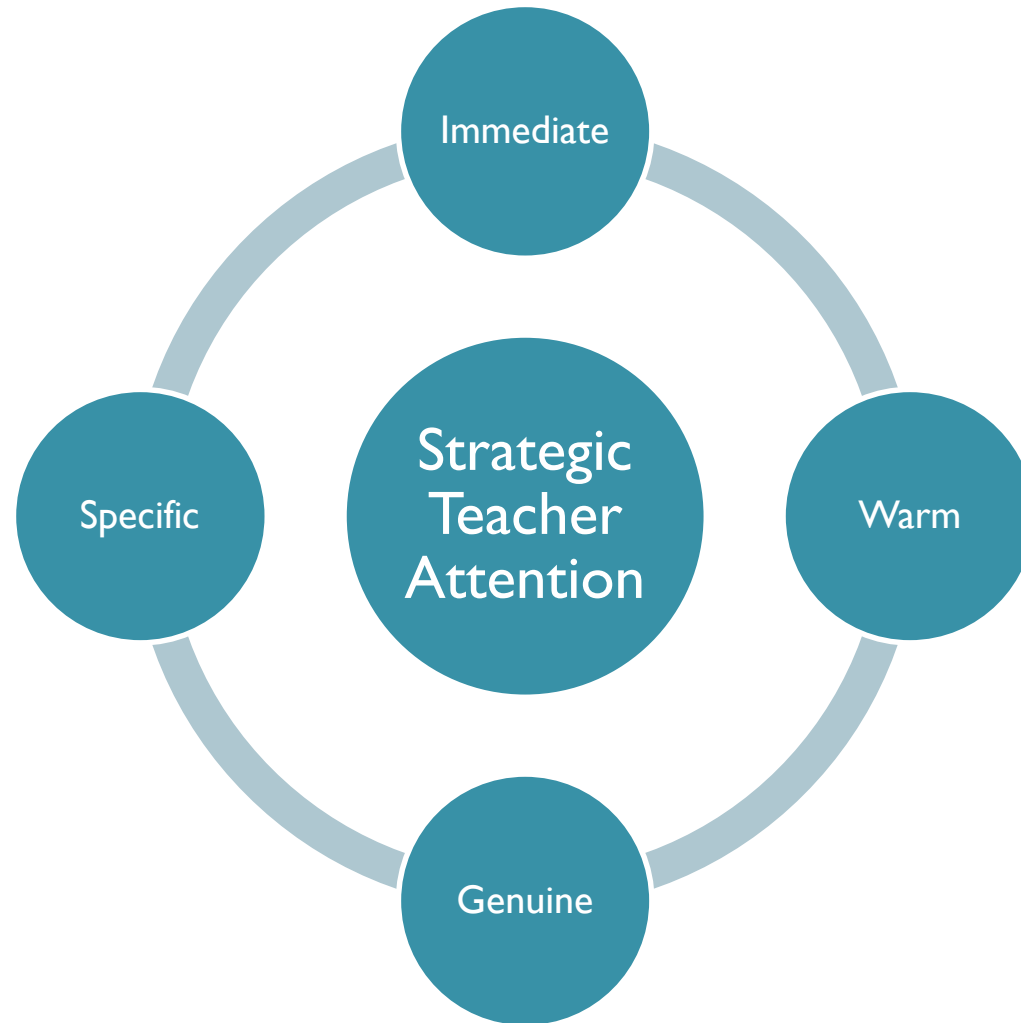
# *ADHD*

*Strategy #1 for older students*

*Strategic teacher attention*

# ADHD

## *Strategic teacher attention*



# ADHD

*Strategic teacher attention*

## **Example:**

*“Thanks for getting started right away, Jason; I really like the way you got our all your materials and got right to work!”*





# *ADHD*

*Strategy #2 for older students*

*Provide organizational assistance*

# ADHD

*Provide organizational assistance*

***Example: Set-up a system for assignment notebook/planner checks***





# *Anxiety disorders*

## *Overview*

- A family of disorders
- Affects 10%-20% of youth
- Core feature: excessive and often debilitating anxiety
- Associated symptoms: restlessness, fatigue, concentration difficulties, irritability, worry, proneness to excessive self-criticism
- The worry is key (not the target of the worry)



# *Anxiety disorders*

## *The family of anxiety disorders*

- Social Phobia
- Acute Stress Disorder
- Separation Anxiety Disorder
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
- Adjustment Disorder with Anxiety
- Specific Phobia
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
- Anxiety Disorder NOS



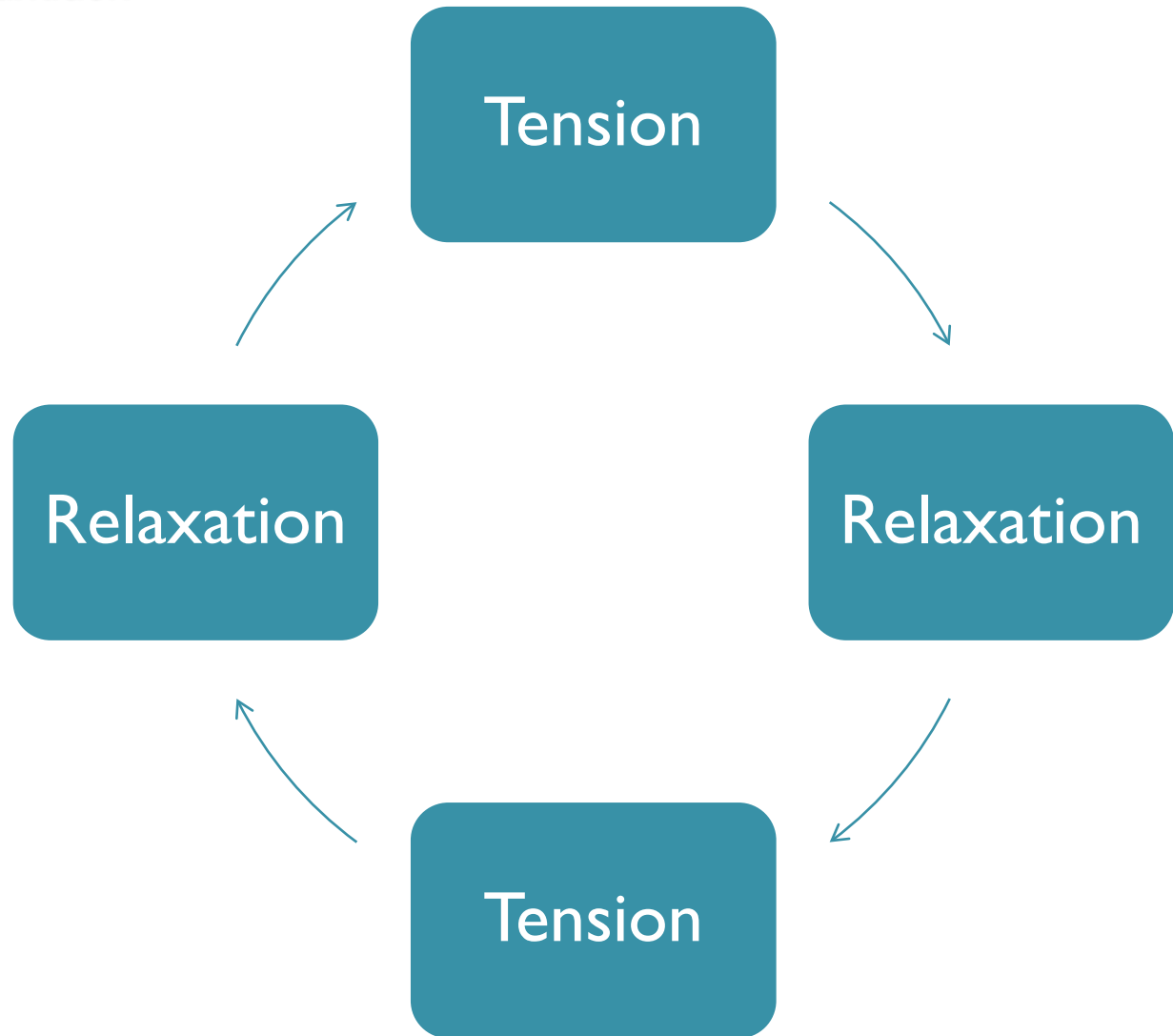
# *Anxiety disorders*

*Strategy #1 for younger students*

*Teach relaxation*

# *Anxiety disorders*

*Teach relaxation*





# *Anxiety disorders*

*Teach relaxation*

## ***Examples:***

*Hands & Arms (Squeezing a lemon)*

*Shoulder & Neck (Turtle in a shell)*

*Jaw (Giant hard candy)*



## *Anxiety disorders*

*Strategy #2 for younger students*

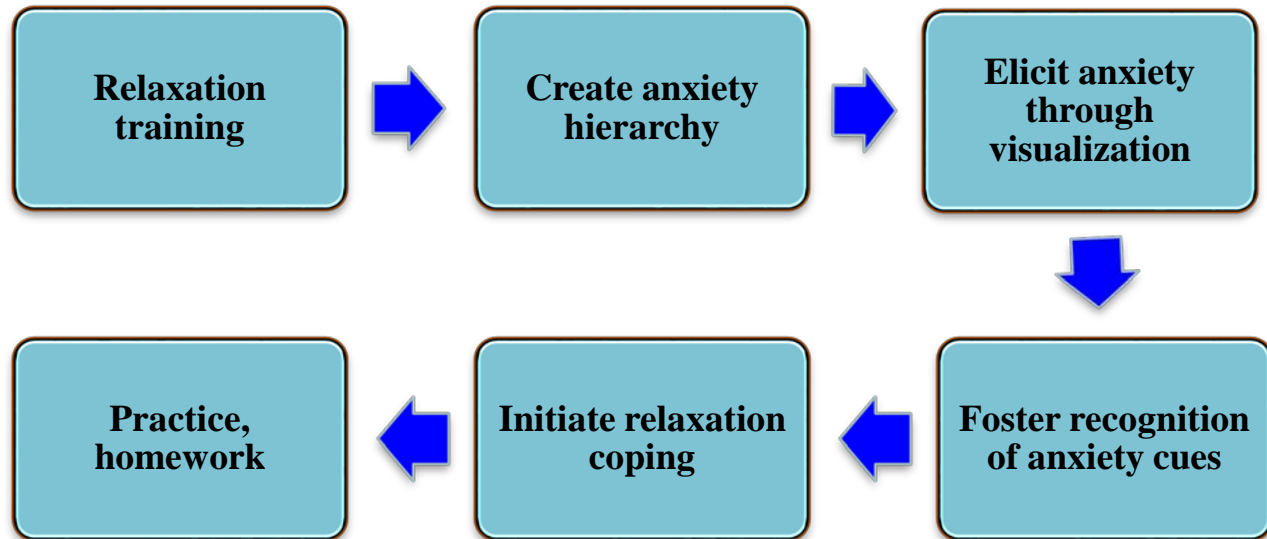
*For specific fears, try gentle exposure*



# Anxiety disorders

## Gentle exposure

### **Example: Systematic desensitization**





# *Anxiety disorders*

*Strategy #1 for older students*

*Work on cognitions*

# *Anxiety disorders*

*Work on cognitions*

## **Example: Keep a thought record**

<b>SITUATION</b>	<b>AUTO THOUGHT</b>	<b>EVIDENCE</b>	<b>RATIONAL THOUGHT</b>	<b>EVIDENCE</b>

**Could add: Emotion, rating scale, type of cognitive distortion, outcome, etc.**



# *Anxiety disorders*

*Strategy #2 for older students*

*Develop coping strategies*

# *Anxiety disorders*

*Develop coping strategies*



It's Going to be fine!!

- Basic Relaxation
- Self-Talk



But...just in case it's not

- Coping Strategy



## *Anxiety disorders*

*Develop coping strategies*

### **Examples:**

*FEAR: “What if my mouth goes dry & I can ’t talk?”*

*STRATEGY: Ask teacher if student can have a bottle of water nearby*

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*FEAR: “What if I forget everything I was going to say?”*

*STRATEGY: Ask teacher if student can prepare/read from detailed notes*



*Thank you....*

Thank you for attending this session!

Feel free to send us comments or questions:

[richard.auger@mnsu.edu](mailto:richard.auger@mnsu.edu)

[nicholas.abel@mnsu.edu](mailto:nicholas.abel@mnsu.edu)