

The background is a collage of various images. At the top left is a close-up of a young boy with light hair and blue eyes, looking upwards. Next to it is a young girl with dark hair looking to the side. To the right is a close-up of a young girl's face, looking down. Further right are two young boys in blue shirts, one resting his chin on his hand. Below these are several other images: a young girl in a pink shirt, a boy in a grey shirt, a girl with dark hair smiling, and a girl with curly hair in a blue shirt. At the bottom left, a family of four (father, mother, and two children) is shown with their arms raised in a celebratory gesture. At the bottom right is a close-up of a young girl with long brown hair, looking directly at the camera.

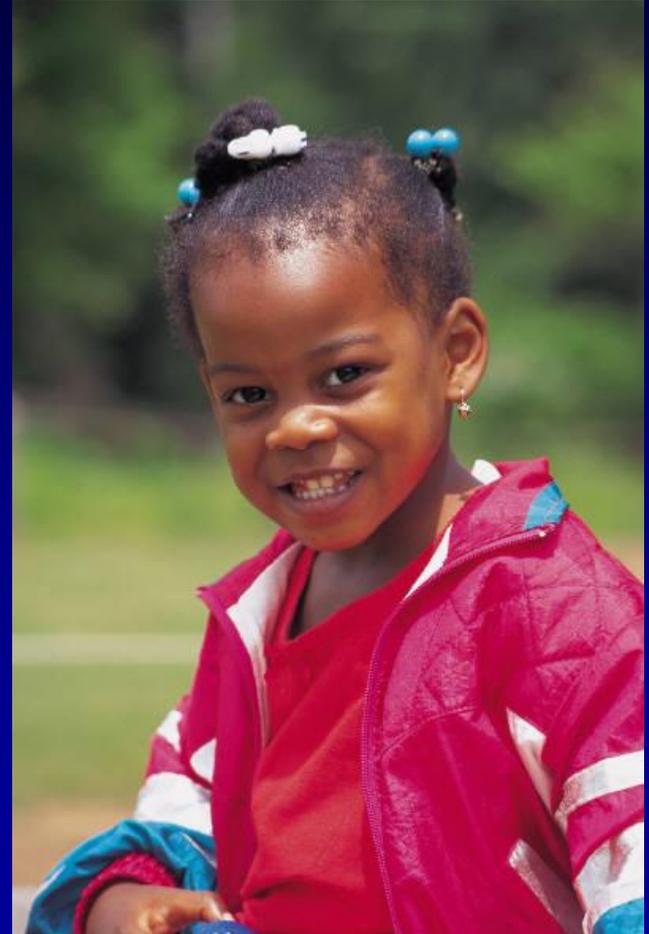
Understanding Children's Mental Health Disorders and the Impact on Learning and Functioning

Minnesota
Department

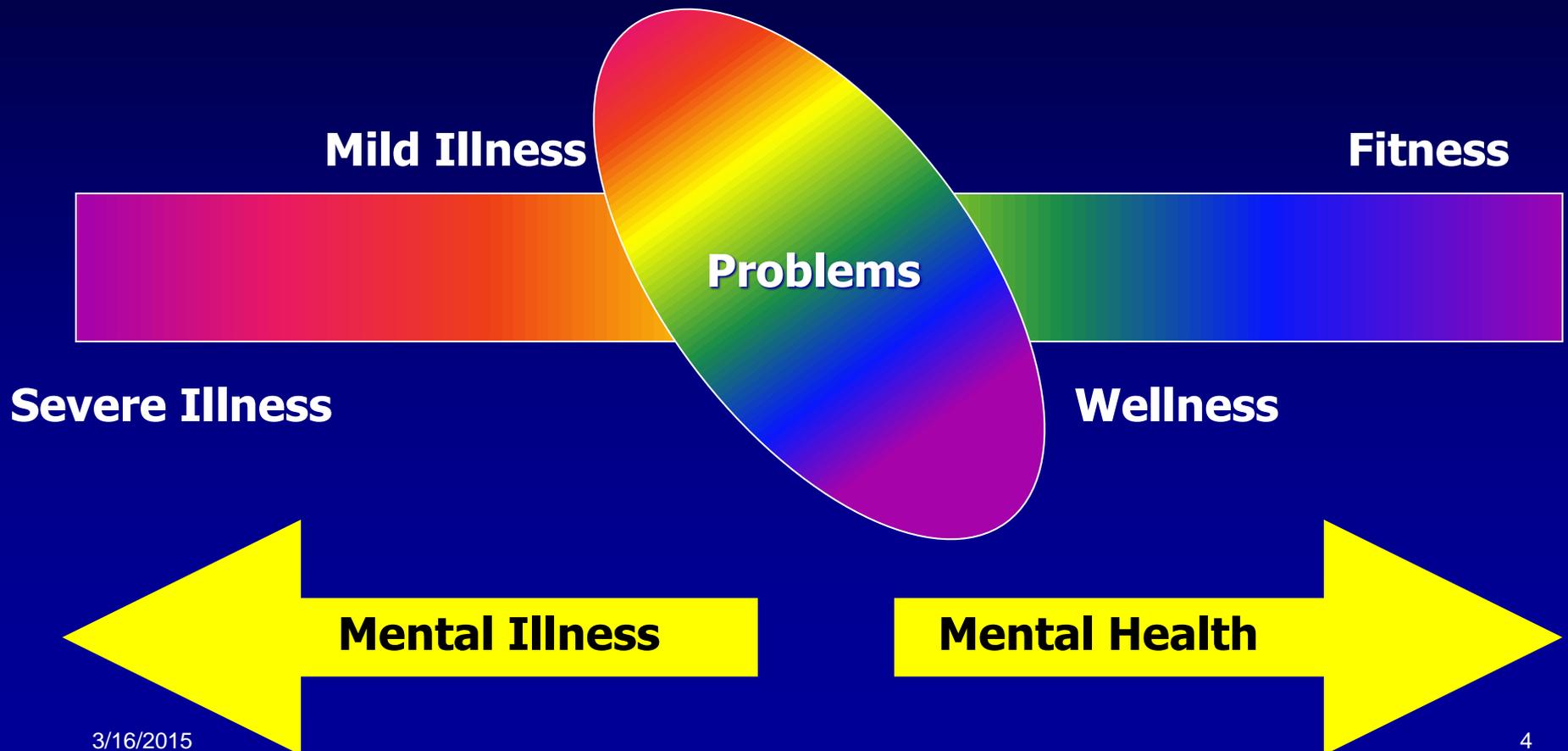
of Education 

Introduction to Children's Mental Health

An Overview of Stress, Fear and Anxiety



Mental Illness and Mental Health



What is Mental Health?

Tolerance

Think clearly

Balance

Self Awareness

Children's Mental Health United States Statistics

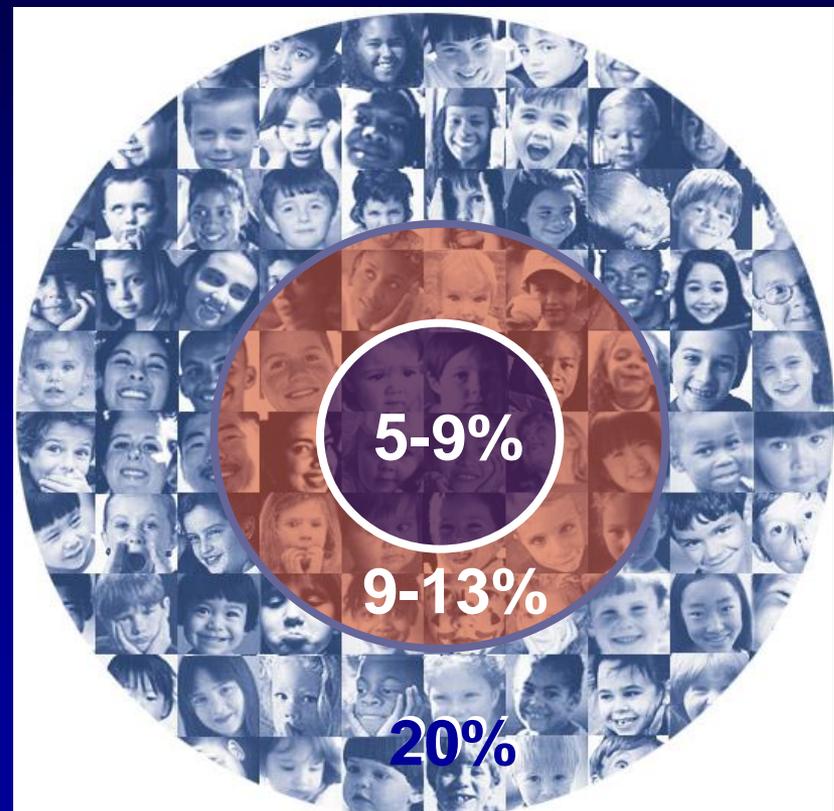
Prevalence of Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED)

Population Proportions (9 to 17 year-olds)

5-9% Youth with SED &
extreme functional
impairment

9-13% Youth with SED,
with substantial
functional
impairment

20% Youth with any
diagnosable
disorder



Children's Mental Health Minnesota Statistics



- Estimated 145,000 youth aged 9-17 have a diagnosable mental health disorder
- 69,000 (47.6%) have functional mental health impairment (home, school and community)

Minnesota Department of Health (2004)

Mental Health Treatment in Minnesota

Nearly 1 in 10 children and adolescents in Minnesota have been diagnosed with a mental health condition.

Of the children receiving treatment:

27%	Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder
24%	Depression
15.5%	Anxiety
15.5%	Adjustment Disorders
11%	Disruptive Behavior Disorders

The Spectrum of Fear and Anxiety in Children



Severe
anxiety
symptoms

Typical,
developmentally
appropriate
worry and
fearfulness

Anxiety is misunderstood and misinterpreted in children

- Children may **lack ability** to realize that they are anxious
- Children may **lack the words to** express their thoughts and feelings
- Children may act out their anxiety by
 - Clinging
 - Freezing
 - Crying
 - Fidgeting

Fear

Primitive, complex, automatic response of the central nervous system to some perceived threat of harm or danger



Anxiety

A condition of sustained arousal of the central nervous system that may be

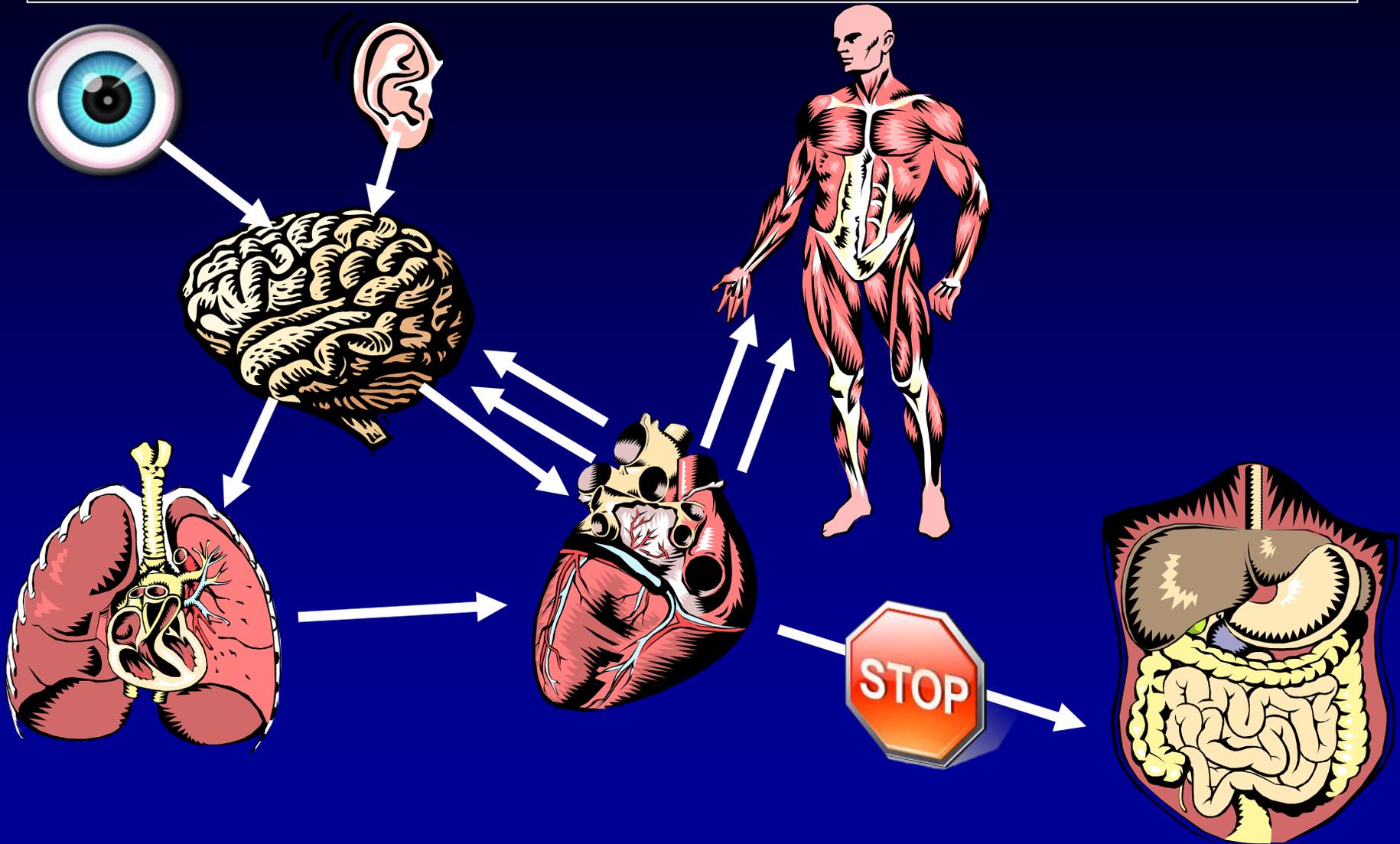
- acute (panic attack)
- chronic



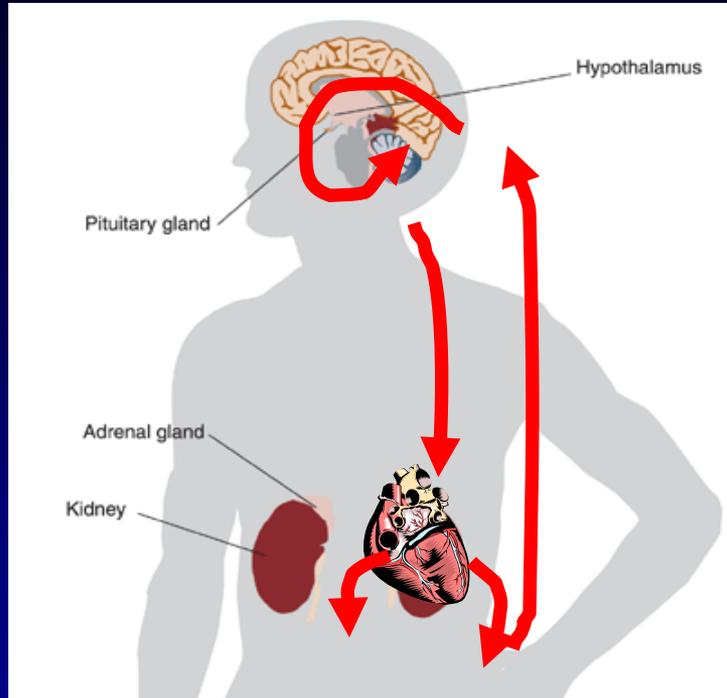
5 Features of Anxiety

- 1) Fight and Flight Response to Fear
- 2) Freeze and Withdraw Response to Fear
- 3) Thoughts and Memories Trigger Re-experiencing
- 4) Avoidance
- 5) Hyperarousal

1. Fight-or-Flight Response



Stress chemicals are released in the brain.



Stress hormones are released by the brain and travel in the blood through the body.

Cortisol is released in the body and travels back to the brain to turn off the stress chemicals initially triggered.

In chronic stress this system malfunctions and the stress chemicals are not turned off maintaining a state of persistent arousal.

2. Freeze-and-Withdraw Response

- Involves shallow breathing, slow pulse rate, pale or clammy skin, low blood pressure
- “Shut down”
- Child may appear stunned, fearful or unemotional and unable to respond



3. Re-experiencing the Fear



- Child experiences severe distress in response to a trigger
- May have intrusive and distressing thoughts, mental images or dreams
- May experience flashbacks and feel as if event is happening again

4. Avoidance



- Child avoids thoughts, feelings, or conversations associated with fear
- May feel detached and isolated

5. Persistent Hyperarousal

- Child has difficulty sleeping and thinking clearly
- May be excessively vigilant and have startle easily
- May appear angry, irritable or rageful



Top 3 Take Home Messages

- 1) Anxiety begets anxiety
- 2) Children fill in the gaps
- 3) Children lack self-soothing

1. Anxiety Begets Anxiety

Your anxiety may
trigger anxiety in a
child you are
working or living
with . . .
Be aware of your
emotions



2. Children Fill in the Gaps



Uncertainty
is one of the
most powerful
triggers
of anxiety that
we experience

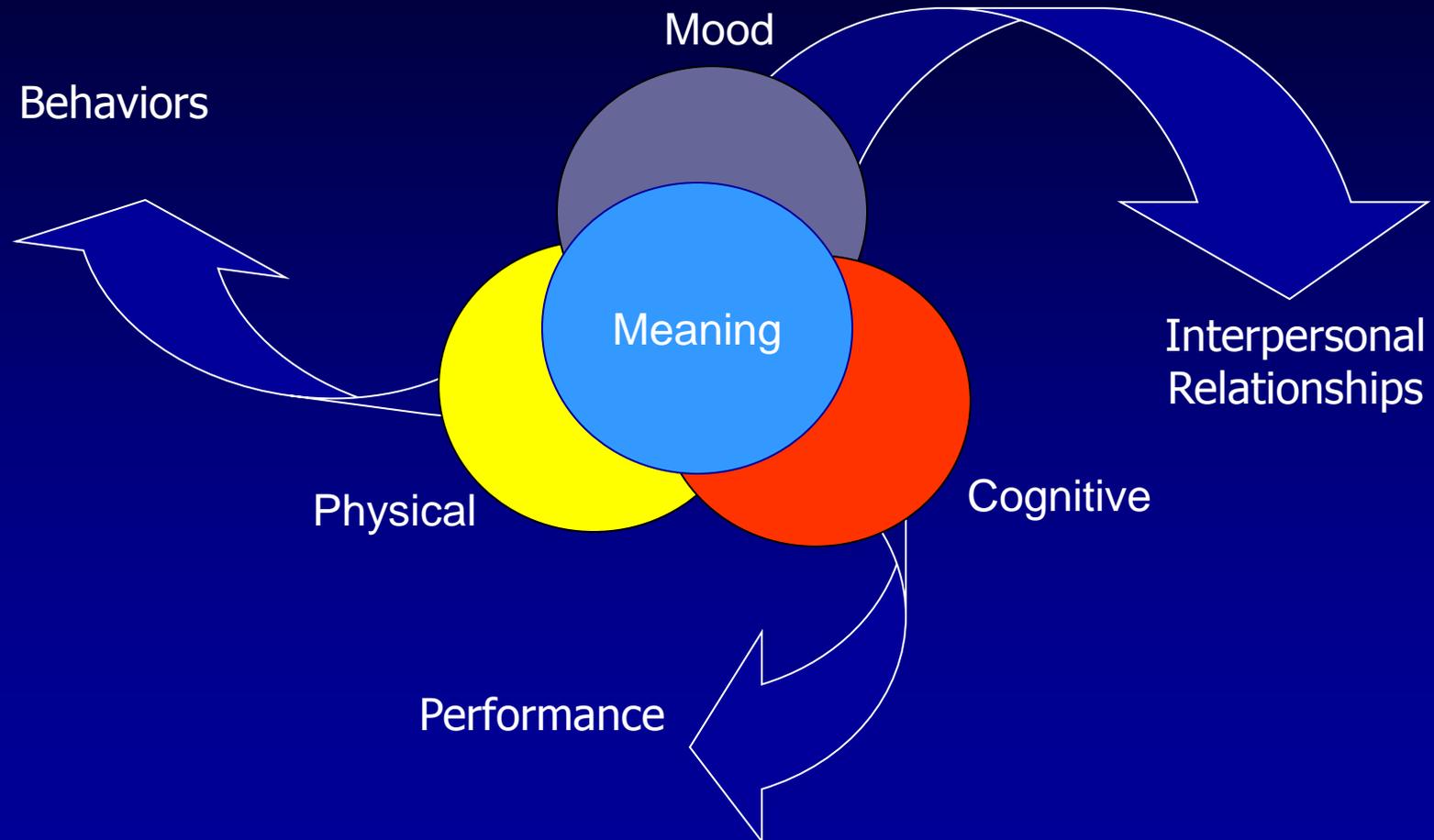
3. Children Lack Self-Soothing

Anxious children
need a safe,
nurturing
environment and
supportive adults



Self-soothing skills are needed to help
the child tolerate distress

The Full Effect of Anxiety



Promoting Wellness in Anxious Children

1. Promoting Physical Wellness
2. Promoting Social and Emotional Wellness
3. Accessing Health Care



1. Promoting Physical Wellness

- Regular and adequate sleep
- Healthy diet and nutrition
- Aerobic activity
- Avoiding artificial stimulation
 - nicotine, caffeine and sugar



2. Promoting Social and Emotional Health

- Relaxation and self-soothing activities
- Healthy support system including adults
- Engaging in fun and recreation
- Commitment to personal growth



3. Accessing Health Care

- Primary care visits
- Mental health care visits
- Medications
- Therapy





The End



For additional information and resources contact:
Minnesota Department of Human Services

Phone: (651) 431-2368

E-mail: dhs.cmhs@state.mn.us

Website: <http://www.dhs.state.mn.us>

Dr. L. Read Sulik, MD
Assistant Commissioner of Chemical and
Mental Health Services.

References

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (1999) *Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Rockville, MD U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center of Mental Health Services, National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Mental Health.
- Minnesota Department of Health, 2004. *Promoting Mental Health and Suicide Prevention*. St. Paul, MN. <http://www.health.state.mn.us>
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