



A Path To Follow

Go Zen 6 Skills to Help Children with Anxiety- A Summary

Credit: **Go Zen**.

Readers are reminded this is a summary only and all are encouraged to consider watching this webinar directly and checking out other resources available from their website.

<https://gozen.com/>



a path to follow



Customised mental wellbeing support
for young people, families and businesses.

EXPECTATION V REALITY

As adults, we most likely grew up being taught to expect the below linear path to happiness; as though it is a place we can arrive and stay (not an emotion that comes and goes).

Perhaps we are teaching our children this unattainable goal also?

6 Essential Skills to Transform Stress and Anxiety for Kids and Teens

Step-by-Step Guide to Becoming a Superhero

Step 1: Good Grades Good College	Step 2: Great Job	Step 3: Good Husband (2.2 Kids)	Step 4: Happiness
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In reality, we know that this is what occurs in life.



Common Worries We ALL Experience

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Worry Lava

Social worry:
I don't want to join in.
I don't know what to say.
What if I have nothing to say?

Avoidance:
I don't want to go there or do that.

Not using skills:
I don't want to relax or breathe!

Negative Thoughts:
School is the worst!
My life sucks!
Everything will be awful forever.



Overwhelm:
There's too much to do!
I'm not doing well enough.

Faceless worry:
I worry, but not sure what it's about.
I just feel bad, my tummy hurts, I'm nervous.

Mistake worry:
I don't want to raise my hand!
I don't want to do this homework!
I don't want to try out!
What if I fail?

Lack of Motivation:
I don't feel like it.

It is believed under all of these worries are **common maladaptive beliefs**. Because of these underlying systems we find that worries can morph from one worry into another. We often miss working with these underlying beliefs because we are spending way too much time on behavioural interventions that only have short term effects.

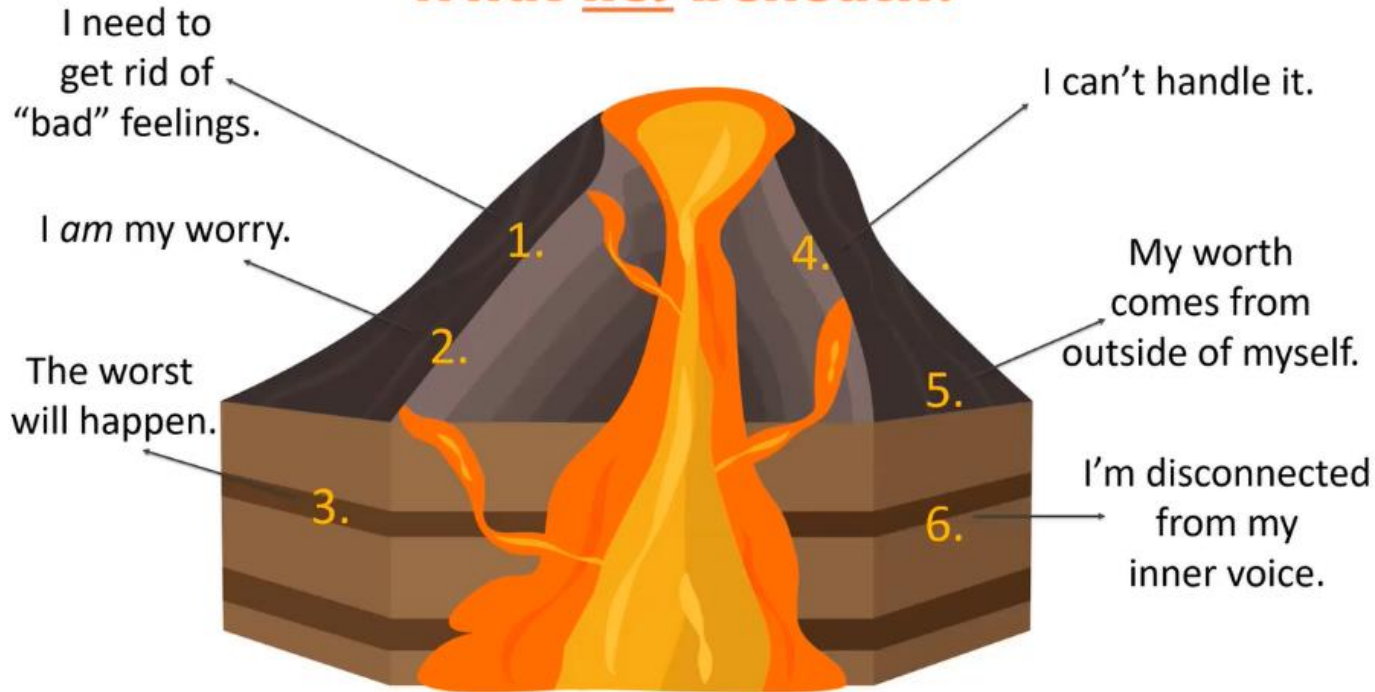
What is suggested is that we work on **changing the underlying faulty beliefs** to effect long lasting change.



THE CORE FAULTY BELIEFS

6 Essential Skills to Transform Stress and Anxiety for Kids and Teens

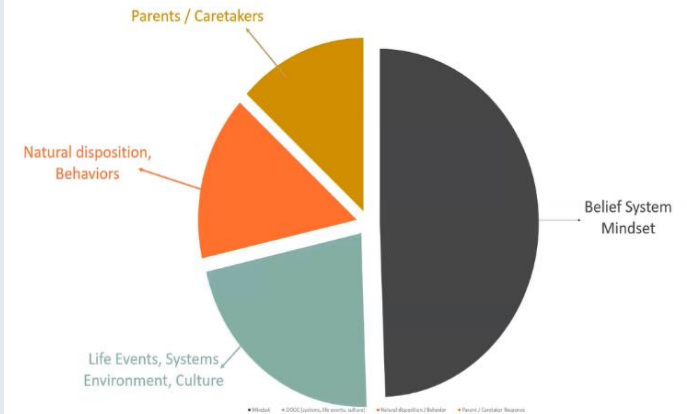
What lies beneath?



According to research, long term resilience, although influenced by parents, our natural disposition and community, is most greatly influenced by our ***underlying belief system***.

6 Essential Skills to Transform Stress and Anxiety for Kids and Teens

Resilience Pie



So, the faulty beliefs and how to edit them...

Belief 1: I need to get rid of the bad feelings

Skill Needed: Bring on and lean into the feelings.

Emotions are transient; they come and go. They are not a permanent state that stay with most of us.

Generally, we take negative feelings, get scared and try to push them down. However, they often get pushed down only to come back again. Instead of teaching this, we could teach ourselves and our children that all emotions are giving us messages about what we want to do/achieve.

When we try to eliminate by avoidance, distraction, shut down it only provides short term relief, comes back and the anxiety can become reinforced. On the flip side, if we lean into our feelings, listen to the message, knowing it is temporary, we can use these emotions to make a calm and informed choice about our future actions.

Example: Anger- is a protective function and tells our body we want something to change. Let's teach to be curious about what is needed, rather than reactionary and just trying to get rid of the anger any way they can.



So, the faulty beliefs and how to edit them...

Belief 2-I am my worry

Skill: Talk to Your Worry (All ages)

Eg: *Inside Out* movie

Begin to personify the emotion/part; name it and talk about it. Mr.Wobbly could be the worry part.

Worry **is a part** of everyone; **it is not us**. We can also talk to the part (showing that it is not all of them).

Help them edit their feelings: "I think my worry part is trying to tell you something..."

Try saying "A part of me feels worried" rather than "I am worried".



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So, the faulty beliefs and how to edit them...

Belief 3- The worst will happen

Skill: Challenge the Pessimistic View

We need to adopt the optimistic style. Help edit the pessimistic terminology- “always” “should”

I suggest “should” is replaced with “could” and “always” with “often” etc.

Highlight that this part of their brain telling them this is pessimistic; it applies all bad things that happen to them as relating to their whole person, as permanent and applying widely to their life. This part are their brain is an exaggerator; it tells lies.

Explanatory Style

I got a bad grade on my test...

	Pessimistic	Optimistic
Permanence	Permanent I'll never get another good grade.	Temporary At least it was only the one test.
Pervasiveness	Universal Nothing in my life ever works out.	Specific Math class has been tough this year.
Personalization	Internal I'm not smart enough to get a good grade.	External My teacher should help me after school.

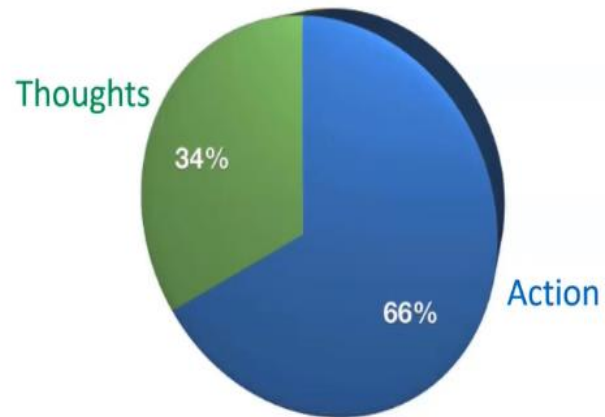
Illustrated by CoStren



So, the faulty beliefs and how to edit them...

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Behavioral Activation



Neal, David T., Wendy Wood, and Jeffrey M. Quinn. 'Habits—A Repeat Performance'. Current Directions in Psychological Science 15.4 (2006): 198-202.

Belief 4- I can't handle this.

Skill: It is a lie that worry tells us.

When they feel this way, remind them of when they last handled something and ask what it felt like last time they did handle. Highlight the success.

Taking action creates motivation to take even more action; so start small so that success can be attained and then build up to the ultimate goal. This will help to change the underlying belief that they "can't handle it".



So, the faulty beliefs and how to edit them...

Belief 5- my worth comes from outside myself (my abilities)

Skill: Self-Compassion- human compassion (everyone has challenges)/treat as if you are best friend, be mindful

People who hold perfectionist expectations often avoid challenges, are risk adverse & don't want to be "a work in progress". They are also very hard on themselves...

So, we need to teach them to love themselves (self-compassion), that all people experience struggle (human compassion) and be mindful.

Using Strength Stories can be a good tool. The below can be looked at and stories created about strengths.

Character Strengths

VIA Classification of Character Strengths



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<https://www.viacharacter.org/character-strengths>



So, the faulty beliefs and how to edit them...

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Behavior: Social worry

Belief: My worth comes from the outside.

Tools: Talk to worry;
Itty-bitty steps;
Bring on the feelings

Behavior: Avoidance

Beliefs: I can't handle it;
The worst will happen.
Tools: Bring on the feelings;
Talk to worry

Behavior: Negative Thinking

Beliefs: I am my worry.
Tools: Talk to worry,
Mindfulness

Recap

Behavior: Anger

Beliefs: All
Tools: All



Behavior: Overwhelm

Beliefs: My worth comes from the outside; I can't handle it.
Tools: Laddering

Behavior: Faceless worry

Beliefs: The worst will happen, I can't handle it.
Tools: Talk to worry

Behavior: Mistake worry

Beliefs: My worth comes from the outside;
The worst will happen; I can't handle it.
Tools: Self-compassion,
Itty-bitty steps

Belief 6- I am disconnected from my inner voice.

Skills- meditation, listen to your heart.

The webinar facilitator believes this is the reason why anxiety has increased so much in young people; that they have lost touch from their inner voice.

All of this information can be used for all age ranges: children, tweens and teens. Also great for the parents, as that is how we can also treat the child (if we can alter our faulty beliefs).

