Hidden Sparks is a non-profit whose purpose is to help children with learning differences reach their full potential in school and life. Hidden Sparks supports professional development for Jewish day schools to help increase understanding and support for diverse learners.

Hidden Sparks’ programs combine school-based professional development in learning and positive behavioral support, classroom observation and coaching. Our philosophy is that by helping teachers meet the needs of struggling students, ultimately all students will benefit.

Now in its 10th year, Hidden Sparks has trained 210 coaches in 69 Jewish day schools in New York, New Jersey, Baltimore, Boca Raton, and Chicago, and 4 Israeli cities (Jerusalem, Modiin, Ramle, Ra’anana).
Welcome to Hidden Sparks Without Walls. The webinar will be starting at 8:30 pm

Thank you for joining the webinar. There will be no sound until we begin at 8:30pm.

To alleviate background noise and ensure a quiet session, your phones have been automatically muted. Questions and comments can be submitted via the CHAT FEATURE. While we are waiting, activate the chat feature by clicking in the “Chat” tab that is located below the attendees list on the right of your screen.

When chatting, please remember to select “All Participants” if you would like everyone to see your message. Select “All Panelists” if you would like only the presenter and facilitator to see your message.

If you would like to call in by phone for audio:
Call-in toll number (US/Canada): 1-650-429-3300
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Press # when prompted for Caller ID
Calm: The Teacher’s Guide to Supporting Anxious Students

Presented by Zipora Schuck
February 21, 2018
Zipora Schuck, MA, MS, is the founder of Pathways Consulting Service, an agency providing professional development services to teachers, principals, therapists and parents. She is a NYS Certified school psychologist holding masters degrees in both special education and school psychology. Mrs. Schuck is an educational consultant to many schools in the New York/New Jersey area as well as a Catapult trainer and leadership coach. She presents to teachers and parents across the country and her popular workshops are usually standing room only!
Overview of the Session

Like most educators, you probably have students in your class who struggle with anxiety. When children and teens are anxious in school they may have a hard time absorbing new information, retrieving previously learned information, or even behaving.

This webinar will offer you a basic understanding of anxiety across the developmental trajectory with a focus on how it manifests in a school setting. Tips, strategies, and techniques will be offered to facilitate students learning to ‘live in the gray’, relax, and gain from classroom instruction.
Learning Objectives:

• Understand different types of anxiety.

• Differentiate between an anxiety disorder and perfectionism.

• Recognize the difference between transitory anxiety and problematic anxiety.

• Learn global techniques that will benefit all students.

• Learn specific interventions to help individual students.
Defining Anxiety

The uneasiness, worry or tension we experience when we expect a threat to our security.

- The sense of danger may be real or perceived, and may come from outside or from within us.
- Anxiety is both valuable and necessary to our safety, needed as preparation and protection against threat or danger (Fight or Flight).
Where is it happening?
Where else?

The Palm
The Anxiety Formula

Overestimation of threat + Underestimation of ability to cope = Anxious Response
Anxiety Manifests in Three Ways

1. **Cognitively** – person’s perception and interpretation of a situation

2. **Physiologically** - changes to the sympathetic nervous system

3. **Behaviorally** - person’s actions in response to anxiety
Normal Development

- **Infancy:** *Stranger anxiety*
- **Early childhood:** *Separation anxiety*
- **Elementary school:** *Real world dangers*
- **Middle school:** *Social acceptance, academic performance*
- **High school:** *Social acceptance, future success*
Transitory Anxiety – A Phase

- Fears and concerns are reasonable and expectable
- Child is responsive to suggestions to change.
- Symptoms are limited to the situation.
- Child understands why he needs to face the situation.
- Symptoms diminish in intensity over time.
Fears and concerns are out of proportion with event.
Child becomes overwhelmed and regresses in response to suggestions.
Symptoms generalize to more situations.
Child more focused on how to avoid the situation than how to face it.
Symptoms increase in intensity over time and worry takes on a life of its own.
Indicators of Problem Anxiety

**Normal Anxiety**
- Reasonable
- Productive
- Manageable
- Mobilizing
- Specific
- Time-Limited
- Age Matched

**Problematic**
- Excessive
- Detrimental
- Uncontrollable
- Paralyzing
- Pervasive
- Chronic
- Age Mismatched
The Four D’s of Disorder

1. Disproportion
2. Disruption
3. Distress
4. Duration
Reactivity
It’s a problem if...

It affects a child’s ability to engage in the three main responsibilities of childhood

✓ To learn
✓ To make friends
✓ To have fun
The Umbrella of Anxiety Disorders

• Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)
• Obsessive – Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
• Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
• Panic Disorder
• Separation Anxiety Disorder (SAD)
• Social Anxiety Disorder/Selective Mutism
• Specific Fears and Phobias
Approx. 7% of children ages 7-16 may suffer from an anxiety disorder.

Girls are more represented.

Boys generally get treatment quicker.
What makes a child anxious?

• Genetics and brain philosophy
• Temperament
• Parenting style
• Environmental factors
Irrational beliefs:

• “If I try hard enough, I can avoid making mistakes.”
• “I must not let anyone see me making a mistake.”
• “My entire life depends on how I perform.”
• “If I make a mistake I am incompetent – a failure.”
• “I can’t stand it when my work is not as good as someone else’s.”
Warning Signs and Signals

- Out of character behaviors
- What if?
- Avoidance
- Reassurance seeking
- Frequent physical complaints
- Decline in attention, concentration and organization
- Incomplete tasks
- Easily triggered distress
- Wasted logic
Warning signs and signals

- Regressive behaviors
- Nightmares
- Thumb sucking
- Less or decreased independence
- Inability to progress
Differentiating Anxiety and Attention Challenges

Symptom: Easily distracted, doesn’t seem to listen
  • **Anxiety**: Distracted by worries, may be afraid of hearing question wrong.
  • **Attention**: Distracted by other kids and noises, can’t process what the teacher is saying.

Symptom: Impulsive, blurts out answers
  • **Anxiety**: Fear that she will forget, needs reassurance
  • **Attention**: Unable to pause, unaware of interrupting
Classroom Challenges

• Multiple demands, needing frequent reassurance and support

• Inability and/or inadequacy of coping and problem solving skills

• Dependence on adults
Misunderstood As...

Manipulative
• Deliberately being fussy
• Annoying
• Attention-seeking
• Full of excuses
• Avoidance
• Refusal

Most children with anxiety have a hard time explaining why they behave the way they do.
Creating a safe haven

• Open smile and open posture
• A legal break
• Transitional items (younger students)
• Structure, schedules and routines
• ‘Doing the best I can’ or other affirmation cards
• Encourage drinking (water!)
Classroom Accommodations

- Student self-signal for participation
- Good Neighbors or Study Buddy Groups
- Reward the process, not the product
- Grade effort or content not appearance
- Provide extra set of notes
- Sticky pad for multiple questions
- Schedule catch-up time
- Visual schedules
- Transitional songs
Classroom Interventions

- Stress breathing
- Pretzel vs. noodle
- Guided imagery
- ‘What if’ flow charts
Alternatives to (typical) Assessment

• Test orally
• Use a scribe
• Change the venue
• Duplicate test
• Show what you know within a time-limit
• Pass/Fail requirements
• Ungraded assignments
• Focus on correct answers, not errors
• Strength Based Assessment
Alternatives for Younger Children

- Pointing vs. Listening
- Full class activity vs. Buddy shared jobs
- Asking – How would you like to do this?
Emotional Thermometer

• Model first with positive emotions
• Differentiate #1-10.
• Provide specific examples.
• Refer to levels.
• Re-label it for worry – a fearmometer
Month One: Intrigue and Define

“Flexible means being able to change and being o.k.”
Month Two: Self Report and Model

“I usually like to… but I can be flexible and…”
Month Three: Notice and Reinforce

“Chavi, I noticed you were really flexible when you…”
Month Four: Offer Flexible Challenges

“Do you think you can be flexible and…”
or
“Can anyone be flexible and…”
or
“I need a volunteer to be flexible and…”
How does your own anxiety impact you as a teacher?

• **Recognize and separate your symptoms from student needs.**

• **Learn relaxation techniques.**

• **Believe in “good enough”.**

• **Get help if needed.**
Questions for School Assessment

• What is the specific behavior that is problematic?
• When did it begin?
• When does the behavior occur and in what circumstance?
• What is the frequency and duration of the behavior?
• How distressed is the child?
• What factors in the classroom, school or home environment appear to contribute to the behavior?
• How is the child’s academic and social functioning affected?
• What seems to calm the child and what seems to escalate anxiety?
When it is too much to manage...

1. Open lines of parent communication early on.
2. Collaborate with partner teacher.
3. Describe in behavioral terms the frequency and intensity.
4. **Never Diagnose.**
5. Ask for suggestions.
6. Create an action plan, monitor and follow up.
7. Involve administration.
FYI - Treatments

• Psycho-education
• Relaxation Techniques
• Systematic Desensitization
• Cognitive Behavior Therapy
• Pharmacology
FMI-Books and Bibliotherapy

✓ **Worried No More** by Aureen Wagner
✓ **Kids In the Syndrome Mix** by Martin Kutscher
✓ (kids) **Up and Down the Worry Hill** by Aureen Wagner
✓ (kids) **What to Do When You Worry Too Much** by Dawn Huebner
✓ (kids) **Smart Girls Guide to Worry** by the American Girl Company
Children grow from a place of security, not from a place of fear.
Upcoming Hidden Sparks Without Walls Sessions

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<th>For Teachers</th>
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| Tue. Mar. 6, 2018 | **Focusing In: Strategies for Supporting Students’ Focus**  
Presented by Mindy Rosenthal |
| Tue. April 24, 2018 | **Executive Assistant: Building Executive Function Strategies for Reading and Writing**  
Presented by Hollis Dannaham |

Does your school participate in Hidden Sparks? Find out about how your school can train internal faculty coaches to deepen its ability to reach diverse learners.

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