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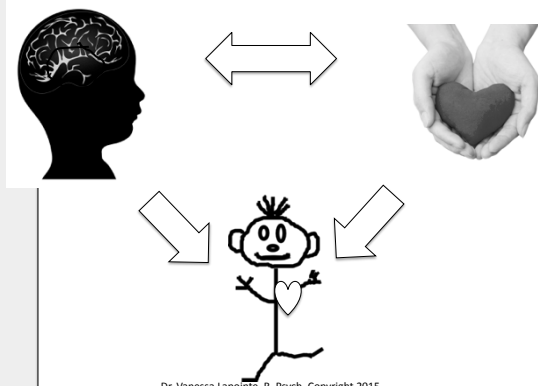
**When the worry monster
ATTACKS**

**-Understanding and responding
to childhood anxiety-**

The art of *Being* rather than *Doing*

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Science and Heart

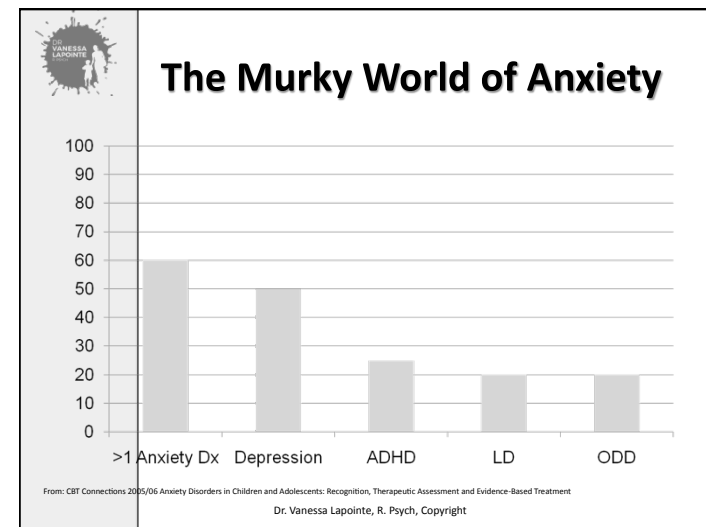



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Anxiety

- Anxiety disorders are the most commonly diagnosed mental health disorders (for children & adults)
- 6.4%
 - 42 000 children in BC
 - 338 000 children in Canada
- Between 12 and 20% of us will be “clinically diagnosable” at some point in our lifetime


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Anxiety Diagnoses

- Separation Anxiety
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Phobias
- Social Anxiety
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder



Behind the label THE EXPERIENCE OF ANXIETY


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Common Threads


- Fear
- “Trauma” (in the eye of the beholder)
- Agitated
- Irritable
- Frustrated
- Acting out
- Sleep disturbances – nightmares; can’t settle; difficult to rouse in morning
- Increased body stress response – cortisol – can kick off all sorts of other body symptoms
- Safety & security questioned
- Disregulated
- Feel blamed – viewed as “won’t” vs. “can’t”
- Organization difficulties
- Self-esteem impacted
- Relationships affected
- Attentional regulation is impaired

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The root of the emotion ANXIETY AS “ALARM”

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Redefining Anxiety

Anxiety = Alarm

Dr. Gordon Neufeld

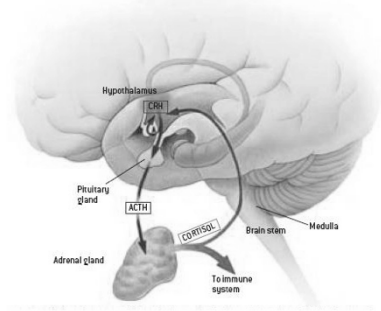
- A healthy, normal and much needed response in the body
- An adaptive response
- Our belief systems drive the continued alarm response
- Becomes maladaptive when no obvious threat is present
- To change this, we need to go to the emotional core

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The Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal Axis

STRESS RESPONSE SYSTEM



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Alarm System

Autonomic Nervous System

Parasympathetic System
rest and digest

Sympathetic System
fight or flight



A note on temperament...

N

O

R

M

A

L

Generally settled & chill

More intensely aware

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Shyness ≠ Anxious

- Shyness has an ill-informed bad rap!
- We do NOT want children to do the bidding of a stranger
- Shyness is a developmentally appropriate reaction of a child to a person not part of their inner circle
- Shyness keeps children emotionally (and otherwise!) safe
- We want children to be shy around people they don't really know

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The adaptive function of alarm

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Anxiety is Adaptive! Until it isn't...

- A healthy, normal and much needed response in the body
- An adaptive response
- Our belief systems drive the continued alarm response
- Becomes maladaptive when no obvious threat is present
- To change this, we need to go to the emotional core

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WHO IS THE CHILD?

Prepared by To The Moon and Back Psychological Services



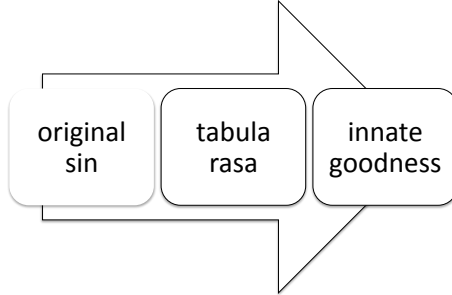
Who is “The Child”?

- Who do we think children are?
- How do our ideas about who children are impact the way we interact with them?
- How do these interactions in turn affect how they experience us as really “knowing” them...really “getting them”?
- How does this impact how they develop and grow up?




Who is “The Child”?

- Historical timeline:

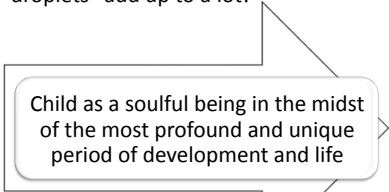


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graph LR; A[original sin] --> B[tabula rasa]; B --> C[innate goodness];
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Who is “The Child”?

- Our assumptions about children really matter
- They trickle down and impact the minutia of our everyday
- Over the days, weeks, months, and years, these “droplets” add up to a lot!




Child as a soulful being in the midst of the most profound and unique period of development and life






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What does it mean to be held in another's mind? Why does it matter, and how does such a feeling develop? Everything that we know about [children] leads to the conclusion that they seek human **connection**, not only to survive but for its own sake. They are born looking for us. Given a choice of what to look at in their first hours, it is always the human face they choose.


-Dr. Jeree Paul

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CONNECTION IS KEY


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Connection is key

- We are a social species
- Emotional connectedness allows us to thrive
- It is not a *want*, but a *need*
- **Connection = regulation**
- **Disconnection = disregulation**

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Connectedness & Development

- The most significant “environment” of a developing human’s life
- “Coherent interpersonal relationships produce coherent neural integration within the child that is at the root of adaptive self-regulation.” (Siegel, 2001, p. 86)
- Positive relationships offer the best environment for optimal brain development (Davies, 2004)

Anxiety in the beginning

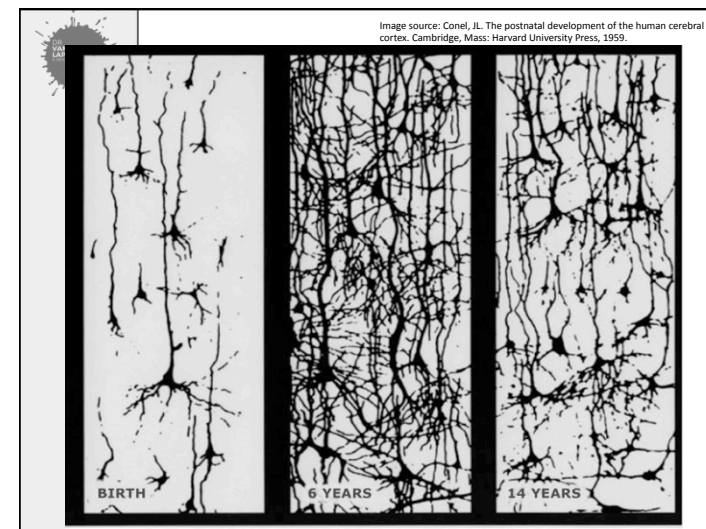
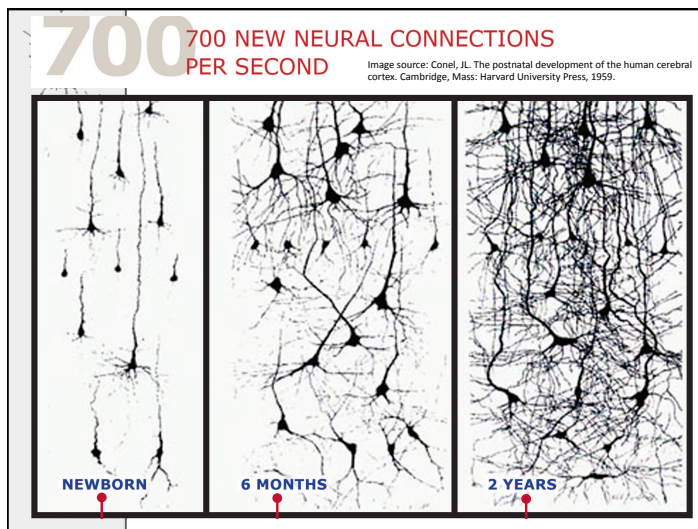
- Anxiety has at its roots in a child who is struggling for control, typically when there is the experience of things around them feeling out of control
- This struggle kicks in neurologically and chemically as a stress response
- This stress response leads to distortions in thinking that make sense for the child in light of the feelings they are experiencing


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Connectedness & Development

- Attachment security is consistently related to levels of depression and anxiety
- This relationship intensifies from childhood to adolescence
 - Brimariu & Kerns, 2010 – review paper; Lee & Hanin, 2009
- A secure base leads to: Higher levels of positive mood; Better coping strategies; Increased regulation of emotion
 - i.e. less depression, less anxiety, less behavioral difficulties
 - (Kerns et al., 2007)
- This research not only highlights our need for etiologic reconsiderations, but also points us solidly in the direction of CONNECTION as we work towards supporting children with anxiety.

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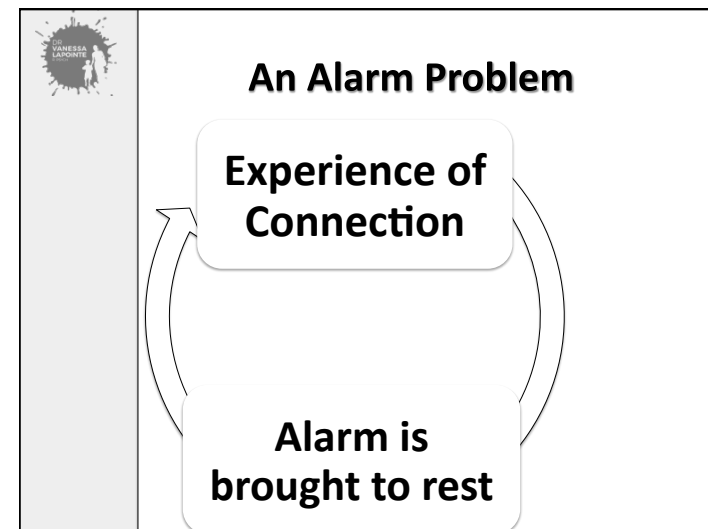
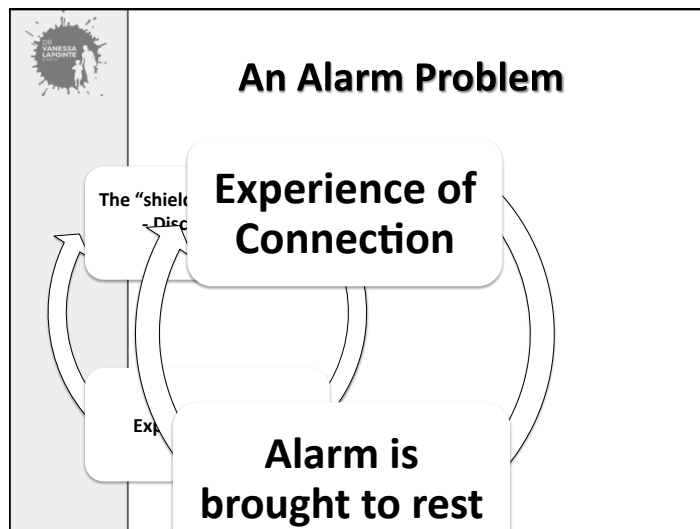
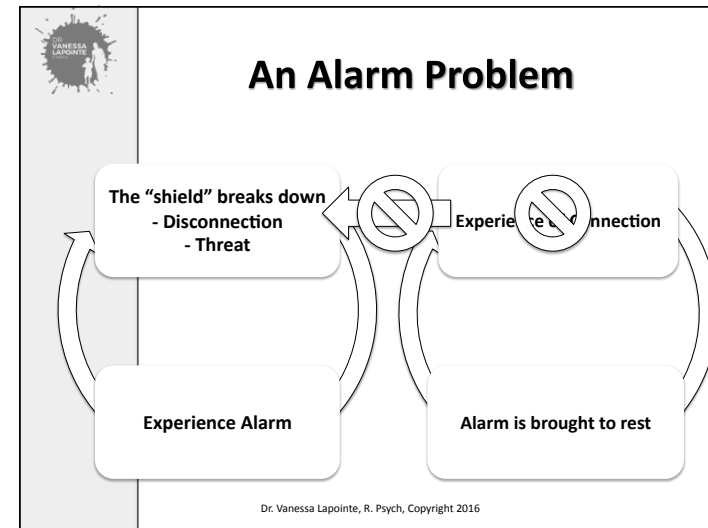





The role of the “big people”

- Children view their “big people” as their ultimate protectors
- Without us, they are not able to survive in this world
- Their connection to us is vital to their development
 - Physically
 - Emotionally
- This connection is so important it has been given the name “attachment” in the research world

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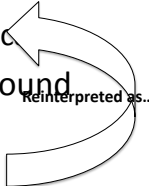





Lack of control = ALARM!
Where does this come from?

1. DISCONNECT
 - emotionally and/or physically
2. THREAT from the world around
 - “perceived” or actual

Reinterpreted as...



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Bad Big People \neq **Anxious child**
 necessarily


BUT...

“At rest” child $=$ **Attuned & Insightful Big People**

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A NIGHT ON THE TOWN...



A night on the town...


- What are some ways in which Barry is too assertive or imposing with Jean?
- If you were Barry, what are some signs from Jean that may lead you to alter your approach?
- What are some examples of how big people act with children that mirror Barry’s tactics with Jean? What assumptions are behind these actions?
- What are some examples of how we might interact with families/parents that mirror Barry’s tactics with Jean? What assumptions are behind these actions?



The Big Picture

The Foundation of Effective Support


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Debunking anxiety pop-culture

1. We do not get better at dealing with worry by practicing dealing with worry – this simply leads to a build-up of worry.
2. Long-term consistency= real change; quick fix = fake change.
3. The process is never unidirectional – life happens!

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Guiding Principles

What children *need*

1. Connection security results in maturity
2. Big people need to ensure that little cups are overflowing
3. Big people must always be the answer to a little person's troubles – even if you have no idea what that answer is, the child must believe that you are the answer. Period.
 - “Children need us to be bigger, stronger, wiser AND kind” – Circle of Security
 - “Hulk it up”
4. Bottom line always comes down to connection


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The process of creating SAFETY


1. Provide Shelter
 - Make the world be quiet
2. Fears to tears
 - Get it out!
3. Cultivate courage

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1. PROVIDE SHELTER


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Provide Shelter from the Storm



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Provide Shelter from the Storm

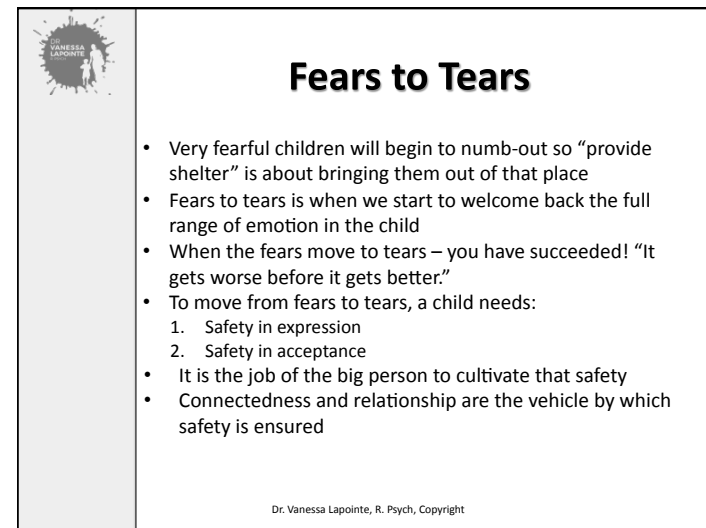
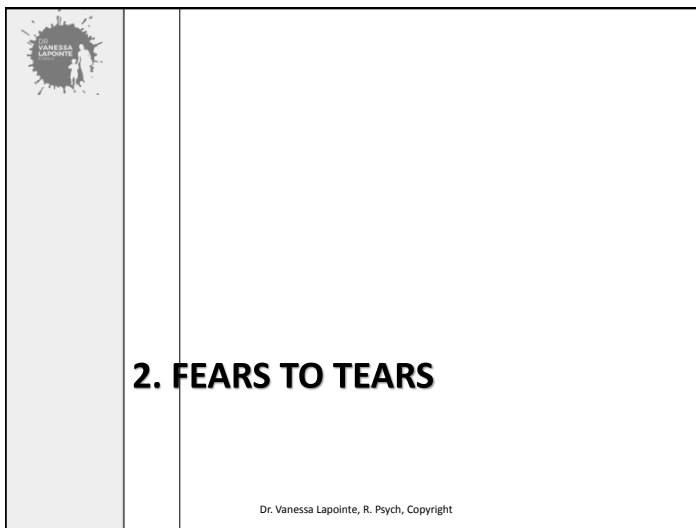
1. Provide the umbrella – reduce sources of anxiety
2. Provide a sense of protection from sources of anxiety
3. Get in front of anxiety – be omnipotent
4. Routine, consistency, calm
5. Nest
6. No matter what – an enduring theme
7. Do not test the connection


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Fears to Tears


1. Be the one they turn to – the one they know will be soft
2. Communicate the sense that you can handle the expression of the fear – no matter what
3. Absolutely ensure that the child feels heard
 - Actions speak louder than words
4. Find ways to provide relief from physical symptoms – in connection and not isolation
5. Move the non-verbal to the verbal – get them talking – move to safety and resolution using the narrative
6. Get them moving – physical activity provides a naturally sourced boost

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3. CULTIVATE COURAGE


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Cultivate Courage

- Six-year-old client:
 - “Courage is feeling afraid but doing it anyway”
- You have to actually be able to feel afraid to be courageous – this is why we need “Shelter” and “Fears to Tears”
- When the stage has been set with relationship, and fears can now easily be converted to tears, courage can be cultivated
- For courage to be expressed, fear must be endured
- The child will need experiences of fear to find courage!

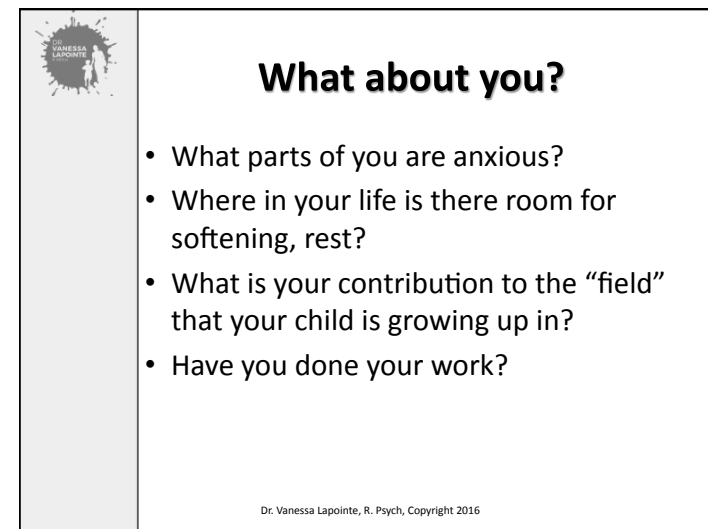
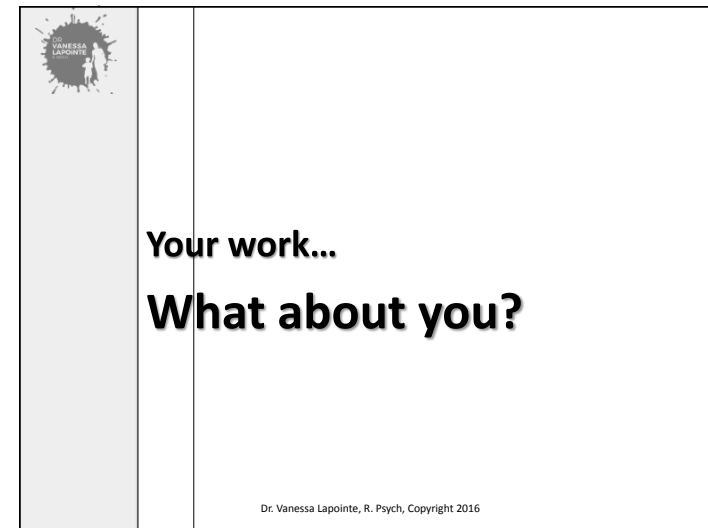
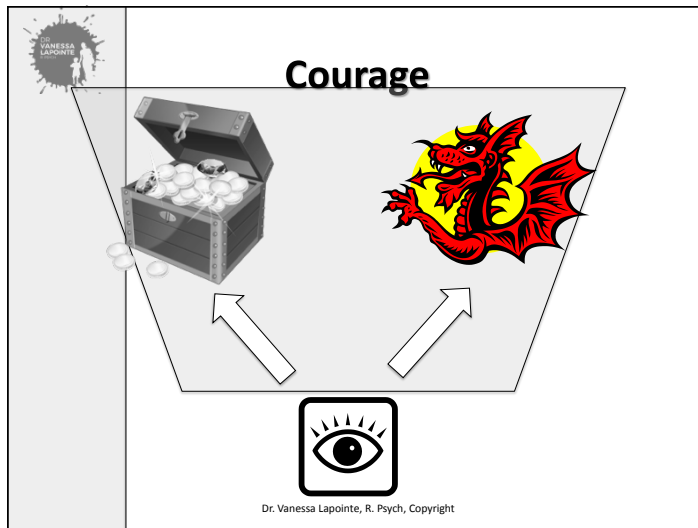
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Cultivate Courage

1. Allow fear to be confronted
2. Start low and go slow
3. Provide repeated experiences
4. Provide a soft landing when courage is fleeting or outcomes are disappointing
5. Focus on BOTH the desired outcome and the lurking fear
6. Provide a safe haven for retreating to

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What about you?

“What is to the
greatest good of self is
to the greatest good
of all.”


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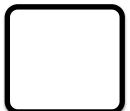


Setting a child up for growth

A WORLD THAT MAKES SENSE

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“Being it”



See
It

Feel
It

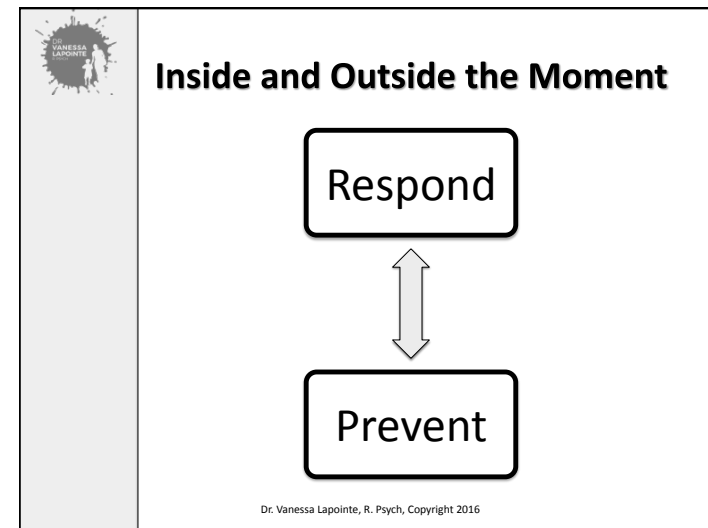
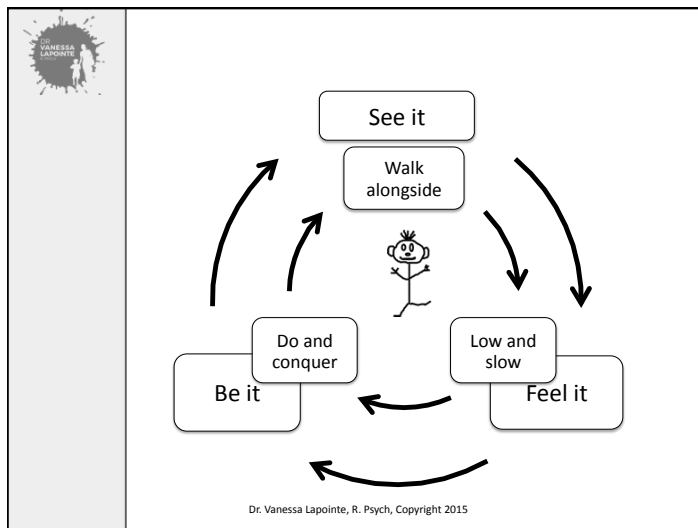
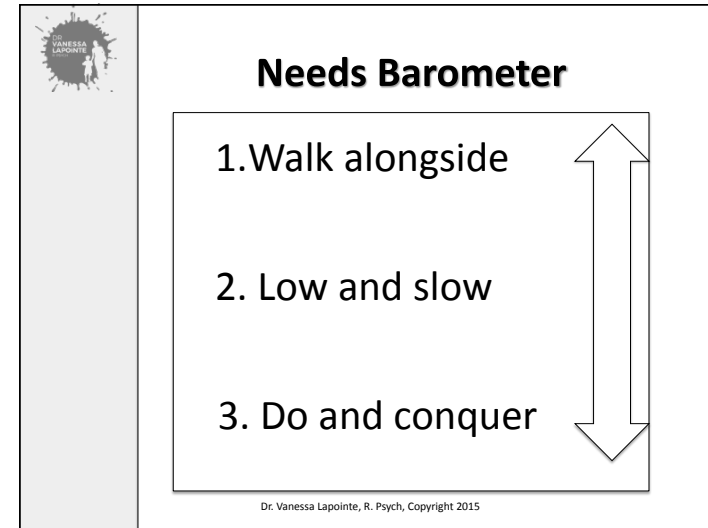
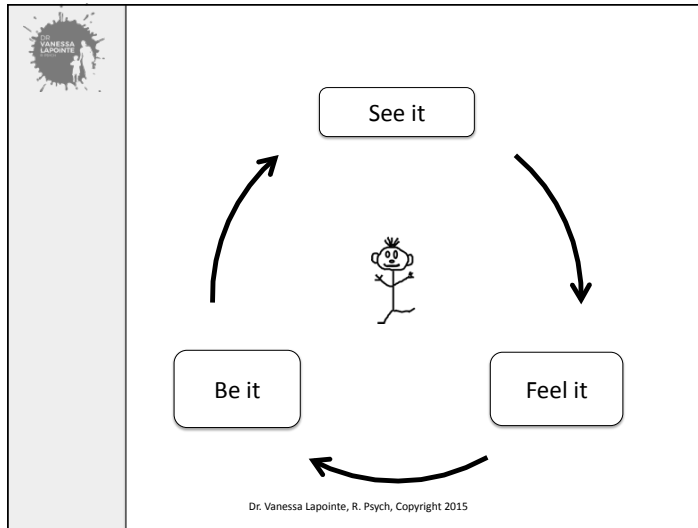
Be
it

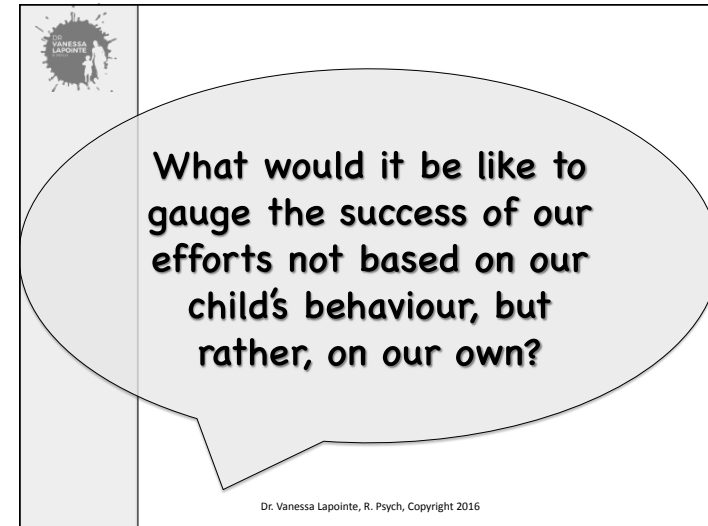
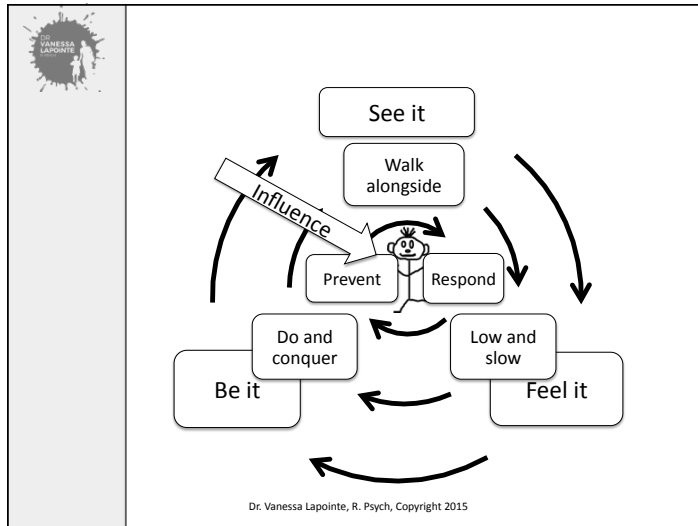
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Si. Fi. Bi.

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4 Principles

Everyday Tools for Managing Anxiety


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- ### How to roll...
1. Nurture connection
 2. Be big
 3. Create Containment
 4. Connect to Relax
- The idea is that you need to provide some shelter
 - You need to make emotions safe to feel and express
 - And you need to find a way to help your child face their fears – and conquer!
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**PRINCIPLE 1.
NURTURE CONNECTION**


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**Principle 1.
Nurture Connection**

1. Connection security results in maturity
2. Come alongside a child to get her onside
3. Show love in a no-matter-what kind of way
4. Keep relationship as the bottom line
5. Fill 'em up
6. Pick up what they put down
7. Be generous
8. Play


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**Principle 1.
Nurture Connection**

1. Connection security results in maturity
 - Through the gift of deep dependence comes the reality of true independence
 - Be very direct about inviting your kids to depend on you
 - Look for opportunities to “do for them what they can and should do for themselves”
 - You are seeking to create an environment of acceptance and dependence
 - Dependence is good!


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**Principle 1.
Nurture Connection**

2. Come alongside to get them onside
 - It is human nature to resist influence outside of connection
 - Connection at relationship level but also moment by moment
 - Join with your child first
 - Issue directives, share ideas, and invite compliance with routines second

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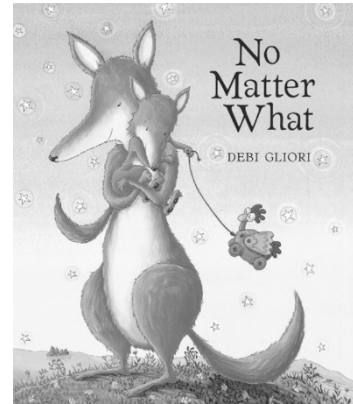
Principle 1. Nurture Connection

3. Show love in a no-matter-what kind of way

- Anxiety absolutely impacts relationships
- But connection = regulation
- Make the connection bigger than the anxiety and all of the symptoms erupting from it
- No matter how big the mistake, the challenge, the explosion— have the child believe that the connection endures beyond everything
- Cast forward to the next point of connection
- Visually script
- Ideas:
 - Symbols to hold onto
 - A time of reconnection to look forward to
 - Talk about the parents to the child (at school, daycare)
 - Parent picture board
 - Use rituals
 - Bite out of sandwich
 - Etc.!!!!

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Principle 1. Nurture Connection

4. Keep relationship as the bottom line

- You want them to *feel* like the most important thing to you is the connection
- You are not here in the service of the world around you, but rather, in the service of the child who is utterly dependent upon you
- Do nothing in terms of responses that would interrupt this.

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**Principle 1.
Nurture Connection**

5. Fill 'em up

- Only when they have had their fill can they rest from seeking it
- Give them more of you than you think they need
- Have them feel your connection above and beyond
- Start your day 15 minutes earlier to provide this
- Make sure to be 100% present for greetings and invitations
- End your day with connection and a casting forward to morning connection
- Book under pillow; chat about visiting in dreamland; hearts sprinkled on bed; morning cups of warmth

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**Principle 1.
Nurture Connection**

6. Pick up what they put down

- Nurture a sense of trust
- Have them know they can depend on you to act on their behalf in the best possible way
- Respond swiftly and deftly
- Be fierce about this – in a quiet, strong, confident, sure way without flaunting

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**Principle 1.
Nurture Connection**

7. Be generous

- What a wonderful gift!
- Surprise the child with generosity
- Act before they ask
- Be stealth in your generous provision
- Extra bedtime chapters; a favorite meal cooked without request; a little treat that magically appears

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**Principle 1.
Nurture Connection**

8. Play


- Play is an essential part of healthy existence (David Elkind)
- You must play in order to grow – even as adults!
- Aim for at least 15 minutes a day of uninterrupted playtime with your child
- Seek the joy

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**PRINCIPLE 2.
BE BIG**


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**Principle 2.
Be Big**

1. “Just know”...
2. Exit stage left
3. Steer into the skid
4. Be okay with upset
5. Exude confidence
6. Be the biggest
7. Provide hope in advance


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**Principle 2.
Be Big**

1. “Just know”...
 - Even if you don’t have the answer, you need to BE the answer
 - Have your children sense you as “all knowing” even if you don’t know


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**Principle 2.
Be Big**

2. Exit stage left
 - Get out of there when you need to!
 - But do so gracefully and without surrounding your “hulkness”
 - Never fear - you will have lots of other opportunities

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Principle 2. Be Big

3. Steer into the skid

- This allows a sense of you as being in control even in situations that actually are very much out of control
- You cannot control a child who cannot control themselves
- So call the shots on what you know is coming anyway

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Principle 2. Be Big

4. Be okay with upset

- Nobody ever said childhood was meant to be quiet and peaceful and pleasant all the time
- Chaos and upset are a lovely and essential part of the package!
- Welcome it
- Tears and upset are wonderful when safely received by the warm embrace of connection with a caring adult

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Principle 2. Be Big

5. Exude confidence

- You have got to walk it
- Your tone
- Your posture
- Your words
- Your eyes
- Have your sense of yourself as a “big person” come seeping out of how you *are* – drip, drop, drip, drop

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Principle 2. Be Big

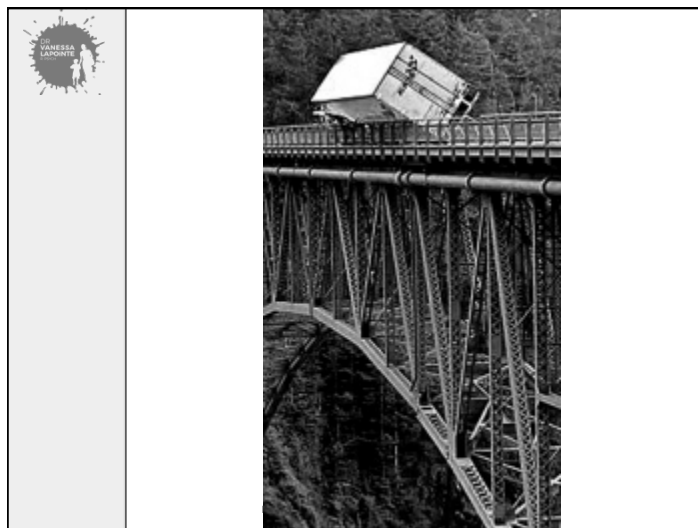
6. Be the biggest


- You be in charge of the connection
- You nurture it
- You mend it
- You apologize
- You care take
- You shield


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	<p>Principle 2. Be Big</p> <p>7. Provide hope in advance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is a sense of desperation that can set in when the “point of no return” is thought to have been passed• Hope in advance rescues the child from having to go there <p><small>Dr. Vanessa Lapointe, R. Psych, Copyright 2016</small></p>
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	<p>PRINCIPLE 3. CREATE CONTAINMENT</p> <p><small>Dr. Vanessa Lapointe, R. Psych, Copyright 2016</small></p>
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	<p>Principle 3. Create Containment</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Get the shout out2. Hand over the road map: using verbal or visual scripting3. Establish rituals and traditions4. Feel the rhythm of your schedule5. Repeat subtle flags6. Create a nest <p><small>Dr. Vanessa Lapointe, R. Psych, Copyright 2016</small></p>
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Principle 3. Create Containment

- Get the shout out
 - Sometimes this can just build up
 - And it gets stuck
 - Provide your child the relief of allow some of the pressure out of the system
 - But set this up to occur at a time and in a way that ultimately safeguards them from the judgmental, shaming gaze of the world


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Principle 3. Create Containment

- Hand over the road map: using verbal or visual scripting
 - Tell the whole story from beginning to end
 - Make it visual
 - Visual schedule of week/month
 - Visual schedule of day
 - Visual schedule for tricky patches in the day e.g. leaving the house
 - Use social stories
 - Remember what stresses kids out:
 - Being rushed
 - Not knowing what is coming next
 - Transitions
 - Resources:
 - Boardmaker
 - www.easydaysies.com

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**Principle 3.
Create Containment**

3. Establish rituals and traditions

- A sense of belonging and identity
- Rituals are a way to bring special meaning and emotional safety into the daily goings-on of a child's world
- We think of rituals and traditions for special occasions, but what about just for life?
- E.g.
 - What are Fridays all about?
 - What do you do to kick off the day each day?
 - What are your special goodbye rituals (give me an "h"!)?

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**Principle 3.
Create Containment**

4. Feel the rhythm of your schedule

- Surprise and spontaneity are not generally well-received by most human beings!
- Having a rhythm to your days and your life provides a sense of safety
- Create a sense of rest in allowing for "givens"

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**Principle 3.
Create Containment**

5. Repeat subtle flags

- Have some go-to's that allow you to easily highlight necessary boundaries and expectations
- "kindness and respect"
- "Caring words"
- "Gentle hands"
- Etc.

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**Principle 3.
Create Containment**

6. Create a nest


- Sometimes you have to take cover
- Put up a big shield
- Climb into the nest and stay there for as long as is required for the "system" to settle

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**PRINCIPLE 4.
CONNECT TO RELAX**


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**Principle 4.
Connect to Relax**

1. Embrace opportunities to help children with the physical process of “settling”:
 - Form a relationship with their feelings
 - Reduce physical symptoms of agitation
 - Feel calmed in the nurturing presence of one of their big people
2. Deep breathing
3. Relaxation scripts
4. Progressive muscle relaxation
5. Calming boards


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**Principle 4.
Connect to Relax**

1. Embrace opportunities to help children with the physical process of “settling”:
 - Form a relationship with their feelings
 - Reduce physical symptoms of agitation
 - Feel calmed in the nurturing presence of one of their big people


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**Principle 4.
Connect to Relax**

2. Deep breathing
 - Circular breathing
 - In through nose and out through mouth
 - Belly breathing; birthday candles; balloon blowing; etc.
 - Snuggled up next to a special big person!


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Principle 4. Connect to Relax

3. Relaxation scripts
 - Guided meditation
 - Simple stories that allow a “pause” button to be pushed
 - App store – Bedtime Meditations by Christiane Kerr


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Principle 4. Connect to Relax

4. Progressive muscle relaxation
 - The various muscle groups in the body are progressively tensed and released following a script
 - www.sickkids.ca/pdfs/IMP/21461-52IMPReprint-Corniere.pdf
 - Check app store
 - Taming Worry Dragons has a script imbedded in the workbook

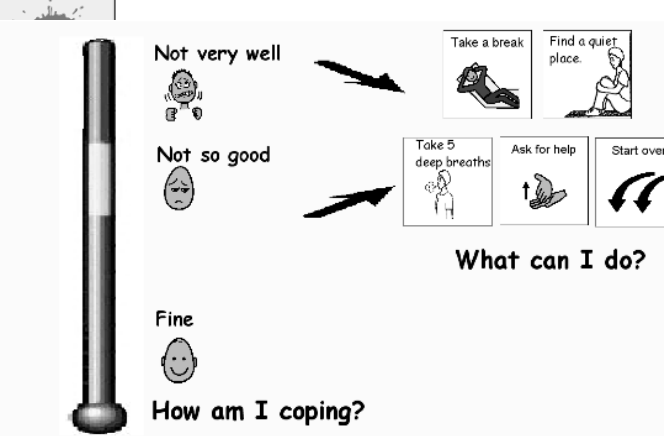
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Principle 4. Connect to Relax

5. Calming boards
 - Visual scripting of what it takes to calm our bodies
 - www.setbc.org for calming boards (visual scripts)

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Not very well

Not so good

Fine

How am I coping?

Take a break

Find a quiet place.


Take 5 deep breaths

Ask for help


Start over

What can I do?


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I'm feeling anxious.
I need to calm down.
What do I do?



I can take a deep breath.



I can count to five.



I can go to a quiet place.


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Call upon your village




- You were never meant to go this alone
- Our brains are designed to marinate in connection
- Find ways to create a sense of community all around your children



IN SUMMARY...


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In Summary...

- A soft, nurturing response is always the answer
- Connection is at the heart of creating the right conditions for allowing a child to change their fears to tears, and find their courage.

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The bottom line...

**“When a child is held in mind, the child feels it, and knows it. There is a sense of safety, of containment, and most important, existence in that other, which is vital. ... It seems to me that one of life’s greatest privileges is just that
- the experience of
being held in someone’s mind.”**

-Dr. Jeree Paul

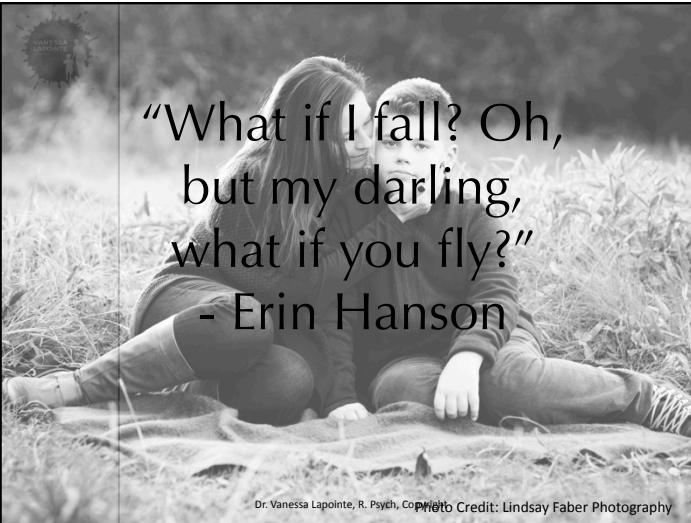
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The bottom line...


- **It only takes one!**
- Be that one...

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**“What if I fall? Oh,
but my darling,
what if you fly?”
- Erin Hanson**

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“Being it”

		
See It	Feel It	Be it

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