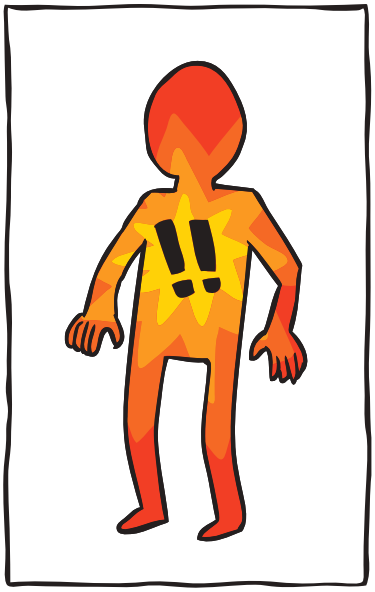
Understand Your Child's Anxiety

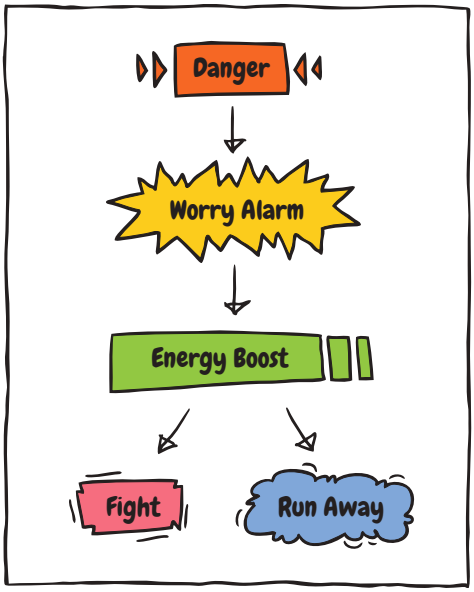
Presented by GoZen!

What is worry?

When our ancestors went out hunting and gathering food, they often ran into danger...

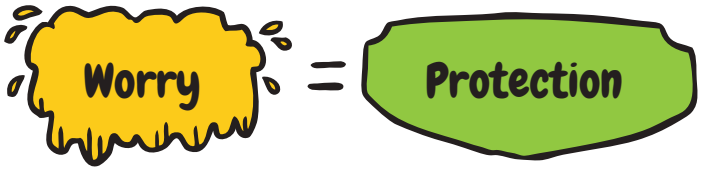


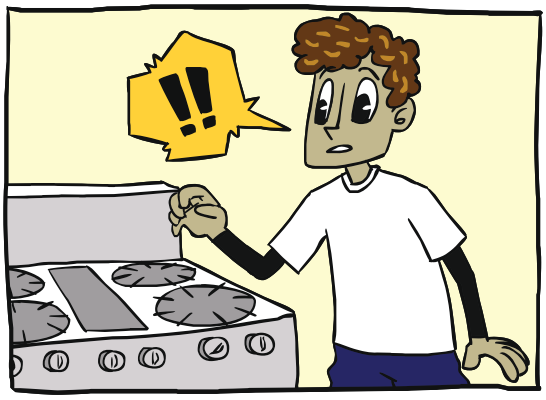
BOOM! Danger triggered an internal worry alarm.



This worry alarm or "stress response" is a defense mechanism wired into our bodies.

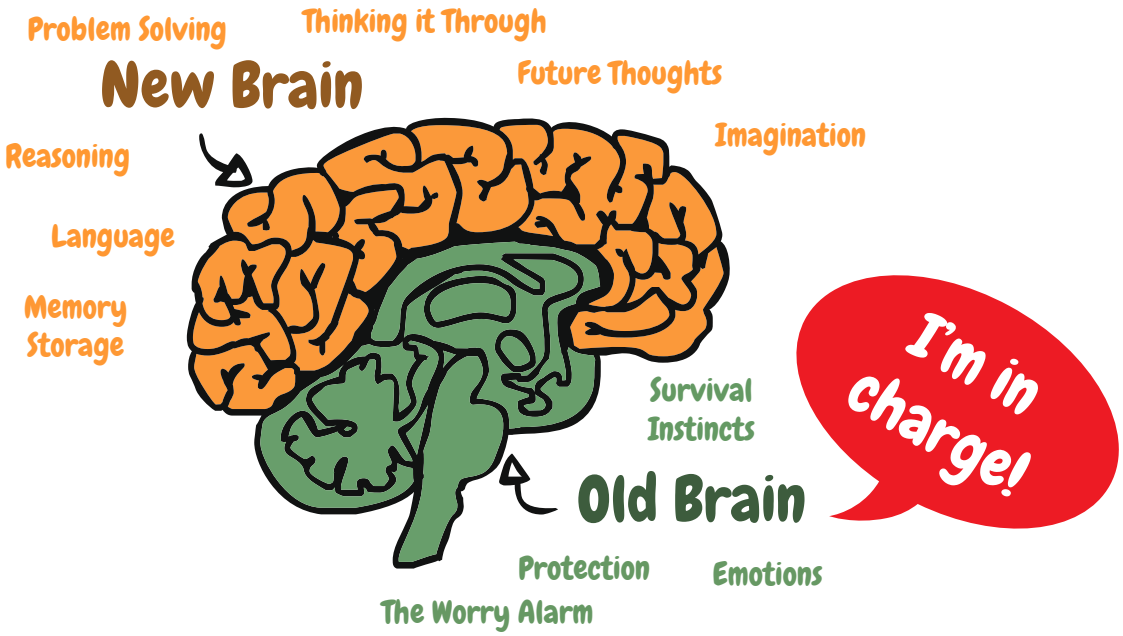
So what is worry exactly?





Worry is protection. Worry is a survival mechanism that still plays a role in modern times. A little worry is a good thing. It keeps us from doing things like touching a hot stove!

Your brain on worry



When the worry alarm is triggered, the older (more emotional) brain takes over. That means the newer (more logical brain) is put on hold. This can make it hard to think rationally.

The worry alarm can make you powerful

When the worry alarm is triggered, a series of neurochemicals are dumped into the body to help you survive! Your body speeds up. Your system cools down. Your muscles get ready to fight. You get extra oxygen to the bloodstream. Your body shuts down unnecessary systems (e.g., digestion). All this stuff makes you capable of incredible things for a short burst of time!

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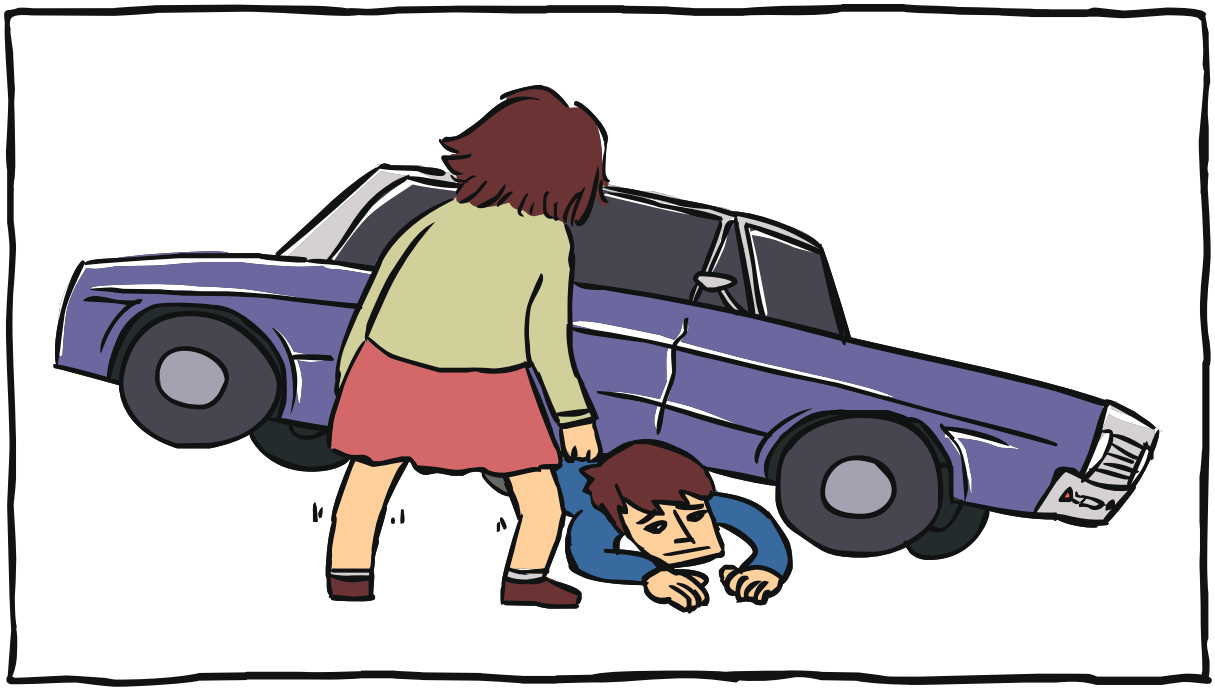
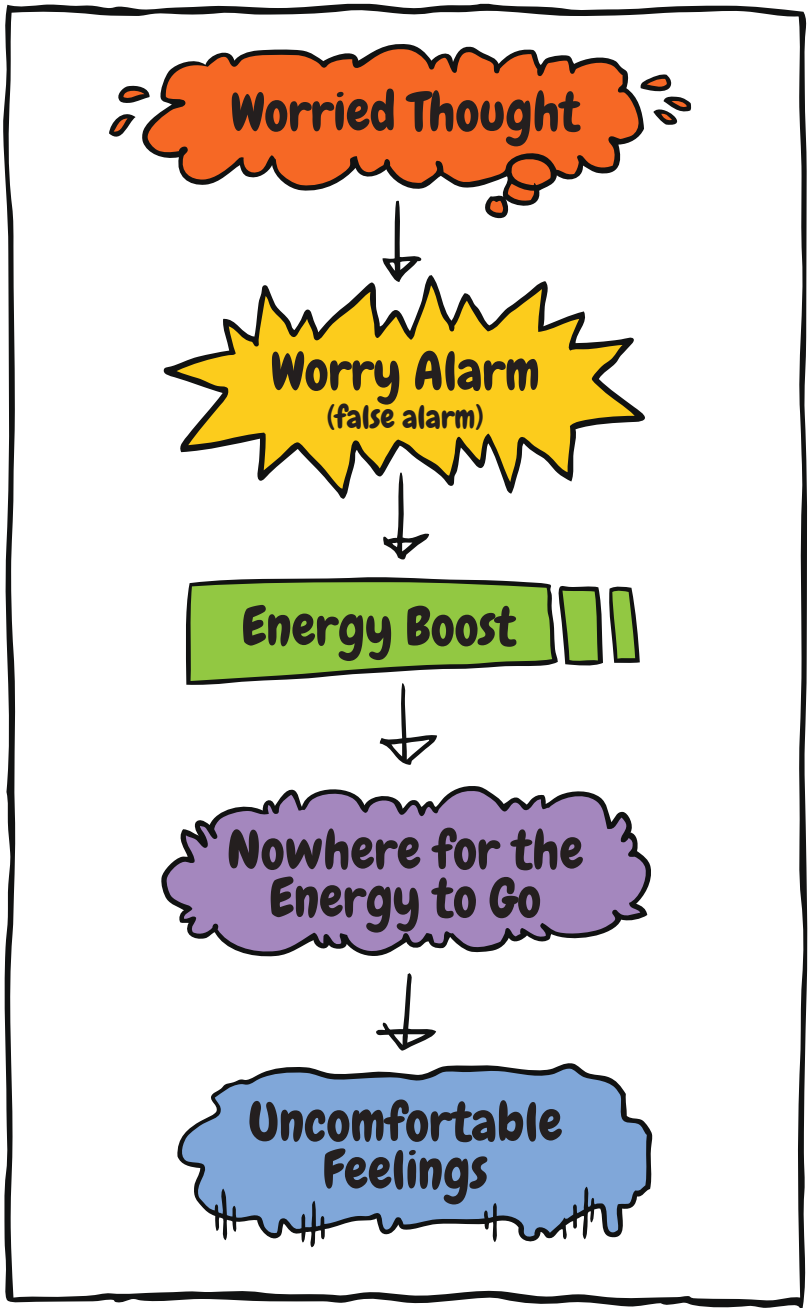


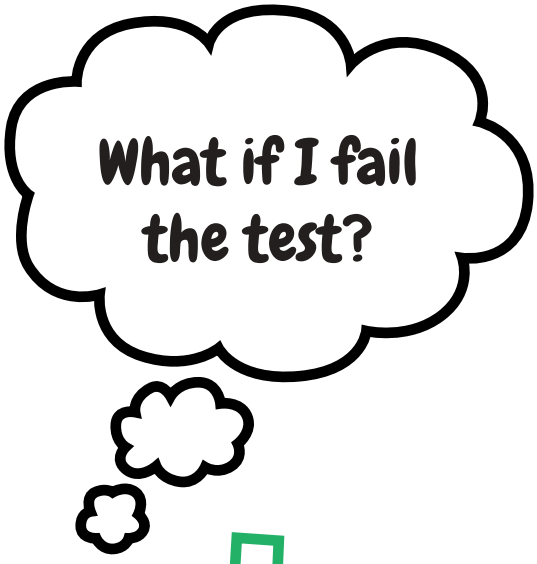
In April 1982, Angela Cavallo's worry alarm went off when she was watching her son, Tony, repair their Chevy Impala. The jack fell from under the car and Tony was pinned. With no help whatsoever, Angela lifted the 3,500 pound car and saved her son!

Sometimes the alarm goes a little haywire

Sometimes we worry when there is no immediate danger.

Worry is meant to protect us from immediate danger. Sometimes, however, we are just thinking about the future...



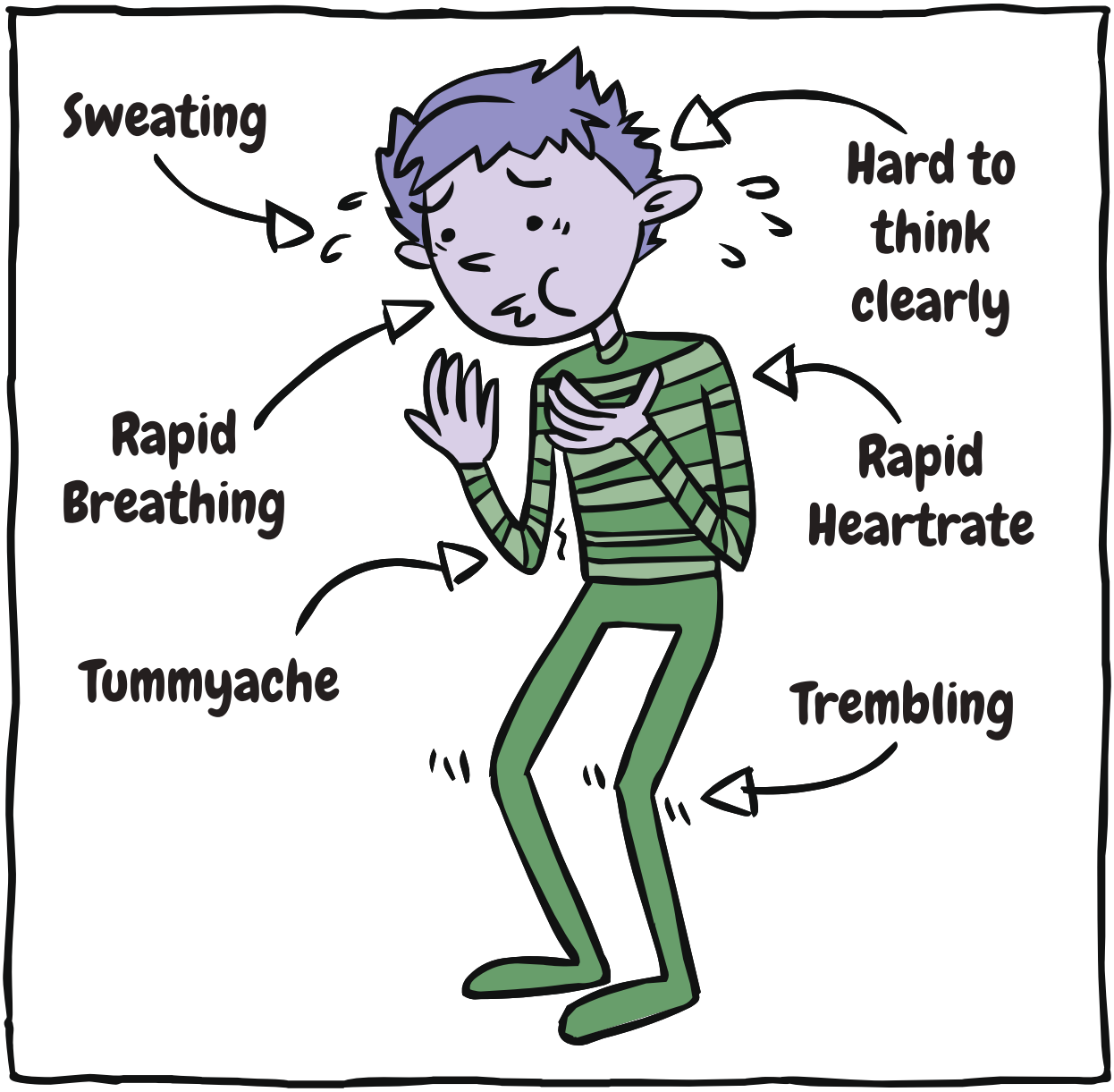


A simple thought can trigger the worry alarm and activate the fight-or-flight response.

What happens when there's nothing to fight or run away from?

There's nowhere for all those chemicals to go...

You could end up feeling like this:



This is Anxiety

Worry is experienced by EVERYONE and it's perfectly normal, but sometimes our worry alarm goes a little haywire. When we have false alarms, our system goes into survival mode when there is no immediate threat!

Why do we have false alarms?

Brain Chemistry

Studies show that out-of-balance neurotransmitters may play a role in anxiety disorders.

Genetics

Some research suggests family history can play a part in anxiety disorders.

Environment

Trauma and stressful events such as abuse or divorce may lead to anxiety disorders.

Anxiety is experienced by many

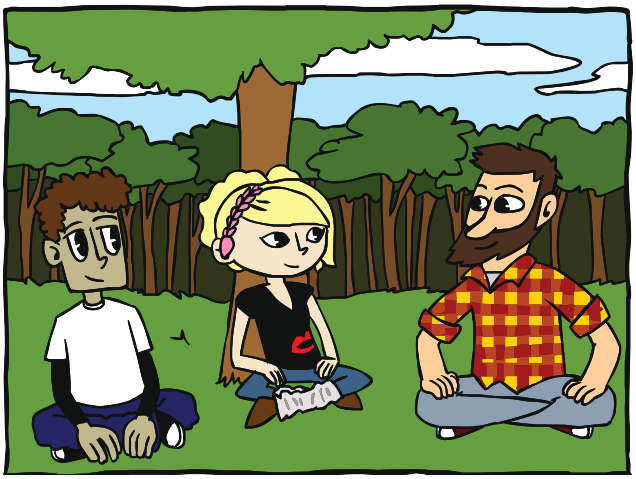
As many as

1 in 8

children suffer from anxiety.

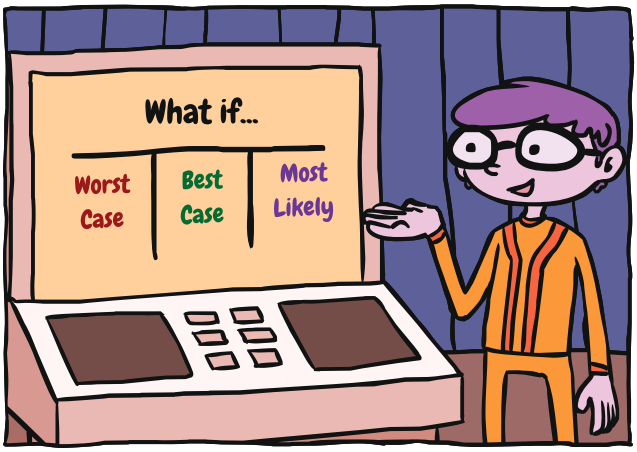
This can make it hard to concentrate in school, remember things we've learned, bounce back from challenges, socialize, and even sleep.

Start relieving worry with these tips!



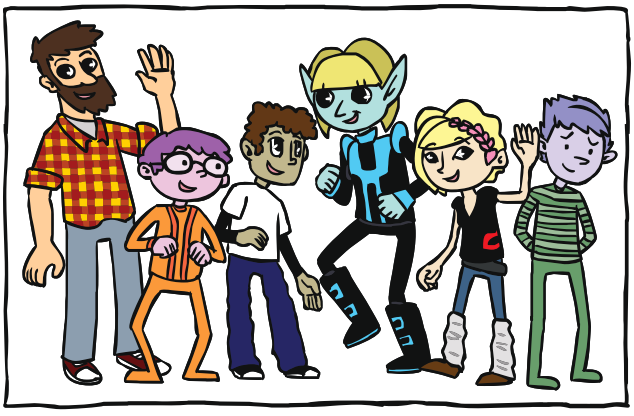
1 Reverse the worry alarm with deep breathing.

This takes your nervous system from "fight-or-flight" to "rest-and-digest." Have your child imagine breathing in and inflating a balloon inside of their belly. Teach them to breath in through the nose for 4 seconds, hold the breath for 7 seconds, and breathe back out of the mouth for 8 seconds.



2 Kick the logical brain into gear!

Anxiety skews one's perception of risk. Re-engage the logical brain with a writing exercise. Have your child get out a piece of paper and write down the issue causing them worry. Next, have them write down the worst case scenario, the best scenario, and the most likely outcome.



3 Create gratitude time in the house.

Help your child express gratitude for everything going right. This is a great practice to try right before bed and first thing in the morning. Gratitude is associated with better sleep, increased determination, more focused attention, enthusiasm and energy. Gratitude exercises are also correlated with a decrease in anxiety and depression.

Sources

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Anxiety Relief Programs for Kids