



## ***Anxiety: Reframing, Grounding, & Mindfulness***

Presented by *Martha Valles, LBSW, MSW*



# *Introduction*

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# *Agenda*

- Introduction
- Overview regarding Anxiety: Reframing, Grounding, & Mindfulness
- Identify the physiological responses to anxiety on the body
- Gain a better understanding of anxiety and the brain
- Coping strategies
- Q & A

## ***A Few Key Definitions***

- *Fear* – a basic, intense emotion aroused by the detection of immanent threat, involving an immediate alarm reaction that mobilizes the organism by triggering a set of psychological changes.
- *Anxiety* - An emotion characterized by apprehension and somatic symptoms of tension in which an individual anticipates impending danger, catastrophe, or misfortune.
- *Stress* - The physiological or psychological response to internal or external stressors. Stress involves changes affecting nearly every system of the body.
- *Worry* - A state of mental distress or agitation due to concern about an impending or anticipated event, threat, or danger.
- *Panic* – A sudden, uncontrollable fear reaction that may involve terror, confusion, and irrational behavior, precipitated by a perceived threat.

# *Anxiety*



Anxiety is a typical human reaction to stress. Anxiety triggers our sympathetic nervous system - our body's natural way of preparing to escape danger. Therefore, it has a purpose and can even help us get things done in our day-to-day lives. But, for some, anxiety levels can become unhealthy and even debilitating. When anxiety starts to affect daily function, it becomes a problem.

# *Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety*

- Inattention, poor focus
- Crying or tantrums
- Constantly seeking reassurance or clingy behavior
- Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep
- Agitation
- Fidgety or restless (chewing fingernails, tugging hair)
- Excessive Shyness
- Unusually fearful of germs or becoming ill
- Repetitive behaviors (hand washing, counting, patterns)
- Difficulty making friends or participating in group activities
- One or both parents tend to be anxious.

# ***Physical Symptoms***

- Increased heart rate
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain or pressure
- Choking sensation
- Dizziness, lightheadedness
- Sweating, hot flashes, chills
- Nausea, upset stomach, diarrhea
- Trembling, shaking
- Weakness, unsteadiness, faintness
- Tense muscles, rigidity
- Dry mouth
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Adapted from *The Anxiety and Worry Workbook* by Clark and Beck

# ***Cognitive Symptoms***

- Fear of losing control, being unable to cope
- Fear of physical injury or death
- Fear of "going crazy"
- Fear of negative evaluations by others
- Frightening thoughts, images, or memories
- Perceptions of unreality or detachment
- Poor concentration, confusion, distractibility
- Narrowing of attention, hypervigilance for threat
- Poor memory
- Difficulty in reasoning, loss of objectivity
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Adapted from *The Anxiety and Worry Workbook* by Clark and Beck



# ***Behavioral Symptoms***

- Avoidance of threat cues or situations
- Escape, flight
- Pursuit of safety, reassurance
- Restlessness, agitation, pacing
- Hyperventilation
- Freezing, motionlessness
- Difficulty speaking
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Adapted from *The Anxiety and Worry Workbook* by Clark and Beck

# ***Emotional Symptoms***

- Feeling nervous, tense, wound up
- Feeling frightened, fearful, terrified
- Being edgy, jumpy, jittery
- Being impatient, frustrated
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Adapted from *The Anxiety and Worry Workbook* by Clark and Beck

# ***High Function Anxiety May Look Like...***

## **What Others See**

- Always on time
- Organized
- Accolades for days
- Takes charge
- Always helpful
- Calm and Composed

## **What I'm Experiencing**

- If late, digestive issues and feelings of panic
- If not organized, overwhelmed
- Often coupled with high stress, worry, and fear
- Need to feel in control to avoid anything going wrong
- Too worried of what they may think or say if say no
- Probably cried earlier in private

***SYMPTOMS ARE  
JUST THAT,  
SYMPTOMS. THEY  
ARE A SMALL  
EXTERNAL PIECE OF A  
MUCH LARGER  
INTERNAL PICTURE.***

Everything makes sense in context.



25% of all teens  
struggle with symptoms of  
**ANXIETY**

7% ages 3 – 17  
have a diagnosed anxiety  
disorder\*

That's ~ 4.4 million  
children & adolescents

\*Ghandour, RM, Sherman, LJ, Vladutiu CJ, Ali MM, Lunch SE, Bitsko, RH, Blumberg SJ. Prevalence and treatment of depression, anxiety and conduct problems in US children. **The Journal of Pediatrics, 2018.**

47 % of females  
21% of males  
Reported moderate or severe  
anxiety symptoms.

1 in 5 people will struggle  
with an anxiety disorder over  
the course of their life.

58% of teens say they are not  
getting enough sleep. People  
with insomnia are 17x as  
likely to have diagnosed  
anxiety.

In 2020

9.2%  
Kids had been diagnosed  
With an anxiety disorder  
That's ~ 5.6 million kids

Adolescent anxiety symptoms doubled during the height of the pandemic. In a survey of U.S. high school students conducted two years after the onset of COVID-19.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36178930/>



# ***Anxiety in Childhood & Adolescence***

- Anxiety is a normal part of childhood. Most children go through phases of anxiety.
- Separation anxiety is a typical (and expected) part of the developmental process in children.
- Puberty, hormonal changes, and social adjustments through “tweenage” years provides a lot of change for kids.
- These phases are generally temporary.
- Anxiety and ADHD.

# ***Risk Factors for Anxiety***

Gender – Females greater likelihood

At age 6, twice as likely to have experienced anxiety disorder than boys

Temperament – Poor emotional regulation

Negative emotional responses more frequent & intense

Parents – Anxiety disorders in parents increase risk in kids

Parent symptoms can impact relationship with child

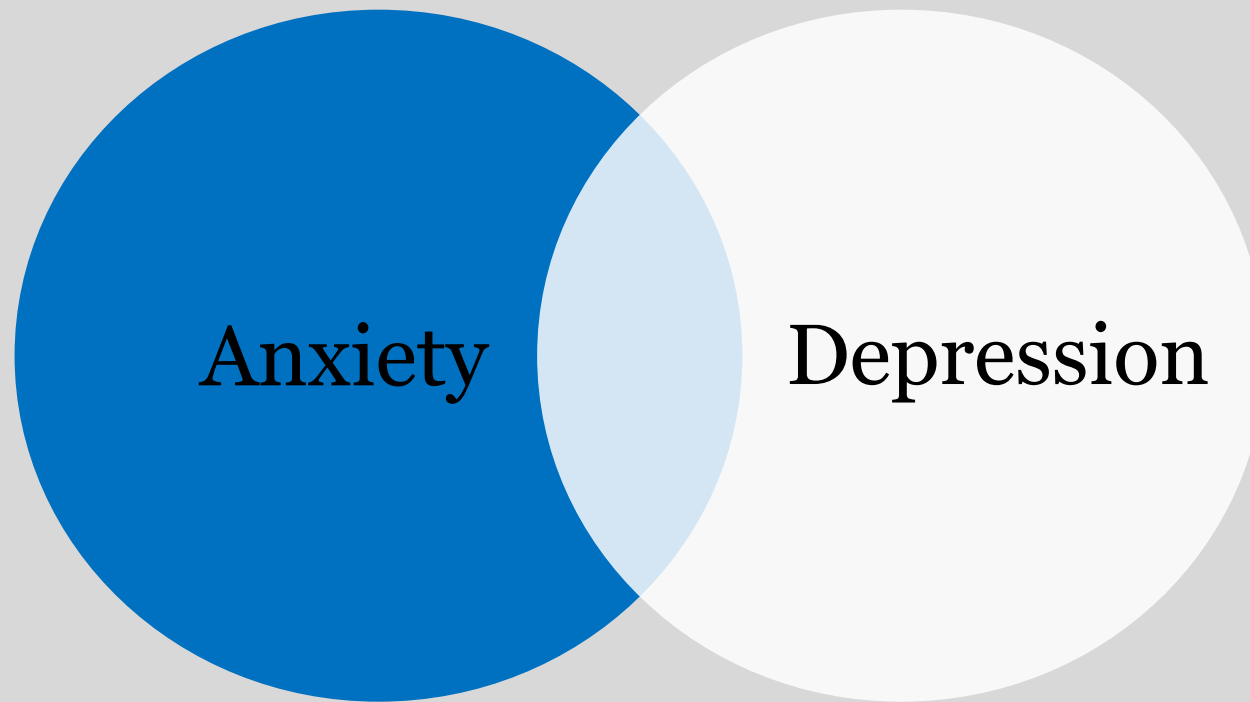
Life Experience/Adversities/Trauma

Parental loss, abuse or neglect, victim of bullying



# ***How Does Anxiety Present in Adolescents***

- Fidgeting
- Nervousness
- Shortened Attention Span
- Inability to Focus
- Irritability
- Withdrawal or Isolation
- Decreased Interest in Hobbies
- Verbally Acting Out
- Fear of Missing Out
- Lack of Motivation
- Increased Truancy, Decreased Grades
- Change in Sleep and/or Appetite
- Inappropriate or Exaggerated
- Emotional Response
- Self-Harm Behaviors



Anxiety & depression are often co-occurring conditions.  
About half of those diagnosed with depression are also  
diagnosed with an anxiety disorder.

# ***The Good News & Bad News***

The Good: Anxiety & Depression are treatable with excellent recovery rates.

The Bad: An estimated 80% of kids with a diagnosable anxiety disorder and 60 % of kids with diagnosable depression are not getting treatment.



## *Let's Get Practical*

*Children and adolescents benefit more from physical and visual interventions than they will from “talk” based interventions*

# Child Development

Erikson's Stage Theory in its Final Version			
Age	Conflict	Resolution or "Virtue"	Culmination in old age
Infancy (0-1 year)	Basic trust vs. mistrust	Hope	Appreciation of interdependence and relatedness
Early childhood (1-3 years)	Autonomy vs. shame	Will	Acceptance of the cycle of life, from integration to disintegration
Play age (3-6 years)	Initiative vs. guilt	Purpose	Humor; empathy; resilience
School age (6-12 years)	Industry vs. inferiority	Competence	Humility; acceptance of the course of one's life and unfulfilled hopes
Adolescence (12-19 years)	Identity vs. Confusion	Fidelity	Sense of complexity of life; merging of sensory, logical and aesthetic perception
Early adulthood (20-25 years)	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Love	Sense of the complexity of relationships; value of tenderness and loving freely
Adulthood (26-64 years)	Generativity vs. stagnation	Care	Caritas, caring for others, and agape, empathy and concern
Old age (65-death)	Integrity vs. Despair	Wisdom	Existential identity; a sense of integrity strong enough to withstand physical disintegration

## Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development

Stage	Psychosocial Crisis/Task	What Happens at This Stage?
1	Trust vs Mistrust	If needs are dependably met, infants develop a sense of basic trust.
2	Autonomy vs Shame/Doubt	Toddlers learn to exercise will and do things for themselves, or they doubt their abilities.
3	Initiative vs Guilt	Preschoolers learn to initiate tasks and carry out plans, or they feel guilty about efforts to be independent.
4	Industry vs Inferiority	Children learn the pleasure of applying themselves to tasks, or they feel inferior.
5	Identity vs Confusion	Teenagers work at refining a sense of self by testing roles and then integrating them to form a single identity, or they become confused about who they are.
6	Intimacy vs Isolation	Young adults struggle to form close relationships and to gain the capacity for intimate love, or they feel socially isolated.
7	Generativity vs Stagnation	The middle-aged discover a sense of contributing to the world, usually through family and work, or they may feel a lack of purpose.
8	Integrity vs Despair	When reflecting on his or her life, the older adult may feel a sense of satisfaction or failure.

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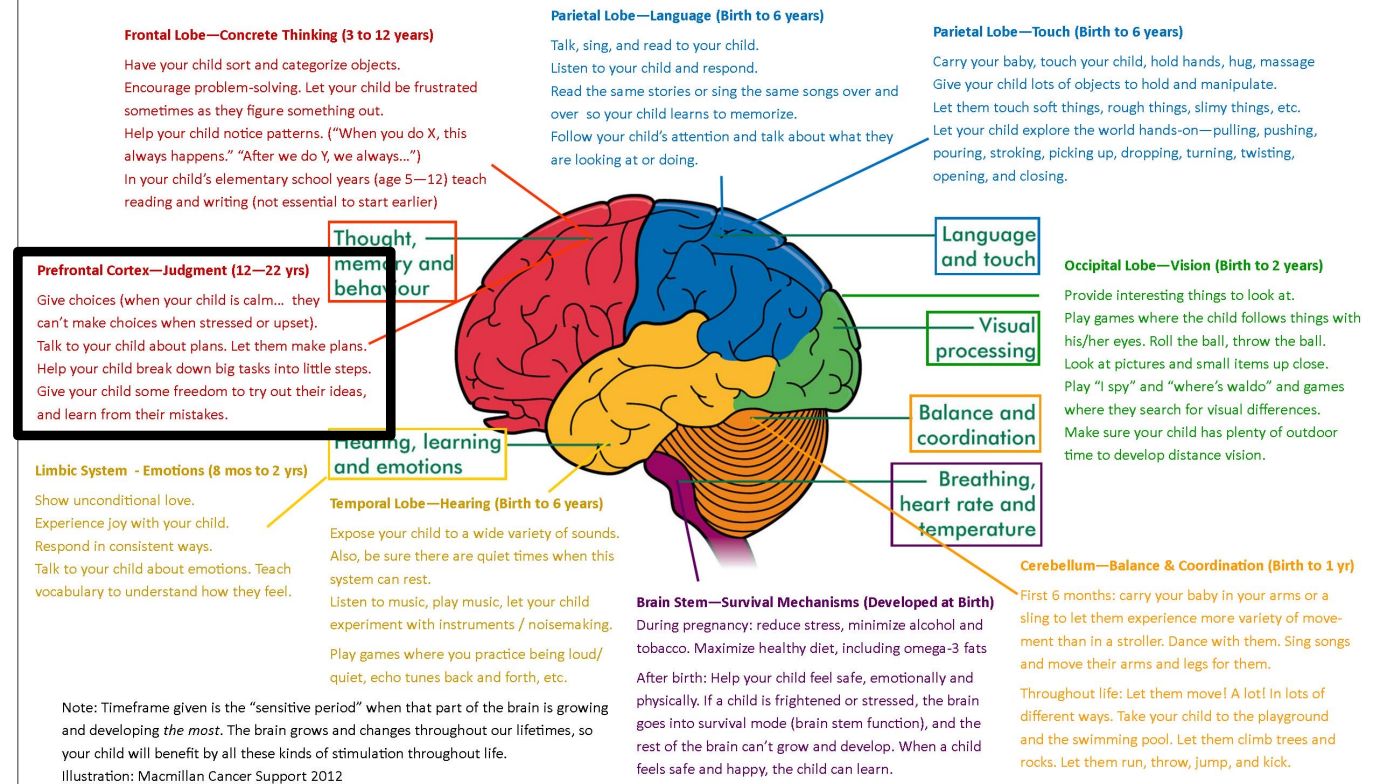
# Anxiety: Reframing, Grounding, & Mindfulness

## Things to Remember

- Underdeveloped prefrontal cortex
  - Last portion of the brain to fully develop, around age 25
  - Most associated with impulse control/decision-making
- Understand the influenceability of today's youth
  - More easily influenced due to increased access to "influencers"
  - More likely to side with something they hear than do research themselves on given topic/idea/belief
- COVID-19
  - This pandemic has completely uprooted any sense of "normalcy" in these kids lives

## Brain Development—How you can help.

Important!! Remember to balance stimulation with rest and quiet time to process it all!



# Anxiety: Reframing, Grounding, & Mindfulness

## What can I do?

- **Be empathetic & understanding**
  - Being a kid in today's world is so hard
  - Kids don't need answers they need to feel heard and supported
- **Encourage conversations with healthy supports**
  - Internalizing these thoughts can be very damaging – especially for kids
  - Create environment where opposing thoughts/beliefs can be shared and heard – not debate style
- **Discuss that positive and negative role that technology takes on during this time**
  - Having so much information at your fingertips allows one to be very well-informed
  - Seeing tweets/posts filled with inaccurate opinions rather than facts
  - When we were kids, you had to watch the news or read the newspaper to receive this info.
- **Refer to a more appropriate level-of-care if needed**
  - No need to wait until a student is in crisis to suggest an intervention/offer mental health resources



# ***Coping Skills***

## **Coping Skills**

- Conscious, direct approach to problems.
- Serve to regulate physiological responses/emotions back to a level at which one can function properly.
- More effectively used in the Preparation, Action, and Maintenance stages of change.

## **Distraction Skills**

- Defense Mechanism.
- Serve to “get my mind off of a situation” or distance self from situation.
- Typically, more effectively utilized during the Pre-Contemplation and Contemplation stages of change.

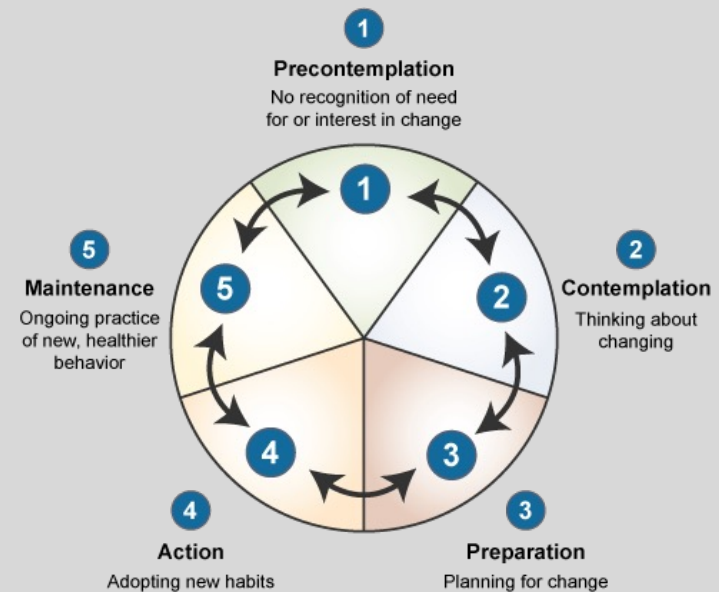


## ***Age-Appropriate Interventions***

- Promoting Self-Awareness (Precontemplation & Contemplation Stages)
- Coping Skills
  - Reframing
  - Grounding
  - Mindfulness

# Identifying Stage of Change

- Identifying the stage of change will help decide what type of intervention will be the most appropriate and beneficial for the adolescent.
- This also allows the adolescent to see and become familiar with their current mental state as it relates to change.



# ***Stages of Change***

- Precontemplation - lack of awareness that life can be improved by a change in behavior.
- Contemplation - recognition of the problem, initial consideration of behavior change, and information gathering about possible solutions and actions.
- Preparation - introspection about the decision, reaffirmation of the need and desire to change behavior, and completion of final pre-action steps.
- Action - implementation of the practices needed for successful behavior change (e.g. exercise class attendance).
- Maintenance - consolidation of the behaviors initiated during the action stage.

# ***Promoting Self-Awareness***

- Golden Rule of Therapy is “know thyself”.
- This can be relatively surface level questioning.
- Trying to help identify triggers and stressors that tend to precipitate anxiety and/or other emotional responses.
- Trying to identify warning signs or other patterns that tend to be repetitive.
- Helping to brain-storm why things are the way they are, or problem solving.

# ***5 Direct Physiological Responses to Anxiety***

- Tempered breathing
- Increased blood pressure
- Increased heart rate
- Increased body temperature
- Racing thoughts

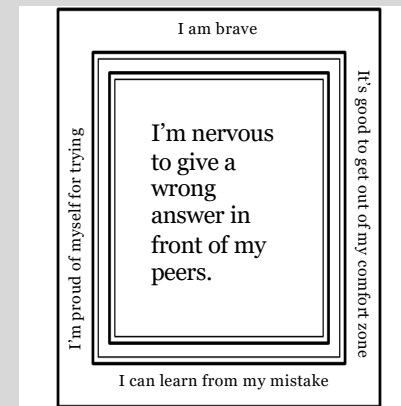
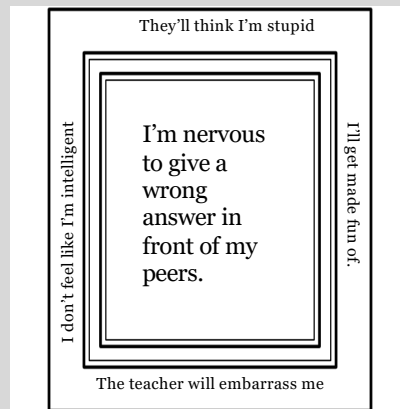
# ***Threat System (Fight or Flight)***

- Thoughts racing helps us to evaluate threat quickly & make rapid decisions, hard to focus on anything but the feeling of danger
- Changes to vision – tunnel vision
- Heart beats faster – feeds more blood to muscles & enhances to fight or run away
- Hands get cold – blood vessels contract to force food to major muscle groups
- Muscles tense – ready to fight or run away they may also shake or tremble
- Dizzy or lightheaded
- Breathing becomes quicker and shallower to take in more oxygen and make our body ore able to fight or run away
- Adrenal glands release adrenaline (adrenaline signals other organs to get ready)
- Bladder urgency muscles in the bladder relax I response to stress
- Palms become sweaty the body sweats to keep cool this makes it a more efficient machine

*<http://psychology.tools>*

# Reframing

- Reframing – A process of reconceptualizing a problem by seeing it from a different perspective. Altering the conceptual or emotional context of a problem often serves to alter perceptions of the problem’s difficulty and to open-up possibilities for solving it.



# ***Grounding Techniques***

- **Body Awareness – technique brings to the here-and-now by directing focus to sensations of the body.**
  - Take 5 long, deep breaths through your nose, and exhale through puckered lips.
  - Place both feet on the floor. Wiggle your toes. Curl and uncurl your toes several times. Spend a moment noticing the sensations in your feet.
  - Clench your hands into fists, then release the tension. Repeat 10 times.
  - Press your palms together. Press them harder and hold this pose for 15 seconds. Pay attention to the feeling of tension in your hands and arms.
  - Rub your palms together briskly. Notice the sound and the feeling of warmth.
  - Reach your hands over your head like you're trying to reach for the sky. Stretch like this for 5 seconds. Bring your arms down and let them relax at your sides.
  - Take 5 more deep breaths and notice the calm in your body.



# ***Grounding Techniques***

- Mental Exercise - Takes mind off uncomfortable thoughts and feelings, are discreet and easy to use at nearly any time and place.
- Name all the objects you see.
- Describe the steps in performing an activity you know how to do well. For example, how to play a sport, prepare your favorite meal, or tie a knot.
- Count backwards from 100 by 7.
- Pick up an object and describe in detail. Describe its color, texture, size, weight, scent, and any other qualities you notice.
- Spell your full name, and the names of three other people backwards.
- Name all your family members, their ages, and one of their favorite activities.
- Read something backwards, letter-by-letter. Practice for at least a few minutes.
- Think of an object and "draw" it in your mind, or in the air with your finger. Try drawing your home , a vehicle, or an animal.

# ***Mindfulness Interventions***

- Mindfulness: "Means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally." - Jon Kabat Zin
- Becoming aware of what is happening as it is, again and again and again.
- Journaling – make a list of all the things that you are grateful for in your life (life lessons, overcoming obstacles, important people in your life, etc.).
- Mindfulness Walk – take a walk through your neighborhood, or just sit outside and look around and name what all you are grateful for around you (nature, fresh air, a place to live, animals, other people, etc.).
- Involves checking in with yourself to see what your mind, body, and spirit need to cope or maintain positive well-being.



## ***Sleep Hygiene***

- Poor sleep has detrimental effects on the human brain, and in turn, our ability to regulate emotions.
- When we go without sleep, or have continuous disrupted sleep, we are making it more likely that our amygdala will be reactive and cause anxiety or other emotional reactions, such as anger or irritability.
- To calm anxiety, we need to resist influences that interfere with sleep.

# ***Techniques to Improve Sleep Hygiene***

- Create a pre-bedtime routine to follow each night.
- Eliminate light stimulation for at least one hour before bed.
- Exercise during the day.
- Avoid napping.
- Establish consistent sleep and wake times.
- Near bedtime, replace activating thoughts with relaxing ones.
- Ensure you're sleeping in a conducive environment.
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, spicy food in late afternoon and evening.
- Use relaxing breathing techniques before bed.
- Use your bed primarily for sleep.
- Avoid using sleep aids.
- Don't use back-lit electronics 60 minutes prior to bed, as the artificial light prevents hormones and neurons that promote sleep.



**CONNECTIONS**  
WELLNESS GROUP

*“CONNECTING YOU BACK  
TO WHAT  
MATTERS MOST.”*

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