

Anxiety in children

You are listening to the beautiful music of the album *aubades*, by Jean-Michel Blais...
The webinar will start at 7:00!

March 2022
By Nadia Gagnier, Ph.D.
Western Quebec School Board

Thank you!

- Thanks to all the people involved in the organisation of this conference!
- We are caring for the wellbeing of students and their parents...
- Any action that gives the feeling that we are a member of a community can make a big difference during these hard times!



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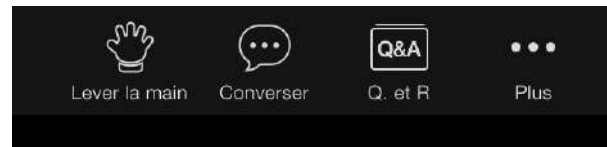
Technical details

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Your conference...

- We are in « webinar » mode...
 - I can't see you and I can't hear you!
- You can communicate with me with the tools that you can see on the margins of your window:
 - Raise your hand
 - Chat
 - Q. & A. (only I can see the questions, and they can be anonymous)
- Question period at the end



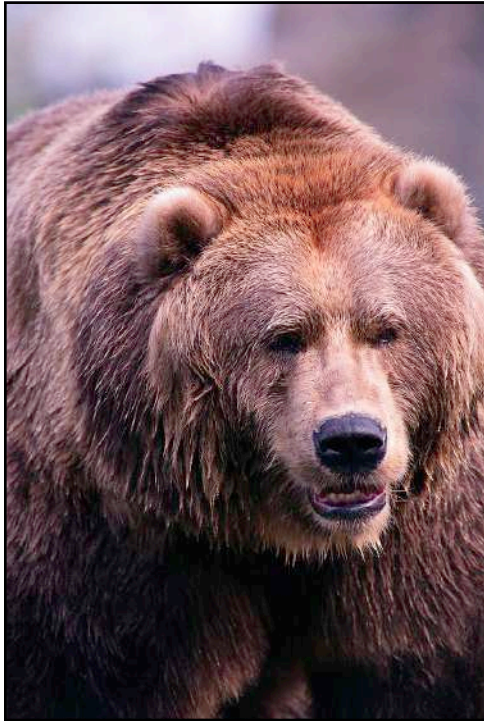
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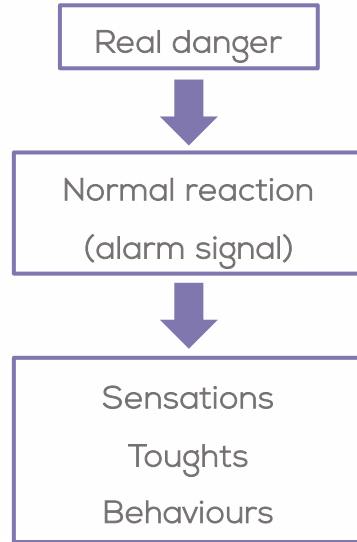
What is anxiety ?

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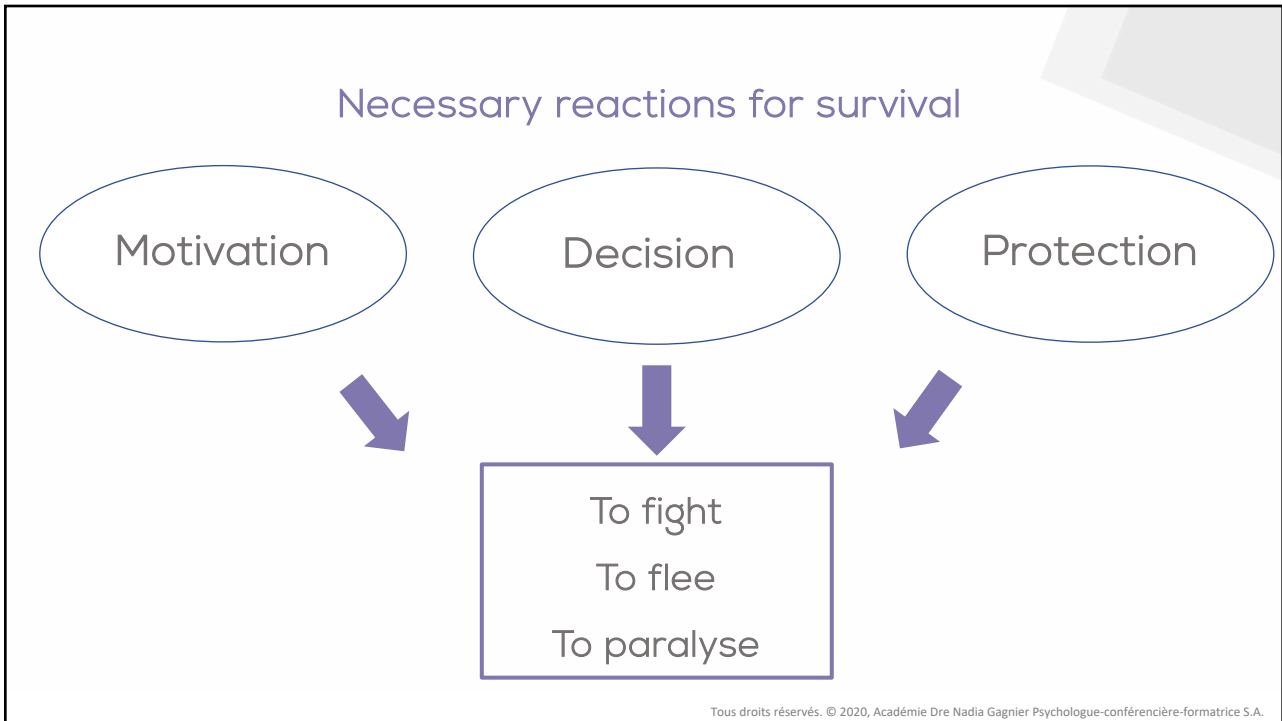


Anxiety is a useful emotion!!



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Anxiety becomes a problem when the fears are...

- Excessive
- Exaggerated
- Paralyzing
- Negative impact on daily functioning

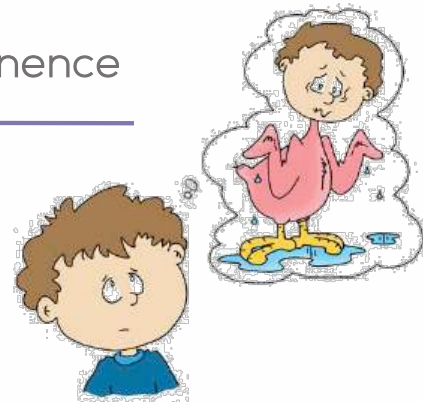
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The equation of the anxious response

Consequences x Probability x Imminence

Self-efficacy



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Statistics

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Anxiety disorders are on the rise...



- 16 to 29% of population
- Early onset
 - Median age of onset is 11 y-o
 - Symptoms can appear as early as 6-8 y-o
 - Anxiety disorders are the most frequent among youngsters (up to 1/3, according to the most alarming studies)
- Treatment used to come late in life
 - Internalizing disorder, less obvious (inhibited temperament)
 - More anxiety provoking situations at the end of adolescence (career, leaving parents, responsibility)

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They can have serious consequences!



- Physical discomfort, somatic complaints
- Social isolation
- Depression/suicide
- Alcohol / drugs
- School or occupational absenteeism
- Increased mental load, concentration and memory problems, procrastination...
 - ...impact on school achievement
- Dropping out of school

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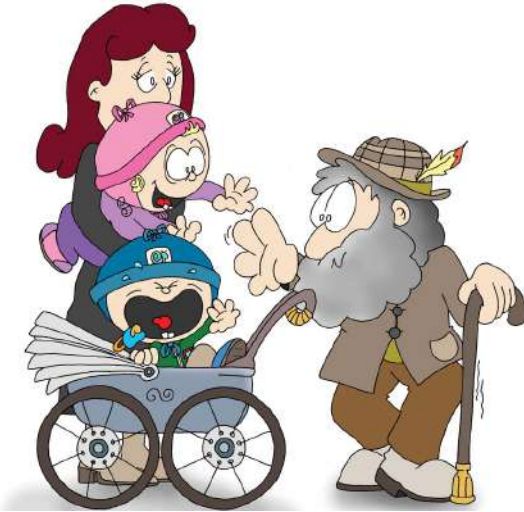
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What are the risk factors?

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Genetics ?



- Family history
 - 40% prevalence
- Inhibited temperament:
 - Withdraws in front of novelty or change
 - Negative affect
 - Adapts more slowly
 - More calm, less active

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Life events (stress)...

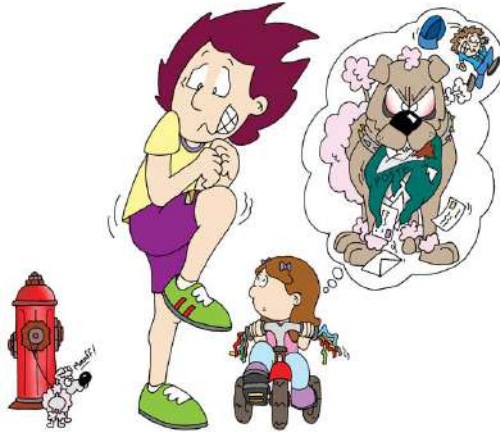


- Traumas
 - Being a victim or a witness
- Stress accumulation
 - Ex.: separation, moving, step parents...

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Parental attitudes...



- Overprotection
- Doing tasks FOR the child
- Neglect
- Social learning

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The best strategy
according to anxious
people...

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Avoidance!

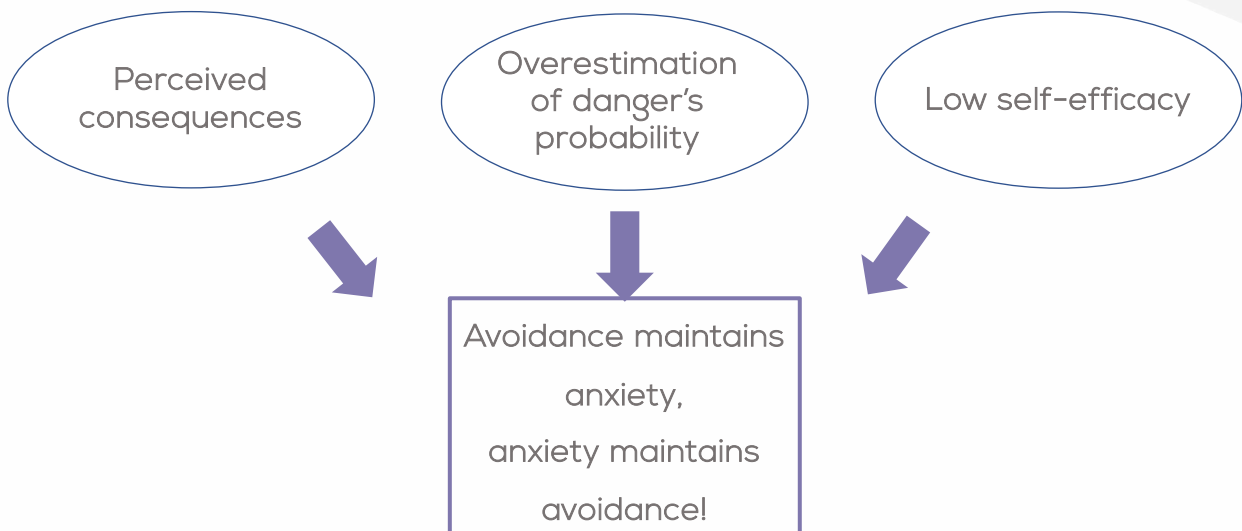
- When it's a real danger...
 - Avoiding or fleeing are excellent strategies
- When it's a false danger...
 - Avoidance is a trap!



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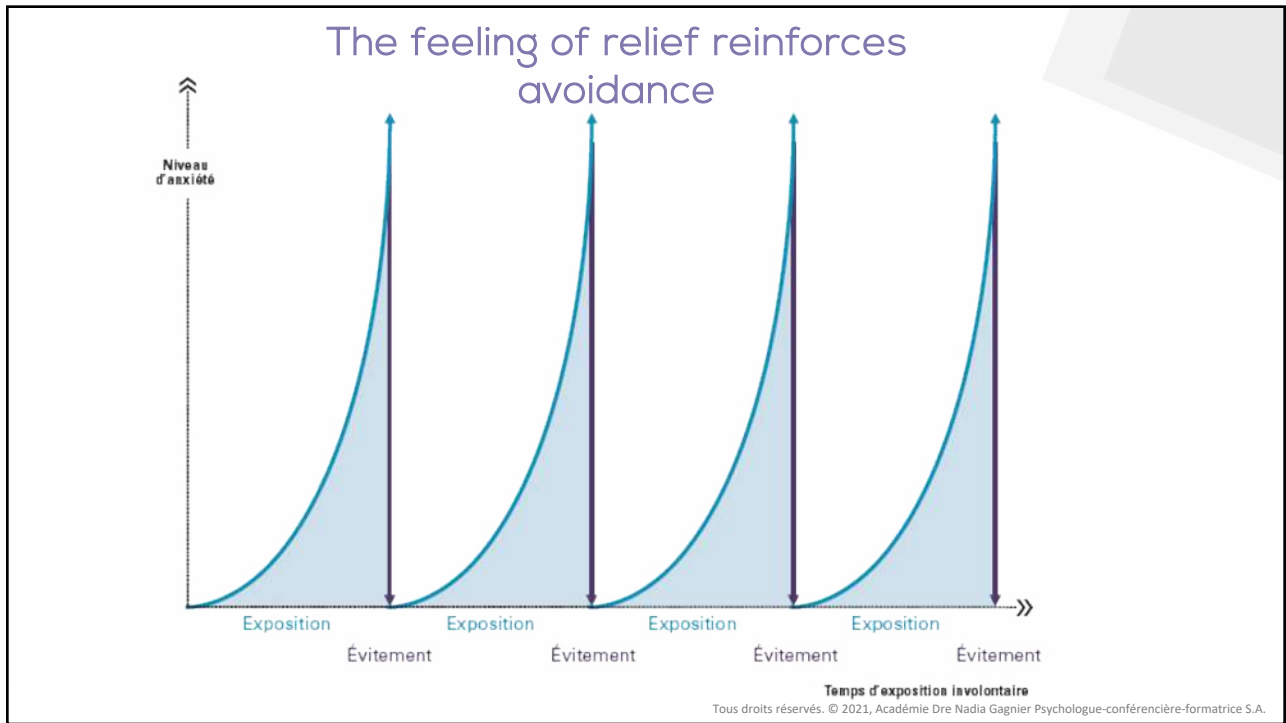
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Avoidance maintains

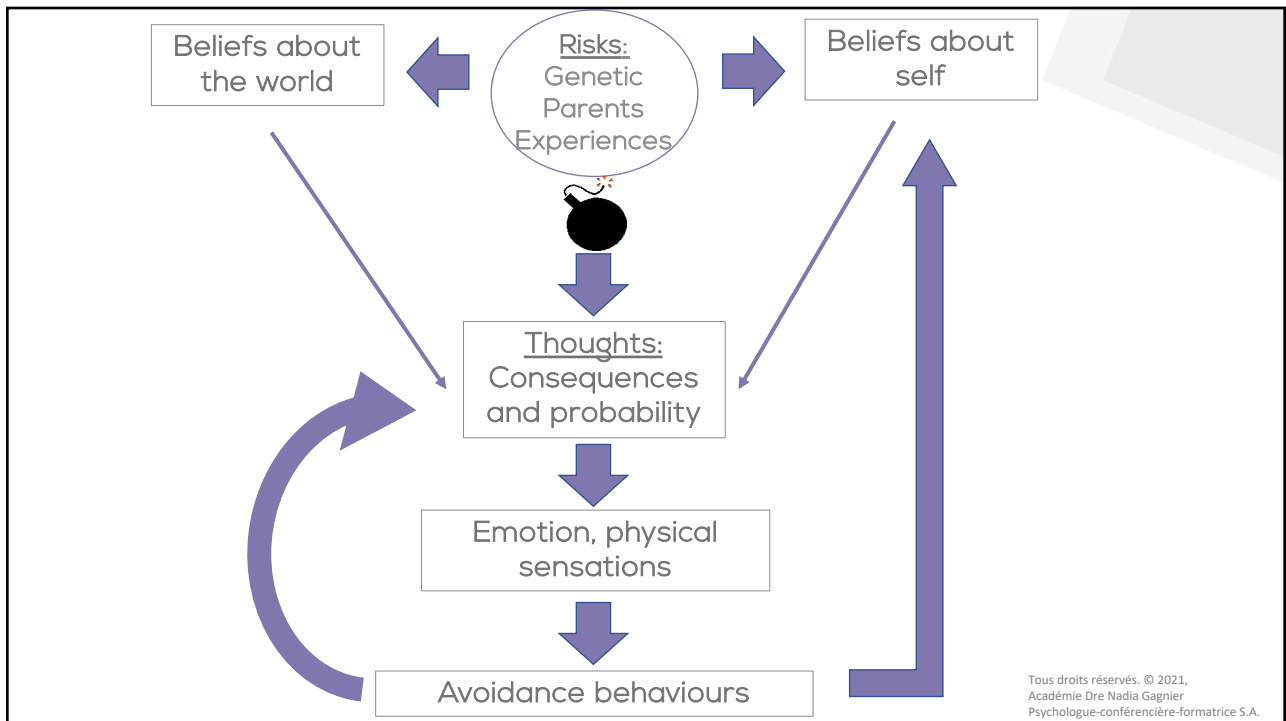


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When should we do something?

When a child is at risk:

- Inhibited temperament
- Anxious parent (social learning, overprotection)
- Stressful events

When a child shows warning signs:

- Non stop, excessive reassurance seeking
- Avoidance behaviours
- Refusal (school, routines)
- Verbalizes fears, worries... anticipates
- Somatic complaints (stomach ache, headache, nausea)
- Gest angry when plans are not respected (rigidity, needs to feel in control)



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Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT)

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CBT

Working on thoughts

- To identify automatic thoughts
- To question automatic thoughts
 - So what!
 - Am I exaggerating?
 - Are there safety elements around me?

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CBT

Working on behaviours

- Stop avoiding
- Facing or confronting fears

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Beware of myths!

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Many people have heard of the principle of exposure therapy...

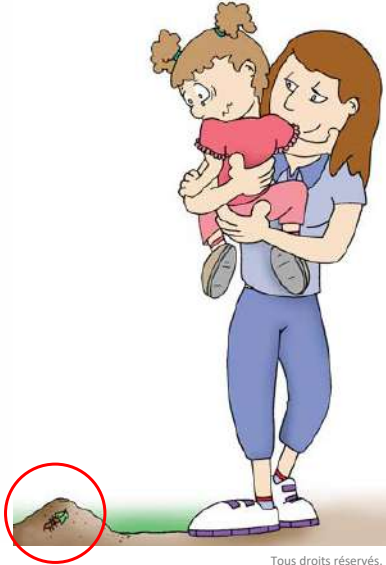
To face your fears...

But there is a ground middle between...

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Allowing to avoid...



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... and forcing to confront!

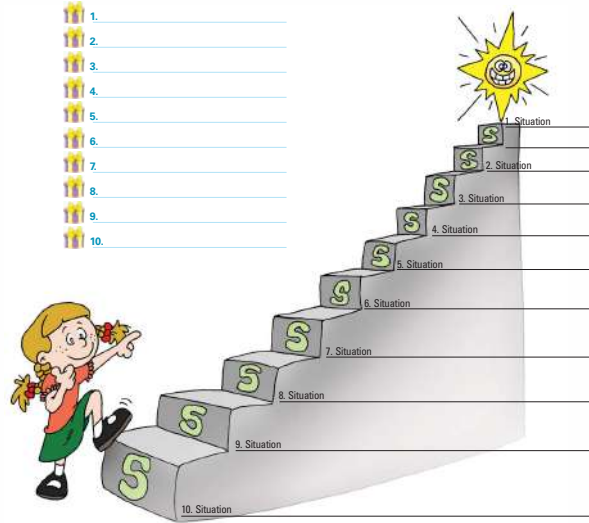


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Exposure must be gradual!

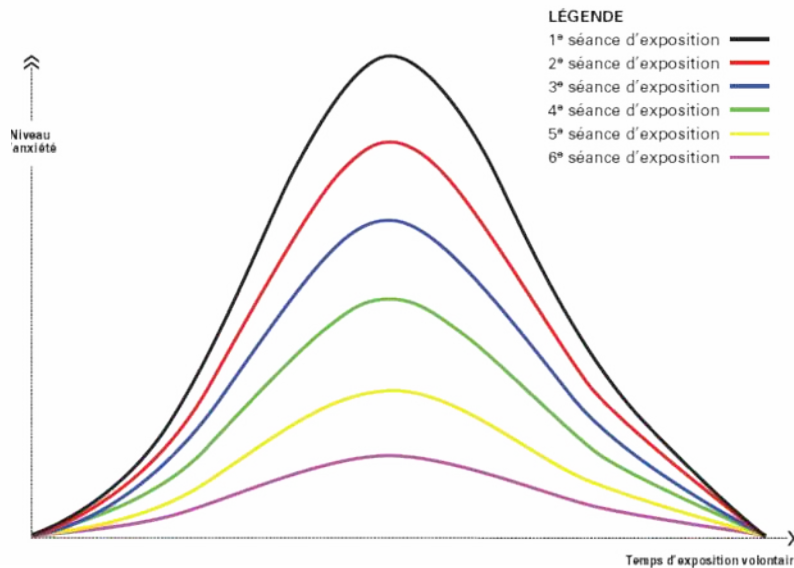
- Allows to tame fears
- Allows to adjust the perception of danger
- Allows to develop self-efficacy



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The effect of exposure



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Conclusion



- Everybody feels anxious!
- It can be treated (CBT)
- Childhood fears are normal
- Be positive!

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Thanks for your
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