

Treatment Approaches for Anxiety Disorders

Systematic Desensitization

- Increasingly greater anxiety-provoking scenes are visualized by the child while engaging in relaxation techniques
- “In vivo” desensitization involves actual exposure to the feared situation or object while the child engages in relaxation techniques

Modeling

- Most successful treatment involves modeling of appropriate behavior while child is also participating in the event
- Child is reinforced for appropriate responses

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Contingency Management

- Positive consequences are provided following exposure to the feared stimulus

Cognitive-Behavioral Treatments

- Alters thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions of anxious children
- Self-talk messages before, during, and after exposure to feared stimulus

Progressive Relaxation and Guided Imagery

- Progressively relax the body starting from the feet and ending at the head
- Create pictures of calming scenes

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Medication

- Serotonin inhibitors (SRI's or SSRI's)
- Clomipramine (and SRI) is the most extensively studied medication for treatment of anxiety disorders
- Most effective use of medications occurs in children diagnosed with OCD