Nervous System Calming Techniques for Anxious Children That Actually Work Transcript

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Why Reassurance Backfires

When a child is anxious, most adults try to calm them with logic. Don't worry. It's not a big deal. You'll be fine. But here's the problem. Anxiety doesn't start in the thinking brain.

And here's the part where everybody's missing because until that nervous system settles, reassurance rarely works. And in fact, it often is fuel for the fire because you get caught in a reassure cycle, which then can lead to obsessive compulsive disorder or OCD.

I see that happening a lot and I this in such a world where we are so stressed out and everybody is walking around with a full stress cup. So, reassurance is not what we want to do, nor is rescuing.

Let's dive into what do we do with our anxious kids, whether it shows up as emotional dysregulation or anger. There are things we can do to support our kids.

When you are thinking about your kid, I want you to really picture them in a stressful moment. Where do they break down? Where does their stress show up?

You might say to me, hey, Dr. Rowe, it's showing up everywhere, right? But maybe it is before a test or a quiz or going to sports practice or the game or actually just physically getting into school.

And they start asking, what if I mess up, What if no one talks to me? What If I do badly? Just being lovely people, trying to do better than our parents, this is what we do.

Parents often feel that pressure to give the exact perfect answer and to provide some relief for them. This is the relief trap people. The reassurance trap.

Calming the Nervous System First

But anxious kids don't need the perfect to answer. They need help regulating their body first because they're feeling it in their and then out pours all of these things out of their mouth, which may feel logical to you.

And that's how you get caught in the trap. It's not easy. So before you calm the thoughts, you have to calm, the nervous system. That is how we turn anxiety and fear around.

So let's talk about five ways to help an anxious nervous system settle. And please know, because so many of you watch me on YouTube and listen to the show, these are the same for adults as they are for kids.

These things work. I know many you bought my dysregulated kid. This is what I talk in The Dysregulate Kid. It is literally the parenting playbook. So, and it's written for, there's a part for adult, a park for kid, I'm talking about really amazing things that are accessible to everybody, that is easy to do, and I literally walk you through it step by step.

And when you pre-buy the book, not only do you get pre buy bonuses that you can start using right away, you'll get into My Disregulated Kid live, where I live walk through and coach you.

which I will no longer be working direct with people when this book comes out in September. So it's a way to get help directly from me. And to make sure the reason why I'm doing this is to be sure that you do it.

I am not going to send my mother the Philomena after you from above. You don't want to mess with her. So, okay,

so let's start with the things that really can help.

So we have to start the body. The fastest way to calm anxiety is often through physical regulation and encouraging movement. Whether it's jumping or stretching, you all know I love my Tai Chi.

It's a super nervous system regulator, cortisol regulator and then has all this bonus of helping you to tighten your muscles. It is awesome. But you could go outside and walk outside.

This is what nature does for you. Movement helps burn off stress. Hormones like adrenaline and cortisol are going to lower with gentle movement. This is not you running a marathon and scaling walls.

We can't meet adrenaline with more adrenaline. So movement, so let's talk about the next thing that really works for everybody and is easy and free. It's called slowing your breath.

And I can can think of a kid who wouldn't do breathing with me in some way, shape or form.

Movement and Breath Work

And that could be bubbles, that can be putting a teddy bear stuffed animal on a belly and having it go up and down. It could a teenager. There was a way that I could find them to do it.

What I do find is that people would breathe wrong. I know a lot of my advanced readers from my book told me they didn't know they were breathing wrong, and that you have to breathe into your belly and fill it up.

And most people are breathing into their chest, which is actually going to increase your anxiety. Kids are so open to learning, even when you think your teenager's not, breath work really is the quickest way to calm things down.

Breath work is directly affecting that nervous system through the vagus nerve. So just try simple things. Inhale slowly through the nose, exhale even more slowly though the mouth.

Now, depending on your kid's age, like when they were little, I just had them breathe in and then just hold it for a second and breathe long out. Let's, let's see how long you can breathe out.

But I love a four, seven, eight breath. That is for me, like it just brings you down into a parasympathetic state, but that longer exhale signals safety to the brain.

And that's why breath work is so powerful. It's easy and you want to use it like. Brushing your teeth proactively, we avoid cavities by brushing our teeth.

We're going to use breath work at least three rounds, three times a day. I do it a lot more than that to avoid nervous system activation. Okay? You can do.

It I set it on my phone when I get lazy. And yes, I'm still using PMF. Yes, you're working on your sleep and diet. You know I am doing Tai Chi four to seven times in little increments.

This is a job, this is something that, but you feel great. And I want you to know, I had the most important meeting of my life the other day and the tech failed and I didn't even break into a sweat.

Somebody said, and this, is what calm looks like in real life. Yes it does, my friend Trina. Yes, it does, because she said it. And it is true. I didn't even go into an alert mode.

I had done my breath work right before the call. I have to be honest, I don't get nervous at these kinds of things. But I joke and I share these things because this is real world and our kids feel a lot and breath is just so freaking powerful.

But it only works when we do it a while and it becomes easier. It's always going to work even in your highest stress point. but you may be too stressed to feel like you can use it.

The more you do it, then the quicker you go into a parasympathetic state when you start using it.

Sensory Input and Predictability

" I'm sure I was doing breathing when I in this thing and I had a tech failure, but I didn't even break a sweat because I went right into parasympathy state.

Okay, number three, let's talk about using sensory input. So many anxious kids regulate through sensory inputs. What are some things? Depressor hugs? weighted blankets, warm showers or warm bath.

I'm gonna be taking a nice warm back tonight. Quiet, dim spaces, low lights. These signals tell the nervous system it's safe to relax. You don't have to be searching for the bad thing and the thing that's gonna go wrong.

It's that powerful. Okay, number four, we're gonna reduce uncertainty. Anxiety thrives on lack of predictability. This is a slippery slope. My reassuring parents, my rescuers, love you all.

I see you, I know you. We've all been there. Stop reassering and rescuing. But we want to make sure we have structure without being compulsive about it.

And simple ways to support could be visual schedules, clear routines, previewing what's going to happen next. Like last night, my Virgo Giancarlo, again, he's not an anxious kid.

He's a Virco. You've got to have things organized. But he would get anxious if I didn't tell him, don't forget, you got PT at 1030 tomorrow morning. Because we've been off routine for robotics because they've had to go seven days a week.

And they still didn't make it, but they were a great team. So we had get back into routine. When the brain knows what to expect, stress is going to decrease.

But if you over schedule, if give too much reassurance about the schedule you'll actually backfire. So get that schedule up, give a reminder. If they keep asking questions, you're going to say, do you remember what I told you last time?

So again, we dive all into this and the dysregulated kid. I have a whole section on accommodating because it's one of the most common things and parents, they don't know.

And I'm going tell you, I'll share all the therapist things. that I've been doing and they're in this book now. So we talked about the importance of having simple schedules, routines, things like that, just to keep the predictability, but just being careful to not over reassure.

Okay. Number five technique, co-regulation. It is the most powerful thing in your toolkit. it really, really really is. Because you know when you're not regulated, you how it works.

So when we regulate, it's that calm adult nervous system. Your kid can borrow calm from the people around them. This is the teacher, this is a grandparent.

That's why sometimes you freak out when the non-calm grand parent is coming over. Because you know, so slower voices, gentle tone, calm presence, these are all signals to the nervous system to settle and really, really get back on track and everything you're showing with your body.

automatically get sent to your child. And it is that powerful. If you feel like you're not regulated, that's what the love pause is about and taking three seconds and pausing.

Co-Regulation and Building Resilience

Remember, you are not going to rescue your children. It really is okay to say to you kid, I'm having a hard time right now. I've got to go over here. This is just about me.

You hear me talk to my kids about this all the time with my kid. Mommy's hormones are having a hard time today. Mommy didn't sleep. So I got to do some breath work and some yoga.

And my kids, it's just like part of what it is. They will say to me, like, I think you need to some Tai Chi, mom. We joke in our house, but they do know it makes a huge difference.

It really does. I can't say these things enough. You know that I never just tell you to I do them and if I haven't done them, that means dozens, hundreds, thousands of my clients have and they are beneficial.

And guess what? They're all grounded in science. We're only talking about science, talking with the nervous system, what works, but regulates and really putting that nervous This isn't about just calming anxiety in the moment.

These things all help our kids over time really get that nervous system regulated, really creating capacity, room in their stress cup so that they can manage things that when tough things happen, they have a love relationship breakup or a friendship issue or the grade they didn't get or they don't make the team.

All the real world stuff that happens. They then can go back into their own resources without over relying on you, without falling apart. And that's what good mental health is about.

It's built in moments of regulation and learning from moments and dysregulation. You cannot go through life in bubble wrap. That is not realistic, and it means it's going to 100% guarantee your kid's gonna have a mental health problem because nobody goes through life unscathed.

It doesn't matter what kind of affluence you have or access to whatever. Just, it is realistic. So it builds emotional resilience. That's what we're talking about for kids.

Resilience. For them, the people, hopefully that they are influencing their kids and all the generations, but really helping them to feel good about themselves for now.

And anxiety doesn't mean a kid is fragile. It means that their nervous system is trying to protect them. And when we help that nervous system settle, regulate, whatever word you want to use, we give the brain space, that capacity to think, learn, grow.

That is huge. If you wanna learn more about this, you need some immediate tools about the nervous Because it's going to talk to you all about how to get out of this cycle.

How to build emotional resilience. The dysregulated kid just goes much deeper into all of these ideas, and it is really just a practical guide. for parents, caregivers, professionals who want to move from overwhelm to regulation in real life.

Not just in theory, this is not a theoretical book. This is the exact playbook to put your nervous system first so you get out of this, whatever dysregulation cycle.

And some of you are dealing with some serious doo-doo. some serious layered mental health issues for yourself, for your kid. And you can't just wish. You can just pray.

you've got to take one step and getting this regulated kid is that one. Step and you get resources immediately. and remember when this goes live, I am going to do live coaching with you for anybody who pre-orders the got a pre-order in the book and that's included free unless you are and then otherwise you're going to have to pay for it.

It's the way it's going work. We need a little we need some preorder. So please if you looking for speaker for your group, you our organization who wants to bring The comms dysregulation protocol to your workforce, because the number one reason your employees take take leave is because of their kids and their kid's mental health and behavioral issues.

If you are a religious organization, you're a school organization and you want to bring this, please just contact us. You can just email me back, drop a message and we'll get a hold of you.

And please everybody, if you have an anxious kid, please know you can break this cycle without medication. You've got to regulate the nervous system.