



Katherine Lutz, LCSW-S

Matt Christian, LCSW

Building Resiliency In Kids

HOW OUR BEST INTENTIONS CAN INTERFERE
WITH DEVELOPMENT AND INCREASE ANXIETY.

Let's talk about...

The cycle that keeps kids anxious and lacking resiliency.

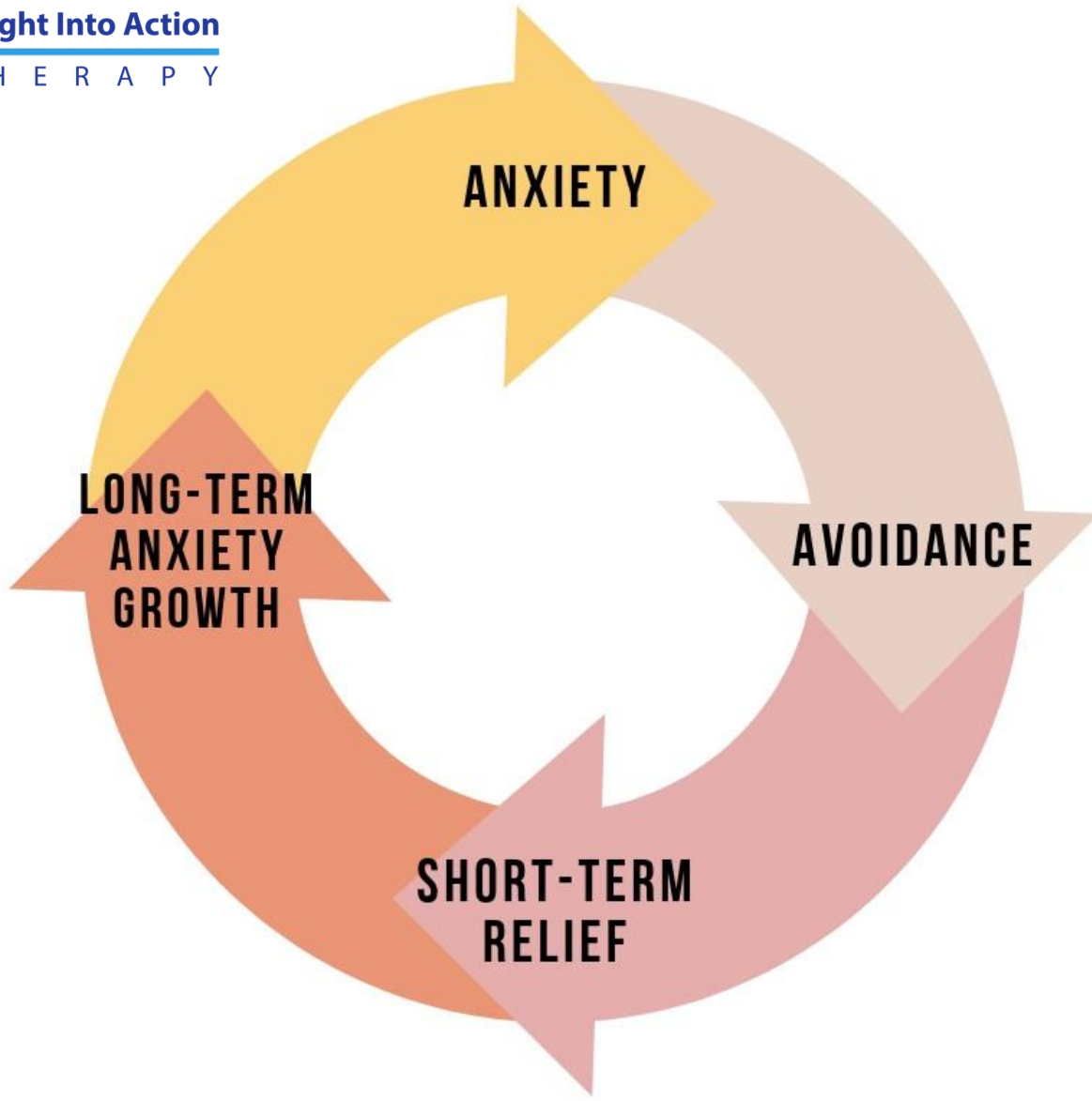
How parents' efforts to help their kids can be reinforcing that cycle.

How to step outside of this cycle and change your family's relationship with anxiety.

Good Anxiety

- ▶ What is your relationship with anxiety?
- ▶ Alarm system: Protection and safety
- ▶ Alarm set off, physiological reaction prepares us to act
- ▶ Dials us in when something is important, risky
- ▶ In order to grow, we must expect to feel anxious





The Avoidance Cycle

When we become
scared of anxiety

The Downstream Effects

Failure to launch

Delays meeting milestones

Increased isolation, lack of confidence, higher risk

Parents and the Anxiety/Avoidance Cycle

If anxiety was a person, what would his or her mission be?

The anxiety is a method for seeking 2 things...

Anxiety is
seeking...

Certainty
&
Comfort

Parents and the Anxiety & Avoidance Cycle

Are we joining in on the worry?

Excessive reassurance – the content trap

Overaccommodating the anxiety

What are we modeling?

**Parents' discomfort in seeing their kid's
discomfort**

Increasing anxiety tolerance: retrain the brain

- ▶ Normalize anxiety – it's predictable
- ▶ Exposure desensitizes our alarm
- ▶ Get comfortable with being uncomfortable – it's worth it
- ▶ Wade into the water - don't throw them into the deep end of the pool
- ▶ Process over outcome



Tips for building resiliency

- ▶ Safety net vs shield parenting – making mistakes is part of the process
- ▶ Scaffold independence – give them opportunities to grow their comfort zone
- ▶ Verbalize to model anxiety management
- ▶ Reflect on success

Play a different game

From “Fixer” to Supportive Coach

- ▶ Excessive Reassurance – Talking someone out of their anxiety?
- ▶ We’re not asking kids to get rid of the worry
- ▶ “EXTERNALIZING” the worry/anxiety
- ▶ Consistent and Calm
- ▶ Acknowledge and empathize with the *feeling* (not engage in the content)



Katherine Lutz, LCSW-S
klutz@insightactiontherapy.com
703-646-7664 ext. 54



Matt Christian, LCSW
mchristian@insightactiontherapy.com
703-646-7664 ext. 14