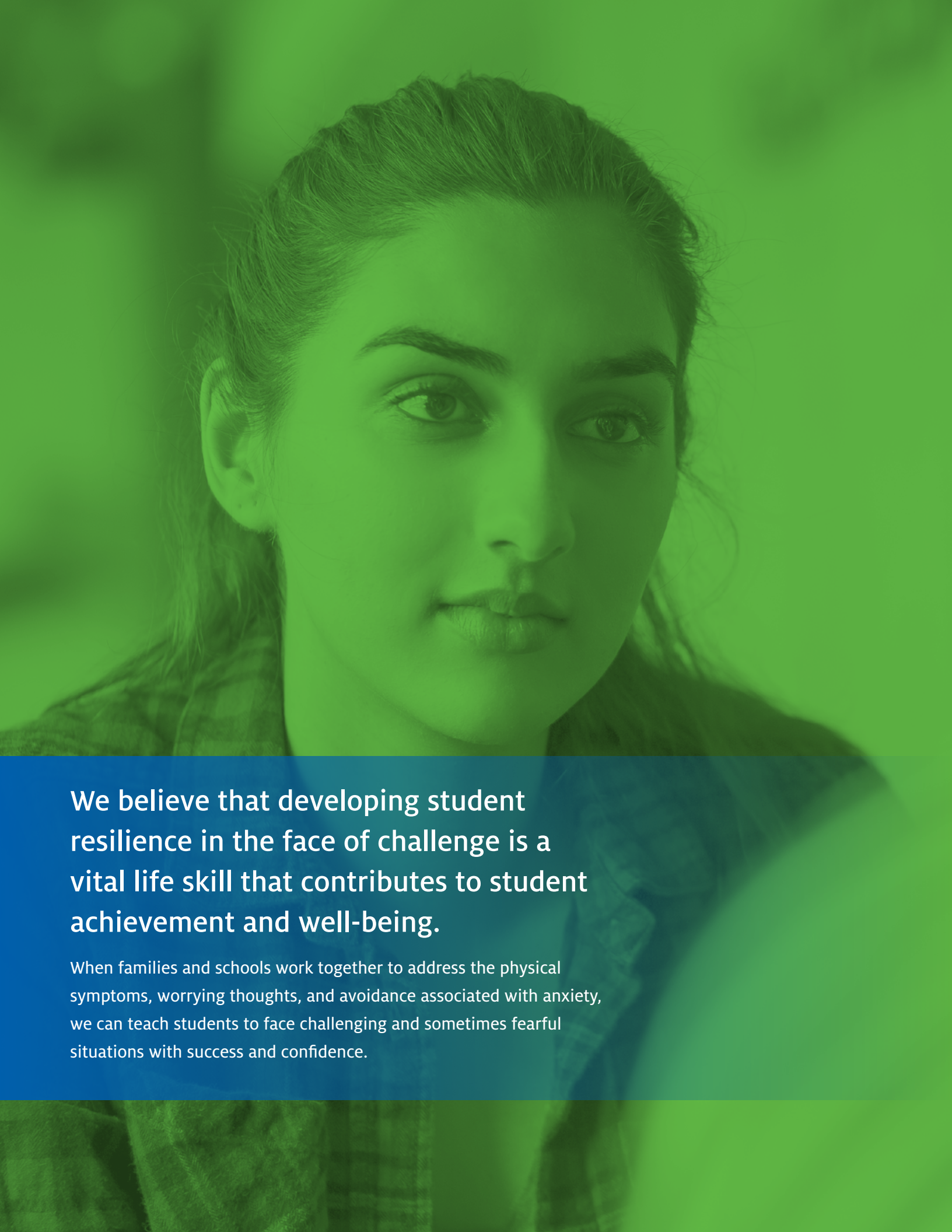




# CAREGIVERS' GUIDE TO ACCESSING SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH ANXIETY



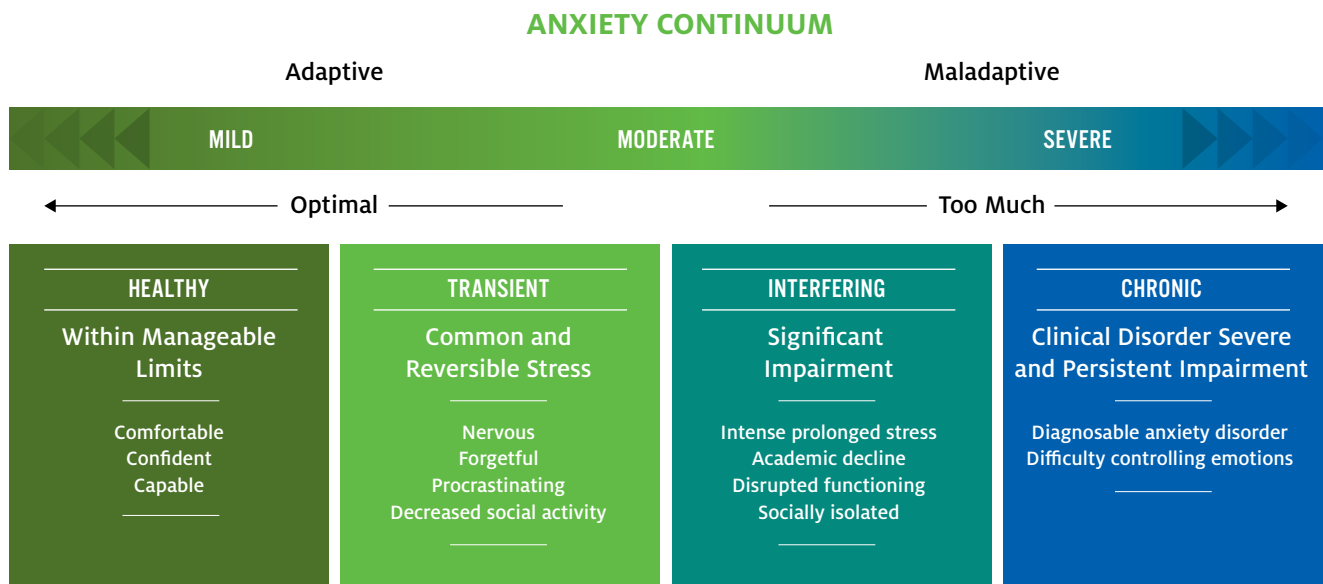


**We believe that developing student resilience in the face of challenge is a vital life skill that contributes to student achievement and well-being.**

When families and schools work together to address the physical symptoms, worrying thoughts, and avoidance associated with anxiety, we can teach students to face challenging and sometimes fearful situations with success and confidence.

# MY CHILD HAS ANXIOUS THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS. IS THIS TYPICAL?

Feelings of anxiety, worry, or fear are a normal part of life and these occur on a continuum, as shown in the diagram below.



At the **mild end of the continuum**, feelings of anxiety can be adaptive or helpful. If we have a worrying thought like “I am not prepared for the test”, it can motivate us to study to become well prepared for the test. In this example, the worrying thought is adaptive because it mobilizes us to take action to face the feared situation. We become better prepared for the test, resulting in less worry and better test performance.

At the **moderate to severe end of the continuum**, the anxious feelings can lead to significant impairments in academic, social, emotional, or day-to-day functioning. In addition, in more severe anxiety, the emotional or behavioural response seems excessive or out of proportion to the feared situation.

An adolescent may have an Anxiety Disorder if anxiety is a pattern causing persistent, functional impairment. Several types of Anxiety Disorders exist, impairing social, personal or academic functioning.

# SHOULD WE BE SEEKING ADDITIONAL SUPPORT?



There are several ways in which the school, in partnership with your family and community supports, can help students.

In addition, home-based strategies have been provided below.

HOME BASED STRATEGIES	
<b>General Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be patient and be prepared to listen</li><li>• Praise and reinforce effort, even if success is less than expected</li><li>• Accept that mistakes are a normal part of growing up and that no one is expected to do everything equally well</li><li>• Model appropriate self-talk and success language in the home</li><li>• Maintain realistic, attainable goals and expectations for your child Do not communicate that perfection is expected or acceptable</li><li>• There will be setbacks. Model acceptance and start each day fresh</li><li>• Balance your child's life demands including academics, social-emotional, and extra-curriculars, so that avoidance is not encouraged</li><li>• Have a designated space at home to do school work that is clean, unoccupied, and quiet, in order to maintain consistent routines</li></ul>
<b>Goal Setting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Practice and rehearse upcoming events, such as giving a speech or other performance tasks</li><li>• Share stories of successful people who experienced setbacks before success</li><li>• Set short, mid, and long term goals that are realistic for where your child's mental health is at today, recognizing that these can change</li><li>• Practice strategies provided by professional therapists, counsellors, and paraprofessionals</li></ul>
<b>Problem Solving</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop anxiety problem solving strategies such as organizing materials and time, developing small 'self-talk' scripts and learning relaxations techniques when stressed.</li></ul>
<b>Online Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• See apps on next page</li><li>• Test Anxiety Booklet: <a href="https://bit.ly/TestAnxietyBooklet">bit.ly/TestAnxietyBooklet</a></li><li>• <a href="http://www.bigwhitewall.ca">www.bigwhitewall.ca</a></li><li>• <a href="http://www.bouncebackontario.ca">www.bouncebackontario.ca</a></li></ul>
<b>Family/School Partnership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Co-create a support plan for areas of concern identified</li><li>• Discuss with school staff the use of coping and relaxation strategies</li><li>• Develop a coordinated plan with teachers for preparing, study strategies and test taking</li></ul>
<b>Community Supports</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Waterloo Region Family Network: <a href="http://wrfn.info">wrfn.info</a></li><li>• Family Compass Waterloo Region: <a href="http://www.familycompasswr.ca">www.familycompasswr.ca</a></li></ul>



IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS AND WOULD LIKE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT, PLEASE CONTACT THE SCHOOL AND SPEAK TO YOUR STUDENT'S VICE PRINCIPAL OR GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR.

# ANXIETY APPS AND ONLINE SUPPORT



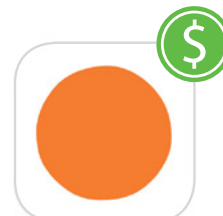
Virtual Hope Box



Mindshift



Pacifica



Headspace



Stop, Breathe, Think



Calm



Relaxing Sounds of Nature



Relax Melodies



Universal Breathing



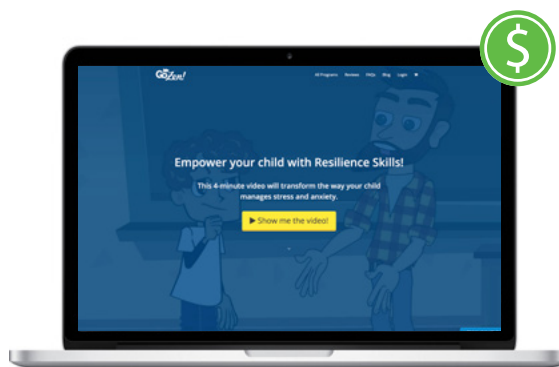
Insight Timer



Adult Colouring Book



Happify



GoZen!

# HOW DO I BALANCE SUPPORTING MY CHILD WHILE ENCOURAGING GRADUATED EXPOSURE (FACING FEARS/CONCERNS) AS A PART OF HEALTHY LIFE?

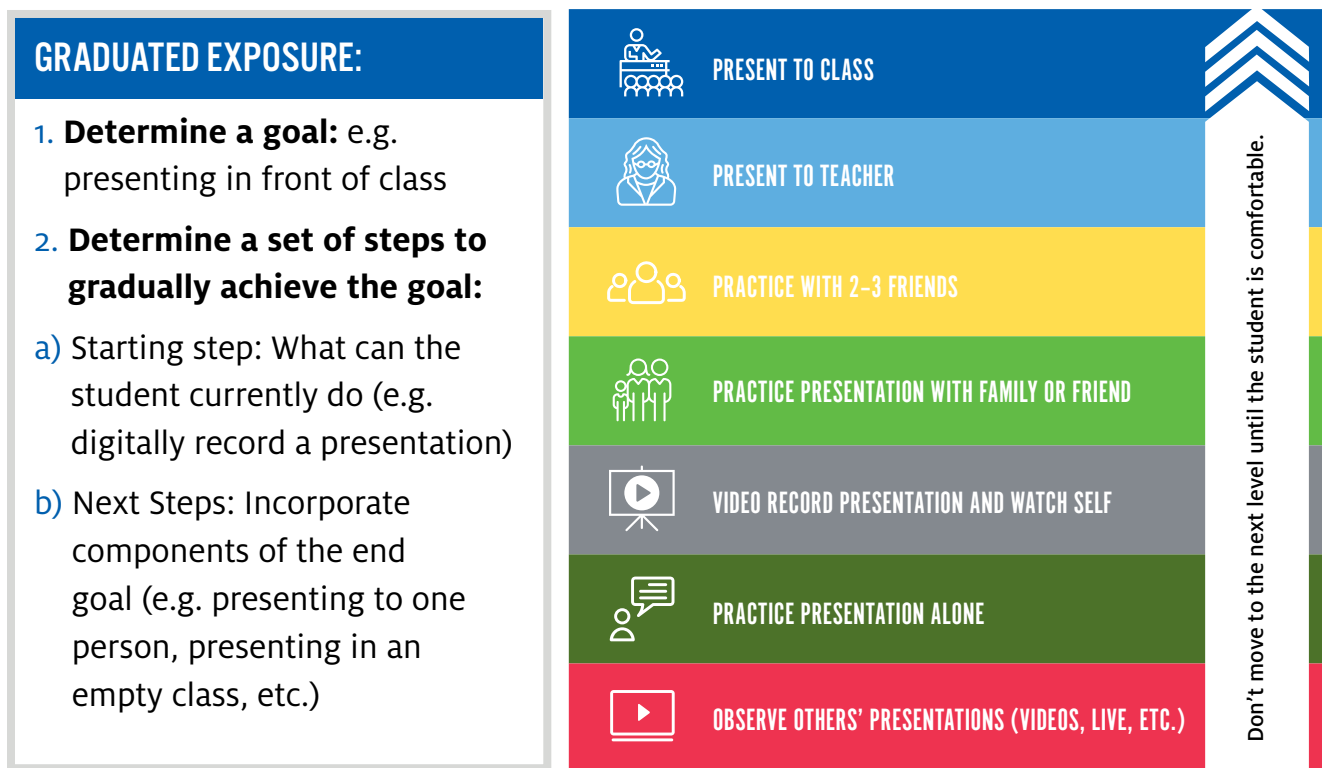


Fleeing or avoiding feared situations is a common behavioural response to anxiety.

**Avoidance reinforces anxious feelings and maintains anxiety**, however, practicing graduated exposure reduces and alleviates anxious feelings.

**Graduated exposure is one of the most powerful**, evidence based approaches we can use to help students cope with anxious feelings. It helps students overcome their avoidance of fearful situations.

Below is an example of how graduated exposure may be used to address anxiousness regarding class presentations.

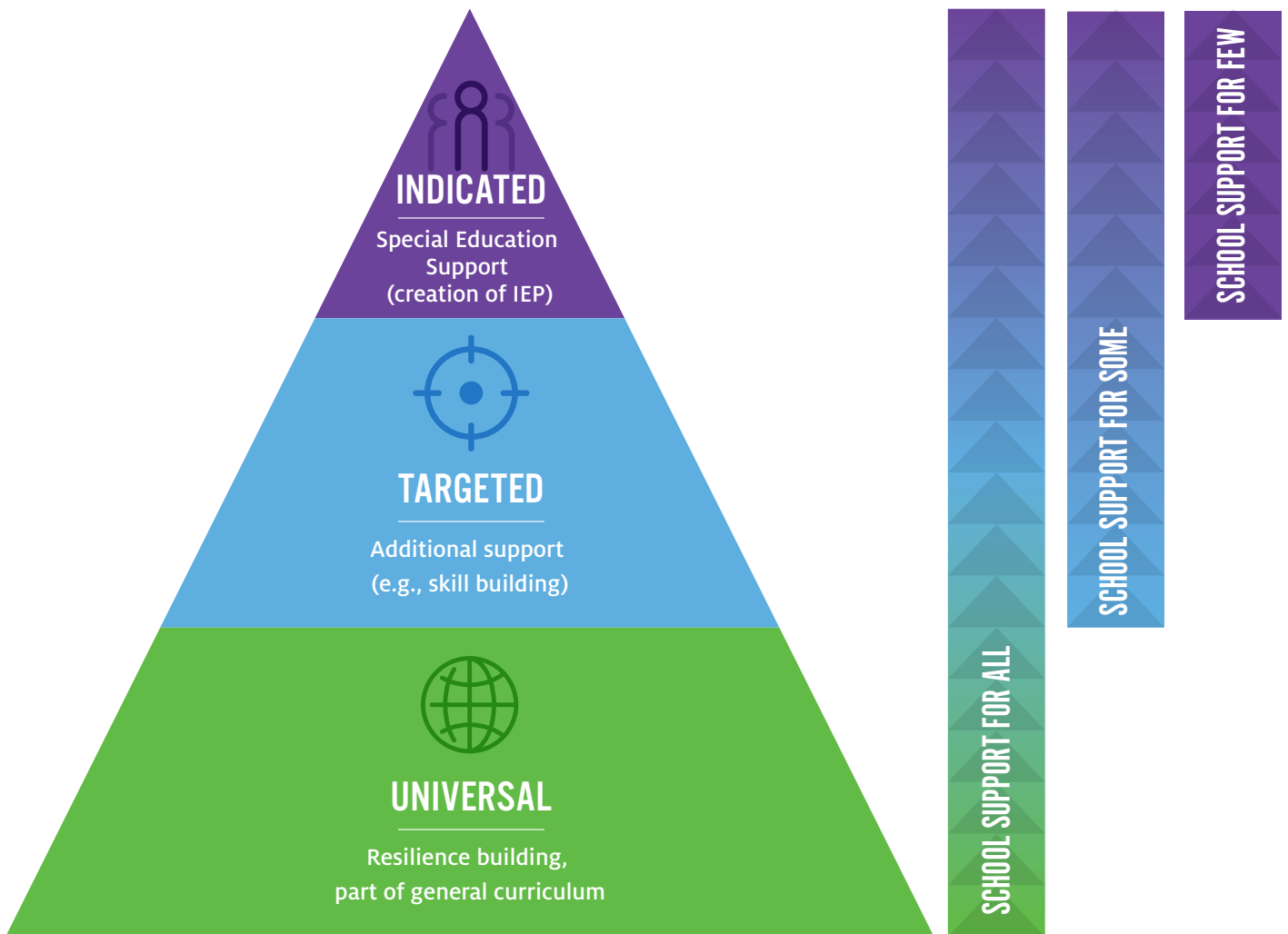


\*Develop in consultation with the student

# TIERS OF SCHOOL SUPPORT

We use a tiered approach when supporting students with anxiety. There is a continuum of support ranging from:

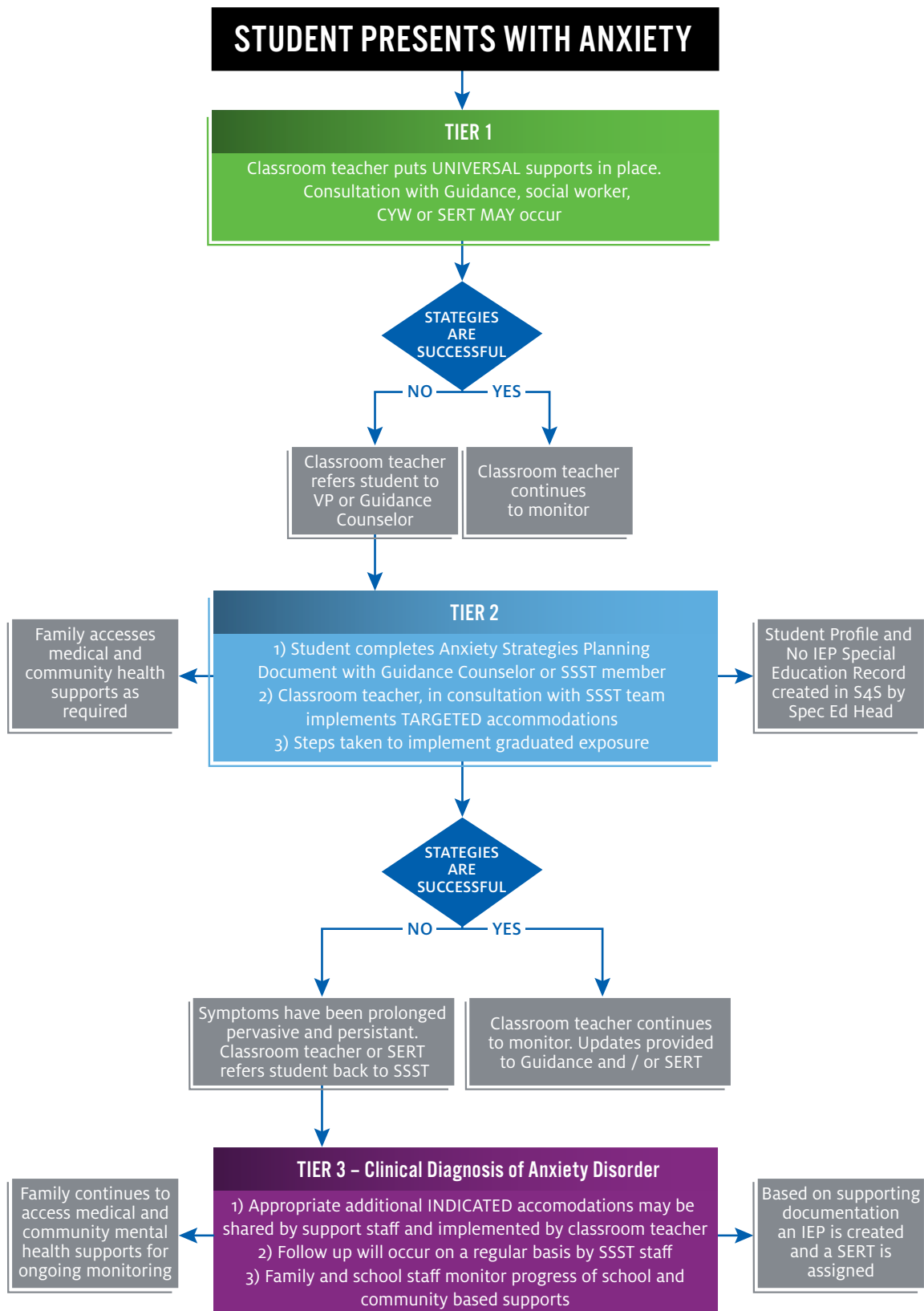
- Universal supports (benefit the whole class/school)
- Targeted supports (prevention strategies and additional support)
- Indicated support (clinical intervention)



Documentation is required in order for your child to access appropriate supports at the Targeted and Indicated level. The more detailed the documentation, the better informed our school team will be in putting together a support plan for your child.



# ANXIETY SUPPORT FLOW CHART







### TIER 1: UNIVERSAL SUPPORT

All students benefit from resilience building strategies that are incorporated into school-wide practices by classroom teachers.

**Response:** Classroom teachers incorporate strategies to reduce anxiety, which may include instruction on test preparation, test taking, relaxation strategies, oral communication, time management, organizational skills, etc.



## TIER 2: TARGETED SUPPORT

For students requiring more support, practicing small group or individual strategies will provide the opportunity to develop coping skills. These skills, along with graduated exposure, will help reduce anxiety.

### Response:

The School team determines the best support plan based on diagnosis from documentation. Additional school support staff may become involved to develop strategies and build resilience. Appropriate additional accommodations are shared with and implemented by classroom teachers.

**Caregivers should consult the suggested home-based strategies chart. (Page 2)**



## TIER 3: INDICATED SUPPORT

For a very few students who have a **clinical diagnosis** of an anxiety disorder, special education services and supports will be provided. Anxiety symptoms have been prolonged, pervasive and persistent and previous targeted strategies have been ineffective.

### Response:

School team determines best support plan based on documentation. Additional school support staff will become involved.

An IEP may be created for cases where anxiety results in academic impairment. The IEP will be reviewed regularly and follow up documentation may be requested.

**Caregivers should consult the suggested home-based strategies chart. (Page 2)**

**For Targeted and Indicated Tiers of Support, Vice-Principals** will call an in-school team of professionals together to support your child once documentation has been provided to the school.

### Documentation Examples:

- Psychiatric Assessment
- Psycho-Educational Assessment
- Medical report
- Medical Assessment/Note
- Psychological assessment
- Follow-up Letters
- Teacher Observations
- Health Information Form



**IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS AND WOULD LIKE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT, PLEASE CONTACT THE SCHOOL AND SPEAK TO YOUR STUDENT'S VICE PRINCIPAL OR GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR.**

**You can get more information about:**

- Transition planning
- Blended learning
- E-learning
- Accessing special education supports
- Pathways planning
- Other school and community resources

**TERMS OF REFERENCE:**

SSST: School Student Success Team

SERT: Special Education Resource Teacher

IEP: Individual Education Plan

CYW: Child and Youth Worker

S4S: Special Education Database





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