



# Mental Health Awareness for Educators: Anxiety Disorders 101

2023/2024

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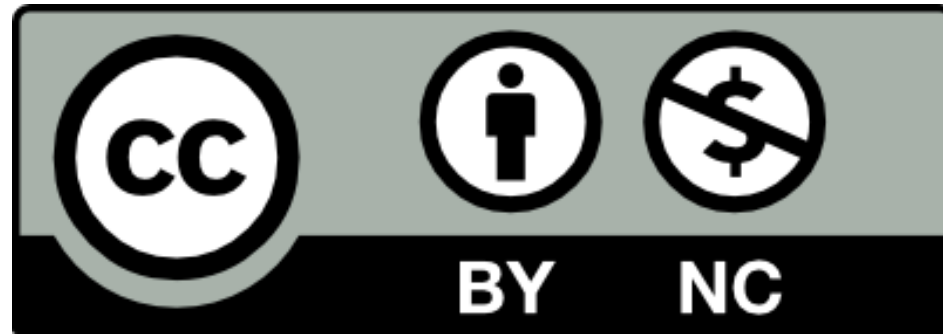


# Acknowledgments

The content for this training day was developed based on the work of:

- American Psychiatric Association (APA)
- Child Mind Institute

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# Group Agreements

## We are Responsible

- Return on time from breaks
- Take care of our needs

## We are Engaged

- Share “air time”
- Plan to participate in multiple ways
  - Chat, breakout rooms, polls, reactions, unmute
  - Ask questions

# Training Effectiveness

- At the end of the session, you will be asked to provide feedback on today's training
- Results will be used to make improvements to professional learning and for reporting to TA Center stakeholders
- One of the feedback questions you will see is related to promoting and positively portraying diversity among educators and learners (e.g., focus on asset-based language, positive representation of multiple identities)

# Purpose

- This session is part of the Mental Health (MH) Awareness for Educators Series designed to increase educators' exposure to and knowledge of various aspects of mental health and well-being.
- This session aims to provide educators with a non-clinical introduction to understanding Anxiety Disorders and how they may manifest in the school setting.

# Intended Outcomes

- Understand what Anxiety is and what Anxiety Disorders are
- Understand several ways that Anxiety manifests in children and adolescents
- Begin to consider ways that schools can support individuals dealing with Anxiety
- Build educator capacity to become Mental Health Aware





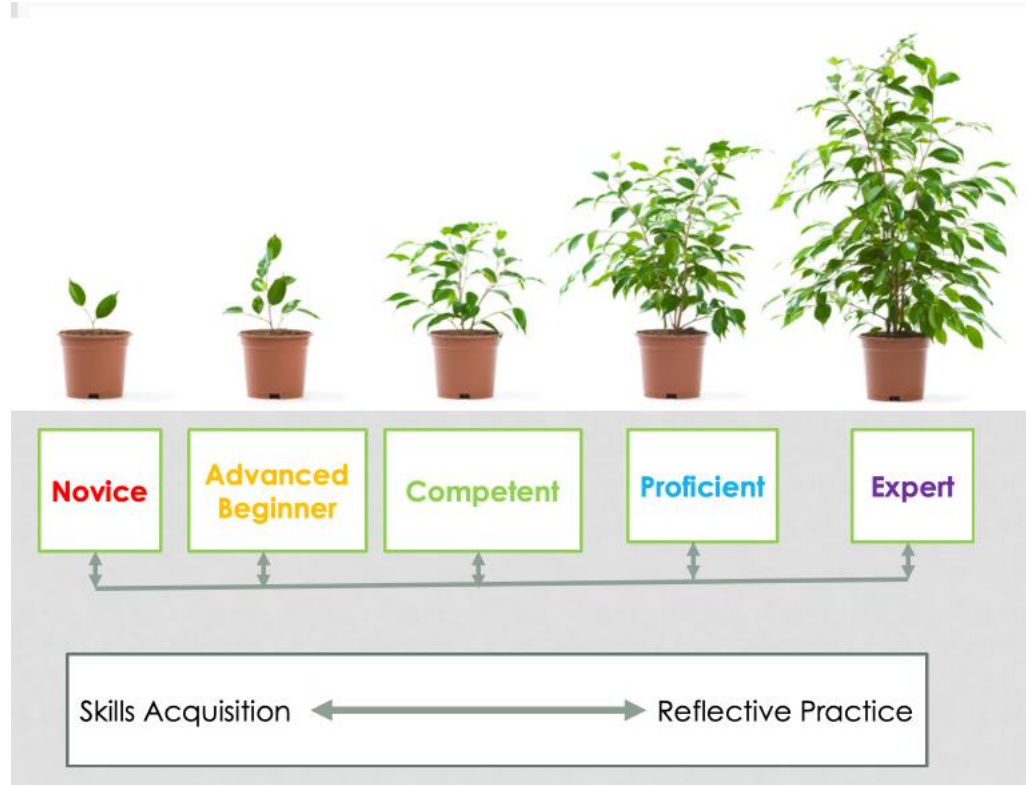
# MH Awareness Topics and Goals of this Series

- Understanding ACEs
  - Internalizing and Externalizing Behaviors
  - **Anxiety Disorders 101**
  - Depressive Disorders 101
  - Trauma Responses in the Classroom
- Reducing the knowledge gap
  - Increasing educator capacity to support student MH and well-being
  - Promote positive SEB skills for students and staff
  - Reduce the stigma around MH
  - Support positive school climate and student/staff well-being

# Agenda

- 1.0 What is Anxiety?
- 2.0 Anxiety and Schools
- 3.0 Supporting Students
- 4.0 Wrap Up and Next Steps

# Activity 0.1



- Self-reflect on your current knowledge and skills related to Anxiety Disorders
- Where do you currently rate your level of knowledge and skills related to Anxiety Disorders?
- You do not have to share your responses!

# 1.0 What is Anxiety?

# Activity 1.1



## Feelings Identification

- Imagine you are about to ride a roller coaster for the first time
- Identify how you might feel
- Share your responses in the chat

# Video: The Definition of an Emotional Roller Coaster



# Anxiety

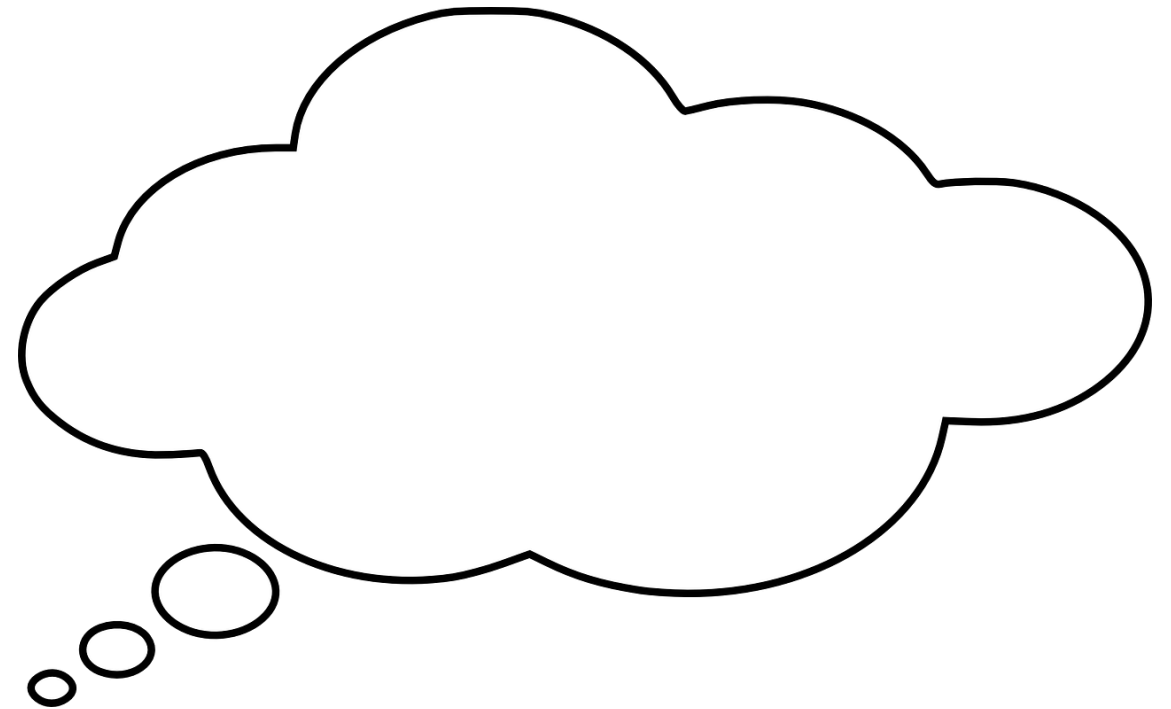
- A feeling of fear, dread, or uneasiness
- It is a typical reaction to stress
- Can help you cope
- It is usually temporary



# Activity 1.2

## Self-Reflection

- Think about the different age and developmental stages of children and adolescents
- What are some common things that might cause children and adolescents to feel anxious?
- Be prepared to share some of your responses



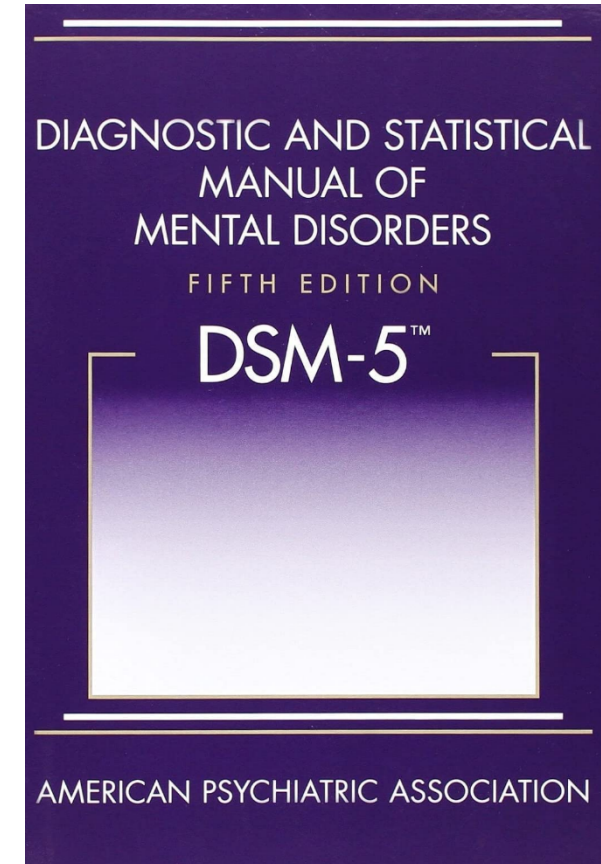


# Anxiety Disorders

- Excessive fear or worry
- Persistent
- Often recurrent
- It is difficult to control the fear or worry
- May lead to internalizing behaviors
- Can cause clinically significant impairment in an individual's:
  - Social functioning
  - Academic functioning
  - Occupational functioning
  - Other areas of functioning

# Types of Anxiety Disorders

- Separation Anxiety Disorder
- Selective Mutism
- Specific Phobias
- Social Anxiety Disorder
- Panic Disorder
- Agoraphobia
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder



American Psychiatric Association, 2013

# Possible Symptoms of Anxiety Disorders in Children

- Trouble sleeping
- Somatic Complaints, i.e., stomachaches, headaches, etc.
- Avoiding certain situations
- Being clingy around parents or caregivers
- Trouble concentrating in class or being very fidgety
- Tantrums
- Being very self-conscious

# Possible Symptoms of Anxiety Disorders in Adolescents

- More internalized anxieties
- Recurrent fears or worries about routine parts of everyday life
- Increased irritability
- Trouble concentrating
- Extreme self-consciousness or sensitivity to criticism
- Avoidance of new or difficult situations
- Chronic somatic complaints

Miller, C., 2023

# Gender and Race Bias in Diagnosis

- Although anyone can have an Anxiety Disorder, females are diagnosed more often than males as having an Anxiety Disorder.
  - Females are diagnosed twice as many times as males as having an Anxiety Disorder
- Native American, white, and Hispanic/Latino individuals are more likely than black respondents to receive an anxiety disorder diagnosis
- This may be the result of race and gender bias in diagnosis

Vanderminden and Esala, 2019

## 2.0 Anxiety and Schools

## First Thought...

- A student squirming in their seat and not paying attention
- A student with problematic attendance
- You see a parent getting frustrated with a young child who refuses to go into their preschool classroom
- A student who asks the teacher multiple questions about an assignment that was explained in great detail to them repeatedly
- A student avoiding eye contact with the teacher when the class is discussing a novel the class has been reading

## First Thought Continued...

- A child having a tantrum when there is a substitute teacher
- A student who refuses to change into their gym clothes and sits out every day
- A student who is frequently out ill and often requests to visit the school nurse
- A student turns in an assignment with holes from erasing their answers multiple times
- A student skipping class or not doing their part of a group assignment
- A student who asks to study in your classroom during their lunch period



## On Second Thought...

- Inattention in the classroom may be due to an inability to control intrusive thoughts and worries
- Attendance issues and school refusal could be due to Anxiety, especially Separation Anxiety
- Anxious students may ask a lot of repetitive questions to seek reassurance
- Even if students know the answers, anxiety might cause them to “freeze,” so they will do their best to avoid being called upon or might fail to respond to questions if asked directly

## More Thoughts...

- Disruptive behaviors may increase when there are disruptions in routine
- Body image/peer perception issues can be a frequent source of anxiety, especially for adolescents
- Increased somatic complaints
- Increased academic challenges
- Increased avoidance or refusal to participate in activities, i.e. giving presentations, doing group work, joining a sports team, or eating in the cafeteria

# Video: Anxiety and Teens





# Activity 2.1

## Breakout Room Discussion

- Create a Brave and Safe Space
  - Introduce and welcome one another to your breakout room
  - Share your name, location, and role
- Consider the schools and districts that you support
- What are some reasons that recognizing student anxiety can be challenging for school staff? What can help?
- Are there things your school or district currently does to support students who are dealing with anxiety?

## 3.0 Supporting Students

# Considerations for Classroom Support

- Physical Factors
  - Is the educational environment physically designed to support students' safety and learning?
- Psychological Factors
  - Have you created an environment that allows students to participate, ask questions, and receive feedback that fosters psychological safety?
- Emotional Factors
  - Have you created an environment that is inclusive, equitable, and celebrates diversity, self-expression, and student achievements?

## Leverage Your MTSS Framework

- MTSS helps all students feel safe physically, socially, emotionally, and academically
- Ensure that your levels of interventions match the needs of all students with increasing intensity at each tier of support
- Begin with universal support that develops social and emotional competencies for staff and students, teaches skills for managing emotions, and skills for how to develop appropriate relationships

# Social, Emotional, Behavioral (SEB) Supports

Promote **well-being** and **mental health**:

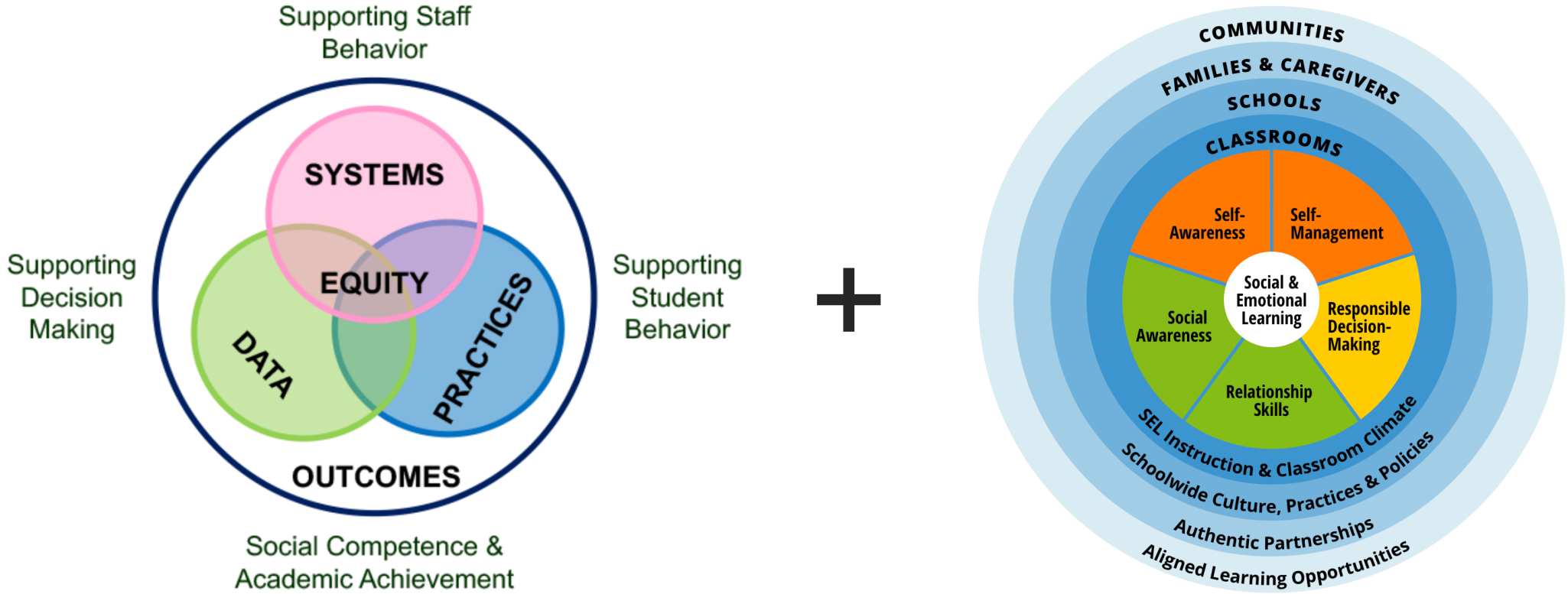
- Social – how we interact
- Emotional – how we feel
- Behavioral – how we act

**Moving beyond our previous ways of thinking about  
“classroom management”**

(U.S. Dept. of Ed., 2021)



# SEB Supports: Leveraging the PBIS and SEL Framework



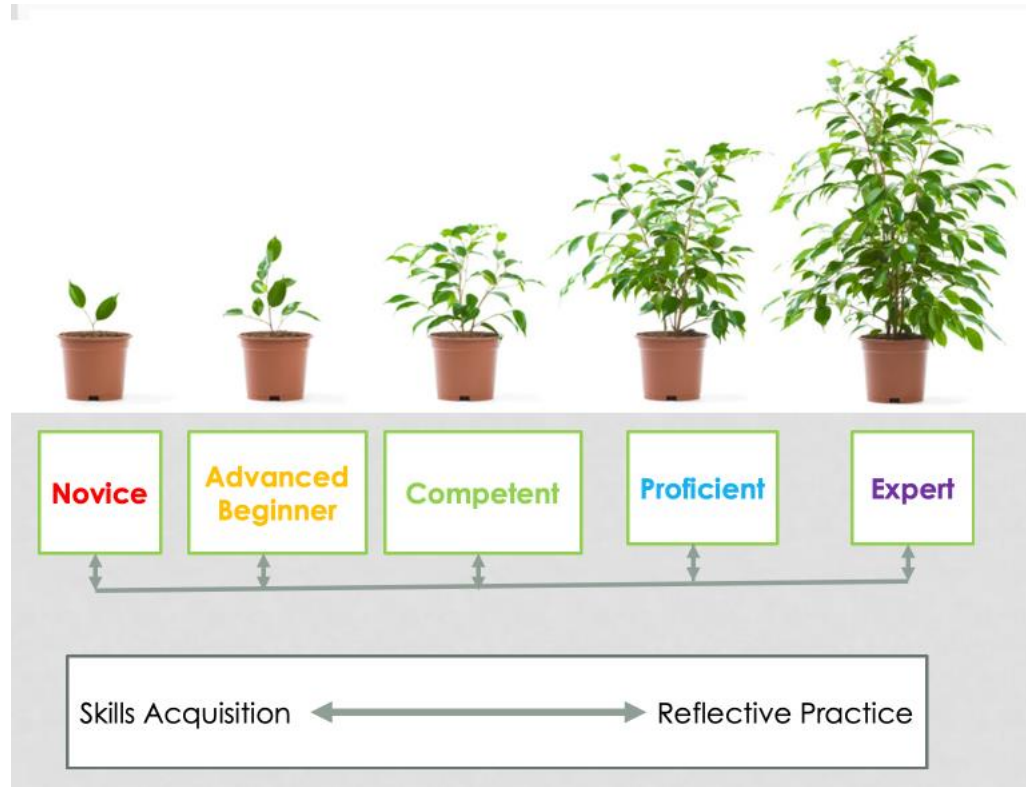
(National Center on PBIS; CASEL)

# Supporting All Students and Staff

- Consider ways to align all practices in your building
- Create safe, predictable, and consistent environments
- Support learners with all abilities
  - Include teaching and reteaching to support learning
- Center equity
  - Incorporate student voice in developing classroom systems and honor students' identity and culture

# 4.0 Wrap Up and Next Steps

# Activity 4.1



- Self-reflect on your current knowledge and skills related to Anxiety Disorders
- Where do you currently rate your level of knowledge and skills related to Anxiety Disorders?
- You do not have to share your responses!

# Closing Review

- Anxiety is a typical response to stressful or novel situations
- Anxiety Disorders develop when fears and worries become persistent, recurrent, and excessive
- Children and adolescents can experience difficulties managing anxiety
- Internalizing and avoidance/refusal behaviors are typical in students who have difficulties managing anxiety
- MTSS frameworks can be leveraged to support students with Anxiety

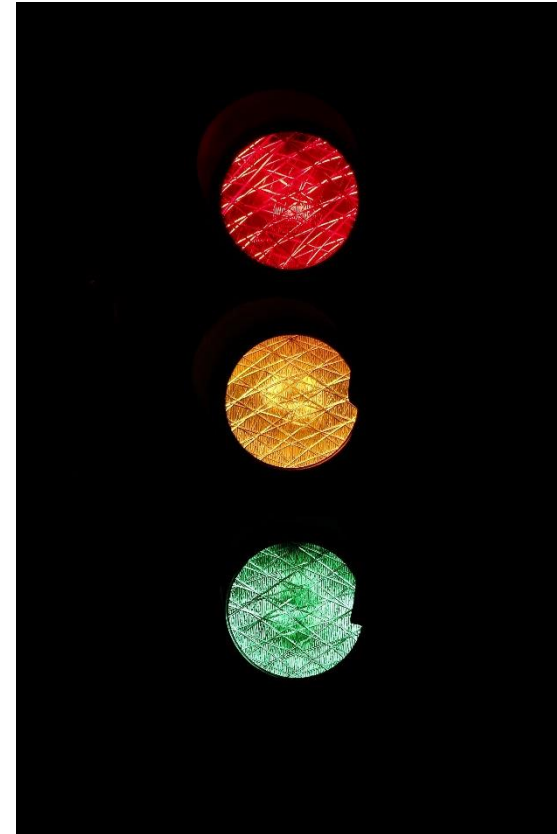
# Next Steps

- Consider what items or resources piqued your interest in learning more today
  - Do you want to learn more about Anxiety?
  - Do you want to learn more about regulation strategies?
  - Do you want to share what you learned today with other staff? How so?
- How will you begin to consider leveraging the supports already in place at your school to support students and staff?
  - Do your tiers of support meet the needs of anxious individuals?
  - How can you ensure that they do?

## Activity 4.2

Share in the chat:

- One thing to **STOP**
- One thing to **CONTINUE**
- One thing to **START**



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