

The Smartphone as a Barrier to Progress in Selective Mutism Anxiety Treatment: An Adolescent Case Example

Chacriya Sereeyothin², Hannah Feng³, Carmen M Tumialan Lynas, Ph.D.¹, Catherine O'Leary, LCPC¹

¹ Advanced Therapeutic Solutions for Anxiety, Oakbrook IL

² The University of Chicago, Chicago, IL

³ The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI



Correspondence: drlynas@advancedtherapeuticsolutions.org

Background

- Selective mutism (SM), an anxiety disorder, is defined as the consistent failure to speak in specific situations, despite competent speech elsewhere (Lorenzo et al. 2021)
- There is little RCT research about SM treatment in adolescents
- Case example: 16 y.o. SM patient used a phone to text communications and avoid speaking. Phone use perpetuated their cycle of anxiety. School teachers reinforced avoidance by accepting the nonverbal communication

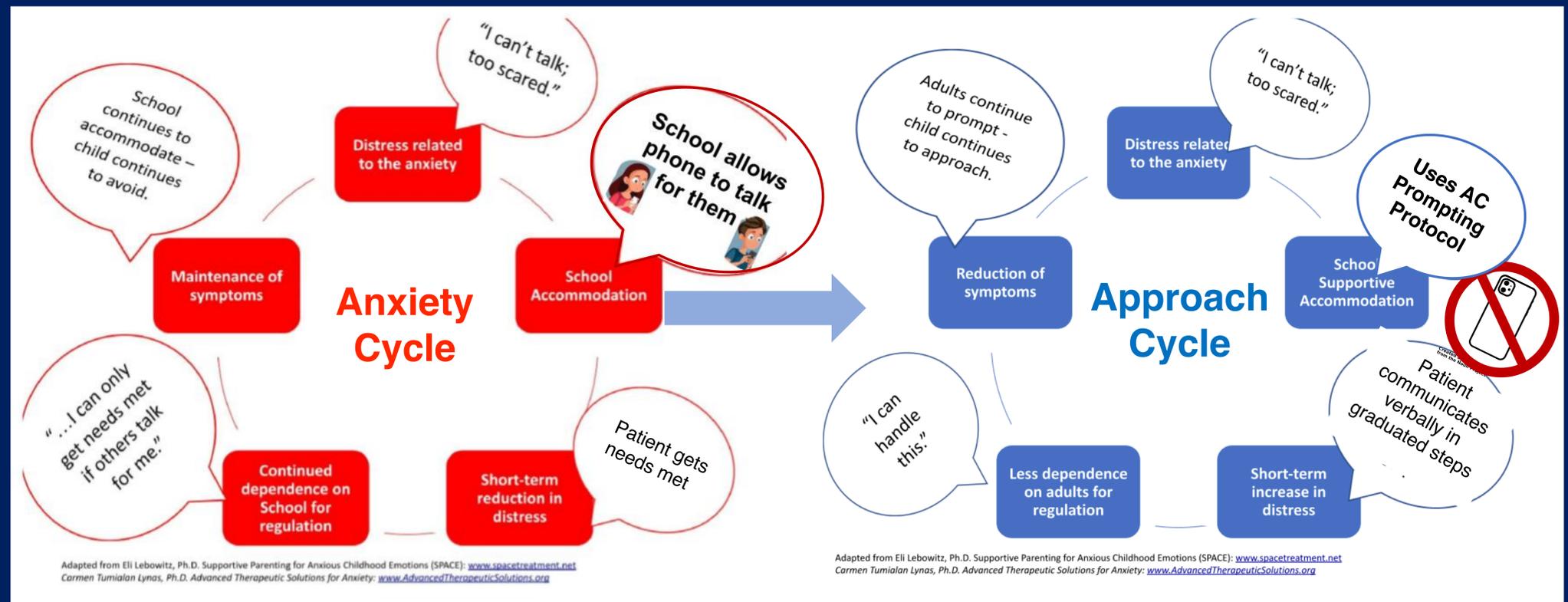
Steps taken to move from Anxiety to Approach Cycle

- On-site training with school staff & peers on reducing enabling accommodations
- Therapist modeled verbal prompting skills with peer, English, and math teachers. Therapist faded out, provided skills coaching (repeated 3x, for 2-hour sessions each)
- Removed safety behavior (i.e., iPhone)
- Met with school team to review accommodation grid, rationale for prompting protocol, and plan for school

Discussion & Considerations

- Working with both teen and school is key to managing anxiety
- Instead of enabling anxiety, schools need training on how to recognize anxiety early and how to implement supportive interventions
- Adventure Camp Prompting Protocol shows promise for use in school setting (Lynas et al., 2022)
- Prompting skills training should occur before staff implementation
- Brave Buddies (clinical setting) RCT showed treatment effect when using a similar prompting protocol (Cornacchio et al., 2019)

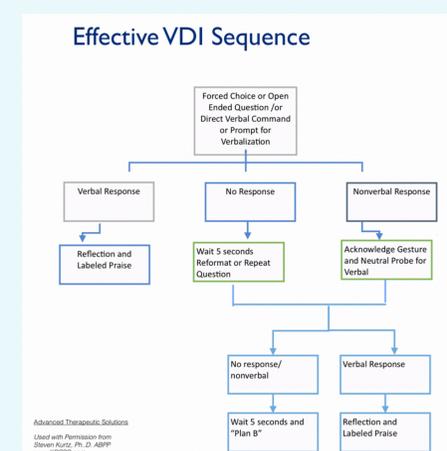
Working with both phobic Teen and their School is key to managing their anxiety



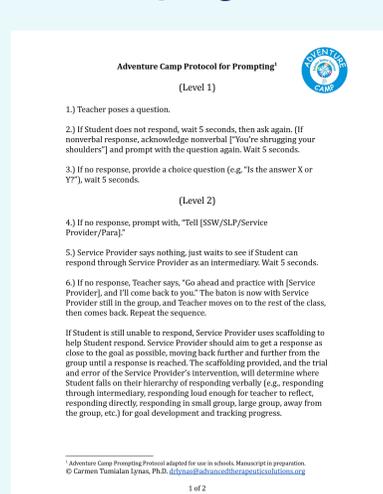
"You can do this, wait, no you can't"



Verbal Directed Interaction: Step-by-step towards verbal communication



AC Prompting Protocol



References



Acknowledgements
Special thanks to the 16 y.o. who agreed to share their story with us!