

## Bridge Back to Your Successes – Lynn Lyons, LCSW

### Anxiety Makes You Forget Your Successes . . .

The young client terrified to go to the party on his own ends up going, has a great time, but then worries with the same intensity when the next invitation arrives.

The teen with a school assignment due next week freaks out, convinced she won't be able to get it done, despite the fact that she does well academically and has completed countless assignments in the past.

This is typical of worry. So, what do we do?

Confront this anxiety-driven amnesia by expecting worry to show up, and prepare **reminder bridges** ahead of time.

**Reminder bridges** help people connect to past successes, specifically times when they felt anxious but moved ahead and handled the worry.

Because successes are so quickly cast aside by worry's catastrophic predictions, an ongoing practice to develop the skill of connecting to **what you did to manage worry** is key.

A reminder bridge is a connection to a previous success, and it is built PRIOR to worry arriving. *As predictable as worry can be, so must be the responses.*

### Bridge Back to Your Successes:

Attempting to talk someone out of the worry in the middle of the worry typically goes nowhere.

Laying the groundwork, creating those neural pathways through repetition, and being ready to pull up *reminder bridges* when needed *moves thinking patterns out of avoiding and toward doing.*

Parents preparing their child with skills to handle worry, rather than preparing (and over preparing) your lives to prevent the arrival of your child's worry is what resilience and flexibility and emotional management are all about for a more adventurous hike ahead.

Here are some example statements to help your young clients connect back to their successes to help them overcome worry:

1. What steps did you take to accomplish this challenge last time?

2. How did you feel the last time worry showed up and you were successful overcoming it?

3. Let's write down your successes right here to help you remember them:

Younger clients often assume, even without realizing it, that when somebody looks like they're really good at a task, that the person is just gifted and it's never a struggle for him/her. Older clients tend to know there's more going on behind the scenes – e.g. effort, hours of practice, etc.

When young clients get introduced to the process of mastery, it can be enormously helpful so they can expect challenges and recognize that they're common and ongoing. This can keep them from feeling hopeless and discouraged.

Here are some great questions to help young clients connect to the process of mastery.

1. What can you do now that you couldn't do a few years ago?

2. Can you remember something that was really challenging when you first tried it but now seems simple?

3. Make a list of accomplishments that make you proud.

4. What can you do now that you worried about before?