

19 seeing the bigger picture

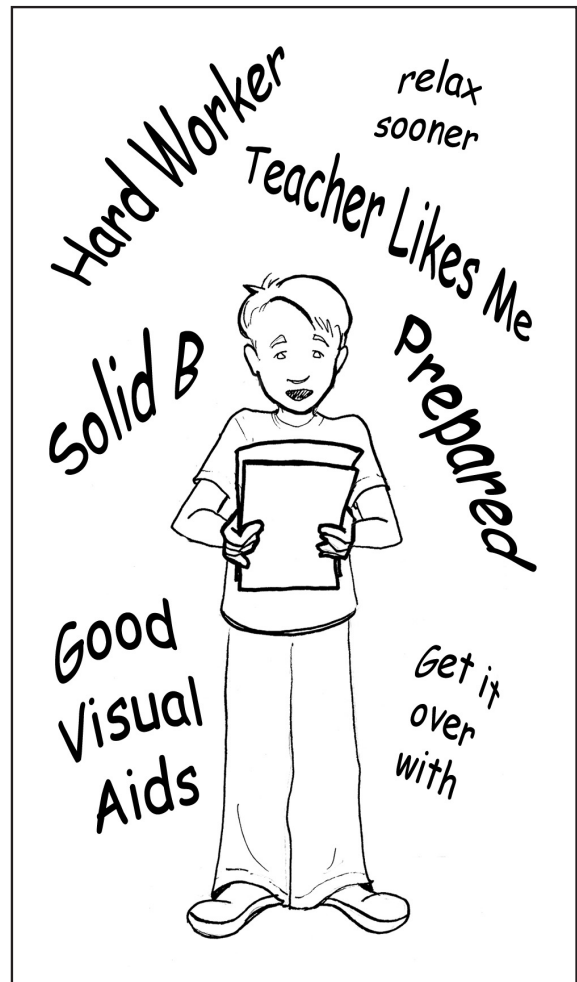
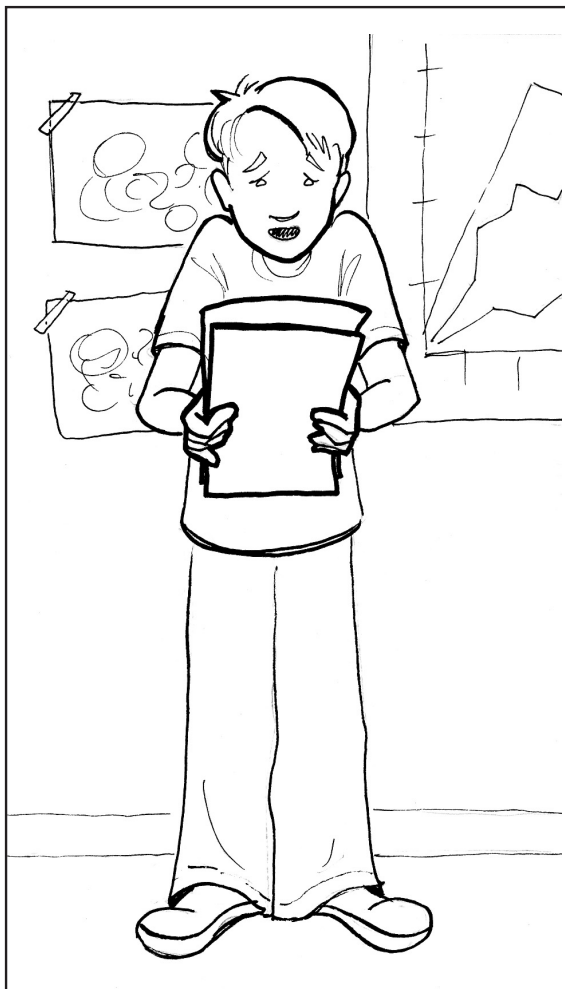
for you to know

Sometimes people focus so closely on one or two small details of a situation that they lose sight of the bigger picture—the whole context—that those details are in. Focusing too closely on an anxious thought makes your anxiety level rise higher. Shifting your focus to the bigger picture can help you to feel more peaceful.

Ryan was feeling anxious because his history teacher had asked him to be the first one to give his oral report the next day. Ryan's older brother, Joe, could tell that something was bothering Ryan and asked what it was. When Ryan told him, Joe said Ryan should look at the bigger picture: Ryan already had a solid B in the class and one presentation wasn't going to change that. The teacher liked him and knew he was a hard worker. He was well prepared for his report and had excellent visual aids. If he did his report first, he would get it over with and could relax for the rest of the week while the other kids did theirs. When Ryan reconsidered his one detail of anxiety in light of this bigger picture, he felt much more peaceful.

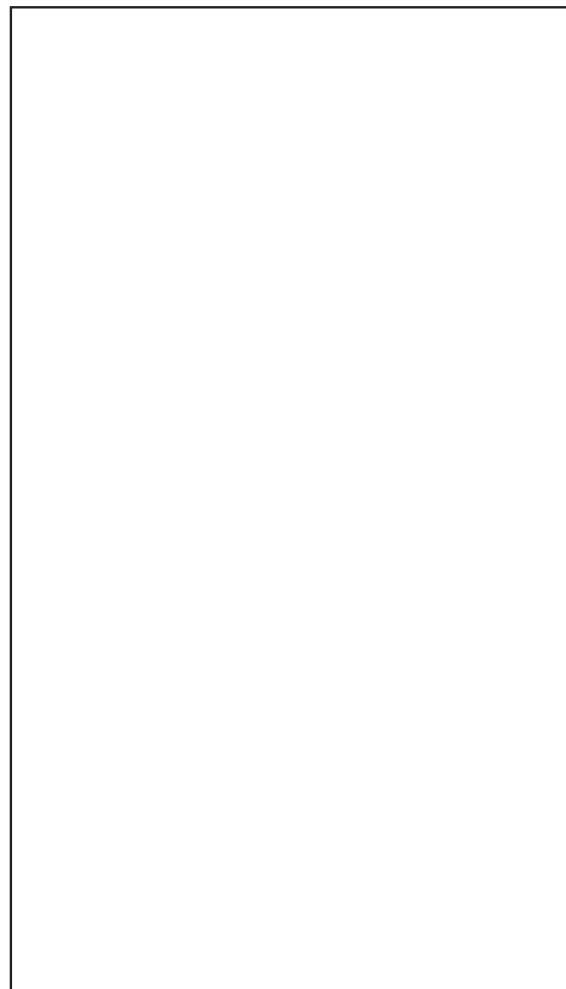
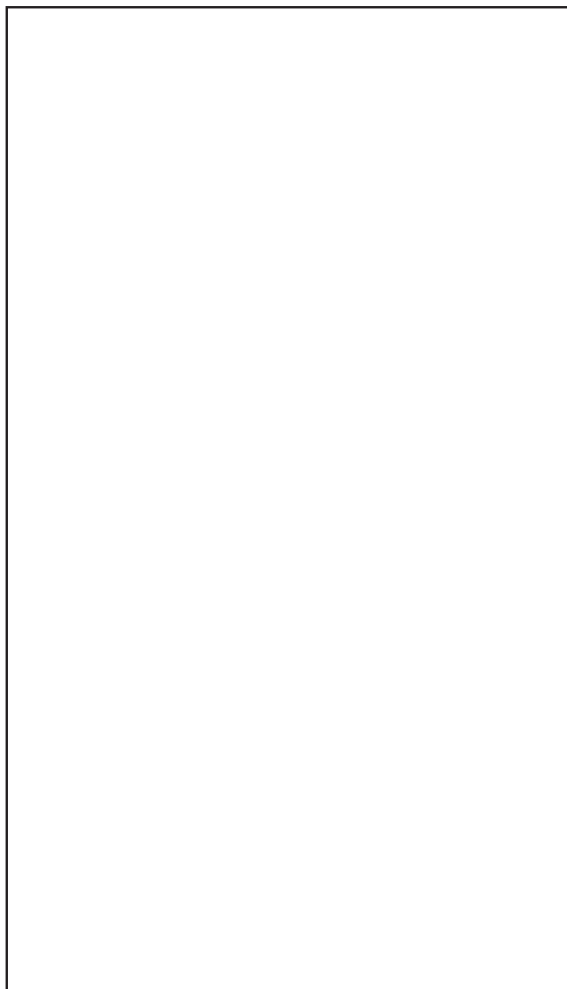
directions

Focusing on one detail of Ryan's situation was like looking at it through binoculars. It made the detail—and his anxiety—appear bigger, like the picture on the left. When he focused on the situation as a whole, it was like looking at that detail through the other end of the binoculars, like the picture on the right.



activity 19 * seeing the bigger picture

In the box on the left, draw or write about a detail of your own life that raises your anxiety level, as if you were looking at it through binoculars. In the box on the right, draw or write that same detail as if you were looking through the other end of the binoculars so that you are able to see the detail in the context of the bigger picture. Then add the other details of the bigger picture around the detail that makes you anxious.



more to do

Look at your two pictures. Describe the difference in your anxious detail when you look at it alone and when you see it in the bigger picture.

For each sentence below, tell if your anxiety would be low, medium, or high, first focusing only on the detail, then focusing on the bigger picture.

Detail: You failed a math test. low medium high

Bigger picture: You got Bs on all of your other math tests for the entire year. low medium high

Detail: You struck out when playing a game of baseball. low medium high

Bigger picture: Your last three at-bats before that were base hits. low medium high

Detail: You hit a wrong note during your trombone solo. low medium high

Bigger picture: You got enthusiastic applause. low medium high

Detail: Someone in your class called you a nerd. low medium high

Bigger picture: You have five good friends who would do anything for you. low medium high

Detail: The first time you went to a dance, your date was bored and went home early with someone else. low medium high

Bigger picture: After your date left, three different people asked you to dance. low medium high

How is your anxiety level affected by shifting your focus from one anxious detail to the bigger picture?
