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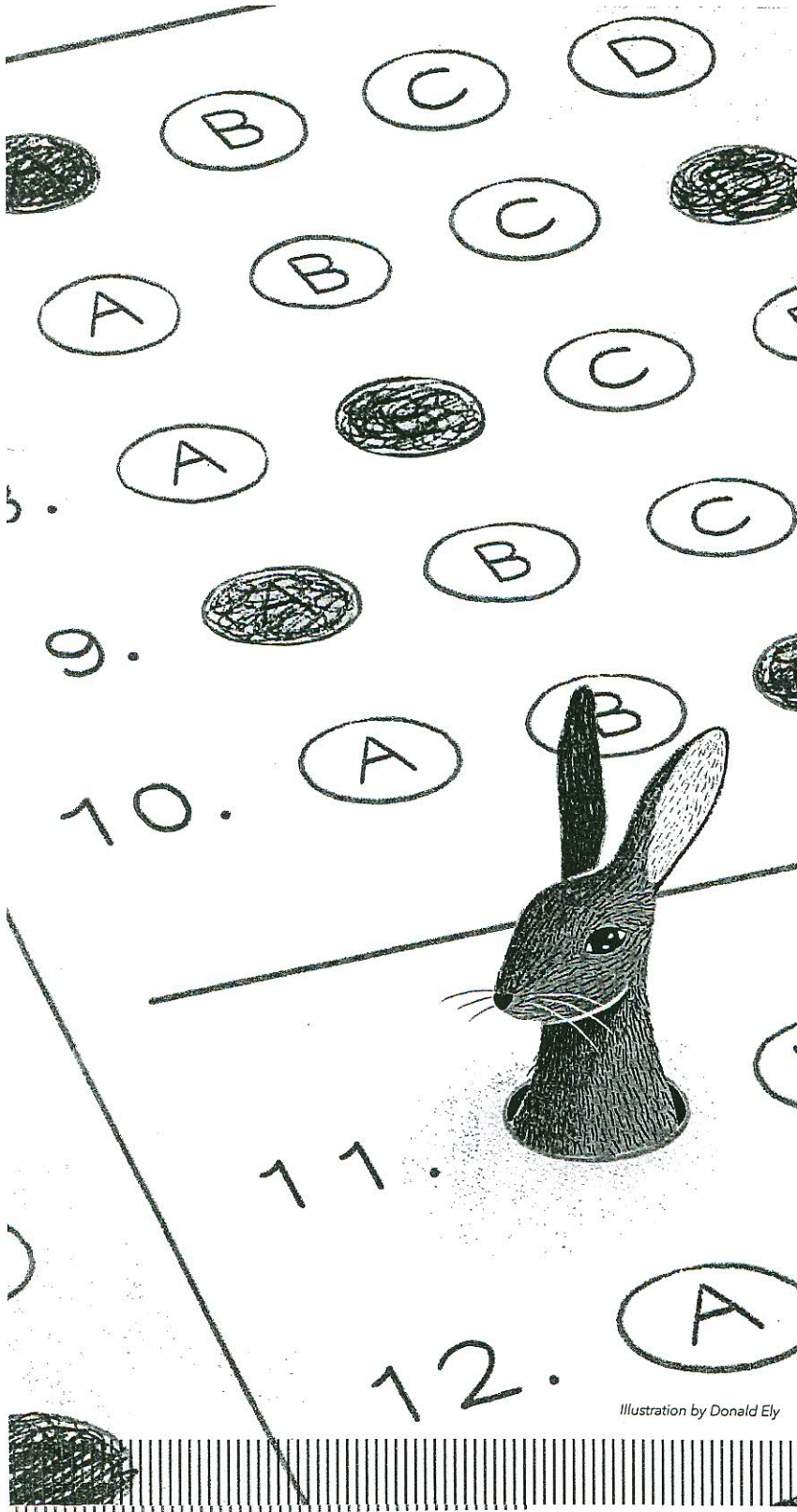


Illustration by Donald Ely

Helping Ease Student Anxiety

By telling anxious students to "calm down," we're assuming they have the skills to do so. These classroom practices can build students' capacity to self-regulate—before they fall into a rabbit hole of worrying thoughts.

One student passed out in the middle of a U.S. history presentation. "I watched her crumble and had to run and catch her," recalls Karen Grace, who teaches at Roosevelt High School in Seattle, Washington. Another student had a "full-on panic attack" during class.

The anxiety in the air these days is so palpable you can almost feel it, Grace says. "I walked more panicked students to the health center this year than in all my previous 15 years of teaching.

"Students are just coming unglued."

A Double Whammy

Like Grace, most educators attest that student anxiety is on the rise. "Anxiety disorders are the most common psychiatric illnesses in children," says Golda Ginsburg, child psychologist and professor at the University of Connecticut. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, 25 percent of children ages 13–18 have a diagnosable anxiety disorder. Ginsburg says that number may be even higher, as anxiety is often "underdiagnosed and undertreated."

The academic effects of anxiety can be crippling, notes Jessica Minahan, behavior analyst and coauthor of *The Behavior Code*. When anxiety increases, "working-memory" skills plummet. Students might study for a test

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