



Less Stress Press

The Midwest Center

for Stress & Anxiety, Inc.
106 N. Church St Suite 200
PO Box 205
Oak Harbor, OH 43449
Tel: 419 898 4357
Fax: 419 898 0669

Dedicated to hope and help since 1984

Minute

VOLUME 1, Number 2
January 2001

"The Midwest Center is committed to providing the individual with cost and time efficient cognitive behavioral based solutions - solutions that foster strength, character and self-empowerment."

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!! The Midwest Center wishes:

JOY AND PEACE TO ALL, HEALTH AND HAPPINESS.

Remember a year ago we were wondering if the whole world would be turned off at the stroke of midnight? We had so many calls that Larry (our Director of Operations and computer wizard) and I made a special tape to comfort all who called. I wonder how many program participants smiled privately as the media tweaked us to the outer limits. I wonder how many of us, hindsight clear, can use this world event as an example of over reacting, external versus internal anxiety, catastrophizing... I wonder how many people put off, limited their actions, or avoided something, because they were uncertain about the future. Sounds familiar doesn't it? I think a lot of people without anxiety disorders were demonstrating: high anxiety, panic and avoidance behaviors.

I would imagine most of us who have or who are experiencing anxiety disorders can relate to the statement, "Everything I've done in my life has been with my heart in my throat, knees stiff and the knowledge that death was imminent." Fear is a good, God-given emotion. *It's what helps us get out of the way of a Greyhound Bus, but it was never meant to RULE our lives.*

In our search for a better life we've learned that there are hints that can help us to achieve almost anything. We must ask, listen and take action. The following are some basic hints for facing fear:

* Support. We are not alone unless we choose to be. When faced with something we are afraid of, be it public speaking, a new job, new baby, new semester, it is helpful to think of someone who has been through the same situation. It is helpful to ask for support. Not asking is almost always connected to PRIDE. Pride can be positive; it can also be a negative. If pride keeps us from achieving, it is negative. Choosing to be alone during a challenging time creates a safe environment to stay stuck-not change. After all, no one will know I had an opportunity to do the feared thing. It's "safe" to stay the way I am.

* Research "The facts mam' just the facts." The unknown is the basis for fear. Research, ask questions of people who are most likely to know the answer, read books, and use every resource available to you.

* Trust Once you've done all that you can do to ensure success, there is only one thing left to do-take action. Taking action in spite of fear helps us develop emotional muscle. Developing emotional muscle ensures that it will be easier the next time we are faced with a challenge. Trust yourself, trust your support system, trust the facts and trust your divine supporter. Trust is developed...through practice.

DON'T PANIC!

- Accept the feeling, it can't hurt you.
- Give yourself permission to feel anxious.
- Don't over-breathe. Breathe slowly through your nose.
- Calm yourself with positive self-talk.
- Let go. Just float and flow.
- Distract yourself, it is only anxiety.
- Use the adrenalin in a positive pursuit.
- Don't let a bad day scare you.
- Let time pass. IT WILL GO AWAY.

© Copyright, 2000
Midwest Center for
Stress & Anxiety.
419-898-4357
All Rights Reserved.

Into Action

This week: choose one thing that you have been afraid to do, avoided. Using the simple three steps listed, do some small part of the avoidance. Perhaps your challenge is driving distances as the following e-mail indicates:

*"I really need support with driving...
It seems the farther I drive the worse I feel."*

List* the friends and family I can ask to go with me for the next 2 weeks.

List the facts about driving distances.

List a schedule for practice over the next 30 days.

*"List" means **WRITE it down-Now!** ☺

Dear Cross Country Driver,

Please consider purchasing the "Driving with Comfort" tape. It will focus all the coping skills in the Attacking Anxiety and Depression program on driving.

The farther you drive is not the real problem. You don't need practice DRIVING distances...you need practice MANAGING YOUR FEELINGS when you drive distances. Distance does not determine recovery. If that were true it would be necessary for you to drive all the way around the world. ☺

Before you reach the point of trembling, refocus by doing your six steps (get those flash cards out-card 2). If you need to pull off to the side at first – do it. Eventually you will be so well practiced in the six steps, you will do them semi-automatically-like shifting gears in a standard shift car. The breathing pattern we teach will stop a panic (if started soon enough and done with the mental counting). After calming down, decide if you wish to go farther or if you have practiced enough for that day. It's up to you!

Practice. Practice. Practice as often as life gives you an opportunity.

Managing your feelings is the ticket-no matter what the limitation.

Positively yours,

Carolyn Dickman, Education Director.

Letters...

"Dear Midwest Center,

Thank you for speaking with me in Dec., it gave me encouragement to continue on the program. I appreciated you gave me another month to try out the program before making a decision. You also asked me to write to you in 2 weeks.

It has become easier to recognize negative thoughts and replace with positive thoughts. I do have a lot of things to work through at the same time (brittle diabetes, arthritis, running a business, a teenage daughter with learning disability) so it is very difficult to progress. I know that I cannot be making excuses, but need to overcome, no matter what the obstacles. Some days, I am not well, and all I can tell myself is that this is a hard time and I need to float through it. I WILL feel better later on. If I can keep remembering that, it helps me to get through without screaming..." Canada

Dear Canada,

It sounds like you have a lot of challenges. You know, I decided a long time ago that this condition doesn't happen to weak people. Look at you! Despite all of the obstacles you mention, you ordered a self-help program, you called for guidance and you responded in writing when asked to. I can't feel anything but admiration.

You are not a victim; you are a victor! REMEMBER, recovery is a process. Some days are more difficult than others. Stay in the moment. Remind yourself that practice makes proficiency. Discomfort is temporary! Action shifts our focus. We are here for you.

Dear Anna,

"Why did this (condition) affect me?" I believe we MAY be born with a tendency to be overly sensitive, inside and out. (Scientists haven't been able to prove that this condition is genetic. It wouldn't matter to me if they did. If it is genetic like my diabetes, should I just sit here with it? Or, should I do what I can to improve my life?) After birth we are thrust into a family, a community. We are affected by what we see – every day. I saw my Dad deal with anxiety by having a drink, smoking cigarettes, and being a work-a-holic. So I did the same things. I saw him deal with everything with anger. So I did too. It's called "modeling." He did the best he was taught and knew...

I didn't learn great coping skills, life management skills, until I went through the program. Most of us "hang in there," for a long time, we really are very gutsy, strong people. We usually take on more than most and we literally run ourselves out of power. A panic attack is the result of a tired body and a tired mind. We are usually very creative mentally—but somewhere along the way we get into the negative mode. We create in the negative; that explains the origin of scary thoughts.

For me the need to know the answer to the question of why and how Anxiety Disorders happened to me is no longer important. I only ask that I be taught HOW to become a more effective human being and that I continue to choose to be as unaffected as is reasonable.