



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

By CAROLYN DICKMAN, MIDWEST CENTER, EDUCATION DIRECTOR

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"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."

"YOU'RE TOO BIG"

"You're too big for the straitjacket." That's what the X-ray technician said to my baby granddaughter. I joked with my audience in the waiting room, "I've been waiting to hear those words all my life!"

Callie has some pretty bothersome asthma. Actually, it bothers the adults in her life a lot more than it does her. She runs until she can't, giggles until she can't – Callie lives life to her fullest. Her asthma doctor wanted some x-rays of her lungs, sinuses and tonsils. She cried loud and clear her indignation at the cold room and scary machinery. The technician wanted to use the board with straps but at 20 months Callie is the size of a 3 year old. The board was out. She was too big.

On the way to McDonald's, there must be rewards for enduring scary machinery, I thought about physical limitations that some of us must work through, overcome, and adjust to. We all know people without limbs, without sight, without hearing. Those limitations can't be "fixed." Those limitations can sometimes be modified, but by and large those people have to choose their attitude toward their physical challenges.

We also know people who have challenges that they are able to change. I have the privilege of working with people as they learn about FEAR. What fears are justified? What fears are realistic, rational, and reasonable? What can we do to take unreasonable fear and reprogram our response to it? As they begin to study the life-skills that will help them re-see, re-evaluate beliefs that they have held for a long time, they clean their glasses, adjust to the clearer vision. Eventually they grow and become "too big" for their fears- too big for their old habits, old thoughts and old coping skills. I'm "too big" to drink away my stress. I'm "too big" to smoke cigarettes any more. I'm "too big" to yell and pound my fists into cupboard doors. I'm "too big" to use my anxiety as a reason not to do things that I am afraid of.

Let's give ourselves a Christmas present this year. Let's all get "too big" for whatever is holding us back, down or up. No more straitjackets for me!

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.

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WHAT ARE WE MADE OF?

Since the terrorist attack on America many of us have made the comment, "The world will see what we are made of." Yes, indeed, they have.

The world has never been perfect, countries aren't perfect, governments and philosophies haven't been perfect and people aren't perfect.

The soft underbelly of America has been her compassion. I dare say that this country has hesitated to react to many attacks over the years. Our country has given billions to others. Those without conscience and soul attack the most vulnerable part. I do not believe that America has changed in her degree of compassion...I do believe that the rest of the world sees our strength-clearly.

I don't know how many therapists volunteered at the counseling center set up at ground zero. One of our most supportive and active affiliates is Dr. David Kaleta in Cleveland Ohio. He has been with us for many years. Of all the therapists I have co-facilitated group therapy with over the last 15 years, he's outstanding. He somehow manages to guide participants to "truth" and change in the most compassionate of ways.

One of Dr. Kaleta's claims to fame is that he was in the last class that Albert Ellis* taught (along with Aaron Beck he is credited as the father of Cognitive and Behavioral therapy). I can attest to his skill in administering this style of therapy.

I have heard that many therapists traveled to volunteer at the counseling center set up at ground zero. I spoke with Dave after he returned. He said he felt, "drawn to the site. I had to go and give my time." He described what it

was like to walk up to the barricades and walk the deserted streets. He tried to put into words the dirt, dust, and smoldering quiet. The utter sacredness he felt. He mentioned the seemingly tireless volunteers. He quickly understood, as he became one of them. Once he started, he didn't want to leave.

I suppose it's like looking at any unfinished business, "If I work just one more hour..." I don't know how it is for other cultures, but America doesn't like to leave things unfinished. We will have a difficult time accepting – not being done.

Those of you in the Cleveland, Beachwood, or Mentor, Ohio area may wish to work the ATTACKING ANXIETY and DEPRESSION program with Dr. Kaleta. Mentor office: 440-255-9255 Beachwood office: 216-292-6007

One of the many books Ellis wrote, **HOW TO STUBBORNLY REFUSE TO MAKE YOURSELF MISERABLE ABOUT ANYTHING...YES...ANYTHING!** Is well worth your reading time.

From another perspective: I asked a Croatian refugee on the program what she could teach us. She was 10, a little girl playing with her brothers in her yard, when she saw planes flying low toward her small town. Her brothers ran for the house when the first bombs landed. She was frozen to the spot. She was able to move only when her mother screamed for her to come inside.

She and her husband were able to come to the United States two years ago...seeking a safe, better life. She and we must deal with – it can happen anywhere. She could only offer that we should be watchful.

"No more panic attacks!!!! Thank you!!! It's been such a long time since I have written to you. But I'm writing now to tell you that I finally made it! Girl, you just have to know how good it feels to be FREE again. I can do everything! Go anywhere, be anywhere, without that old dread..."

Margie Allen

"I want to thank you for giving me hope. I speak from my much happier heart when I say that I am climbing the hill to recovery...The ATTACKING ANXIETY program helped me to realize that I was placing unbelievably unrealistic expectations on myself. I am still working on NOT comparing myself to others...Even though I have been through the program once; I am still listening to the tapes and absorbing the energy of Lucinda and the participants. Their voices continually reassure me that I am not alone in my recovery. Thanks again for helping me to live a much more HEALTHY life! S.A. age 26, ND

“I DON’T HAVE TIME!”

During the holidays it’s not unusual to hear, “I don’t have time!” “I don’t have time to exercise. I don’t have time to use my relaxation tape. I don’t have time to slow down. I don’t have time to treat myself with quiet, calm respect.” In effect we are saying, “I must run fast, fight hard. I must badger myself so that I get everything done; and done perfectly.”

I’m sure you are familiar with the Foxworthy comedy routine that begins: “You might be a red-neck...” A few summers ago, during a fabulous electrical storm we lost all power. We looked at each other with that face that says, “Now what are we going to do...there’s nothing to do!”

My son picked up his baby daughter, took her out to the open garage, and found a ringside seat for the spectacular lightening. It wasn’t long before we all followed. We all sat oohing and ahing, pointing and applauding nature’s beautiful display. This went on for ten minutes when from the back of the crowd (it’s a crowd when the Dickman family is all in one place-it was a two car garage), we hear the resident comedian, “You might be a red-neck if your whole family sits in the garage and watches lightening for entertainment.”

We might be rednecks, or we might have learned along the way how to get simple. The Dickman kids didn’t have a lot of fancy indoor toys. They might have eaten a lot of peanut butter sandwiches but they made their own fun. They played outside, not in front of the TV. They rolled around the yard inside big tires. They made mud pies and sand castles. I could have grown peas in the sand that was left in the tub every night. They ran, from each other, to each other, for each other. (One made it as far as the Boston Marathon-they are still running races.) We were and are-simple folks.

I bought my husband, Paul, a shed for Christmas. (We have to move some of the stuff out of the garage if we want to continue using it as outdoor all-weather seating.) I shoveled 5 ton of gravel for the foundation-mostly by myself. As you know if you read the LESS STRESS PRESS, I have 6 able bodied young men that I could have called on to help me, but the most important part of gift-giving for me is the time one gives and the effort. Gift giving is not about how much something costs. I gave the simple gifts of effort and time. I’ve earned the Christmas spirit this year.

This time of year it truly is important to remember to be simple: slow down, take time, give time, and make time. Make time to exercise, relax and be respectful of others AND yourself, be simply playful, prayerful and peaceful this season.

Happy Holy Days,

Carolyn Dickman, and the staff at Midwest Center for Stress and Anxiety