

HOW TO COPE WITH THE WORLD SPINNING OUT OF CONTROL

Boyko A., *JIC* – 810

If the 1920s were known as “Roaring”, the 1960s were about “Flower Power”, and the 1980s were the “Me Generation”, then the 2000s went on as the “Age of Anxiety”. And I think it’s true. Now more than ever we are worrying ourselves sick. Why are we so scared?

First, I believe a number of factors play into the “excessive worry” epidemic. We are literally overloaded, bombarded, with information daily. This “information crush” has the effect of short circuiting our electrical systems.

Then, too, people in general have less quiet time and very few understand how to get it. Solitude acts as a safety valve to let off “excess information” steam. Exercise, especially meditative types like Yoga, Tai Chi, and Pilates, and solitary pursuits like walking or running alone, can serve the same purpose.

Processed foods – really little more than conglomerations of chemicals with refined sugar added – also overload the central nervous system. Any toxins including food additives, overload the liver and make it work harder to keep the body functioning properly.

More heavy demands are made on the body by stress, which overloads the adrenal glands. Eventually, the body just wears out and the copy mechanisms break down, sometimes completely. The body processes “fear” in a two-phase approach. When fearful stimuli are perceived, one circuit goes through the amygdala, otherwise known as “fear central”. The amygdala is the tiny almond-shaped portion of the brain that doesn’t take time to discriminate or reason things out. It just sends out messages to the “fight-or-flight” mechanism that say “Hey, get us out of here!” The body responds blindly. Digestion and reasoning are shut down as blood is moved away from the brain and stomach and toward the arms and legs so we can “run like crazy” or stand up and fight.

A second, slower route is through the cerebral cortex. This portion of the brain takes time to analyze the situation and come up with a game plan. If it decides, for example, that the “ghost” was only some sheets “Grandma” hung outside to dry that are now flapping in the breeze, it will send a message to the amygdala to “stand down”. The only problem with the system is that the fear switch is much easier to turn on than it is to turn off. In fact, what scientists are beginning to learn is that some people have

switches that are stuck in the “on” position (namely chronic sufferers from anxiety disorders, like panic attacks, generalized anxiety, phobias, and obsessive-compulsive disorder).

So, what can you do if you’re one of those people who suffer from “excessive fear and worry”? At best, anti-anxiety medications can help you temporarily while you rebuild your adrenals and the rest of your coping mechanism. But you should be quite aware that many of these drugs have serious side effects and some are highly addictive.

I think, what works best for each person is highly individualized. So, a multiple-pronged approach is usually suggested. First, essential oils like lavender can have fairly instantaneous calming effects. A few drops in the bath or a foot soak or dabbed behind the ears work wonders.

Second, borrowing from the Behaviorists, one of the best treatments “fearful” people can give themselves is usually the hardest for them to follow. To reduce anxiety and worry, remove as much disturbing stimuli as you can from the environment. Change jobs or take a vacation. Cut back on the amount of activities you try to cram into a week and get more sleep.

Third, spend more time exercising. Exercise produces endorphins, nature’s antidepressants. Fourth, breathe – deeply. Oxygen is the number one ingredient your body needs to survive and thrive.

Fifth, try the cognitive approach. Practice becoming aware of negative self talk and transforming it to positive. According to Dr. Bourne, worries tend to imagine the worst possible scenarios all of the time.

One of the best ways to change negative self talk is at the subconscious level. The primary tool is hypnosis. After all, all habits including the habit of being afraid are stored in the subconscious mind. The particular hypnotic techniques used in working with “excessive worriers” include releasing root causes; parts therapy (negotiating with the fearful part and getting it to agree to relax); desensitization to the fear producing stimuli; anchoring a “safe feeling” button; providing post-hypnotic suggestions that work automatically to keep the person calm; and translogic, which helps move the anxious thinking from the emotional right brain to the logical left brain.

In the conclusion, I should say the following: once the people can begin to see the problem logically, they can begin to take actions to heal themselves.

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