



Lakeview Beacon

Helping People Find Solutions
Spring 2009 Edition

Lakeview Counseling
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Recommended Reading on Anxiety:

Freeing Your Child From Anxiety

by
Tamar Chansky, PhD

What to Do When You Worry Too Much:

A Kid's Guide to Overcoming Anxiety

by
Dawn Huebner
Bonnie Matthews

10 Simple Solutions to Shyness: How to Overcome Shyness, Social Anxiety & Fear of Public Speaking

by
Dr. Martin Antony

Quiet Your Mind: An Easy-to-Use Guide to

Ending Chronic Worry and Negative Thoughts and Living a Calmer Life

by
John Selby

Understanding Anxiety by Jill Kimball, ACSW

We all feel nervous from time to time. Usually our fear comes from facing a situation in which the outcomes are either unknown or predicted to be difficult. Ideally we use this feeling of discomfort to motivate us toward some action that will either prepare us to perform at our best or prepare for the possible outcomes. Unfortunately, for some this feeling quickly accelerates into intense fear, initiating physiological responses within their nervous system designed to prepare them for an emergency. This reaction is commonly known as the “fight or flight” response. It should be noted that research now tells us that this response is better described as “fight, flight, or freeze”. When there is no emergency to respond to, a person is left with a rapid pulse, muscular tension, a knot in their stomach and an overall sense of doom. This over-response is anxiety.

Anxiety is the most commonly diagnosed psychological disorder and the treatments for it are known to be very effective. A diagnosis of anxiety is made when a person is experiencing prolonged excessive worry and anxiety, accompanied by difficulty concentrating, irritability, restlessness, feelings of fatigue, muscle tension and sleep disturbances. Their fears are far out of proportion compared to the actual likely outcomes. A person finds it difficult to control their worrying and it is impairing the quality of life. Anxiety may be specific to an object such as a phobia or specific to an event such as public speaking; or it may be generalized, giving the person an overall sense of doom or preoccupation with negative possible outcomes.

Anxiety disorders are very real and no amount of “shake it off” or “face your fears” helps a person overcome this impairment, however there are specific techniques that a person can learn through therapy and there are medications designed to lessen the physiological response. Anxiety can be experienced by adults and children. If you feel that anxiety is impairing you or your child’s functioning, talk with your doctor or seek treatment with a trained mental health expert.

**Techniques
that
parents
can
practice
with their
children to
help
manage
stress
include
deep
breathing
exercises,
regular
physical
exercise,
adopting
self-talk
that
promotes
acceptance
and
calmness,
and
identifying
and
expressing
a variety of
emotions
especially
anger and
sadness.**

Anxiety in Children and Adolescents By Barb Cain, ACSW

We all feel a certain level of stress in our lives that helps us to accomplish the tasks of our days. It is when that stress starts to feel out of control that assistance is necessary. A simple definition of anxiety is: general feelings of worry and apprehensiveness about a number of activities that results in symptoms that can include restlessness or feeling on edge, easily fatigued, difficulty concentrating, irritability, muscle tension and sleep disturbance.

We frequently see families when parents are concerned about behavior shifts in their children and aren't clear about what is taking place. Anxiety often looks different in children and adolescents than it does in adults. This is largely due to a lack of vocabulary and self-awareness that people at a young age have to describe their situation. For example, a young person might come in with parents describing increased opposition, agitation and struggle with sleep. These are symptoms that could illustrate a number of situations but with the help of a thorough assessment, therapists can assist parents and children in identifying and treating underlying conditions.

Anxiety can be situational as well as biochemical. Children with anxiety often have a parent or other close family member who also struggles with anxiety. Situational anxiety is when a certain event is anticipated, or takes place, and a young person responds by developing anxious symptoms. This could range anywhere from being picked on during recess to having to make an oral presentation in class to experiencing the loss of a loved one. When there is anxiety that runs in a family system, children and youth will frequently not know what "tripped" the symptoms and they often ignore them until they become quite strong. At this point they may feel like their emotions are "out of control".

Our goal is to help young people who are developing unhealthy responses to anxiety learn more positive coping skills. Some examples of potential anxious behavior include: perfectionism, sleep disturbance, feeling irritable, being ore clingy to a parent, describing increased fears and acting out behaviors. Helping children develop self-awareness and self-regulation is an empowering process. In addition to learning to identify and manage a range of feelings, young people also can increase social awareness and empathy.

The most typical form of treatment in working with anxiety is cognitive behavioral therapy, which is described in detail in another article. Teaching young people to recognize the early feelings of anxiety and what is triggering them, allows the child to practice putting a healthier response in place. As they develop this skill, the children are less nervous about the feelings happening and the increased arousal state decreases.

There are times that anxiety in children and adolescents shifts focus and this can be frustrating for parents and the child. For example, if a child overcomes anxiety about performance but starts to struggle being separated from a parent, this shift can be a challenge to identify and treat. Normalizing this process can help take the emotional heat out of it and, again, using cognitive behavioral therapy, children can begin to use the new behavior in a variety of situations.

Easy techniques that parents can practice with their children to help manage stress include deep breathing exercises, regular physical exercise, adopting self-talk that promotes acceptance and calmness, and identifying and expressing a variety of emotions especially anger and sadness. By working on these skills with children, we are helping them develop their stress management techniques from an early age and they will be able to draw on them more easily as the stress/anxiety in their lives increases.

Online resources: worrywisekids.com, empoweringparents.com

Cognitive Behavior Therapy By Carol Murray, ACSW

Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) is designed to help people develop more balanced ways of thinking and more rational responses to those thoughts. It is based on the concept that how we think about things affects our emotions and behavior. CBT is widely used by therapists because it addresses everyday practical concerns, does not require an extensive amount of sessions, is found to be effective with many psychological disorders and enhances left-right hemisphere balance in the brain. The success of CBT is supported by scientific research.

Psychologists Aaron Beck and Albert Ellis are credited with developing CBT in the 1960's. They believed that maladaptive behavior or mood changes were due to inappropriate or irrational thought patterns. If one can identify the thoughts and/or behaviors that are causing distress, then one can change these thoughts and behaviors with the help of a professional trained in CBT techniques.

Cognitive behavior therapists often talk about the A-B-C's of thought and behavior: "A" stands for antecedent or trigger event, "B" stands for the behavior/belief about what that event meant (frequently this is an irrational belief) and "C" stands for consequences, which could be the behavioral consequence or emotional consequence. If you can identify the "A" (activating event) which lead to the "B" (irrational belief or dysfunctional behavior) and then "D" dispute the irrational belief or "D" decide to change the dysfunctional behavioral response, you will change the "C" emotional consequence and therefore, reduce distress by creating a new "E" emotional response.

There are certain "known" irrational beliefs that lead to anxiety. Catastrophizing: imagining that worse case scenario will occur. Black & white thinking: it's all good or all bad. Unrealistic expectations: believing that you must obtain perfection with every effort.

CBT treatment is comprised of identifying and defining the source of distress, developing an action plan, maximizing motivation for change and reinforcing the new thoughts and behaviors. In CBT, a client might be given homework assignments (to practice what is being learned in real life situations). They may engage in behavioral rehearsal within the therapy sessions and learn relaxation techniques (such as deep breathing, muscle relaxation and visualization) so they are better prepared to face the source of their distress. They may learn about mindfulness and practice challenging (or disputing) the validity of negative thoughts. Remember: thoughts are not facts!

CBT is very effective in treating anxiety. Anxiety is a pervasive feeling that something bad will happen. A person who suffers anxiety has irrational beliefs that lead them to overestimate danger and underestimate their ability to cope or get help. Anxious thinking can lead to significant behavior changes in an attempt to feel safe. CBT trains the person to differentiate between "real" worries and irrational or imaginary worries. Reprogramming of thinking, utilizing relaxation techniques and rewarding oneself for healthier thinking work to successfully diminish anxiety.

Recommended reading about Cognitive Behavior Therapy:

*Mind Over Mood by D. Greenberger and C. Padesky

*How to Make Yourself Happy by Albert Ellis

*Change Your Brain Change Your Life by D. Amen

*Thoughts and Feelings: Taking Control of Your Moods and Your Life by Matthew McKay, Martha Davis and Patrick Fanning

*Talking to Yourself: How Cognitive Behavior Therapy Can Change Your Life by P. Butler

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Information Anxiety! By Jill Kimball, ACSW

Do you feel anxious, lost or worried without your cell phone? When was the last time you checked your email? With constant access to the internet, television, cell phones, ipods, emails, Myspace, Twitter, and Facebook, is it any wonder that we feel a compelling push to find out all we can for fear that we may miss out on some very important information! Information anxiety has become pervasive in kids and adults; it seems no one is immune. Our faces and fingers are stuck to our computers and it all feels very urgent, but it's not necessary—this is the trick of anxiety! When I bought a new vehicle, I did enough research on it to become an expert; but all the while I just kept looking for more: more info, more photos, more opinions, more, more, more. It's time to step away from the mad rush for more information.

Too much of a good thing has become a burden. It interferes with our confidence in decision making, giving us this nagging feeling like something bad will happen if we don't check one more source. But it's not true, the world will not come to end if I don't know every fact about everything and everyone! The quality of my life may improve if I decide to make real face-to-face connections with real humans. This summer, try making a commitment to limiting your information pursuit, limiting your access to emails and social networking sites and increasing your connections to mother nature. Use your time to pursue real relationships. The sense of ease and peace that will come about will more than make up for missing out on the barrage of facts, tid-bits and friendly updates.

****If you have questions or comments regarding our newsletter please contact our editor,
Jill Kimball, ACSW at 929-0300, ext. 105***

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