



Anxiety – Is this a new epidemic?

(Energy Currents)

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The number of people suffering from anxiety is rising exponentially. Not only is it affecting adults, it is now a common occurrence with our children. Anxiety is an internal mental state of concern. It arises when a person's internal mind chatter doesn't stop and there is a feeling of fear or overwhelming uncertainty either due to an event that happened in the past or that might happen in the future. The mind thinks of a negative thought repeatedly or it thinks of many different negative things that could happen. In other words, the mind is over active and unable to ground itself, to feel safe.

From an energetic perspective, being grounded is a quality of 'earth'. A person's 'earth' is a reflection of their identity, their sense of safety, protection, boundaries, security and structure. Feeling safe and secure within ourselves, with our family and within our greater community is an essential part of being grounded and secure in your life. Yet, we are constantly bombarded with media that informs us that we aren't safe – whether it be our schools, streets, food, plastics etc. For example, the violence in schools, the recent recalls on children toys because of lead in the paint, on pet food because of contamination and on the increasing awareness of the risks and side effects of pharmaceutical drugs. The Hygiene Hypothesis is about people being so anxious about catching a bug from someone or something that we have made our environment so clean – with disinfectant and antibacterial soaps, hand cleaners, wipes etc - that people are now getting sick because the 'good' bacteria on their skin has been destroyed.

The over use of cellular phones, text messaging and emails has eroded the normal sense of boundaries. It is appalling how common it is to have someone carry on a conversation, on a cell phone, in public, that would normally be done privately. People say things, and type things in emails that they would never say face-to-face, and that they can't take back. Personal information is no longer personal. People do not use their minds now like they use to. The art and practice of face-to-face communication is lost with many people, especially young people. The act of speaking directly with someone else is a way of the body releasing tension and 'toxic' thoughts. There are different physiological processes that occur in the body when there is a direct conversation between two people, versus a conversation on a cell phone or by email.

Another way that the mind grounds its thoughts is to solve problems and to work through different options. Children are being taught to memorize information, not necessarily to think. There are tools to assist with everything, and the practice of problem solving is being obsolete. You don't even have to learn to read a map anymore, a GPS will tell you what to do. The mind doesn't have to think about where to find information; everything is just a 'Google' search away. Many businesses are process and technology driven. We need to recognize that the mind is an organ that is designed to do work. Use it or lose it, applies as much to the mind as it does to any muscle.

Many people keep their mind active most of the time, even when they are relaxing. Children and teenagers often spend hours focused on game-boy, play station, and computer games. The frequent bombardment of EMF radiation from cell phones and computers adds to the problem. If you live in the city, everywhere you turn you are confronted with visual stimuli with all the advertisement, flashing signs and poster boards. Even when people come home from



work, it is common to spend hours watching television as a form of relaxation, but what about the mind, it is still 'turned on'.

The nervous system is like a teeter-totter. On one side is the sympathetic nervous system, on the other the parasympathetic nervous system. In sympathetic mode a person is in a flight or fight state. In parasympathetic, a person is in a relaxed state. When a person is anxious they will be in a sympathetic state whereby their breathing becomes more rapid and shallow, heart rate increases and the blood rushes to their muscles and to the peripheral organs. It is also common for people that are anxious to have sleep disturbances, changes in their mood and cognitive function and increased sensitivity to noise, light and smells. In sympathetic mode the body releases cortisol, a stress hormone, which can further exhaust the body and often affects other aspects of health. For example, weight changes, blood sugar concerns, and cardiovascular problems and decreased immune function.

Most systems in the body function more efficiently in sympathetic mode, except the digestive system. The digestive system functions optimally when a person's nervous system is in a parasympathetic mode. That is why it is recommended that you sit down and relax when you eat and after eating. Relaxation allows the body to properly digest what you've eaten. It is common for people who suffer from anxiety to have digestive complaints as their nervous system is not in parasympathetic mode when they are eating or digesting their food.

It is important to remember that the mind will often 'talk' to you as a way of conveying information, caution, insight or discontentment. Many of the tasks that we do during the day, whether it is working, watching television or our daily tasks distract us from really paying attention to what the mind is trying to convey to us. Anxiety is often an over reaction to a situation. Many times the mind is overreacting because we are listening. We aren't making the changes in our thinking or in our life that are required. If your anxiety is worse when you go to bed, it is often because when you finally slow down the mind decides that it is now has your undivided attention and it will 'talk' to you with the aim of you listening, and often changing something.

Eliminating anxiety involves looking at your specific contributing factors and addressing them. For many, learning to minimize and remove anxiety requires listening to and retraining the mind. The first step is to become aware of what the mind is really doing. Understand what the internal mind chatter is about and determine what is behind the overwhelming concern or fear. Learn to bring your mind back to the present and to breathe slowly and deep into the abdomen. Remember that anxiety is always about the past or the future. Bringing your mind to the present, focusing on what you are doing right this second is often very helpful. Controlling your breathing is one of the easiest ways to decrease anxiety, to bring the body back to parasympathetic mode.

The following are some additional techniques to assist with decreasing anxiety:

- Decrease the amount of time you spend on your cell phone and computer.
- Spend more time having conversations face-to-face with people.
- Voice your concerns and fears. Often speaking of what concerns you will dissipate its intensity.
- Write down your thoughts. When you journal you see the thoughts in front of you and your mind is often be able to process the information differently.
- The best exercise to do when anxious is stretching or walking slowly as they help ground the body.
- Listen to drumming or music that has a slow, methodical rhythm.



- Avoid foods that stimulate the nervous system, such as coffee, sugar, pop or any 'white' processed food. Limit your fruit intake to two a day.
- Increase your consumption of root vegetables, such as potatoes, yams, beets, carrots, leeks and turnips.
- Eat warm cooked food, like a stew.
- Increase the structure in your day. Eat at regular times, go to bed and get up at the same time every day, exercise on a daily basis.

Anxiety is on the rise for a number of very valid reasons. Before you taking a supplement, herb or drug to eliminate anxiety, take the time to really understand what your mind is trying to convey and what in your life needs to be changed.