



Lifeline

anxiety disorder newsletter

A quarterly newsletter for people – and the families of people – who suffer from the panic brought about by fears, anxieties and phobias.

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Anxiety sensitivity

The first evidence of what is being termed *anxiety sensitivity* as a risk factor in the development of anxiety disorders is shown in a newly published study from Florida State University. The study indicates that people who feel fear when they experience a pounding heart, sweaty palms or dizziness, even when it is caused by everyday stress or exercise or too much coffee, are more likely to develop clinical anxiety or panic disorder. The findings came to light in an anxiety prevention study involving 404 young adults who were studied over a two-year period. They underwent interviews and self-report procedures, including the Anxiety Sensitivity Index (ASI), and were randomly assigned to a treatment or control group for the study. Those who scored high on the ASI in the initial assessment were found to be nearly twice as likely to have suffered spontaneous panic attacks and to have been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder at the follow-up point two years later.

Magic mushrooms

A controversial, small clinical study investigating the effects of psilocybin, the hallucinogenic compound found in 'magic' mushrooms, on people with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), at the University of Arizona, showed the compound effecting transient relief from symptoms, with one participant experiencing a period of remission for more than six months. While the primary objective of the study was to demonstrate safety as opposed to proving efficacy, the researchers feel that the findings do support the need for a controlled study. Reports of OCD patients having periods of remission after using hallucinogens led the researchers to experiment with psilocybin on nine patients who did not respond to other treatments. They all experienced significant reduction in their symptoms for up to 24 hours after they were given low doses of psilocybin. These were all previous users of psychedelic drugs in order to meet safety standards for the study.

Anxiety disorders not necessarily caused by physical illness.

Evaluating the association between anxiety disorders and physical conditions, using a German Health Survey of 4100 adults interviewed between 1997 and 1999 and the only study ever made in which psychologists and psychiatrists diagnosed mental disorder and physicians diagnosed physical illnesses, researchers from the University of Manitoba showed that anxiety disorders present in study participants were independent of recent physical diseases. The anxiety disorders were more likely to have preceded the physical diseases which included arthritis, allergies, migraine, respiratory, gastro-intestinal diseases. People with both anxiety and physical conditions were also found to have greater levels of disability than people with only physical conditions. Since anxiety disorders, when present with a physical illnesses, can easily remain undiagnosed in cases where illnesses such as migraine and arthritis may increase a patient's anxiety about the pain or where panic attacks could be mistaken for asthma attacks, this analysis of the German study is of great importance to primary physicians. The importance of recognizing and treating depression, in patients with physical illness, is now well recognized but similar recognition is needed in the case of anxiety disorders in view of their propensity to restrict physical and social activities causing the likelihood of the development and diagnosis of both physical diseases and conditions, such as substance abuse, without the pre-existing anxiety disorder being recognized.

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The current issue is always available for viewing or download from our website at: <http://www.designandcopy.ca/lifeline>.

Having a successful career despite panic and anxiety in the workplace.

Your stomach churns and you break out in a cold sweat at the very thought of supervising a project. Your heart pounds and you, literally, cannot speak when it's your turn to address a meeting. The idea of rationalizing what you know is a brilliant idea, just makes you want to run away and hide. And your boss? Well, it's easiest just to avoid her.

Yes, an anxiety disorder can be career-limiting. The workplace can be too scary even to contemplate actually being part of it. Panic attacks, obsessions and phobias can make it too difficult to secure or hold on to a job, let alone a career.

But it is possible to confront anxiety.

A little cognitive behavioural therapy should be applied. Identify what the anxiety really is – an exaggerated perception of not being able to handle the situation. Change that perception. Break the cycle and apply your corrected thinking to getting the job done.

Easier said than done, you think...

Break it down. Figure out what it is that's making you fearful. Confront your own assumption of what the outcome will be. Ask yourself – "Is this really likely to happen?" Replace the negative thinking with a visualization of a more likely and much more desirable scenario. Then, go for it!

Regularly evaluating the anxiety-provoking situations in the workplace this way, and correcting your perceptions will reduce the anxiety and allow you to do your work effectively.

There are a number of other things you can do to maintain your corrected perceptions about yourself and your anxiety:

- Make opportunities to confront the situations and people you normally avoid in order to keep your anxiety under control. Each time you do so, you'll learn a little more about how to handle the problem. The more you do it the easier it will become.
- Stop hiding from people for fear of your anxiety showing through blushing, sweating or trembling. Ignore it – it's the only way – and, what's more, you'll win people's respect.
- Force yourself to do the things that scare you by setting goals for speaking up where you'd otherwise stay silent, for using the lunch room instead of sneaking off home or spending a miserable hour sitting in your car somewhere. Take these things a step at a time – for instance; just verbally acknowledging support of

somebody else's idea, the first time, or asking if you can join your co-workers at their table. Don't expect more of yourself. Next time, you will be able to go further.

- Think about your successes when something starts to make you anxious; never think about what might go wrong.

Only confronting anxiety will cause it to dissipate. Avoiding it will never get you anywhere and could make you a prisoner in your own home. If you want to use your accomplishments and have a career, or even just have a job which allows you to pay your way, you must take the confrontation path and get past your avoidance habit. Every time you work through the problem, you become a little more confident about confronting it the next time.

The good news, today, is that depression and anxiety, and the stress that triggers them, are recognized as the most common mental disorders affecting employees. And, what's more, they are, increasingly, being incorporated into company health and safety programs .

Employers taking action.

For the past six years, a group of Canadian executives, under the leadership of chief executive officer Bill Wilkerson and the Honourable Michael Wilson, now Canada's ambassador to Washington, have been documenting the debilitating effects of mental illness on the Canadian work force. This Global Business and Economic Roundtable on Addiction and Mental Health has been continuously influencing improvement in the way mental health problems are perceived in the workplace so that they can be treated early and everybody can get back to work. Their *Board of Directors Guideline on Mental Health and Safety* is now endorsed by senior business leaders across the country. The organization raised money for the research projects and enlisted employers to volunteer their workplaces to be used as laboratories for the research. Some of the companies now have committees to monitor the workloads of their employees; others have human resources staff who keep track of the impact of stress levels on employees. The strategies may be different but they are taking steps where they feared to tread before!

The Roundtable's advocacy has brought about government recognition of the impact of mental health issues on the economy and the resulting initiatives which will, eventually, de-stigmatize them and put them on a par with physical health and safety issues when corporate decisions are taken in the boardroom.

From one reader to another...

Not the Only One

I have the world's best therapist. Maybe I'm exaggerating a little, but not that much. A lot of the progress I've made in conquering my agoraphobia is because of her guidance and compassion. Kathie is a marriage and family therapist. I spend an hour with her every three weeks. She receives a copy of each essay I write on panic disorder, including a recent one on my desire to be in an anxiety support group.

She told me that she thought about that essay for a long time and decided to start an anxiety peer support group. But she didn't want to do it alone. Kathie wanted me to lead the group with her.

When she asked me, I felt like I had won the lottery and I hadn't even bought a ticket. Because of the meaningful work she was already doing, I would never have asked Kathie to lead a group. I certainly didn't feel ready to lead one by myself. I usually have to give myself a push when I do something new. I try new experiences when I'm almost ready because I might never feel completely ready. Kathie helped calm my doubts because she said she would always be there to back me up. She made it clear, however, that she wanted me to lead the group, to do the talking. I remembered how much it meant to me when I first met another person with panic disorder. I had prayed for any opportunity to help other phobics. I was still fearful, but I didn't turn her down.

We could hold our first meeting at a clinic where Kathie had ten clients with various forms of anxiety. She mailed them invitations. She planned on introducing me and, for the rest of an hour, I would present basic information about panic disorder using my own experiences.

Since we were meeting in the evening, I had plenty of time that day for anticipatory anxiety. By early afternoon, I had a headache, restlessness, fatigue, and armies of negative thoughts. As is sometimes the case, thinking about doing a new activity is worse than actually doing it. When the time came to leave for the clinic, however, I made the twenty five minute drive with no problems.

I was eager to know how many people would be sitting in the clinic, anxiously waiting for the group to start. The answer was one. I'll call her Eve. Eve's first reaction was to ask in shocked disappointment, "You mean I'm the only one?"



As we spoke later, Eve's reason for alarm was clear. In her twelve years of panic disorder, she had never spoken to another person who had panic attacks. I could see why that happened. Back when I first had panic attacks, those were medieval times. But in this age of super cyber communications, I was sad that she felt as isolated as I had over thirty years ago. I promised to bring her addresses of newsletters and web addresses to access on her computer.

We also talked about reasons why phobics are so isolated. Eve, generally, has kept her panic disorder a secret. She hadn't felt accepted by some of the people she had told. She wished our disorder showed, just like a cast over a broken leg. Most people immediately offer to help when they see an obvious need. Because anxious people don't often show physical symptoms, other people aren't aware of the need for support or don't know how to be helpful.

I hope more people will come to future meetings of the support group. Naturally I understood why the turnout was so small. I consoled myself with the thought that Eve might not have felt as comfortable if she had to speak in front of more people, I also felt that my earlier anxiety was worth the time I spent with Eve. No one wants to be the only one.

Colette Carner.

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How to overcome a fearful and scary situation.

By: Stanley Popovich

Here are some techniques and suggestions on managing the fear caused by a stressful and scary situation.

The first thing to do is to visualize doing the scary task in their mind. For instance, you and your team have to play in the championship game in front of a large group of people in the next few days. Before the big day comes, imagine yourself playing the game in your mind. Imagine that you are playing in front of a large audience. By playing the game in your mind, you will be better prepared to perform for real when the time comes. Visualization is a great way to reduce the fear and stress of an upcoming situation.

Try to find motivation from within before performing the task. You will be more successful if you have a solid reason for doing the task. If you are not sure why you are doing it, fear will get the best of you. Having the motivation and enthusiasm will help you to manage the fear and increase your chances of success.

Get all of the facts of the given situation. Gathering the facts helps to prevent exaggerated and fearful assumptions. Focusing on the facts means relying on reality.

Take it one step at a time. Don't try to do too much at the same time because you will be easily overwhelmed. Take it slowly. Remember that each day can provide different opportunities to learn new things and that

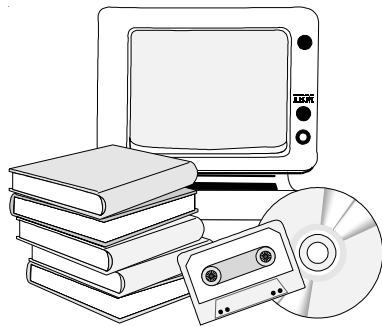
includes learning how to deal with problems. You never know when the answers you are looking for will arrive on your doorstep.

No one can predict the future with one hundred percent certainty. Even if what is most feared happens, there are circumstances and factors which can be used to your advantage. For instance, let's say that, at your place of work that you miss the deadline for a project you have been working on for the last few months. Everything you feared is coming true. Suddenly, your boss comes to your office and tells you that the deadline is extended and that he forgot to tell you the day before. This unknown factor changes everything. Remember: we may be ninety-nine percent correct in predicting the future, but all it takes is for that one percent to make a world of difference.

It is not easy to deal with the fear of the unknown. However, sometimes the fear can be worse than the situation. If you have trouble managing your anxiety, then talk to someone who can help you.

Stan Popovich is the author of "A Layman's Guide to Managing Fear Using Psychology, Christianity and Non Resistant Methods" - an easy to read book that presents a general overview of techniques that are effective in managing persistent fears and anxieties. For additional information go to: <http://www.managingfear.com/>

LIFELINE'S Media Review



Anxious 9 to 5: How to Beat Worry, Stop Second Guessing Yourself, And Work With Confidence. Larina Kase. New Harbinger Publications. September 2006.

People who have anxiety disorders worry about work for many more than forty hours each week they spend in the workplace. It impacts, not only, on their work performance, but on the general quality of their lives as well.

Anxiety 9 to 5 has clear and simple solutions for various kinds of work-related anxiety problems and for the people who struggle with them. Established cognitive behavioural techniques are employed, together with quizzes, exercises and coaching points, pertaining to each chapter, assist readers in conceptualizing and successfully overcoming their anxiety and effectively beat them. Strategies are provided for the many workplace problems which result from anxiety, whether time management difficulties, tiredness and lack of energy, difficulty

concentrating, avoidance, assertiveness problems or team-building. Kase addresses the problems which millions of people experience throughout the range of levels of nervousness - from talking with the boss to giving a presentation or taking on a new work role. She examines the way anxiety kills creativity and innovation and shows how mastering workplace anxiety leads to having greater ideas, working more efficiently and performing competently as a team member. She also demonstrates the benefits to employers who work with employees in developing strategies to reduce anxiety. Written with humour and using real-life scenarios to provide examples, the book is invaluable for people suffering from social anxiety and fear of failure in the workplace.

Martin M. Antony, Ph.D., chief psychologist and director of the Anxiety Treatment and Research Centre at Hamilton, Ontario's St. Joseph's Healthcare and professor at McMaster University, wrote the introduction to the book which is a recommendation in itself.

Larina Kase, Psy.D., MBA, is a psychologist and business coach who specializes in the reduction of anxiety and stress in the workplace. She has worked with the Center for the Treatment and Study of Anxiety at the University of Pennsylvania and, as a coach, assists business owners and executives throughout the United States and Canada in overcoming workplace stress, anxiety and worry. Her articles regularly appear in business-related media.