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**THE UNTOLD TRUTH
ABOUT ANXIETY**

WHAT NOBODY TELLS YOU

MYRA ESPEY

The Untold Truth about Anxiety

Introduction

Anxiety is a vital aspect of being human. If we never felt anxious we would probably be dead because anxiety is a protective mechanism that protects us from danger of different types. A small amount of stress releases cortisol – called the stress hormone, Cortisol influences, regulates or modulates many changes that occur in the body in response to stress. We need a tiny bit of cortisol release when crossing a busy road, this slight stress or feeling of anxiousness makes us alert and cautious. If we walked into a lion's den and did not feel anxious by the raised cortisol levels, we would likely be mauled. So anxiety is important. When we talk about an ***anxiety free life*** – we do not mean eliminating the vital release of cortisol to raise our stress and mild anxiety to keep us safe. When cortisol is released at the desired levels, it helps deal with stress by shutting down unnecessary functions to allow the body to direct all energies toward dealing with the immediate stress at hand.

These levels of anxiety as stated are important. They are also relevant. Being alert when crossing the busy road, and being cautious or reluctant to enter a lion's den increases valid fears. One can get run over by a car if one is not cautious. One can be eaten by a lion if entering a lion's den. These are real and valid fears, generating valuable stress and anxiety levels.

The anxiety we are referring to are exacerbated stress levels that create high levels of anxiety releasing

hormones, extremely high levels of cortisol which increases blood sugar levels which starts a spiral of physical symptoms well known by anxiety sufferers. Fast heart rate, sweaty palms, dry mouth when trying to speak, feeling nauseas or faint. Levels of anxiety vary. Mild , which is sometimes manageable and ignored, through to severe anxiety that can no longer be ignored. Somewhere in-between, levels of anxiety fluctuate, where one feels uncomfortable but can still perform, to levels where coping becomes a huge challenge and all the energy available is utilised on coping strategies. This can continue for many years – however without intervention, this level of stress and anxiety will definitely affect careers, families and ability to cope with life. **Burnout** it may be called. Some folk get physically ill, which is the bodies way of giving one a break from the anxiety triggers.

We will talk about the PEACE OF MIND PATHWAY after looking at the history of belief.

History

The history of mental illness and depression is fascinating going way back to ancient Greece. A good read for those who are fascinated. Wikipedia has a conclusive chronological listing of developments and trends.

Melancholia was the name used for what is now known as clinical depression.

The term depression was derived from the latin verb deprimere – to press down. In the 18th Century various terms similar to depression were given to men who were had intellectual brilliance. In the 19th century it shifted to women.

In the early 20th Century many types of mood disorders was classified as manic-depressive insanity. Depression and its allies are chemical imbalances affecting moods and mental ability.

Anxiety is different.

For centuries people believed that anxiety was part of normal life. Some people could get up and give a speech to thousands of people without batting an eyelid, and others were so nervous reading in front of their classmates that they would have heart palpitations, feel faint and have sweaty hands. Were sleepless before the event.

Other people got so nervous when faced with unpleasant tasks, that they felt nauseous, and physically sick.

It was regarded as part of ones personality.

Anxious or not anxious! That's it.

So the anxious just had to accept that as part of their life. Sometimes it was regarded as shyness.

They may have been told that anxiety is genetic and there is nothing that could be done about it. And, so they lived with it believing that it is a part of their genetic makeup.

Back in the day when this was believed, any form or mental illness was regarded as "Mad" and people were either hidden from public or, if severe, institutionalised, highly anxious people were lumped into this group.

Depression was not a diagnosable illness or state and was thrown in with the mental illness states.

Decades later, many in fact, depression was given a name and was diagnosable. Many unexplained behaviours that were shifted into the depression basket which was also still regarded as “mental illnesses“. When it was separated from Mental illness and given its own name and a treatment designed was designed. Or should we say a drug was designed. The birth of the anti-depressant revolution.

The definition of depression is – feelings of severe despondency and dejection.

This is quite the opposite of anxiety. This is defined as – a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome.

For decades anxiety has been confused with depression.

Very recently the two have been properly or accurately separated. Depression is a mental illness, anxiety IS NOT, it is a neurological malfunction. Even though this truth is known – drug companies have once again hopped on the bandwagon and produced – “Anti-anxiety“ drugs - supposedly to be the solution.

Myths about anxiety

The Peace of Mind Pathway dispels 5 myths that generally prevent an Anxiety Free Life

1 *You think you are ill*

You are not ill. You have a neurological pathway malfunction that is easily rewired – see section on neuroplasticity. Pretend that your body is a house. At some stage there were electrical problems in your house. A really bad electrician came and did the rewiring. Instead

of connecting the switches to the lights, he connected them erroneously to electrical appliances. Yes you did find ways of still switching on the lights and use the appliances . New patterns and pathways of using the dysfunctional wiring are possible – however it takes effort to try and find the right connections. This has happened to your body, making it harder to do simple tasks – the wiring needs to be fixed. When it is, – life becomes simple again, - effortless and anxiety free. It really is that simple. The rest is just a con job!

2 *You believe in an overnight ‘cure’*

These neurons have been firing in a particular way for a long time – they have formed habits, patterns and pathways – these habits need time to change and re-establish new and efficient neurological pathways. The reason for an 8 week structured program. It takes time to undo what has taken time to construct.

The drug industry will lead you to believe that there is an instant or quick cure. Pop the pill. You will no longer feel anxious – simple as that. After reading No 1 myth, you can see that you can keep functioning in a dysfunctional house, however unless there is intervention – rewiring the house – no permanent change can occur.

Because you are not a house and we cannot rewire you overnight as we can a house, the rewiring needs to be planned, constructive, structured and built on strong foundations. If your house does not have strong foundations – the first storm – Anxiety triggers – will flatten it totally and the mess will be worse than before the storm. A pile of rubble.

The Peace Of Mind Pathway is a slow structured process that rewires one bit at a time, slowly making changes that build the foundation and with a strong foundation as the walls go up, changes happen, a beautiful strong house is built – to last. It will not be affected by storms of old patterns that drove you to a state of heightened anxiety.

Your anxiety will be a thing of the past and will not plague you again because you have invested the time to make the changes and ensure that they are consolidated into your new neurological pathways.

3 *You think you “have to” talk about the problem*

Reliving the past and old issues can be counterproductive. You have already experienced the pain once – why twice. We do look at reasons for the malfunctions but then put them where they belong – in the past.

Two of the three Peace of Mind Pathway programs do offer one on one consultation. One every fortnight, one weekly, and one not at all. In these consultations you are free to talk about your past behaviours or issues as much as you like. The therapists are trained to deal with most aspects of human behaviour and trauma. However it is definitely not necessary. You may feel you like to speak to the person guiding you through the changes. I certainly do because I love to talk and I like feeling a bond with people I work with. Not everybody is the same, you may just want to do the program quietly by yourself. Either way there is extra help if you require it. Because the changes are at a very deep level, they will alter the way you view the past and as that changes, the stress of past experiences loses power as you move towards building a new house in which to live, in safety and peace.

4 *Think you are abnormal*

Anxiety affects 18% of the US population 18 years and older each year. That is 40 million people. The median onset is around 31 years old. Anxiety disorders cost the US more than \$42 billion each year because even though anxiety is treatable – only 1/3 of people seek help. Non-intervention is expensive long term.

From the time a girl reaches puberty until the age of around 50, she is twice as likely to have an anxiety disorder as a man. Anxiety disorders occur earlier in women than men. The fight or flight response is activated more readily in women and stays activated longer than men. Partly as a result of the action of estrogen and progesterone.

The neurotransmitter serotonin may also play a role in responsiveness to stress and anxiety.

Stats and theories abound – the only thing that matters to you is – how do I get rid of these feelings.

You are not abnormal – even though at times you may feel that. You are just experiencing malfunctions of your neurological wiring and this creates stress, fear and anxiety. A very large percentage of the population experiences high anxiety levels – sadly they aren't all lucky enough to find this pathway.

We are all human, we are all wired similarly – sadly when the wiring burns out or breaks – the wiring in the house

can fail. It does not mean the house is broken – nor are you. You both need rewiring. Simple as that!

5 *You hope the anxiety will just go away*

Tired of being told to “get over it” or “pull yourself together”.

The high levels of anxiety usually get worse as these pathways become more and more entrenched. The more people tell you the above – the more stressed you may feel, angry with them for not understanding, disappointed in yourself because you can’t – just get over it. It really amplifies the issue of loss of self confidence, increase in insecurity, sadness and fear.

The only way to deal with anxiety is with an intervention program. You need intervention to stop it.

The only way to change the patterns of anxiety is to replace these patterns with new patterns which work better to prevent the onset of anxiety.

The PEACE OF MIND pathway DOES intervene and create an Anxiety Free Life.

With the myths dispelled. Lets glance into the simple process.

SIMPLE INTERVENTION STEPS

These simple steps are integrated into the *Peace of Mind Pathway* program which is an 8 week program with new material added weekly. It starts with setting up a strong foundation then brick by brick builds the walls. There is no point putting bricks on bricks that have not been laid properly, the whole wall will fall down. So each week we ensure that the previous week has been integrated, assimilated and has become a new way of being. Some clients have taken two weeks to do one week of the program because they are busy or felt they needed more time for integration. So slowly the walls go up and the old patterns are replaced easily and simply. There is no magic moment of revelation – just a gradual slipping into peace of mind and a growing calmness and sense of being able to cope easily again. Every step is explained carefully in the program, so you know why you are doing things to support the changes. It is awful feeling like you have to do something you do not understand the reason why.

Step 1 – diet

You are what you eat – so they say. If this is true you need to look at the fuel you use in your body. If you put poor quality gas in your car, it will not perform as well as good quality. Dirty fuel can make your body and mind struggle to function optimally. We recommend small changes. We do not treat you like a baby by giving you daily shopping lists and recipes???? Help who want that added stress. No thank you.

The changes are small and gradual. At the end of the program you can decide whether to reintroduce fuels or stay with your new way of fuelling your body.

Step 2 - supplements

As the neurological pathways have been challenged with constant anxiety and stress they need support in the form of supplements to strengthen them as the changes occur. The supplements are for the 8 week program to ensure the body is stable and has the best chance for change. This is the foundation work. If we build walls on a wonky foundation, the walls may fall down. These are selected after years of research into effects of these amazing products.

Step 3 – movement

There is now conclusive evidence that specific movements stimulate parts of the brain which in turn again stimulate parts of the body and as those move stimulate the brain again. Yes you got it. A wonderful cycle starts happening where both the brain and body become more receptive and able to withstand the triggers that used to spark the anxiety.

These are not exercises, just targeted movements that should be done daily and take only 1 minute each time. See section on Brain gym.

Step 4 – calming the brain

There is no way an agitated brain can reduce the incidence of anxiety. Even though life obviously will throw curveballs frequently, if we learn to make our brains calm as the default – we will be able to utilise the tools we have learnt to eliminate anxiety.

We encourage meditation. Again we show you how to use it to reduce stress. Not create more stress. When I was first introduced to meditation – I was so stressed because I thought I was hopeless and failing. You won't feel like that on this program. We introduce it gently, slowly and take into consideration your personal feelings and attitudes into account. You do the best you can within your timeframe and mindset.

Step 5 – hormones

Stress hormone - Cortisol and anxiety have a cyclical relationship. The one produces more of the other. Excess cortisol definitely causes anxiety and contributes to the likelihood of an anxiety attack. Cortisol has a powerful effect on the brain. Anything that increases cortisol production, or sharp decreases in it, can cause anxiety. So balancing it is essential.

Sex hormones - Estrogen and testosterone imbalances can contribute to anxiety levels. Numerous studies have confirmed that anxiety often begins during periods of intense hormonal change, pregnancy, menopause etc.

Thyroid Hormone An overactive thyroid can also cause a significant problem by increasing anxiety sometimes to the point of a panic attack. When you suffer from hyperthyroidism, your body goes on overdrive and starts to increase your overall body's metabolism, causing hyperventilation and an increased heart rate, among other symptoms. Hypothyroidism, when you don't have enough thyroid hormone, also appears to contribute to anxiety due to the way an underproduction of thyroid hormone affects the brain.

There are two ways of treating hormone imbalances – one is with the mind, and the other is to use natural hormones to balance them.

In the Peace of Mind Pathway, we recommend hormone testing and using remediation as prescribed by an integrative medical practitioner together with the mind practises that are introduced in the pathway.

The role of neuroplasticity

Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to reorganise itself by forming new neural connections throughout life. Neuroplasticity allows the neurons (nerve cells) in the brain to compensate for injury, disease and psychological problems including anxiety, and to adjust their activities in response to new situations or to changes in their environment.

Brain reorganisation takes place by mechanisms such as “axonal sprouting” in which undamaged axons grow new nerve endings to reconnect neurons whose links were injured or severed. Undamaged axons can also sprout nerve endings and connect with other undamaged nerve cells, forming new neural pathways to accomplish a needed function. This is by no means a new philosophy. It has been around since the early 1800's.

This challenges the philosophy that the adult brain is formed and static, or hard wired. **THIS IS NOT TRUE.**

So what does this really mean? It means that the brain is plastic and can easily change!!!!

Wow how amazing is that. WE CAN CHANGE ANYTHING

SCARY yes – it can only occur when the change is structured, willed and repeated – to create a new pathway.

This is the crux of the ***PEACE OF MIND PATHWAY***. It is a pathway to start changing the brain pathways to suit whatever it is that you need to function optimally.

The role of Brain Gym

INTRODUCTION TO BRAIN GYM

Brain Gym is a specific series of movements to improve brain function. The brain is a very complex organ and is all powerful as it is the command centre for everything we think and do. Brain gym is based on neuroscience principles. These principles support the basic premise of the ***Peace Of Mind Pathway*** – neuroplasticity. The brain can change, and therefore so can any behaviour, learning and desired outcomes.

No longer can we say – “that is the way I am” or “I can’t change who I am”.

Yes we can change anything we want to change.

When the brain is not functioning in a whole brained way – the neurological pathways or neurons can misfire making an activity more difficult or sometimes completely inappropriate. This puts the body and brain under stress of varying degrees and this is the basic cause of anxiety. When the neurological pathway has the same action

repeated – it becomes a pattern and a habit. When anxiety becomes a pattern, it can continue for life unless the neurological pathways have new ways of reacting. There has to be some intervention to stop anxiety. Brain gym is a wonderful way of keeping the brain functioning at its optimum, as movements and new behaviours occur, it can create new patterns easily.

If the whole brain is not functioning properly, inevitably most parts of the brain will shut down leaving only the reptilian part of the brain functioning. This is where the fight or flight behaviour lives and when this is all that is available to the individual – they either fight, become aggressive or violent or abusive, or they withdraw into a shell and hide.

Neither of these are productive behaviours. They cause major relationship breakdowns both at work and home. Keeping all the parts of the brain functioning is vital to be able to withstand the triggering of anxiety causing situations.

This is why the ***Peace of Mind Pathway*** program is so effective.

Prerequisites for change to occur together with Brain Gym are:

Water – 8 glasses of water a day

Assists digestion.

Solvent and carrier for digestive enzymes

Assists breathing

Increases Oxygen carrying capacity of Hemoglobin

Essential for transmission of information in our bodies.

Oxygen

Humans breath approximately 432 litres of oxygen per day, and that oxygen helps the tissues in the human body function properly. The body needs approximately 352,8 litres of oxygen per day when the body is at rest.

Humans need oxygen to provide nutrients to all of the cells in their bodies. Without oxygen, tissues and cells will begin to die. For example, brain cells can only go without oxygen for three minutes before they begin to die. After three minutes of no oxygen, permanent brain damage begins to spread throught the brain's tissues.

The human body also needs energy in order to function properly. The human body uses the compound ATP for chemical energy for all its cells and tissues. Without oxygen, humans cannot synthesis enough ATP to keep their cells alive.

So getting adequate oxygen in our bodies is essential in combating the symptoms of anxiety.

We do this by doing breathing exercises to increase the amount of oxygen we introduce into our bodies.

This exercise should be done three times a day.

1. Breathe in through your nose and out through your nose. 3 times
2. Breathe in filling your chest, (push your chest out as you breathe in), breathe out through your nose. 3 times.

3. Breathe in filling your chest – hold your breath for count of 5. Breathe out through your nose for the count of 5. Do this 3 times.
4. Breathe in filling your belly (push your belly out), then breathe out sharply through your mouth. 3 times.
5. Breathe in filling your belly. Hold your breath for count of 5. Breathe out through your mouth for the count of 5. Do this 3 times.

The role of Meditation

What is meditation?

In a nutshell – it is the calming of the mind.

Meditation is a means of transforming the mind, using techniques that encourage and develop concentration, clarity, emotional positivity and a calm, seeing of the true nature of things.

True meditation occurs when the mind is calm and silent, yet completely alert.

One meditation technique is not necessarily better than another. It is an individualistic process and is what suits you best to achieve the objective of calming and bringing the mind into the present.

Why you should try it?

By engaging in meditation you learn the patterns and habits of your mind and the practise offers a means to cultivate new, more positive ways of being. Meditation has a transformative effect and can lead to a new understanding of life. In doing so it can reduce stress and anxiety and fears.

Why Meditation is important in reducing anxiety?

Meditation is one of the most effective forms of stress reduction. It is a means of attaining mental peace and tranquillity. It enables one to focus on the present moment rather than dwell on the unchangeable past or unknown future.

Anxiety is associated with the activation of the sympathetic component of the autonomic nervous system which, in its extreme, causes the “fight or flight” response. Meditation acts to reduce sympathetic activation by release of catecholamines and other stress hormones such as cortisol, and promoting increased parasympathetic activity ,which in turn slows the heart rate and improves the flow of blood to the viscera and away from the periphery. Thus reducing anxiety or panic attacks.

The role of conditioning and beliefs

Finally lets look at the role that conditioning and belief play in anxiety.

In the Peace of Mind pathway, we work extensively with the role of the conscious and subconscious mind to ensure that both are on board for the necessary changes to eliminate anxiety.

The conscious mind is the Pilot and the subconscious mind is the Autopilot. The aim of the program is to take total control back from external and other forces that have allowed the anxiety to grow unchecked and sometimes even out of control. At first we stay on autopilot because we have done that for some time – probably most of our lives.

Now comes the time to turn autopilot off for a while and get back on the right flight path by using the pilot. The autopilot sometimes takes us way off course. Then when the changes are consolidated, the autopilot can be turned on again so you don't have to think about every thought or decision you are making, the new pathway will become second nature and life will be back on track and "plane" sailing.

The subconscious and conscious mind relationship is fascinating. I love the book, Spontaneous Healing of Belief by Greg Braden. Explains this so well.

Just a brief look - the subconscious mind is much larger and more powerful than the conscious one. Your subconscious mind has a record of every single thing you have ever experienced throughout your entire life. It is often those experiences that unexpectedly surface in our lives, seemingly at the times when we would least like for them to be there. Upwards of 90% of our lives are directed from the subconscious level. These functions keep us alive. Breathing and digestion. We would not like to have to make these decisions consciously. For most part these automatic responses are a good thing. UNLESS they have created chaotic neurological pathways that cause us undue stress and anxiety. The subconscious mind is 500,000 times faster than the conscious mind. It is fast and works instinctively, without our thoughts and considerations getting in the way and slowing it down.

The subconscious mind works like a computer parallel processor, it divides information into small pieces that are sent to various places so that they can all be processed at the same time.

The conscious mind is slower, it processes tremendous amounts of information but relatively slowly.

This brief explanation shows how important it is to mindfully turn off the subconscious mind for some things, and function consciously while we are making the rewiring changes. We have to keep it in check because it wants to speed off and make us behave like we always have.

Once the changes have been consolidated and we have shown the subconscious mind who is really the boss – pilot. We can then allow its new way of behaving to continue playing the part it should in our lives.

These untold truths are not always available because the issue of anxiety has been overcomplicated. I hope this information helps to decipher what is really happening. In your body – mind relationship. Anxiety is real, anxiety is a misfiring of neurons. There is a huge amount involved in the way humans work, however the Peace Of Mind Pathway has taken all these factors and more into account in designing the process that will make the changes last.