

Frontlinefocus



SPECIAL EDITION | HELPING AND SUPPORTING YOU TO LIVE WELL AND SERVE WELL...

DOC #11

Events like the recent incident in Dayton remind us of the importance of having a support system in place to help those impacted by tragedy. For state agencies, boards and commissions, the Ohio Employee Assistance Program (Ohio EAP) is that support system. They have resources, such as Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) services, to assist and support staff in the event of a critical incident in the workplace. You can learn more about CISM and other services and training opportunities offered by the Ohio EAP by visiting ohio.gov/eap.

While we hope a traumatic event does not occur in the workplace, it is important to have a plan in place to deal with such an event. This edition of Frontline Focus is dedicated to crisis management and offers helpful information about how to respond to various crisis situations.

From the Ohio Employee Assistance Program Staff

What Is a traumatic event?

An event, or series of events, that causes moderate to severe stress reactions is called a traumatic event. Traumatic events are characterized by a sense of horror, helplessness, serious injury, or the threat of serious injury or death. Traumatic events affect survivors, first responders, and friends and relatives of victims who have been directly involved, in addition to potentially affecting those who suffer injuries or loss. They may also affect

people who have witnessed the event either first-hand or on television. Stress reactions immediately following a traumatic event are very common; however, most of the reactions will resolve within 10 days.

Violence in your community:

What you can do for yourself and for others

Whether you're involved directly, through proximity or as a second-hand witness via the media, friends or family, stress and anxiety are normal reactions to critical events. There are many ways to help yourself and others deal with the feelings that accompany violent events.

What you can do for yourself

Taking care of yourself is key to managing the physical and emotional symptoms that are common side effects of violence. You can start by incorporating the ideas below into your daily life:

- Eat well-balanced and regular meals, even if you don't feel like it. Good nutrition is very important when you are under stress.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Exercise regularly. It can help work off some physical stress symptoms, leaving you feeling calmer and better able to relax. If you're feeling lethargic it can help energize you and clear your mind.
- Avoid caffeine, especially if you are having trouble sleeping.

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Common responses to a traumatic event

Cognitive	Emotional	Physical	Behavioral
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor concentration • Confusion • Disorientation • Indecisiveness • Shortened attention span • Memory loss • Unwanted memories • Difficulty making decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shock • Numbness • Feeling overwhelmed • Depression • Feeling lost • Fear of harm to self and/or loved ones • Feeling nothing • Feeling abandoned • Uncertainty of feelings • Volatile emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nausea • Lightheadedness • Dizziness • Gastro-intestinal problems • Rapid heart rate • Tremors • Headaches • Grinding of teeth • Fatigue • Poor sleep • Pain • Jumpiness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suspicion • Irritability • Arguments with friends and loved ones • Withdrawal • Excessive silence • Inappropriate humor • Increased/decreased eating • Change in sexual desire or functioning • Increased smoking • Increased substance use or abuse

By the Center for Disease Control and Prevention: Emergency Preparedness and Response

- Spend time with other people. Coping with stressful events is easier when people support each other.
- Avoid the use of drugs or alcohol, including prescription and over the counter drugs to numb the pain. It will only complicate or delay your recovery.
- Structure your time and set priorities. Maintain your basic normal routine, but give yourself permission to skip the extras for a while.
- Don't make any major life changes or decisions.
- Do make as many small daily decisions as possible to reassert your sense of control.
- Don't try to avoid or deny reoccurring thoughts or feelings about the incident. They are normal and will decrease over time.
- Give yourself permission to feel rotten and to share your feelings with others.
- Do things that you enjoy. Take mini-breaks: go out to dinner, take 10 minutes alone, watch a movie, or read a favorite magazine.
- Talk about how you're feeling. Be willing to listen to others who need to talk about how they're feeling.
- Don't be afraid to set limits with others when you don't feel like talking. You don't have to discuss the incident or your feelings when you don't want to.
- Remind yourself you're having normal reactions.
- Write down your thoughts and feelings. This can be especially helpful if you're having trouble sleeping or when you wake from a troubling dream.
- Ask for help if you need it. If you are having trouble coping on your own, help is available from many sources:
 - Professional assistance from a counselor may sometimes be necessary. This does not imply weakness or instability. It simply acknowledges that the particular event was just too powerful to handle by yourself
 - In the workplace, you may be able to get assistance from your co-workers, human resources representative, or the Ohio EAP
 - Church, friends, family, and other community resources can be valuable sources of support

What you can do for others

When violent events occur – whether or not they personally involve you – it's natural to try and help friends



and loved ones cope with the difficult time. But we may not always know the best way to do it. Friends may simply need to talk or they may need help taking care of everyday tasks. The following are ideas for reaching out to loved ones during a traumatic time.

Listening

- Listen carefully
- Acknowledge feelings as normal
- Be sensitive to individual circumstances and different points of view
- Don't respond with "you're lucky it wasn't worse." Instead, say that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand and help
- Don't take emotional responses like anger personally
- Respect an individual's need for privacy. If someone doesn't want to talk about the incident or their feelings, don't insist
- Reaching out at work
- Organize support groups at work to help one another
- Offer a "listening ear" to someone who hasn't asked for help but may need it
- Give encouragement, support, and understanding with on-the-job issues
- Identify resources for additional help (Ohio EAP, mental health resources, human resources representative)

Helping family and friends

- Offer help with everyday tasks like cleaning, cooking, and caring for the family

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- Respect their need for privacy and time alone
- Suggest available help (Ohio EAP, community resources, church groups, etc.)
- Keep communication open – be available and accessible

By liveandworkwell.com

Common symptoms in children after a traumatic event

There are some common symptoms to look for in children after they have been exposed to a traumatic event such as an accident, a natural disaster, violence, or the death of a loved one. Children are likely to show signs of stress. These signs may resurface around the anniversary of the traumatic event, particularly when there are visible reminders (on television or via social media, for example). Whether a child was involved directly, through proximity, or as a second-hand witness via the media, friends, or family, they are likely to exhibit some of the following symptoms. These reactions are normal and there are many ways parents and caregivers can help children cope.

Indicators of emotional overload in children

- Regression: returning to outgrown behaviors
- Nightmares and night terrors
- Clinging to parents, fear of strangers
- Outbursts and tantrums; irritability
- "Fragile" feelings: easily hurt, tendency to cry more quickly than usual
- Nervous behavior, worry
- Withdrawal and isolation
- Suppression of emotion
- Physical complaints: headaches, stomach aches
- Changes in eating or sleeping behavior
- Bedwetting or thumb-sucking
- Excessive fear of darkness, separation, or being alone

Helping your child with emotional trauma

- Provide reassurance that the child is safe and you will protect him or her
- Hold and/or hug your child often

- Explore your child's perceptions of the event. Correct misinterpretations and answer questions
- Be honest and give accurate information, but don't give more information than your child wants. Give information he or she can understand
- Be more tolerant of unusual behavior
- Spend extra time with your child at bedtime
- Help your child to identify, label, and express feelings, and let your child know these feelings are normal. Model honesty about feelings by describing your own at a comfortable level for the child
- Watch for, and correct self-blame by your child. Children tend to blame themselves for all that happens around them. Make sure your child understands that what happened was not his or her fault
- Allow your child to mourn or grieve over their loss, whether it is a toy, their home, etc.
- If symptoms do not decrease in severity over a few weeks or if your child was exposed to actual or potential violence, loss, or serious injury, consider consulting a mental health professional who works with children with these types of concerns

By liveandworkwell.com



The Basics: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Toolkit

What can I do?

Following a traumatic event, it is important to take care of yourself. Talk about your feelings with those close to you. Having support can help you to cope with your experiences. If you are having trouble, there are things you can do to help yourself.

Seek help

It is important to be open about the experience. There are professionals trained to guide you through the healing process. Sometimes medication may be needed. It can help to start managing the symptoms. Tell your health care professional what you are feeling. They can refer you to someone specializing in the treatment of PTSD. Seeing a counselor to help with your recovery can be one of the first steps to healing.

Reconnect with others

If you are feeling numb, it may be a struggle to regain close relationships. Making an effort to reconnect can help with the healing process. Reaffirm existing relationships. Work to develop new ones. Spend time with people. Being involved in volunteer work can help you form new relationships. Helping others is a great way to stay busy. After a horrible event, it may be hard to believe that people are good. Involving yourself in volunteer work can remind you that there are a lot of good people out there.

Join a support group

Sharing with other survivors of trauma can help you. You can begin to build a network of support. There are many support groups for those who have survived a trauma. Find one that is comfortable for you. It is important to feel safe talking about your experiences.

Practice relaxation techniques

When our bodies are always on alert, it is hard to relax. Find time to practice breathing exercises. These are useful when you start to feel stressed or feel a flashback coming on. Daily meditation is a good way to relax. You can start with just a couple minutes a day. Increase your meditation time as you become more comfortable. Nature soundtracks, such as ocean or wind sounds, can help you to relax.

Exercise

Physical activity can help relieve tension. Starting an exercise routine can allow time daily to be free of the event. Exercise will keep your mind and body healthy.

Keep yourself safe

Be aware of your surroundings. If possible, avoid places with high crime. Making sure that you are in a safe environment will help you to re-establish the feeling of security you may have lost.

Educate yourself

You are the biggest part of your recovery. It is important to understand what you are living with. Learning more about the symptoms of PTSD can help you to create a plan for coping. The more you learn, the more tools you have for recovery.



Enjoy life

Find a hobby or activity that you enjoy. If nothing sounds like fun, try something you used to enjoy. Start gardening again or playing board games. Do anything that can keep you busy and teach you to have fun again. Healing is different for everyone. Find what works for you.

Taking action to help yourself is one of the best decisions you can make. Make sure that you are getting the support you need.

By Optum Behavioral Solutions



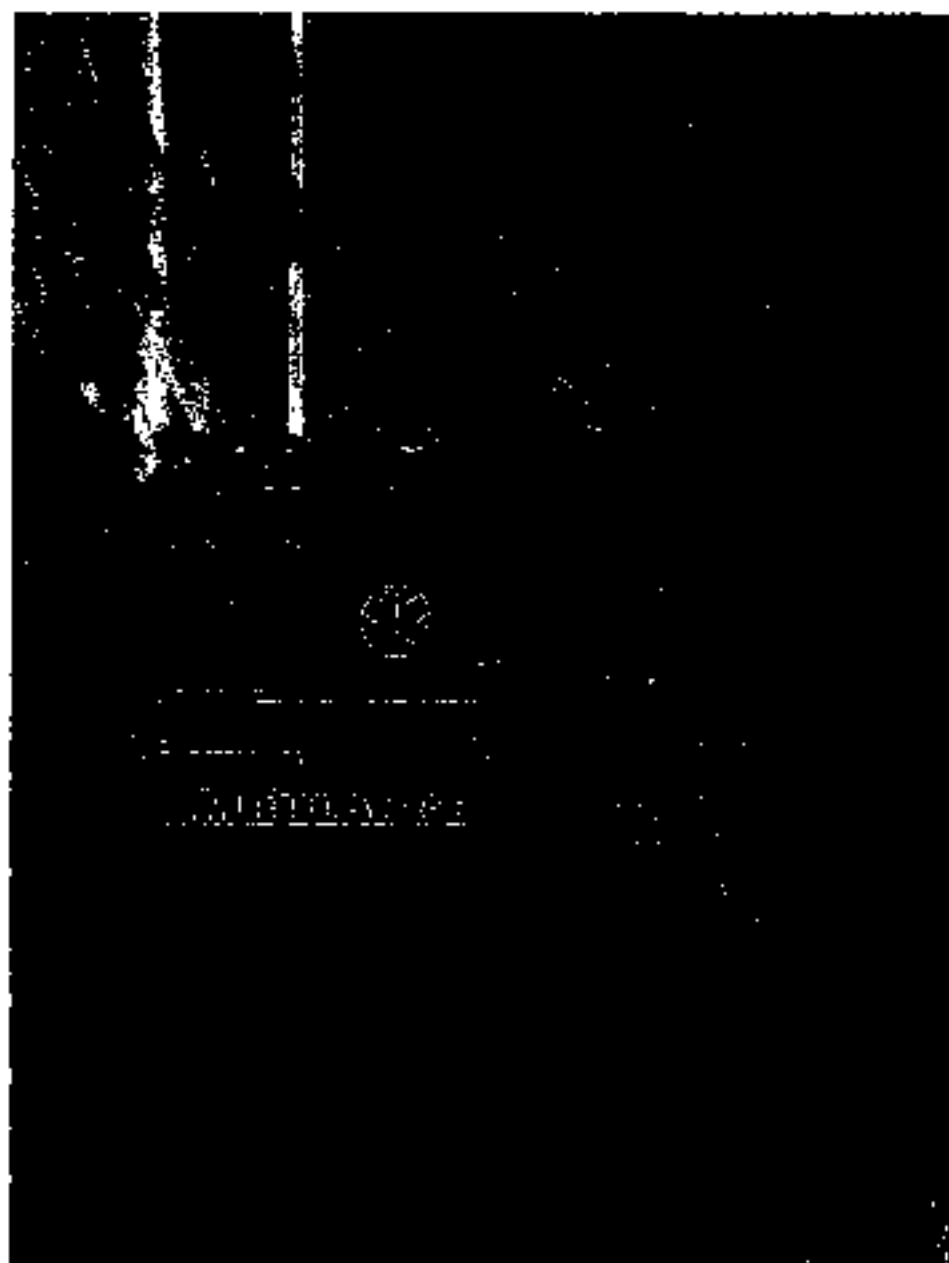
Your employee assistance program offers confidential help for personal problems and concerns. Concerned about a troubled family member who won't get help? Feel tired and exhausted, but don't know if it's burnout, loss of motivation, depression or all three? Late for work too often? Has the use of alcohol or drugs created a crisis you are facing right now? The bottom line: never wonder if your concern is appropriate to contact Ohio EAP. So, if you've been putting off taking action to solve a serious issue that is weighing on you, give Ohio EAP a call today.

Share Your Comments about Frontline Focus

Your comments are important. Please share your comments about Frontline Focus via Ohio EAP's confidential email address: help@das.ohio.gov. Your comments may be published in a future edition of Frontline Focus.

800-221-6327/614-644-6545 • ohio.gov/eap

Beth Kim, Ohio EAP Benefit Manager



Preparing for an emergency at work

- Know your company's emergency plans. If your company does not have an emergency plan, volunteer to help develop one
- Support each other. Determine how you will help each other in the event that public transportation is down or thoroughfares are impassable. Are there employees who could temporarily house, transport, or feed other employees?
- Know at least two exit routes from each room, if possible. Be able to escape in the dark by knowing how many desks or cubicles are between your workstation and two of the nearest exits
- Know the location of fire extinguishers and medical kits
- Make sure there is a designated meeting location and that every employee knows what it is
- Make special emergency plans for co-workers who are disabled or may require assistance during an emergency
- Never lock fire exits or block doorways, halls, or

stairways. However, keep fire doors closed to slow the spread of smoke and fire

- Keep your own personal emergency supplies in a desk drawer. Consider a flashlight, walking shoes, a water bottle, and non-perishable food. Contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency for information on workplace emergency kits
- Have a printed list of important phone numbers (e.g., your spouse's number at work, your children's school numbers) at your desk. Do not rely on electronic lists, such as direct-dial phone numbers and computer organizers

By the National Crime Prevention Council

How to respond appropriately if something happens

Unfortunately, anyone can experience a traumatic situation or a critical incident in the workplace, in public, or at home. Critical incidents may include:

- Active-aggressor or hostage incident
- Serious injury or death of co-worker
- Resident suicide or death
- Catastrophic accidents
- Incidents involving use of force

Rapid response is most effective in minimizing the long-term problems such incidents cause; therefore, employees, managers, and human resources representatives should immediately contact the Ohio Employee Assistance Program (Ohio EAP) by phone, 614-644-8545 or toll free: 800-221-6327, or email, oeap@das.ohio.gov, when a traumatic event occurs in the workplace.

Ohio EAP consultants are available to listen and to help with any critical situation or issues in the workplace. Ohio EAP consultants also know how to professionally evaluate potentially threatening situations, so don't hesitate to call. Your prompt response could save a life.

By Ohio Employee Assistance Program

Addicted to anxiety

Patients can work
with their conditions

BY DENNIS ORTMAN, PHD

As a psychologist in private practice, I am sometimes astounded at the persistence of the illnesses of some of my patients. It seems that their illnesses consume them. Sometimes I suspect that they have come to love their conditions and identify with their sick role. Consciously they hate their condition, but secretly they love it, deriving some benefit. Anxiety, in particular, seems to be one of those stubborn, treatment-resistant conditions.

For example, Rachel, a woman who battled anxiety for decades, told me, "I can't even imagine not worrying. I don't know who I would be if I were not an anxious person. It would be scarier for me not to have something to worry about."

Anxiety, sometimes called stress, is the most common and chronic mental health condition in our fast-paced society. It is so rampant that some people think being stressed out is normal. Research indicates that more than one-quarter of adults and nearly one-third of children will experience a clinical level of anxiety during their lifetime. For many, I believe, their anxiety, fear and worry become so persistent that it acts like a drug: exciting, numbing and bossing them.

When I suspect that a patient is addicted to his anxiety, I invite him to consider the following questions:

- Do you feel powerless to stop your anxious reacting?
- Does your life feel unmanageable because of it?
- Does your craving for control interfere with your life?
- Do you feel hopeless for a cure?

If the patient answers "yes" to these questions, it indicates that he is hooked on his anxiety. The anxiety acts like a stimulant drug that interferes with the person living a full life.

Even if all the conventional therapies the person has tried have not cured his anxiety, there is still hope. I use an approach that has helped countless individuals with a variety of addictions: the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). The Steps provide a framework for good therapy. I adapt the Steps in the following ways, which can be summarized in four moves.

Admitting powerlessness

When patients come to me, the first question I ask involves their goal in therapy. Invariably they respond, "I want to get rid

of my anxiety." They tell me about everything they have done to eliminate it and how nothing has worked.

I then suggest a different approach. "Instead of trying to get rid of it, why don't we try to accept it, work with it and learn from it?" I tell them they are powerless over the flow of their thoughts and feelings, their past and many circumstances in their lives. But I affirm, "You have power over your attitude and behavior regarding your anxiety."

I explain, "Your thoughts and feelings are like clouds that arise and disappear. They come from you, but are not you. You are the blue sky. Your anxious thoughts and feelings are not as solid as you think." That perspective often causes them to pause and think, "That really makes sense."

This first move suggests a clinical question: "What can you learn from your anxiety? What is the message of the pain?"

Moving faith in a Higher Power

The anxious mind dwells in a dark cave. It focuses on the negative, on what can go wrong, on "what if" thinking. I remind my patients that they have another mind: a wise, rational mind that views life from the mountaintop. I tell them that they have

As the growing observers and
 recognizing the power of
 business, patients realize
 the anxious reacting
 with them unless
 the awakening
 business releases

power within themselves that probably goes unnoticed because they do not pay close enough attention. It is the power of consciousness.

I invite my patients to become astute observers of themselves. I tell them, "Imagine that your thoughts and feelings flow like a river. You can try to stop the flow. But the waters still get through. You can jump into the stream and be carried along by the thoughts and feelings, drown-

ing yourself. Or you can step back and become an observer."

As observers we can sense our freedom from the control of our thoughts and feelings. We do not have to react and follow blindly our impulses to action. We can stop, think and consider before acting. That is the power of consciousness, whose source is mysterious and unlimited. This power goes by many names: the Life Force, Spirit, Creative Intelligence or Gracious

Mystery. Whatever it is called, most of us recognize we are connected to something larger than ourselves.

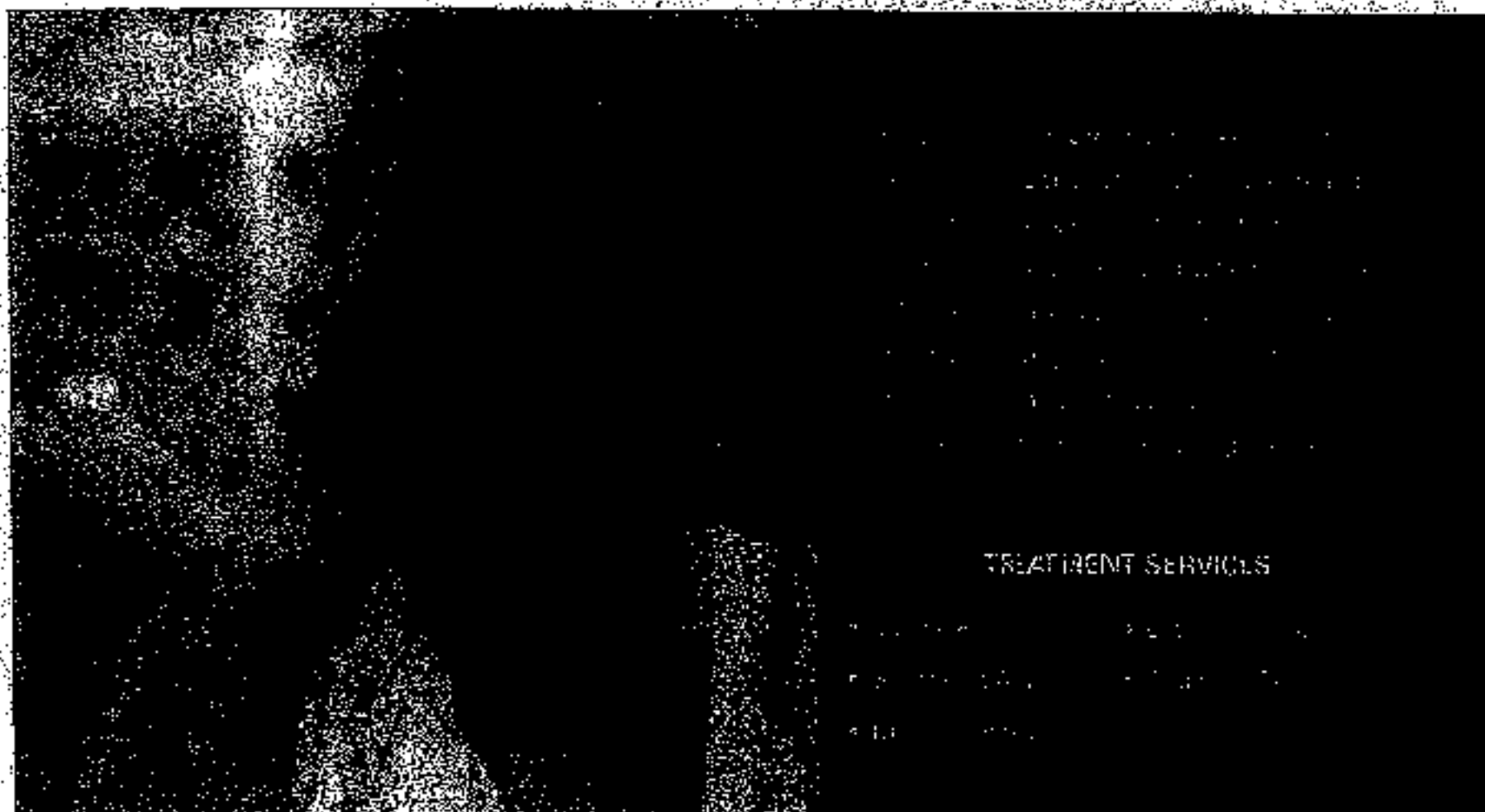
In becoming observers and experiencing the power of consciousness, patients realize that their anxious reacting cannot control them unless they let it. The awakening of consciousness releases the spirit of their true self. That is the gift of Steps 2 and 3 in AA.

This move suggests another clinical question: "Do you want to trust your anxious mind or your wise, rational mind?"

Seeing anxiety as a symptom

My patients think that being anxious is their real problem because it is so painful. Actually, their anxious reaction is a symptom of a deeper underlying problem. Anxiety arises from a fear of losing what we consider important, even necessary, for our happiness. We may fear losing love, control, status, health, possessions and so forth. What we fear losing reveals what we cling to for happiness.

At the core of anxiety is a negative self-centeredness that craves security. The anxious mind creates the illusion of security



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by hanging on to fixed pessimistic ideas. It is not the anxiety that is the problem but excessive attachments. We value some things too highly and become terrified of losing them.

I tell my patients, "Pay close attention to your fears. Put into words the thoughts that are running through your head when you are anxious. They will tell you what you value." Standing back as observers, they can then ask themselves if their fears of loss are realistic. Are they trying to protect something that is not really essential to their well-being? Our attachments keep us from being our true self. Such housecleaning is the work of Steps 4 to 7 in AA.

This move proposes a clinical question: "What do you fear losing? What do you hang on to desperately, believing you need it for happiness?"

Following one's values

I ask my patients, "What would you do if you were not so anxious?" They often give me a long list of their desires, which indicates what is important to them. "What keeps you from doing those things?" I ask. "My anxiety," they say, as if it is obvious. I then counter with, "Why do you give your anxiety so much control over your life?"

I challenge them. I tell them they have a choice. They can let their anxious reactions control them, or they can choose to follow a value-directed life. Anxious reactions often come automatically from early emotional programming. Only a conscious choice can change the direction of our life.

I further explain, "Anxiety, although it is distressful, will never really harm you. What harms you are the ways you manage your anxiety. Your fearful reactions make you shrink your life. You withdraw from life to protect yourself. But the real threat is your loss of a meaningful life." My patients begin to recognize that they have disempowered themselves by following the dictates of their fears. Living according to our authentic, freely chosen values is the work of Steps 8 and 9 in AA.

This move invites some clinical considerations: "What do you value in life? How can you pursue freely what is important to you? What interferes?"

Daily practices

I tell my patients they can begin to turn

down the volume on their anxiety and reclaim their power by following a few daily practices, which Steps 10 to 12 in AA recommend. The first is to make regular spot checks when they sense anxiety arising. Stop and notice the early tremors of nervousness before they gather momentum and become an avalanche. Second, I urge them to take time for silence, in order to become more aware of the presence of their powerful observing self. They should learn to trust it. Finally, they should pay attention to what they truly value and pursue it. I assure them that their freedom and joy will come in helping others and escaping the self-centeredness of their fearful reactions.

At my suggestion, Rachel joined an

Emotions Anonymous group and began working the Steps. She later told me, "It was like a miracle. I'm not entirely free of my anxiety, but I'm not its slave like I used to be."

Dennis Ortman, PhD, has been a psychologist in private practice in the Detroit area for the past 23 years. Previously, he was a Catholic priest for 14 years. He specializes in treating individuals with addictions, and he attempts to integrate psychological and spiritual perspectives in his work. Ortman has published six books on treating addictions and on the trauma of infidelity.



Addiction impacts every aspect of a person's life.

Treat it with a recovery program that impacts every aspect of a person's life.

As a world-class residential addiction and co-occurring disorder treatment facility, Cedar is uniquely capable of providing fully integrated care that's personalized to each individual's unique condition. Using a holistic approach to heal the mind, body and spirit, our intensive treatment program includes pharmacology, psychiatric services and advanced medical care. Call us to learn more about referrals, or even to refer someone today.



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