

Healing the Deeper Causes of Anxiety

Are you an anxious person? Maybe you just suffer from bouts of anxiety from time to time? Alternatively, you may not be a particularly anxious person, but someone you love dearly suffers from anxiety. Well I have some good news for you this month. Whilst going through a quite debilitating bout of anxiety on my way home from Assisi last week, I discovered an American doctor on You Tube called Russell Kennedy who has some absolutely fabulous advice for dealing with anxiety – just a little of which I am going to share with you in this message.

First of all, you need to know that anxiety is neither a mental illness, nor a character defect, however debilitating it may seem to be at times. Chronic anxiety is fundamentally a coping mechanism that usually stems from some unresolved childhood trauma or emotional distress. As a young child, you probably froze if you felt as though you were in a dangerous situation with no way to escape. Now many years later, that traumatised child still goes into a state of shock when something in your current life triggers some fear deep within your system. You then tense up against that deep inner pain. Simultaneously, your body starts to go into ‘alarm mode’ and so you feel physical sensations such as a tightness in your jaw, a fluttering in your chest, or a soreness in your solar plexus that you then label as ‘anxiety’.

Once you notice these uncomfortable sensations in your physical body, you will probably start to think fearful thoughts such as, ‘Oh no. I am really anxious again. There is no way I will sleep well tonight. My anxiety is going to trigger my insomnia!’ Or, ‘Oh no, I am feeling so anxious this evening. If I go to that party, I am going to have a panic attack. I will just have to stay at home until this passes. Why am I such a wimp?’

Now you have created the perfect anxiety loop. Anxious sensations somewhere in the mid-line of your body have triggered anxious thoughts in your mind that then create yet more tension and pain your body. What can you do?

Well the first thing to do is to bring your awareness directly to the uncomfortable sensations in your body. Then, slow your breath right down and soften around those unpleasant sensations. Next, find a part of your body that feels open and relaxed – maybe your toes, your fingers, or just one toe – and

focus on that more relaxed part of your body for a few minutes. What we focus on gets stronger. So if whenever we are anxious, we focus on even the smallest part of our body that is relaxed, that sense of relaxation will spread.

Now this practice can certainly deal with the immediate discomfort of anxiety. However, it is only the first step on a long and often pretty challenging journey towards being able to handle anxiety much more effectively whenever it makes an unwelcome appearance in your life.

In order to heal the deeper cause of your chronic anxiety, you need to start listening to the cries of your distressed inner child. You need to hold your emotionally distraught child in unconditional, self-compassion or loving kindness until she/he finally feels safe and protected. Although it may be possible to do this on your own, in my experience, you will probably need a wonderful friend or counsellor of some kind to hold you in a really safe, loving space as you allow your suppressed, and highly upset inner child to feel their true feelings whilst being held, supported and soothed in unconditional Love Energy.

Let me give you a real life example of how this deep healing works. Last week I was on retreat in Assisi and the retreat leader was a lovely man called Vinod. As the week unfolded, I became aware that Vinod was supporting me in an exceptionally kind and loving way – like a perfect mother! I also had a deep conversation with a lovely woman on our retreat who, just like me, had been adopted as a tiny baby.

When the retreat ended and I started a two day journey home, I began to feel anxious for no particular reason that I could think of, although I did realise that I was missing Vinod's motherly presence.

Then when I arrived at Rome airport tired after a long train journey, a man approached me and asked if I needed a taxi. When I said 'Yes', he grabbed my case and started walking out of the airport. I immediately said to myself, 'This is a scam!' But for some reason, I just kept following him without protest. I ended up paying him 50 Euros for a 10 minute ride that should have cost 30 Euros at the very most. Of course, in itself, this was no big deal. However this incident triggered even more anxiety on top of the anxiety I was already feeling since leaving Assisi.

I did not sleep at all well that night and I just could not wait to fly home the next day. Almost as soon as I got home to Gloria, I collapsed in her arms and sobbed my heart out for quite some time before wailing in a babyish voice, 'I want my Mummy!' The next day, I found myself curling up on the sofa and sucking my thumb like a small baby! By this point, I knew for sure that I was going through a deep healing around being removed from my natural mother at six weeks old after she had breastfed me for several weeks. I was also releasing some of the emotional distress I experienced in relation to my adoptive mother who had a phobia about physical contact and so never cuddled me when I was a baby or toddler even when I was frightened or really upset.

After allowing this suppressed heartbroken baby to release her deep pain and distress, I felt calm but incredibly tired. I went to sleep at 9pm that night and slept deeply for 10 hours. When I awoke, I knew that that particular healing process was well and truly over.

Now I know that this deep healing around one particular childhood issue in no way means that I will never experience anxiety again. However, I am so grateful that my anxiety as I made my way home from the retreat triggered such a deep healing and also led me to find Russell Kennedy MD on You Tube. This guy is amazing as he uses his own life-long struggle with severe, long-term anxiety to help others to heal their own anxiety and panic attacks. He has loads of You Tube Videos you can watch for free. So if you would like some really effective help with dealing with any anxiety issues of your own, I strongly recommend you watch some or all of his videos.

Finally, please always remember that feeling anxious from time to time is not a weakness of any kind. We all now live in an anxiety provoking world in which we are constantly bombarded by fearful news and more or less constantly going through collective or personal 'crises' of one kind or another. Some anxiety is simply a natural 'flight or fight' response to these perceived dangers all around us. If you learn to tune into the sensations of this anxiety in your body and then soften around them, you will find that feeling anxious from time to time is no longer such a big deal.

However, if you suffer from excess or long-lasting anxiety, you need to know that it can definitely be healed on the deepest of levels by bravely releasing

some stored, subconscious emotional pain from your past. All you really need to do is put up a little prayer to the universe saying, 'Bring it on!' and sooner or later, the ideal conditions for you to heal deeply and safely will arise for you.

Your healing journey may feel ultimately challenging at times, but I promise you that it will be life-changing. As you finally clear a load of suppressed emotional pain from your past, you will discover, to your amazement, that you are living so much more fully, freely and joyfully in the present.

Bon Voyage!

Peggy Foster

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