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A Question to Ask Yourself: “Do I Have Anxiety Issues?”

These comments submitted by a subscriber to the Panic Attack Recovery Newsletter (to sign up enter your email in the left hand box) were very helpful in facilitating a discussion on anxiety issues or put another way, hidden issues that can contribute or cause anxiety. You'll see why; here we go:

Comment: “I am scared whenever I sleep. My heart races and I sweat. This feeling is really bad. Even when I am not scared, I fear that the same feeling will come again. So there, the fear leads me to that scary feeling. It's a vicious cycle. I would just panic as long as I get onto bed or even close my eyes.

It all started when my law programme began in August. I was very stressed (and I still am) and was worried about my sleep because I knew if I couldn't sleep well I wouldn't be able to stay up for classes and work. The initial fear was quite normal. It was just like an ordinary person worrying about their sleep. But then it got worse. I got panics, and after panics, I would be extremely depressed. I couldn't sleep. I couldn't eat. I couldn't go to school.”

Matthew's Response:

I think now would be a good thing to discuss something that has been discussed by Dr. David Burns, M.D., psychiatrist.

Dr. Burns indicates that sometimes anxiety and panic attacks are the result of a hidden problem or emotion (or can be exacerbated by them). Not that the anxiety sufferer intentionally hides the problem, it's more that he/she is not aware of it.

Two examples could be someone who really dislikes his/her job or really doesn't enjoy the degree he/she is pursuing at university.

What happens is that for whatever reason these persons cannot come to see how they really feel, i.e. that they do not really like their job or really enjoy spending time with

certain individuals that they feel compelled to spend time with. Instead of these issues being addressed, though, these folks generate symptoms of anxiety and panic attacks – not intentionally.

Here is another example of a variation of the above issues that still involves an issue/emotion that becomes hidden: You have an interaction with someone at your place of work that is very unpleasant at the time. You said some things that were probably hurtful to the other person but couldn't come about to apologize.

You go on with your work throughout the day but later that evening at home you begin thinking or feeling guilty about the interaction you had with the colleague and begin to feel anxious. Your hands begin to sweat and you feel faint. You go to the bathroom to splash some cool water on your face and notice that you are quite pale and that your pupils are dilated. Your heart is pounding at this point and you are obviously incredibly anxious.

Now because I am presenting this one specific example within the context of this topic it is probably obvious to see the connection between the issue that happened previously in this day and the anxiety felt afterwards which ultimately led to a panic attack. However anyone in this situation is likely to have forgotten about the incident that brought on the anxiety and probably has become enthralled with the symptoms of his/her panic attack.

What has happened is that the real issue hasn't been dealt with and has been brushed aside and taken over by the panic attacks and after the panic attack ends, the next concern might be the worry of another tank.

Notice that the original problem does not come back into play and has not been dealt with.

Now this is just one other example. The truth is there can be a many variations of what I'm discussing.

So in a nutshell here is what you need to do to discover the hidden issue(s)/emotion(s) at the root:

1. Discover what the problem is.
2. Take steps to deal with the problem.

Step one may take some time but it will likely be worth it to spend some time on looking back to see if there are problems or issues that have been unresolved.

Step two can often be quite quick to enact. It could just be a matter of following your instincts once you have a clear grasp of what the problem is.

There are obviously a variety of ways in which hidden emotions or problems/issues can exist but the important thing is for you to look at your own life and see if there are issues that you have not dealt with which could be at the root (at least in part) of your anxiety problem. Although not always applicable, it doesn't hurt to consider the hidden emotion model.

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