

# If You're Not Anxious, You're Not Paying Attention: Anxiety Compassion, Not Cure

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# PAYING ATTENTION TO WHAT?

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# GUN VIOLENCE

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- Gun violence is on the rise
- Mass shootings are increasing, more than one a day
- In 2020 Americans bought a record number of firearms, up 65% from 2019

AS OF 2020

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- Guns killed more people ages 1-19 in the U.S. than vehicle crashes, drug overdoses, or cancer.

# ONCE AGAIN, WE ARE WATCHING THE HORRORS OF WAR ON THE NEWS.

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- A state of armed conflict between different countries or groups
- A state of competition or hostility between different people or groups

Not all wars are formalized with official declarations

Not every armed conflict is classified as a war



# CLIMATE CHANGE

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- Global weirding
- Glaciers have shrunk; river, lake, and ocean ice is breaking up earlier; plant and animal ranges have shifted
- Sea level and more severe weather patterns
- Temperatures are rising (the arctic hit 85 degrees!)
- More droughts, heat waves, floods, storms, fires
- Permafrost thawing, releasing tons of methane gas into the atmosphere

# FINANCIAL FEARS

## MONEY IS A LEADING SOURCE OF ANXIETY AND STRESS

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- Over-spending is a top concern across generations
- A 2020 survey found that 48% of US adults lose sleep over finances
- Americans blow \$324,000 on impulse buys over their lifetime
- Parents go into debt to please their kids
- 52% of home owners are routinely anxious about making their mortgage payment
- Happiness only correlates with money up to \$75,000, but half the US doesn't make that much.



# CEO SALARY TO WORKER SALARY RATIO

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350 to 1



## THE MIDDLE CLASS OF THE PAST...

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- is past.
- By definition: a single person must earn between \$30,000 and \$90,000
- Group fell from 61% in 1971 to 50% in 2021

# LACK OF FINANCIAL LITERACY

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- Cost Americans \$415 billion in 2020
- Less than half of US states require students to take a course on personal finance
- 40% of Americans have \$300 or less in savings
- Most Americans (60%) do not have enough cash to cover a \$1000 emergency
- 70% of Americans say their financial planning needs work
- Over 40% of student loan borrowers aren't making payments
- Money is #1 reason why couples argue; second leading cause of divorce

# ADDICTION: CURE AND CURSE

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- Persons with addiction often report higher anxiety levels
- Drugs, alcohol, sex, spending, eating—give temporary relief, but with long-term consequences
- Tolerance develops requiring more substances to achieve calm
- Addiction can damage natural mechanisms that help relieve anxiety
- Self-medication and rebound cycle can make treatment and recovery more difficult
- Monitoring withdrawal is a huge hurdle in recovery
- Hyper-anxiety can last for weeks or months in withdrawal



# PANDEMIC

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- World Health Organization: pandemic triggers 25% increase in prevalence of anxiety (and depression) worldwide
- Isolation, loneliness, fear of infection, work constraints, lack of support, cessation of community engagement, loss of loved ones, illness—all increase anxiety
- In some ways, life was easier early on with the pandemic wall.
- Post-pandemic has created it's own anxiety

# SUICIDE RATES

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- Suicide is a leading cause of death in the US
- Second leading cause of death for people ages 10-14 and 25-34
- Important to know 90% of those who attempt suicide and survive, never go on to die by suicide
- Many suicides happen impulsively
- Stigma decreases chance of seeking help

# SADNESS AMONG U.S. TEENS

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- Teens who say they feel “persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness” rose from 26 percent to 44 percent, according to the CDC.
- 2021 survey of 8000 high-school students.
- 1 in 4 girls reported they had seriously contemplated attempting suicide during the pandemic—twice the rate of boys.
- Nearly half of LGBTQ teens said they had contemplated.
- Sadness and hopelessness have increased for teens since 2009.



# IT IS NOT TEENS BEHAVING BADLY

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- Eating disorders
- Self-harming
- Teen suicides are all up
- This is not a new trend or pandemic-related

# HABITS OF DISENGAGEMENT

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# DIVISIVENESS

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- Religion
- Politics
- Guns
- Climate change
- Immigration
- Abortion
- **COVID beliefs and management**



# LOSS OF TRUST AND COMFORT FROM OUR INSTITUTIONS

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- Church
- Government
- Educational institutions
- Big business
- News
- Science
- Supreme court
- Military, police, protective agencies

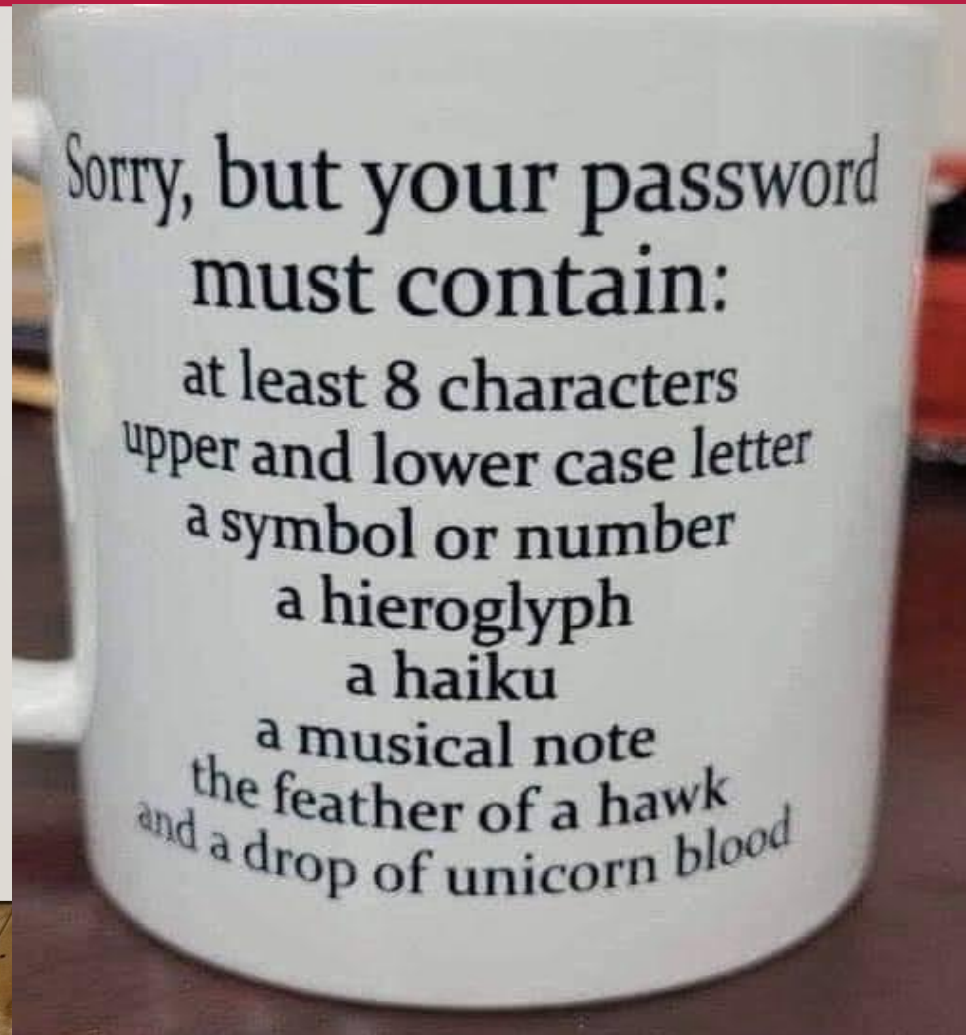
# AND WE HAVEN'T EVEN MENTIONED

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- Personal issues that cause alarm
- Interpersonal conflicts
- Loved ones in distress
- Uncertainty regarding the future
- Employment/unemployment
- Housing

# AND MY VERY FAVORITE ANXIETY-PRODUCING SOURCE

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# SO, IF YOU ARE NOT ANXIOUS, YOU MAY NOT BE PAYING ATTENTION

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- If nothing else we have just been through a collective trauma with the pandemic
- Feel less secure about our loved ones and kids safety
- Are falling behind financially
- Feel despair about the way our planet is changing
- Have lost confidence in many of our ways to have a positive impact
- Feel our way of life is threatened by deviousness



# TAKE AWAYS...

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- Get to know your own physiology and psychology
- Know your limits and set your boundaries
- Make a real list of the activities that help you keep your anxiety at a functional level
- Identify activities that help you “burn the churn”
- Find the most comforting spot and sit quietly without your phone
- Revisit a memory bank of uplifting experiences
- Identify your “comfort core” of people who calm you
- Do what you *can* do in the moment

# SOME OF US COME INTO THE WORLD MORE VIGILANT AND SENSITIVE

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- Genes—your parents; more women than men
- Balance of chemicals in the brain
- People with depression often do have anxiety
- It's not just one chemical
- Experiences such a trauma
- Your brain associates events
- Seeing someone physically abused creates a lifetime of vigilance

# BOTH ANXIETY AND FEAR ARE NORMAL AND HEALTHY—UNTIL THEY ARE NOT.

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- When faced with a potentially harmful experience, feelings of fear and/or anxiety are not only normal but necessary for survival.
- Our internal alarms systems allow us to stay focused and take life-saving action.



# DYSFUNCTION OF ANXIETY OCCURS...

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- When you can't turn off the extra energy when it is no longer needed.
- When an ongoing sense of well-being is not available.
- When even small events feel highly threatening.
- When it is used to offset depression.

# ANXIETY AND FEAR BOTH TRIGGER AN ALARM SYSTEM

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- Fear is a response to something specific and immediate
- Anxiety is a response to something imagined that *might* happen in the future.
- Fear mobilizes us
- Anxiety paralyzes us

# ANXIETY AND FEAR BOTH TRIGGER AN AROUSAL OF THE AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

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- Anxiety focuses more on anticipation of a future threat, with an increase in vigilance, muscle tension, and avoidance.
- Fear focuses on immediate danger and is associated with a fight-or-flight response.
- Panic attacks can happen with either.

# THE DURATION OF ANXIETY

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- often out of proportion to the original trigger or stressor.
  - Rumination-having repetitive negative thoughts
  - Going through the same cognitive loops without control to stop
  - Increased blood pressure
  - Shallow, rapid breaths
  - Nausea, GI issues



# RUMINATION

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- Often occurs automatically.
- Is not the same as problem-solving.
- Often does not have a solution (e.g. you don't really know what others were thinking).
- Important to recognize and call it by name; “Oh, I’m ruminating.”
- If it were problem-solving you would stop at resolution.
- Make a conscious choice to redirect thoughts.
- Understand that redirecting takes practice.

# ANXIETY CAN ALSO EVOKE IRRITABILITY

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- Being on-edge.
- Overwhelmed by worry.
- Concentration difficulties.
- Change in sleep patterns; too little or excessive.
- Highly sensitive startle reflex.

# 30% OF US

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- are destined to be impaired by anxiety
- What do we mean by “impaired?”
- Impairment occurs when anxiety interferes with your life.
- When it keeps you from being your best self.

# BY DEFINITION, GENERAL ANXIETY DISORDER (GAD) INTERFERES WITH

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- Work
- School
- Relationships
- Concentration
- Mood
- Sleep
- Enjoyment



# 30% OF US EXPERIENCE LIFE-INTERFERING ANXIETY

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- Intense, excessive, persistent worry
- Stress regarding everyday situations
- Lack of emotional regulation or calibration (no small events)
- Increased blood pressure
- Avoiding otherwise enjoyable or obligatory activities
- Experience can be generalized, social anxiety, phobias, or separation anxiety
- You can have more than one anxiety disorder

# ANXIETY CAN ALSO INTERFERE WITH:

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- Relationships
- Sex drive
- Decision-making
- Digestion
- Love
- Enjoyment of life

# ANXIETY AFFECTS

- 100 million people in the US
- Not including the lives of family members



# AS OF 2020...

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Anxiety is *leading cause of*  
*disability!*





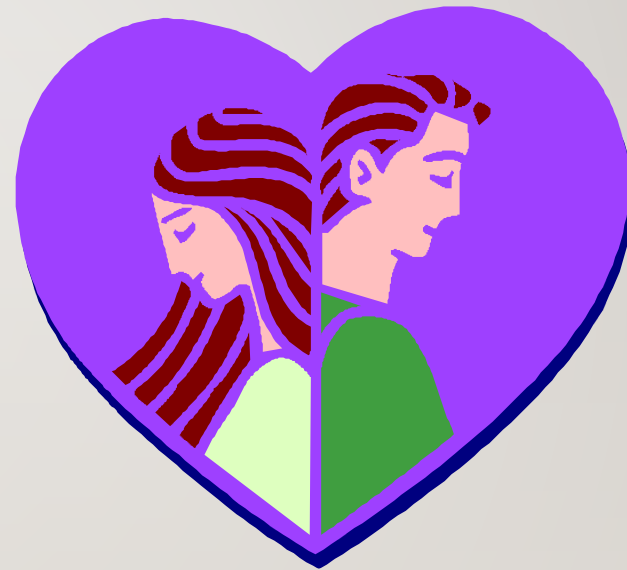
# A DIRECT CONSEQUENCE OF ANXIETY...

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- Alcohol/drug abuse
- Compulsive/addictive behaviors
- Broken relationships

# ANXIETY IS A PERSONAL ISSUE...

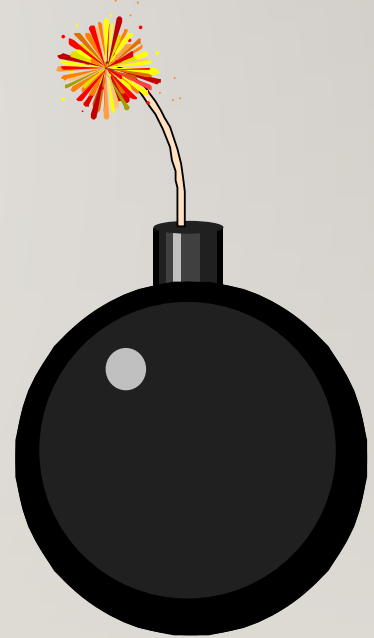
- With  
*interpersonal*  
repercussions



WHEN EVEN ONE PERSON IN THE  
RELATIONSHIP IS ANXIOUS...

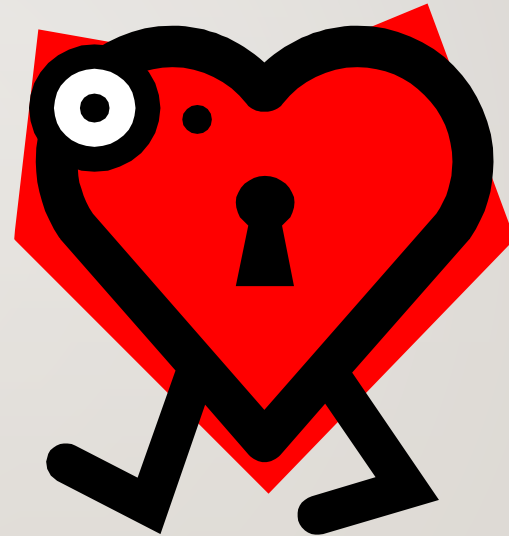
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- The divorce rate  
goes up *nine* times!



# IN RELATIONSHIPS, ANXIETY MAY MANIFEST IN...

- Resistance to change
- Controlling, rigidity
- Overreacting to slightest event
- Withdrawing
- Clinging
- Overfunctioning
- Suspiciousness, paranoia
- Jealousy
- Sexual compulsivity





# ANXIETY CAN BE MISTAKEN FOR...

- Over-functioning
- Insensitivity
- Lack of caring
- Forgetfulness
- Withdrawal
- Avoidance
- Procrastination



# ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

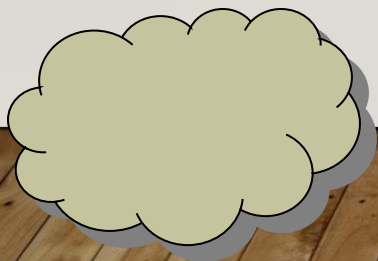
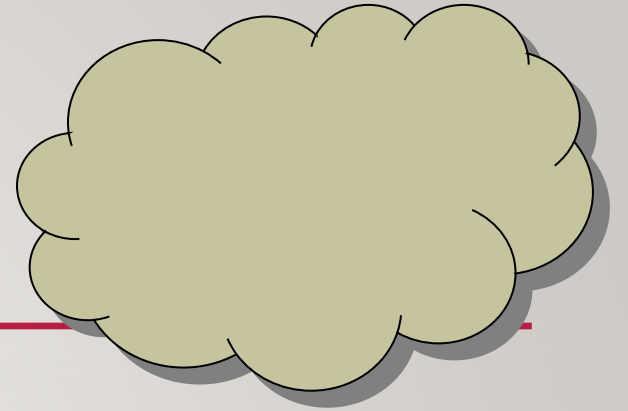
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- Are often two sides of the same coin.
- Two-thirds of individuals who are anxious are also depressed.
  - Anxiety may be more visible
  - Depression may be more visible.

# DESPITE YOUR BEST EFFORTS, AN ANXIOUS PERSON

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- Can defeat your attempts to improve the situation.
- Can wear out your support and understanding.



# PARTNER COPING STYLES MAY INCLUDE...

- Running interference
- Avoidance
- Resenting
- Feeling lonely and shut out
- Staying busy or preoccupied
- Compensating

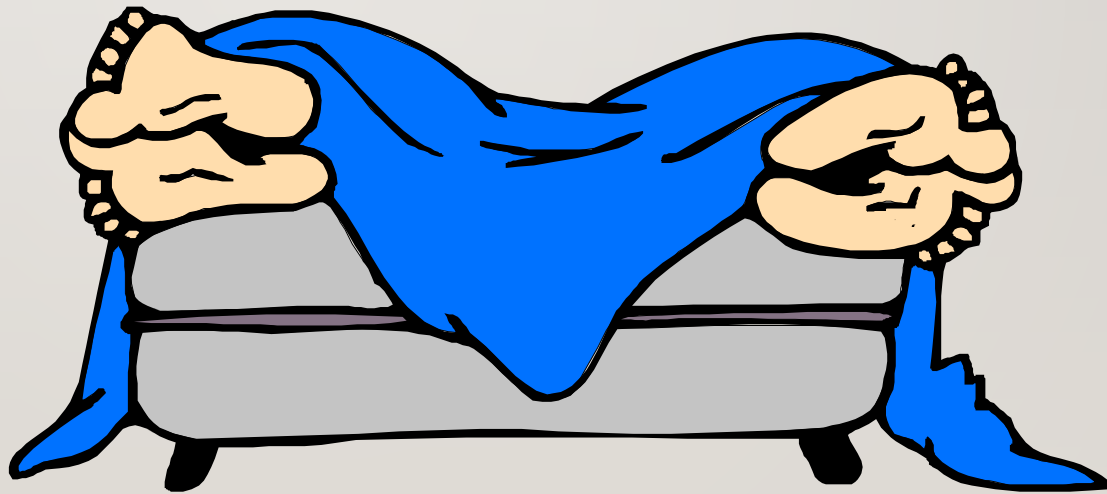




# COMMON CONSEQUENCES FOR PARTNER

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- *Exhaustion*
- *Burnout*
- *Loneliness*



## NEWSFLASH!

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- *You cannot alter your behavior enough to alleviate the anxiety of an anxious person.*

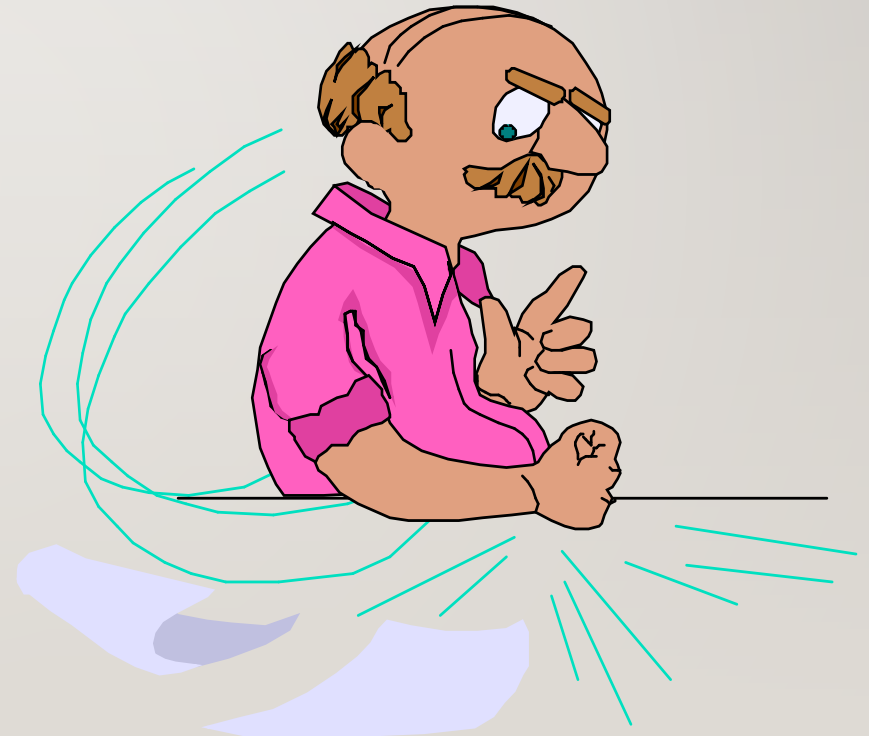
REGARDLESS OF THE SERIOUS IMPACT  
ANXIETY HAS ON RELATIONSHIPS...

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- Seldom is a relationship  
the sole cause.

# RELATIONSHIPS ARE FAR MORE DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN...

- when you are anxious.
- Most common symptom...





# PARTNERS MAY HAVE DIFFICULTY UNDERSTANDING...

- 
- that anxiety is *not*

intentional

## ANXIOUS INDIVIDUALS OFTEN

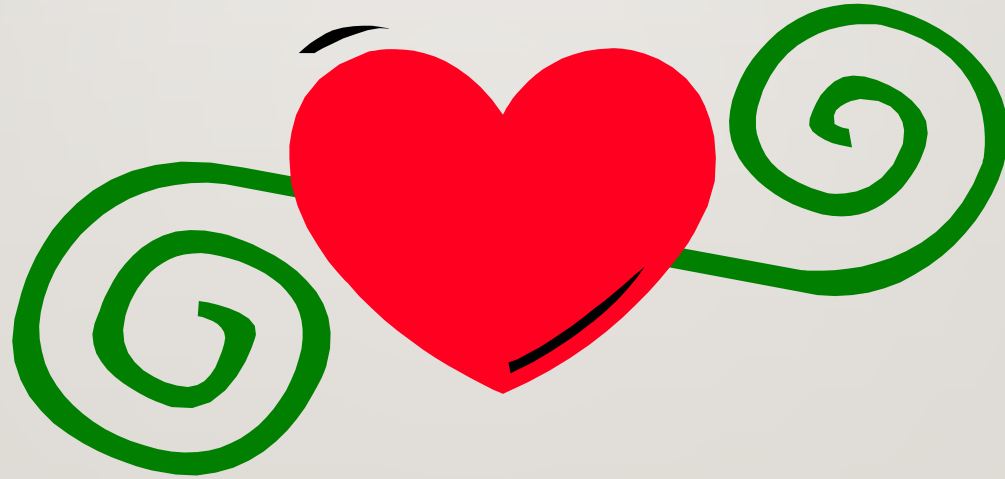
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- Exit the relationship—believing it is the source of threat.
- Turn to outside relationships for the *drug effect of infatuation*.

# INFATUATION PROVIDES

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- The neurotransmitters which are missing in anxiety and depression



# PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF ANXIETY

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- 71% believe, due emotional weakness
- 65% believe, caused by bad parenting
- 45% believe, it's a personal choice
- 43% believe it is incurable
- 35% believe it is the consequence of sin
- 10% believe it has a biological basis involving the brain



# ANXIETY CAN HAVE NON-BIOLOGICAL BASIS

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- Lifestyle
  - Work, relationships, recreation
- Stress and stressful life events
- Individual coping styles
  - Treatment should correspond.

# SOCIAL MEDIA USE

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- Teen disturbances have risen since 2009
- Guess what happened in 2007?

# IN 2012

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- Smartphone ownership surpassed 50 percent
- Mobile social-media use spiked
- There is plenty of debate around the effects of social media use
- Twenge: Social media isn't like rat poison, which is toxic to everyone. It's more like alcohol: mildly addictive but can lead to dependency and mental health consequences among a minority of users.

# A 2020 INSTAGRAM STUDY

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- Most users had a positive experience
- 1/3 of girls said “Instagram made them feel worse.”
- Cambridge University study of 84,000 people of all ages
- Social media was associated with worse mental health during sensitive life periods.



# CHILDHOOD HAS BEEN SHORTENED--

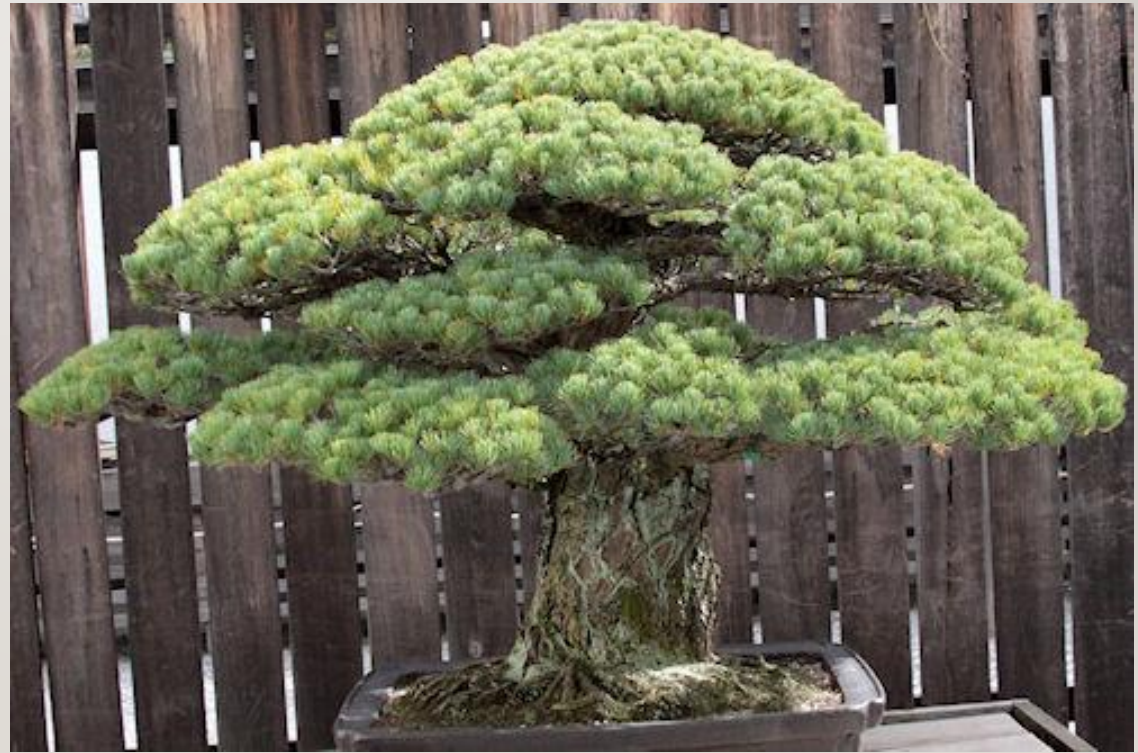
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- Dependency lengthened
  - Teens less likely to drive
  - Less summer jobs
  - Less requirement to do household chores
  - Free play has been replaced by play dates

# BONSAI PARENTING

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- Stunting the growth of the child by controlling every movement.



# TYPES OF ANXIETY

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- Catastrophic—feeling that something bad is about to happen.  
Heightened response to separation.
- Phobias—heightened fear in response to specifics
  - Ophidiophobia—fear of snakes
  - Acrophobia—fear of heights (6% of the population)
  - Cynophobia—fear of dogs
  - Trypanophobia—fear of injections, as many as 2-30% of adults have this
  - Glossophobia—fear of public speaking



# MORE TYPES OF ANXIETY

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- Social phobia—fear of being watched, judged, humiliated in front of others. Eating in front of others can create anxiety.
- Agoraphobia—fear of being alone in a situation where escape may be difficult; fear of crowded or open spaces; fear of leaving home. 1/3 with panic disorder develop agoraphobia. Onset is usually late adolescents to mid-30's. 2/3 are women.
- Claustrophobia-fear of tight places.
- Mysophobia—excessive fear of germs.



# Subtypes of OCD

**Contamination obsessions  
with cleaning compulsions**



**Hoarding**



**Symmetry obsessions  
with ordering compulsions**



**Obsessions  
without visible  
compulsions**



**Harm obsessions  
with checking  
compulsions**



# ANXIETY MANIFESTATION

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- Talkativeness
- “Talking too much” doesn’t mean the same thing to everyone.
- Cutting off others
- Talking over others
- Dominating conversations

# PRESSURED SPEECH

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- Forceful speech that is difficult to stop
- Other people cannot get a word in
- Faster speech than ordinary
- Stringing partial thoughts together in one sentence: “I don’t have detergent...store open...but my sitter can only...don’t know if I can make it happen...”

# ANXIETY IS BEST KNOWN FOR MANIFESTING IN PANIC ATTACKS, IRRITABILITY, AGITATION

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- but it can also operate below the surface while you look perfectly normal.
- You may feel distressed yet you continue to operate in your day-to-day life, and no one around you really knows what's happening with you internally.
- **Functional anxiety** has you prepare for all possible negative outcomes, often to avoid feelings like disappointment or failure,”
- So not only are you rewarded with an avoidance of a negative outcome, but the achievement of a successful one, and usually at the same time.



# THERE IS A COST TO FUNCTIONAL ANXIETY

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- You excel in your professional life and struggle in your personal life.
- You tend to use the same strategies in both places and they don't work.
- Relaxing isn't easy
- A day off means doing all the other things you have on your to-do list, as opposed to using the day to recharge.
- You can be stewing about work when kicking back with friends or obsessing over the spat you had with your partner during a meeting.
- You get little empathy because you look so functional.



# MANY ORIGINS OF ANXIETY

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- Genetic predisposition
- Gender—more women than men
- Trauma
- Association—pairing past to present situations
- Over-generalizing

# TREATMENT

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- Recognizes etiology
  - Genetic, physiology
  - Environment
  - Stress
  - Coping styles
  - Self care

# MOST IMPORTANT

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- Make friends with your emotions.
- Know that you are not alone.
- Understand that one-third of us share a generous amount of anxiety.
- Become familiar with the role of anxiety in your life.



# TREATMENT APPROACHES

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- Make an appointment with a therapist.
- Take an honest look at how you increase your own anxiety.
- Eliminate the unnecessary activities that add to your anxiety.
- Identify your calming course, i.e. the actions that lead to peace and composure
  - People
  - Places
  - Pets
  - Participation

# DE-STRESS

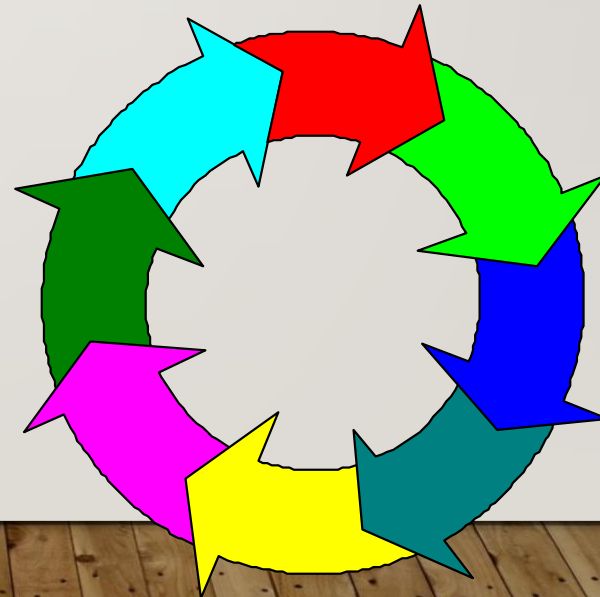
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- Therapeutic support
- Avoid over-exercising
- Relax 2-3 times per day for 5-15 minutes
- Calming techniques
  - Yoga, meditation, deep breathing, creativity, rote
- Guard transition moments
- Hydrate
- Body work
- Reconciliation

# MOST PEOPLE ASSUME THAT THE BODY

---

- Is self-regulating
- A closed system



# AN INDIVIDUAL DOES NOT DIRECT ALL OF HIS OWN FUNCTIONS

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- A second person transmits regulatory information that can alter
  - Hormone levels
  - Cardiovascular function
  - Sleep rhythms
  - Immune functions



## ADULTS REMAIN SOCIAL ANIMALS BECAUSE...

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- They continue to require a source of stabilization outside themselves
- Humans *cannot* be stable on their own

## HOWEVER, IF A PERSON'S HISTORY INCLUDES TRAUMA

---

- Then a relationship with a non-aware friend, spouse, or therapist will not provide the safe haven in which to explore the reintegration of relationship safety.

# HUMANS ARE BORN

---

- With a brain system that promotes safety by establishing an instinctive behavioral bond with others.



# PROLONGED STRESS

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- Uses up your natural chemicals that prevent anxiety and depression.
  - Natural stimulants
  - Sedatives
  - Pain relievers



# REGULAR USE OF DRUGLIKE FOODS

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- Such as refined sugars and flours
- Inhibits the bodies natural production of pleasure chemicals

# IN THE US...

- We consume an average of 1/3 pound of sugar per day!



# SUGAR, CARBO DUMPING

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- Out rushes insulin
- Knocks out sugar, stores it as fat
- When insulin takes too much, the adrenal glands rush to the rescue
- If this stressful scenario is repeated too often your adrenals will get overwhelmed

## EVEN ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS

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- Set up craving for sweets and carbs in some people
- Over time it takes more and more sugars to alleviate cravings



# THE BRAIN CHEMISTRY OF OVEREATING

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- Is very similar to that of alcohol and drug abuse
- May be a symptom of anhedonia

# USE OF ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

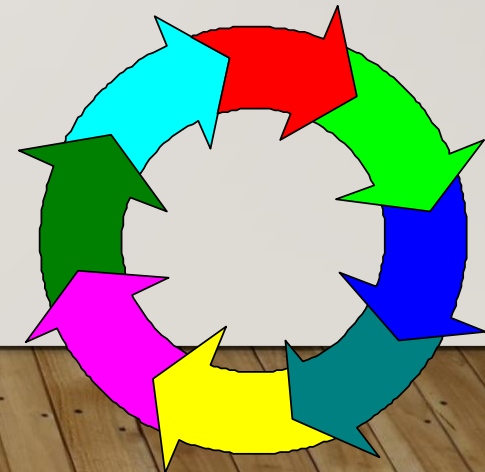
- Inhibit the production of the body's pleasure chemicals.



# USING A PARTICULAR COPING MECHANISM...

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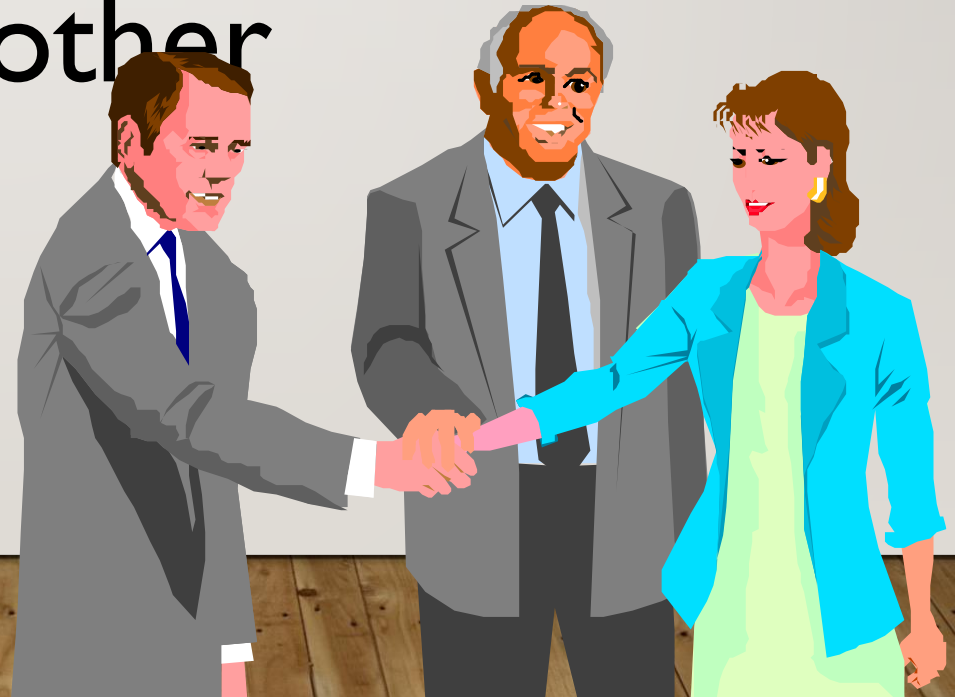
- Increases the likelihood that your response will be the same in the future.



# HUMANS, BECAUSE OF THEIR DEPENDENCY

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- Are far more interested in,  
and impacted by other  
humans.





# THEREFORE, ONE'S EARLY IMPRESSIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS

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- Greatly influence current interpretations
- Our experience of reality
- Our level of anxiety

THIS MEANS PAST HURTS,  
DISAPPOINTMENTS, STRESSES

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- Influence our level of anxiety
- And the extent to which we are likely to have positive experiences in life.

# ANXIETY...

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- Fear is the reality of the present situation.
- Explicit memory
- Implicit memory

# EXPLICIT MEMORY

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- Comes with recall,





# IMPLICIT MEMORY

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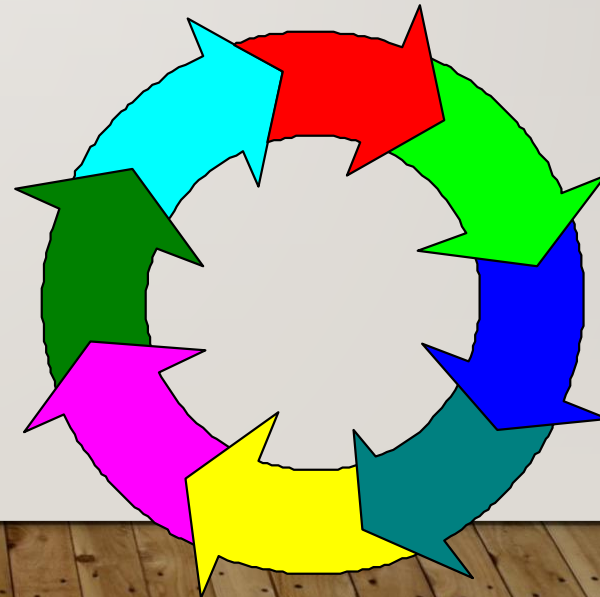
- Comes only with sensations



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# BREAKING THE PANIC CYCLE

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- Reid Wilson, Ph.D.

# TREATMENT MOST OFTEN NEEDS TO BE MULTI-MODAL...

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- Lifestyle changes
- Change in physiology
- Cognitive restructuring
- Creating healthy relationship patterns



# THE ANTIDEPRESSANT FAMILY (YAPKO)

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- Encourages activity
- Frequent social contact
- Frequent fun
- Clear boundaries
- Conducive to open communication
- Encourage relaxation and self-care
- Realistic expectations of self and others
- Provide ongoing support

# THE ANTI-ANXIETY FAMILY ...

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- Safe
- Loving
- Accepting
- Informative, instructive
- Empowering
- Respectful use of power
- Fun
- Protective boundaries

# AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION ...

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- Monitor your reactions and emotions
- Learn to distinguish archaic from current feelings
- Develop a trustworthy support system
- Define your personal limits
- Practice seeing life from another's point of view
- Check out consequences before you act