

A Message About Panic Disorders, Anxiety and Phobias

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Panic disorder is an acute state of arousal that occurs repeatedly and unexpectedly, and without any particular cause. Intense panic may last only a few minutes, and in more rare cases continue with waves up to two hours. Some of the following symptoms are:

Difficult rapid or labored breathing, palpitations, chest pains, choking or smothering sensations, dizziness, fainting, fear of dying, fear of mental illness, or of impending doom, hot / cold flushes, hot / cold clammy hands, tingling / burning sensations, trembling / shaking, sweating, nausea or 'butterfly's', unrealistic feelings.

Most people with a panic disorder feel anxious about the possibility of having another panic attack, and the implications to it, and where they will be, when they panic. This unpredictability is one reason why they can be so devastating.

Panic is where adrenaline pumps around the body, called a 'Flight or Fight response' from our caveman days where we had to fight or run from a hairy Mammoth. Unfortunately with panic the response is fired off without any threat, then the person feels terrible, frightened and fearful, and may even experience a fear of fear.

Medical causes need to be eliminated, for example sudden chest pain, and shortness of breath, may be due to a cardiac problem. It is advisable to have thyroid functioning checked, any medications, as well as reducing caffeine, may be causing panicky feelings.

Panic attacks can occur at any time or place with no apparent reason. Sometimes a person can have a single panic attack, and not experience another panic for months or years, a person may have six or more panic attacks per day.

A panic disorder can progress to produce a phobia due to avoiding a situation that they think will cause a panic, which may include crowded places, stores, and when driving. The more places a person panics in, the more they may feel the only place that is safe, is their home. If this situation persists, where they do not want to go out, they then become agoraphobic. If possible, therapy needs to be instigated before this happens, however, this may not become apparent to an individual for weeks, months or years.

Hypnotherapy is valuable in panic disorders to resolve and eliminate or modify thought patterns to the symptoms of the patient. A person does not have to put up with these problems, with a good clinician's help, they will dissipate, where the client feels more in control.

Anxiety is different from that of panic and fear, in that anxiety is a chronic state of arousal, where panic and fear is sudden and an acute state.

The most common complaints by an anxious person are, sweating, nausea or 'butterfly's' in the stomach, palpitations or chest pain, shallow or constricted breathing, including shortness of breath, muscle tension and headaches are often found. Not all these different symptoms may be experienced, as everyone is an individual.

Anxiety is normally persistent and severity depends on how badly individuals expect they will do

in a situation, how much control they may have, in a particular situation or event, and how critically they will be judged afterwards. They frequently evaluate themselves or create an image that is negative, which causes further or persistent anxiousness. They frequently worry about anything and everything, which may cause insomnia, or an inability to go to work.

Nearly all those suffering from anxiety will complain of not being able to concentrate or they have a poor memory. There is nothing wrong with their concentration or memory, just the underlying anxiety that creates them not to think with logic and reason.

Hypnotherapy is valuable in anxiety disorders to resolve and work through these anxieties. Hypnosis is utilized to significantly reduce anxiety disorders through the use of relaxation, and using visualization techniques to overcome exaggerated fearful thought processes. It is important to understand that a person can get out of these anxious states, with the assistance from a good clinician.

A **phobia** is a persistent irrational fear of, and wish to avoid, a specific object, activity or situation. This sense of fear is out of proportion to the real danger, which the person recognizes as exaggeration. The person finds it difficult to control fear and will attempt to avoid the object or situation. A specific phobia can cause you considerable anxiety, and depends on whether you come across that particular trigger area often or not. Those suffering with a phobia feel anxious not only in the presence of an object or situation, but when thinking about them as well.

It is estimated that 10% of the population experiences a fear or phobia, and most will not seek treatment, as it does not affect them very often. Some are easier to live with, such as fear of snakes, unless you come across snakes on a daily basis.

Animal phobias are more common, rats, spiders, birds and dogs. These phobic responses develop in childhood, where they may be considered 'normal'. It is only when they persist into adult life and cause a disruption that they are then called a phobia.

There are so many phobias, in fact anyone can have a fear or phobia about anything in the entire world, some of which are, fear of heights, crowds, open or enclosed spaces, elevators, thunder and lightning, injury, hypodermic needles, illness. These phobias are a cause of the person's perceptions on what could go wrong, or have experienced something that did go wrong, perhaps a previous trauma. The person then places more emphasis on the negative, building up into an extreme fear that it will happen again. Sometimes it is a 'learned response' from their parents who had a specific fear or phobia.

Many individuals encounter fear of flying, some of which are unable to fly at all. The fears range from wings falling off, to claustrophobia, not being able to get out, wheels not fixing for a landing, and many other fears of something that could go wrong.

Hypnotherapy is extremely helpful in treating phobias. By finding and resolving the specific fear or phobia and where it developed, allows that person to feel so much better and put the fear behind them.