

The TRUTH about anxiety



Michael McGuinness

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By
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Hi, my name is Michael McGuinness and I am a therapist in private practice in Castlebar, Ireland. I have over two decades of experience specialising in the treatment of anxiety.

My METHOD of treatment is very different from what you will find when attending your average therapist or counsellor. I use a counterintuitive approach that has gone under the radar since the growing popularity of medication and talk-therapy. This method was described by the great Dr Victor Frankl as “the only true cure” for anxiety.

Anxiety is a misunderstood problem among sufferers, therapists and doctors, resulting in treatments that can leave the vast majority of sufferers struggling and trying to “cope” with anxiety all their lives. Anxiety is CURABLE with the proper help. ***The truth of the matter is that there is ABSOLUTELY no need for anxiety sufferers to continue to live with anxiety.***

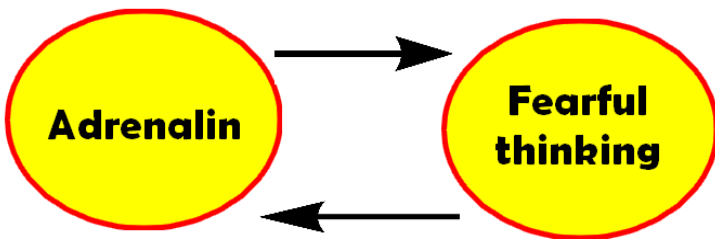
I put together this short e-book to give you an insight into the dynamics of the development of anxiety, which is the first important step in your recovery.

Disclaimer

All content presented is for educational purposes only, it cannot be considered as a substitute for the advice of a medical practitioner. The client has responsibility for consulting their medical practitioner for advice on their physical and mental well-being.

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety can be best described as an adrenalin / fearful thinking loop. So, both thinking and the physical symptoms of a heightened release of adrenalin are present.



Anxiety is a normal reaction when a person is under threat. The physical symptoms are normal as is the need to take flight. It is nature's way of keeping us safe. ***The term “suffering from anxiety” means that a person creates an anxiety response that is out of proportion to what the threat is or creates it when seemingly there is no threat that is rationally obvious.***

Anxiety can be stated as “over-protection” by the mind. It is a learned response from one's experiences. You don't have a “mental illness”, you are not “going crazy” or “losing your mind”. It is simply a subconscious learning and what you learn can be unlearned and replaced with a learning that serves you better. The ideal learning would be how the average person would feel and behave in a particular situation who didn't have an anxiety problem.

How physiological factors influence anxiety

While there are circumstances outside your control that will trigger the flight or fight, behaviours within your control can prevent the response happening in the first place in many instances. The way you look after yourself physically through diet, exercise can influence the triggering of the fight or flight response. It is well documented that people who suffered from anxiety and simply changed their diet managed to become free from their problem. The diagram below illustrates why this can be the case.



The dial represents the agitation level in your body. When it goes into the red you have anxiety sensations in your body and at the top end of the red, you have a full-blown panic attack.

In addition to the mindset factors described later in this e-book, your diet, your exercise activity will influence where you are on the dial. When you get into orange, it is easy for something to tip you over into the red. People

are way more physically stressed than they realise. It is only when they get into the red section that they become aware of the physical sensations.

When a person goes deeply into theta-state relaxation they become aware of “the gap” between that physical state of relaxation and their everyday state. It is very important that you take measures to reduce your overall level of stress.

The physiological factors that can influence the flight or fight are discussed in the in-clinic-program.

How cognitive factors influence anxiety.

Primitive thinking (the cognition of the amygdala)

The thinking of the amygdala is primitive thinking. We are not the only species involved in thinking. We tend to associate cognition with imagination, language and imagery but the more primitive thinking happens outside our conscious awareness.

There are a number of ways your experiences can trigger the amygdala to create the fight or flight response. You often hear people saying that they get anxiety or panic attacks for no reason, this is not the case. Everything that happens is cause-and-effect, anxiety is no different. The fact is that you **consciously** may not be aware of why panic is triggered. I will now give you some scenarios (other than physiological reasons) for the triggering of the flight or fight response.

If you were the victim of trauma, you could become frightened by the location or indeed **any element of the situation could trigger panic**. Let's say you were viciously attacked by a dog in the wood, you could develop a fear of dogs and a fear of woods. And not just that, any dominant element of the experience could also be a trigger for panic. For instance, if a pigeon was cooing loudly when the attack was happening, you could develop a fear of pigeons or indeed a fear of birds in general, and so on.

It is important to remember that a witness to trauma is the victim of trauma. The witnessing could be in a real-life

situation or indeed an experience through the media. For instance, many people developed a fear of flying after the 9/11 twin towers destruction.

Another example of how a panic attack can be triggered comes from 18-year-old client I treated in private practice. She got a panic attack while attending a lecture at her university.

The lecture had just begun when she got a panic attack that forced to leave the lecture. From my years of experience, I knew that there probably was something different about the lecture hall that frightened the amygdala.

I questioned her on this but she said there was nothing different that she was aware of except that she had a new lecturer. She said as soon as he began to speak she got the panic attack. I then asked her if there was any possible characteristic of this man that could have triggered fear.

She instantly makes the connection that caused the fear and she told me her story. When she was in third grade she had a teacher that scared her, in fact, almost everyone was scared him. Her fear was so bad that there were times she didn't attend school and she often vomited before going to school.

I then asked her HOW she connected the lecturer with that teacher. She said that they both were from the same location in the country with a distinct accent and their tone of voice was identical. You can now see how the primitive mind can become scared even though you are

not consciously aware of any possible danger.

I will give you a scenario where one can develop General Anxiety Disorder (GAD). This girl is walking down a side-street at night listening to music on her headphones and checking her messages on her mobile phone when she is attacked from behind and her handbag is taken. She is badly shaken and frightened by the ordeal.

Next morning she is feeling very anxious but realises that this can be normal after what happened the previous night. However, this continues in the days and weeks that pass. She finds that she is on edge no matter where she goes, she constantly feels that she is in some danger.

When a person experiences a dangerous situation, the amygdala will create a response to prevent the person experiencing that danger again. The problem is that it will over-protect and the response may not be logical.

For instance, the amygdala may have concluded that ***she was attacked because she was not paying attention*** due to listening on headphones and looking at her mobile phone, so now it drives her to be super-vigilant at all times in case a further attack occurs. The logical response would be to make her super-alert going down side-streets at night or maybe avoid them. Instead, this super-alertness is generalised to every location in which she finds herself.

You now can get the gist of how anxiety and panic are created, the good news is that the amygdala can be retrained as the rational mind is a feeder mind to the amygdala.

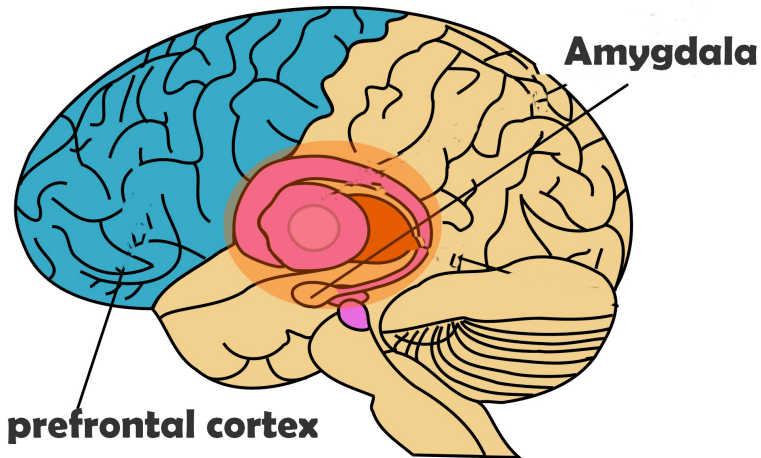
This brings us to rational thinking and its influence on anxiety. While the rational mind can influence the amygdala for the better, unfortunately, it can also be the creator of anxiety. We will now look at this a little more.

Rational thinking

The ability to think creatively and logically can be either our liberator or our captor, depending on how effective our thinking is. We live in an era that is dominated by fearful thinking. People have concerns about the “what ifs” in life, where we no longer have the ability to live in the moment. Instead, the mind travels in time and often pictures the worse case scenarios about the future.

The problem with the amygdala is that it can't differentiate between a real experience and a vividly imagined experience, so imagined scenarios can trigger adrenalin release as though scenarios were happening right now. This is why you **MUST** really get a handle on your thinking.

Panic attacks



The anatomy of anxiety

Before I explain why you become “anxious”, I will, first of all, explain the anatomy of how your stress system works.

The amygdala is our primitive mind and it goes back as far as we go back and it has the intelligence of a five or six-year-old child (let's say for convenience).

One of its primary goals is to protect you from danger. Whenever there is a perceived threat it will fire the fight or flight response, you either flight or you flee (you may also freeze).

We have two minds, the logical mind and the emotional mind. In the diagram above this is represented as the prefrontal cortex (logical mind) and the emotional mind

(the orange circle). Information flows between the logical brain and the emotional brain and the **amygdala** is the coordinator of the flow of information between the two.

If there is a threat the amygdala will fire the flight or fight response. You know the physical symptoms!!! Your heart will race, breathing will become fast and shallow, your tummy may feel in knots, you begin to sweat, etc, This is preparing you to do a runner but you don't see any threat from which to run.

The problem is that in many instances there is no logical reason why the physical symptoms are triggered. In other words, there is no context. If you are running quickly and you experience the above physical symptoms, there is a context – ***this is what should be happening.***

However, if you are sitting in a room full of people and all of a sudden those symptoms happen, there is no context, so the primitive mind takes over - ***you lose rational mindfulness.*** You now are thinking as a 5 or 6-year-old child. ***Your thoughts are now totally irrational.***

Furthermore, you now become scared of the physical symptoms of the adrenalin rush in your body – your thinking is now starting to scare the primitive mind even more and you release more adrenalin, and so this body-mind loop continues to the state of having a full-blown panic attack.

Primary and secondary fear

What **first scares** the amygdala is often termed as the initial or **primary fear**. They are unthinking, instinctive responses that we have. The response or secondary fear is the way we feel **about** the primary fear. **This is usually the problem with “anxiety”.**

However, the primary fear is not always an inherited reaction to a stimulus. The primary fear can be a learned fear and we can also retrain an instinctive primary fear through new understanding. The following paragraph is a good example of this.

Think of a primitive man when he heard thunder and lightning, he ran for his life into the cave. He was scared of it because he didn't understand it. Thunder and lightning have not changed over the years but our understanding of it has changed and so has our behaviour. Thankfully, people no longer do a runner into a building when we hear thunder and see lightning. When you understand primary panic, your behaviour also changes.

Many primary fears are learned from experience, we can become conditioned to fear a situation. For instance, most people don't fear dogs but if you were attacked by a dog you could develop a primary fear of the presence of a dog – not just the dog that attacked you.

The amygdala develops a generalisation when threatened. So, in the case mentioned the person may not just develop a fear of the particular dog that bit you but ALL dogs.

This generalisation is important when it comes to our experiences with other people. This is significant is social anxiety. If you were hurt by one person, you may develop a fear of people in general (unless, you have developed a sense of safety around them – your family for example).

Now that you have a better understanding of how anxiety and panic attacks are created, ***you may want to get the strategies to break FREE from your problem*** by attending the clinic for the program.

For further details:

Tel: 094 9060226 or 0861612301

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