**How Anxiety Works in the Body**

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The purpose of us feeling anxiety in our bodies is so that we will ‘DO SOMETHING’ to try to eliminate the event, situation or thing that we are worried about. This is a primitive and **basic survival instinct** that we still have deeply embedded in our brains. The problem is…we don’t need to run away from saber tooth tigers anymore!

However, instead of having the idea of “*I need to get rid of this feeling*” we need to change it to “***whatever is happening right at this moment, I CAN HANDLE that*.”**

What we need to do is learn about anxiety and how it works in our bodies and then break anxiety down into small pieces, and take it step by step. It may start with learning about how anxiety works and feels in our bodies; the sensations we get from anxiety. Starting with what happens in our brain and body when we are anxious. Then we need to learn what we can do with those sensations to lessen them and our anxiety. Then we work on our anxious thoughts and work to change the dialogue we have in our heads about anxiety. Essentially we break anxiety down into small chewable bites. This is in order to give you some success.

Anxiety and Worry is only a signal to “problem solve.”

Therefore, to decrease your worry, all you need to do is STEP BACK in the moment,

***accept that anxiety is happening*** and then…

CALM your body response and try to problem solve.

**Our problem is** we CATASTROPHIZE our problems…..we see our problems as SO HUGE that we can’t handle it and have to GET OUT! We need to change our thinking to **I CAN HANDLE THIS.**

We have to be able to TOLERATE UNCERTAINTY. Running away from anxiety or avoiding uncomfortable situations only increases our anxiety. As well, reassuring someone who is anxious that they will be okay does not work either because the person won’t believe what someone else is saying *unless they say it to themselves and actually believe it themselves.*

We also need to use DETERMINATION to help us face our fears. Call back up your past successes to help you face NEW challenges.

We talk to ourselves all day long in our heads and often what we say is negative, we need to change this self-talk. **Turning our Negative Thinking into Positive Thinking will help immensely.**

Anxiety is actually very simple….it is just HARD to do the work.

Working through anxiety involves doing the OPPOSITE of what we want to do!

For example: “I can’t get a full breath! “ okay…..let all of your breath out…and never breathe again!

What will happen is …. you ***will*** take a full breath!

**TYPES of ANXIETY**

* **Generalized anxiety –** is worrying too much about a variety of things and events in our life, such as your job, school, responsibilities, health, finances or a variety of other topics.
* **Phobias –** are a very intense fear of a specific situation or object, which is actually out of proportion to the real threat that object or situation would be. For example: a fear of spiders or flying in a plane which is so intense that you don’t go outside or on a vacation where you would need to take a plane, could be considered a phobia.
* **Panic –** is an extreme anxiety response where a person experiences body sensations that feel overwhelming and so real that they may think they are having an actual heart attack.

Working through the worksheets in this section will help you to conquer your anxiety.

REMEMBER

Anxiety GROWS by trying to AVOID the things that cause anxiety!

When a ‘scary’ thing is avoided, there is an immediate but short-lived sense of relief. However, the next time a threat arises that is similar in nature, it may feel even scarier! This creates a cycle of AVOIDANCE and thus worsens the anxiety.

It is critical to FACE you anxiety and worries and to take action on them rather than AVOID.