

Anxiety: A Partnership

By Peter Persad, B.A., B.Ed., M.A.C., C.C.C.



I recently developed a case of Generalized Anxiety Disorder. It overtook my life within weeks and left me debilitated, sleepless, unable to work and reeling from one moment to another. These are pretty strong words for a therapist to write, yet there is a healing power in being able to express what ails me. And there is a healing power in being able to create a connection with clients who suffer from the same disorder.

One of the pillars of any therapeutic intervention is the ability of the human beings present in both chairs to build a relationship based on a common understanding and perspective. No one is immune to the ravages of a mental health crisis. And as a therapist, I find a non-hierarchical approach to treatment has greater potential for successful outcomes. The therapeutic alliance should be just that: a partnership.

With the infiltration of technology in our daily lives, especially social media, anxiety and other mental illness are also becoming more prevalent. The similarity of these trend lines is disturbing. It is important for therapists to normalize the struggle in maintaining mental health and to educate and thereby empower clients to feel that they are not alone, that there is hope for recovery and that they themselves

play a critical part in recovering and maintaining healthy cognitive functioning.

I read an essay last week by Nina K Moore in *The Globe and Mail* entitled “My On-again, Off-again Relationship With Anxiety Has Taught Me a Lot.” In the article, the author writes a letter to her “partner” characterizing her struggle with anxiety as akin to being in a relationship with another person. “Dear Anxiety,” she writes, “We’ve been together a long time now.” It’s the perfect metaphor for the condition and well worth the read for those of us who are dealing with this disorder. It helps to hear how someone else copes with anxiety and how misunderstood she feels by others. At the same time, Ms. Moore is hopeful and proactive as she struggles and copes. She demonstrably structures her daily activities to keep her anxiety at bay. She “unplugs” from social media, meditates, practices yoga and creates intention around her cognitive processes to create resilience. In the end, the author is thankful for her “darling.” Despite its negative elements, her anxiety has brought her clarity and helped her appreciate the sacredness of life.

“*La vie est une lutte éternelle*” a wise man once told me. “Life is a constant struggle.” Let us focus on the small victories, the pathway and the process in main-

taining our mental health and the beauty to be found on this journey.

Nadworny, Jaqueline et al. (2019, May 23). Anxiety Symptoms, Signs, Disorders, Causes, Treatments. Retrieved from www.anxietycentre.com

Moore, Nina K. (2019, May 24). My On-again, Off-again Relationship With Anxiety Has Taught Me a Lot. *The Globe and Mail*, Retrieved from www.theglobeandmail.com

About the Author

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Peter is an educator and counsellor with nearly three decades of experience helping individuals and families overcome obstacles and realize their potential.

Stop the Bickering!



Bickering is the petty disputes you experience with another person, especially a loved one like a spouse, partner, or best friend.

To bicker is human, but a frequent pattern that sabotages the pleasures of a relationship you both value needs a fix. Try this intervention:

- 1) Accept that quarrelling is a problem and that you want to dramatically reduce it. (Agree to avoid bickering about who is more at fault.)
- 2) Participate in a 10-minute exercise together, listing as many adverse effects of bickering as possible. Include both visible effects, such as negative effects on children, and invisible effects, such as coping methods,

negative self-talk, isolation, reduced intimacy, wasted time, withdrawal, recuperation time, resentment, even your reputation as the “Bickersons.” Write fast, and get it all down.

- 3) Practice with a behavioural change log. After the next bickering event, record the topic, how long it lasted, what you did well to end the bickering, what you can do better next time, and especially anything you learned or insights gained. After one week, share your experiences. Making major behavioural changes (new habits of communicating) will take four to six weeks. If things stay rocky, seek a counsellor and bring your notes for a speedier counselling experience.

You Can Overcome Indecisiveness

Everyone occasionally struggles with making a decision, but does indecisiveness



feel like a frequent problem for you that's interfering with your happiness? Meet with your employee assistance

program or a counselling professional in your community to fight to overcome this “paralysis by analysis.” Making decisions is a life skill that's teachable and involves comparing the outcomes and impact of choices while paying close attention to your emotions and the sway of feelings in your decision. With counselling, you can learn to make decisions more quickly by reducing overanalyzing, visualizing possible outcomes, trusting yourself more, and knowing that you are making the right choices. A counsellor can help you understand how a pattern of indecisiveness developed, examine whether depression contributes to it, and decide what further assistance could be helpful. Don't let indecisiveness remain a problem that causes you to lose faith in your own judgment and prevents you from attaining what life has to offer.

People aged 18 to 35 are experiencing more mental health issues than any other age group

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