Welcome to Week 10

Types of anxiety

Whenever a client comes to me with anxiety I want to know what exactly is going on. There are different anxiety disorders and I think no-one has spelled them out so well as my friend and colleague Fi Nicolson in the book we co-authored, The Hypnotherapy Handbook. Here is what Fi says:

“There are six diﬀerent and deﬁnable anxiety disorders: anxiety disorders are conditions where anxiety is the core symptom. These disorders can overlap, for example someone with General Anxiety Disorder (GAD) or Social Anxiety Disorder can experience panic attacks when they reach a certain level of anxiety or in response to a speciﬁc trigger.

***Speciﬁc Phobias***

A phobia is an intense fear when an individual is exposed to a speciﬁc object or situation.

Common phobias are ﬂying, dogs, cats and heights. Phobias can cause individuals to avoid everyday situations. This topic is explored fully in a separate chapter in this book.

***Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)***

This may develop following exposure to any one of a variety of traumatic events such as violent assault, sexual abuse or military combat. PTSD can develop in any situation where a person feels extreme fear, horror or helplessness. The traumatic event could even be witnessed or learnt about rather than directly experienced.

***Social Anxiety Disorder***

Sometimes called social phobia, this involves self-consciousness about social situations. This can often be based on a fear of being judged by others.

***General Anxiety Disorder (GAD)***

Is an overwhelming fear, tension and worry, again often without a deﬁnable cause or reason. GAD develops in about one in 50 people at some stage in life with twice as many women as men being aﬀected. It often develops ﬁrst in a person’s 20s and can persist long term.

***Panic Disorder***

Individuals can experience recurring and regular panic attacks. Symptoms can include chest pain and palpitations and it can be common with the initial panic attack that people think that they

are having a heart attack.

***Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)***

This involves certain fears and thoughts that can cause individuals to go through speciﬁc routines or rituals. The thoughts are called obsessions and the routines are called compulsions; common compulsions include hand washing and utilising speciﬁc sets of numbers.”

If you want to read more about Fiona’s views on anxiety and how she treats it then you can read more in The Hypnotherapy Handbook.



The three good things

One reason for anxiety can be that we focus on what goes wrong rather than on what went right. Some psychologists believe there are strong evolutionary reasons for this. When we were hunter gatherers it benefitted us to think about what went wrong that day. What went wrong may well have led to a disaster, no food or being eaten by a wild animal. We needed to learn from every mistake and make very sure we didn’t repeat them. This is less true today, when the world in which we live is a lot safer, but still we can brood on what went wrong.

The famous psychologist Martin Seligman thinks we would all benefit from focusing on what went right rather then what went wrong. So he devised this little exercise to change the way you think.

At the end of each day just sit down take some time to yourself and think of three good things which happened

to you that day. Ask yourself why it went well.

These do not have to be life shattering events but the role you played is important. So perhaps you did a good job at work because you were well prepared or had a good time with a friend because you took time to listen to their stories.

You might want to write these things down, so you can see how much good happens to you and notice how the more you think in this new way the easier it becomes.

Keep this up for at least a month and you will notice a change in your mood. You are training your mind to concentrate on what is good in your life. And that is a very good thinking habit to have.