

From Anxiety to Enthusiasm

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MY STORY

I am sitting in the car. I am 10 years old. At that time, it's an 8-hour trip from Paradise to Hell. It's September, "back to school week", and we are on the way from my home town in the Austrian Alps to high school in the big city of Vienna. I feel butterflies in the stomach. I feel a vague sense of terror. I crunch up on the floor of the car, hide behind the driver's seat, barely able to speak.

What is happening to me?

On the surface, I am travelling from one beautiful place to another. The trip is necessary because I need to get higher education, "become somebody". From the beauty and grandeur of our valley I am going to the glamour and adventure of the city of artists like Klimt, Schiele and Loos, and therapists like Freud, Adler, Frankl, and of course, the young Wilhelm Reich.

I should be happy! Excited. But I feel the opposite. Sleepless nights; fear of teachers, class mates. The beating heart. Isolation. Separation in a Vienna that is buzzing and so alive with post-world war revival, new hope and expansion after difficult years!

What was happening to me? I did not understand it.

VARIOUS THEORIES OF ANXIETY

Now, I understand that I was in the throes of anxiety. After all these years, and training in both medical sciences and body-psychotherapy, I can find reasonable explanations for what actually was happening to me.

One simple explanation for my experience may be: I wanted to be back home with my father. At the same time, I clearly needed to go to school. My first real, **unsolvable conflict** in life.

On a **biological** level, my body reactions are easy to explain.

My body-mind reacted with the **stress response**. Adrenaline and cortisol were priming my body for defense: flight, fight or freeze. In a scan, a number of brain structures in the emotional brain will show signs of high activation and dysregulation.

Brain science says that anxiety is not necessarily a bad thing!

It has to do with **anticipation**. This is an evolutionary trait that helps us predict and gear-up for the future. If an animal can predict that a lion is around a certain bush it has a greater chance of survival. In my example, I was anticipating angry teachers, hostile students and the loss of my nuclear family, especially my father, due to long the distance from our home.

OTHER EXPLANATIONS

Other explanations for anxiety are also appealing to me.

One theory has to do with **two equally conflicting inner impulses**. You may experience a mild version of this when you want to go to see an exciting movie when at the same time you also feel very tired after a long week. That butterfly feeling may come up in you. It may soon feel unbearable! You may even start a fight with someone! Think about it: It is a great way to get out of this un-solvable internal conflict!

Another useful path of understanding anxiety comes from **Family Constellations** work (of Bert Hellinger). Here we understand anxiety as something that comes to us transmitted, non-consciously, from past generations via our own family system. Such tension can be carried over into our current life, often with detrimental effect, when we choose to hold on to our emotional entanglements.

In **Core Energetics** we follow the model of Character Structure.

Its theories are based on the view that during a child's maturation process certain traumatic events can occur. **Developmental trauma** such as threat of death, abandonment, invasion, rejection, or betrayal will be met with predictable "defenses" against that trauma. Character structures can be seen as wholistic, mind-body-soul defense postures against an overwhelming internal conflict. In the Core Energetics model, each of the five major "character structures" will express their own specific kind of anxiety. Each needs a different kind of treatment response because each character defense asks for a resolution of a specific inner conflict.

A **spiritual** explanation for anxiety might be that it points to an aspect of one's un-completed inner potential. Your "butterflies in the stomach" may be Spirit pointing to your next step to self-realization. Courage may be needed. You may have to take an emotional risk. You may be faced with the need to give up ego "attachments".

In time, you will find that next "right" step by trying out all your available options; you will know that you "got it" when you feel an increased sense of relief, ease, or "flow". As a result, you will also feel more aligned with your inner purpose.

There are **many more theories of anxiety** and various psychological methods to treat it. Many of them have to do with learning how to tolerate overwhelming emotions and hold opposing feelings at the same time.

METHODS TO RESOLVE ANXIETY

CORE ENERGETICS & FAMILY CONSTELLATIONS

Here at the CoreConstellations Center we offer traditional psychotherapy in synergy with Core Energetics (a form of body-psychotherapy), and Family Constellations work as essential tools to face anxiety. We believe that these methods can have a tremendous effect on the mental, emotional, and bodily processing of anxiety

GROUNDING, DISCHARGE AND CONTAINMENT

In a Core Energetics session I help my clients to ground and contain all their feelings, including their fear and anxiety.

Core Energetics exercises, breathwork and movement, help to ground and safely discharge excess energy. The various types of emotional expression and release are combined with insight in one's history.

Learning how to tolerate one's conflicting feelings while at the same time letting go of one's attachment and entanglements, is the secret of these methods and allows clients to find the right inner alignment.

Anxiety can be grounded in the body. Feelings can be contained and processed. The grounded experience of energy that is held within one's anxiety is then easily transformed into joy and enthusiasm!

PSYCHOPHARMACOLOGY & MEDICATION

We encourage medication for clients with severe anxiety. When appropriate we will recommend clients to see a psychiatrist for medication evaluation. Someone may need an antidepressant, another person may be helped with hormones or certain vitamins. It can help re-set a system that is too far out of balance. Sometimes, medication allows the person to make better use of complimentary options of self healing.

ENERGY MEDICINE

In recent years, a number of methods of Energy Medicine and Energy Psychology have become popular. EMDR, Somatic Experiencing, TFT, and many others offer profound anxiety relief. I like to also mention the Eastern techniques of Acupuncture, Qi Gong, and Tai Chi as well as other martial arts approaches. Hypnosis, biofeedback show promising results. The "HeartMath" method ("Freeze Framer") can be very helpful for mastering anxiety. It adjusts one's "heart rate variability" and is a biofeedback method to balance the autonomic nervous system.

PHYSICAL EXERCISE

Physical exercise in any form, yoga, Pilates, and other methods will help with the release of the considerable energetic charge the anxious person constantly has to deal with.

BECOMING AN OBSERVER

No discussion of anxiety treatments is complete without a discussion of Meditation and Mindfulness as an essential adjunct to any other intervention aimed at relieving anxiety.

Meditation works in many ways. First: It balances the autonomic nervous system through centering and calming down and is a tremendous tool for stress reduction. Second: It teaches you to hold "pairs of opposites"; thus it trains you to master conflicting emotions. Third: By becoming an observer of that which is in the moment, you are well on the way of becoming a "Master of your Emotions" in any circumstance. This is your alternative to someone who is repressing emotions and unconsciously reacting to outer circumstances.

SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS

In the letting go of the holding on to the inner conflicts, energy will be released; energy, that can be expressed in joy, curiosity, excitement, acceptance, freedom and love! The observer self, as cultivated in meditation or good psychotherapy, gently helps you make that choice. Easily. Effortlessly. Lovingly.

When energy is grounded in the body a sense of enthusiasm arises spontaneously. I wish that my little frightened boy in the car would have known all that then! It took him a long while. By the way:

Enthusiasm (Greek: en-theos) means: "God within". In my case, this journey has lead me from deep anxiety to a celebration of the God within. On a good day.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

If you would like to go deeper, have a more direct experience of this work, or a taste of how Core Energetics works with anxiety, **please, come to one of our FREE Lecture/Experience** with Kuno Bachbauer, MD.

When: Please call or check the Calendar on our website

Where: CoreConstellations Center in Rockville, MD

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