

## Anxiety vs. Excitement

Dr. Ron Kaiser January 24, 2014 No Comments

### Anxiety vs. Excitement (Transcription)

Hi this is Dr. Ron Kaiser with a new podcast for you. Today's podcast deals with the subject of anxiety. It's an uncomfortable emotion that has psychological, physiological, cognitive and behavioral components to it. It generally involves a level of overall discomfort which tends to be plugged in under stressful conditions. Although there are some people who have generalized anxiety and feel this overall discomfort much of the time, but for most of us, it tends to get plugged in under certain unique conditions, such as new experiences or when we're being tested, whether it be in school or on the job, it may get plugged in when we meet new people or when we walk into a room or when we have to give a presentation to a number of people. Sometimes anxiety takes the form of specific fears or phobias such as heights or elevators or bridges.

Again in extreme cases you have either a very generalized level of anxiety or very serious level that may involve a panic disorder, general feelings of dread and terrible things happening. What we wanna do is be able to get away from this general component that involves anhedonia and most importantly it generally involves kind of unproductive stuckness. The unproductive stuckness comes from ruminating at a cognitive level, over thinking and failing to act. One of the major problems with anxiety is that it stays as anxiety, it doesn't get translated to an activity level that can lead to the next most productive stage in terms of confronting the challenges and the stresses that we face.

Significant progress has been made in anti-anxiety medication or anxiolytics, as those meds are frequently called, and many people are able to contain anxiety to some extent by taking medications such as Xanax, Valium, Klonopin and others. Also there have been

tremendous strides made in the cognitive behavioral therapy realm. In this approach to treatment, we advise people on noticing their thinking when they become anxious, look at what are the components, the cognitive components whether telling themselves that make them anxious.

In many cases where telling ourselves something catastrophic could occur and we immobilize ourselves because of this fear of something terrible happening down the road. Now that obviously means that in order to approach the anxiety issue and make us more productive, we have to change the thinking pattern and the behaving patterns in some particular way. So what we wanna do is move from the unproductive mode of anxiety to the more productive mode of excitement. I believe that anxiety and excitement are on the same continuum running from a more negative to a more positive category. So what we wanna do is interfere with ruminating, interfere with the immobilization, interfere with the fearful thinking.

Now one of the ways in which we can approach is by just simply relabeling what we're fearing and relabeling it in a more positive direction. So let's think in terms not of the bridge that fear fearing crossing but get excited about what will be on the other side of the bridge. What are we going toward because obviously crossing the bridge for a purpose, whether it be to see somebody that we're looking forward to see, whether it's to get to work, to get to physician's office or some other situation that we're actually trying to attain.

Even if we're crossing the bridge for a less happy purpose, such as consoling somebody who has lost either an aspect of their health or has lost a relative, think in terms of what a great thing we're doing from them and let's get excited about it. With respect to other aspects of anxiety, think in terms of how good it will feel to learn a

new subject, rather than fearing a class in statistics or whatever it is that we're particularly fearing. Think of how proud we'll be and let's get excited about how proud we'll be when we accomplish particular goal presenting our ideas to perspective employer, or telling somebody about our job or meeting his new person that might become a lasting friend.

So I think that the strategy that most of us can benefit from in changing anxiety into excitement is number one; as you probably know my first impulse is to ask what can go right and obviously some possibilities exist that could go right. Let's identify it, think in terms of what can go right. Second step is visualize that time in the future when it happens. Visualize things going right and how good we're going to feel about it and third, get excited about it. Don't over think negatively but focus on the positive and think in terms of that future time when things go right and how good we're gonna feel and how exciting it's going to be.

In the process we can overcome additional fears or anxieties, not just the matter of things going right, what we accomplish our goal, but things going right when we eliminate that fear of what it is as a limiting factor. The fact is that the more excited we can be about things, the more we're likely to do those particular things and at some point it becomes not an anxious moment to be able to meet somebody new but an exciting moment and that generalizes, it becomes not anxiety provoking to go into the cold water but exciting to be able to learn to know that we're gonna be able to swim effectively. To be able to be anxious is not a fun experience. To be able to be active is really a counter activity against anxiety. It's very difficult to be active, forward looking and anxious at the same time.

This is not guarantee that we won't get disappointed of the process but disappointment is rarely as bad as the anxiety that led up to it. In

the mean time you've taken away the tendency toward negative thinking and you can build upon being positive by replacing the notion of anxiety with excitement. Try it, if it doesn't work please feel free to be in touch with me with any suggestions that you have and with hopefully some examples of how you've been able to transform anxiety into excitement. Until next time this is Dr. Ron Kaiser and I'm signing off for this podcast now.