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Sunlight’s Dual Nature: Curative or Deadly? What TV’s Dermatologists Do Not Mention.

Posted on June 28, 2013 by wildwoodhealth

By: Elizabeth J. Hall

You hear much about sunlight causing skin cancer. Indeed, solar ultraviolet radiation seems to account for approximately 93 percent of skin cancers and about half of lip cancers.(1) However, there are many scientifically established physiological, cancer-protecting benefits of sunlight as well. A review of 8 studies from 100 countries shows strong inverse correlations with solar UVB for 15 types of cancer: bladder, breast, cervical, colon, endometrial, esophageal, gastric, lung, ovarian, pancreatic, rectal, renal, and vulvar cancer; and Hodgkin’s and non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma.(2)

For example, individuals living in northern latitudes (and thus lower vitamin D production) have a substantial greater risk of getting 15 types of cancer such as breast, stomach, colon cancer, and lymphomas—just to name a few. For example, men living in Michigan, Connecticut, and Washington had colon cancer rates 50-80% higher than men living in New Mexico.(3) Researchers from the University of California also found in their studies that individuals with optimal levels of serum vitamin D, generated through modest sunlight exposure, also had a 50% lower incidence of colorectal cancer.(4) The Cleveland Clinic reports that men with high levels of vitamin D were half as likely to develop the aggressive form of prostate cancer than were those who had lower levels of vitamin D.(5) So how does sunlight protect from cancer? As we shall later see the answer largely lies in vitamin D. Exposure of our skin to sunlight produces vitamin D.

Stunning facts:

- Nutritionist epidemiologists estimate that 50% of North Americans have an insufficient amount of vitamin D.(6)
- Elderly people’s ability to get vitamin D from sun exposure is very greatly reduced. Therefore, they must get vitamin D from fortified foods or supplements.
- Although fair-skinned people can get enough vitamin D by being in the sun for 10-15 minutes a day, this is not true for dark-skinned individuals. They may need to be in sunlight for 30 to 45 minutes to obtain vitamin D.
- Studies show that dark-skinned individuals, breast fed babies, those with kidney disease, obesity, or those living in northern latitudes have significant risk for vitamin D deficiency.
- Sunscreen blocks our ability to get vitamin D through sunlight.

Sunlight Spawns Vitamin D Production

Individuals may get up to 90% of their vitamin D from the sunlight. The human body synthesizes Vitamin D from the ultraviolet rays in sunlight. These rays activate the cholesterol in our skin into a form of Vitamin D which is then absorbed into the blood through the capillaries and transported to the liver. It is then stored in the liver where it undergoes a biological change before it is transported to the kidneys where it is changed into its ‘supercharged’ form (calcitriol).

Cancer-Fighting D

Super-charged D fights cancer by several different biological mechanisms. First, it improves the efficiency of natural killer cells to destroy cancer cells and inhibits the proliferation of cancer cells. It also promotes apoptosis (programmed death) of cancer cells.(7) This is amazing because cancer cells have a higher resistance to apoptosis. Additionally, vitamin D inhibits the development of new blood vessels (angiogenesis) that feed the tumor site, thus slowing the growth of the tumor. I am not saying that vitamin D can prevent or cure all cancers, but certainly individuals who have an increased risk of developing cancer should have their vitamin D levels monitored! If
we have insufficient amounts of vitamin D in our serum, we need to build it up with adequate sunshine and wise supplementation.

Preserves Bone and Muscle Health

By giving us vitamin D, sunshine helps to strengthen our teeth and bones, especially important in today’s aging society because 90% of the elderly who fall break bone. Moderate amounts of Vitamin D can help protect against this by building bone density. Vitamin D promotes bone health also by maintaining Parathyroid Hormone (PTH). PTH stimulates bone building activity. Sufficient levels of vitamin D also help to maintain muscle mass and strength. Exercise, especially in the sunlight, increases the number and the volume of powerhouses in the muscle cells. On the other hand, vitamin D deficiency is associated with muscle weakness, diffuse muscle pain, and atrophy of fast-twitch muscle fibers that give us speed. Evidence suggests that sunbathing may reduce pain from fibromyalgia.(8)

Rev Up Your Metabolism

You’ve heard of your thyroid hormone, so essential for the metabolism of each cell in your body. If you are low in thyroid, your energy and mental alertness decline and your weight often increases. Vitamin D needs to be present at sufficient levels in the cells in order for the thyroid hormone to actually affect that cell and keep your metabolism running smoothly.

More than Vitamin D

Immune Balancer

Sunlight kills germs but it does more than that. By exposing our skin to sunlight, our body becomes better able to resist infections. Studies show that just 10 minutes of sunshine two times a week is enough to help reduce the number and severity of colds we catch. Sunshine, via Vitamin D, increases the number of germ-killing compounds found in special white blood cells that destroy viruses. At the same time regular exposure to sunshine and vitamin D helps to balance the different components of the immune system so as to lower the risk of autoimmune diseases in which the immune system attacks the organs and tissues of the body. By balancing the different immune cells, Vitamin D also helps to protect us from allergies.

Circulation Boost

Resting heart rate, blood pressure, and respiration rates all drop after a mild sunbath. The sun’s infrared rays improve circulation to the skin while they help the blood vessels to dilate.(9) Regular exposure to the sun and vitamin D helps to suppress a blood pressure elevating enzyme and helps to reduce serum cholesterol levels. Sunlight increases nitric oxide production. In moderation, this valuable molecule improves circulation by opening up blood vessels and consequently reduces the risk of undesirable clot formation.

The Connection between Sunshine, Mood, and Vitamin D

Sunlight increases endorphins, chemicals in our brain that make us feel good. Not only that but it helps the brain produce serotonin, a neurotransmitter important for self-control and positive outlook. No wonder that those patients with hospital beds by a sunny window had shorter stays than patients facing no window at all. When this exposure to sunlight is combined with regular aerobic exercise, the production of serotonin may be even better. One important caveat here: Vitamin D supplementation usually increases the blood plasma level of Vitamin D but cannot substitute for sunshine in increasing serotonin.

Protect Your Skin

According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, one out of every five Americans will develop skin cancer during his or her lifetime.(10) There are more new cases of skin cancer each year than the combined yearly incidences of breast, prostate, lung, and colon cancers. Basal cell carcinoma is the most common form of skin cancer affecting 800,000 Americans each year. Individuals with fair skin, light hair, and blue, green, or gray eyes are at the highest risk. Those whose occupations require long hours outdoors or who spend extensive leisure time in the sun are also more likely to develop this type of cancer. Chronic exposure to sunlight is the cause of most basal cell carcinomas that occur most frequently on the exposed parts of the body: (face, ears, neck, scalp, shoulders, and back). Basal cell carcinoma often shows itself as an open sore, a reddish patch, a shiny bump, a pink growth, or a scar-like area.

Melanoma is the most serious form of skin cancer. However, if diagnosed and removed while localized to the superficial layer of the skin, it is almost 100% curable. Once the cancer advances and metastasizes (spreads) to other parts of the body, treatment is difficult. Melanomas are usually black or brown and have irregular borders.

Enjoying Sunlight—A Balanced Approach
• Build up a tan gradually. Avoid getting too tanned and skip the tanning booths.

• Avoid exposure to sunlight during the hottest part of the day (10am – 5pm).

• Apply broad-spectrum sunscreen after at least 15 minutes of exposure to the sun’s rays—sunscreen blocks the absorption of vitamin D into the skin. If you are at risk for skin cancer, apply before you go out in the sunlight. Just take a vitamin D supplement. Your sunscreen should provide both uva and uvb protection. You do need to reapply it every couple of hours. Water, sand, and snow intensify the burning power of the sun.

• Wear a broad-rimmed hat.

• Wear sunglasses with good ultraviolet protection.

• Consider clothing with ultraviolet protection.

• Eat a diet rich in antioxidants. Dark green leafy vegetables and carotenoids found in orange fruits and vegetables protect the skin.

• Limit fat consumption. A high-fat diet encourages the development of cancer.

• Eat foods containing natural COX-2 inhibitors. Too much ultraviolet light (UVB) increases COX-2 activity in the skin which encourages inflammation and other abnormalities. Red grapes, blueberries, garlic, and turmeric possess natural COX-2 inhibitors.

• Don’t smoke. Smoking triples the risk of squamous cell carcinoma, a common skin cancer.(11)

• Be able to identify potential skin cancer lesions.

If you are in the sun for long periods of time, have a thorough skin examination from your doctor at least twice a year to check for any skin abnormalities. Between times have your spouse or a friend check for any skin discoloration. We want to get the benefits of the sunlight without getting skin cancer!

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Contributed by Wildwood’s College of Health Evangelism

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Berries as Disease Fighters

posted on June 28, 2013 by wildwoodhealth

By: Staff of Wildwood Lifestyle Center

If you have or (are at risk for developing) diabetes, hypertension, cancer, or dementia, frequent consumption of berries will improve your health. Here’s why.

Cardiovascular Protection

Harvard researchers followed 100,000 young and middle-aged women for 20 years and found that those who ate more than 3 servings of strawberries or blueberries a week reduced their risk for heart disease by 32%.1

Cardiovascular diseases–atherosclerosis, coronary artery disease, vascular dementia, and hypertension– are caused by much more than accumulated cholesterol and fats in arteries. Oxidation, inflammation, sticky platelets, and reduced ability of the blood vessels to dilate all contribute to these disease processes. The flavonoids and other compounds in berries target each of these problems. As antioxidants, they inhibit the oxidation of cholesterol. This is important because oxidized cholesterol triggers inflammation inside the arteries.

Not only that, their red, purple, and blue pigments (anthocyanins) help to reduce cholesterol synthesis in the body. By inhibiting platelet clumping, they also lower the risk for undesirable clotting and consequently heart attacks and strokes. Plus, the soluble fiber in berries reduces the body’s production of cholesterol, decreases its absorption, and removes it from the body.

Diabetes Prevention

During 3,645,585 person-years of follow-up, higher intakes of anthocyanins were significantly associated with a lower risk of type 2 diabetes.2 How?

Berries are low on the glycemic index. The glycemic index measures how fast and how much a food raises blood glucose levels. Since berries rate low on the index, they make an ideal food for individuals who are obese or have either prediabetes or diabetes. Their soluble fiber slows down the absorption of glucose. The polyphenols in blueberries inhibit the enzymes that break down sucrose. Berries also reduce the natural inflammation that occurs after consuming a high fat, high carb diet in overweight individuals.3

Blueberries contain pterostilbene and resveratrol. These phytochemicals inhibit inflammation. This is important because inflammation fuels the many complications of diabetes. Accumulating studies indicate that resveratrol helps to protect diabetic individuals from the many complications of diabetes while other studies show that pterostilbene itself produced a substantial decrease in plasma glucose levels and glycosylated hemoglobin (hemoglobin A1c).4 This test provides the average of your glucose levels for the last six to twelve week period. When the blood sugar (glucose) is too high, it builds up in the blood and combines with the hemoglobin, becoming “glycated”. Elevated hemoglobin A1c increases the risk for diabetic complications.

Cancer Protection

The ellagic acid in strawberries and raspberries help to protect from cancers of the breast, esophagus, skin, colon, prostate, bladder, and pancreas. Ellagic acid:

- activates DNA repair
- increases the liver’s carcinogen-detoxification
- arrests proliferation of cancer cells
- inhibits tumor angiogenesis (a mechanism in which new blood vessels are created to feed the tumor)
• induces apoptosis (cell suicide) of cancer cells

When consumed daily, blueberries help to protect genomic DNA integrity and can stimulate natural killer cell activity. Blueberries help to protect us from the breast, prostate, stomach, colon, and pancreatic cancers. Blueberries exert cancer-protecting activity (to name just a few) by:

• inhibit inflammation
• protect DNA from free radical damage
• inhibit proliferation of cancer cells
• increase the suicide of the cancer cells

Blueberries also have the phytochemical pterostilbene which inhibits two enzymes (MMP-2 and MMP-9) that help cancer cells to invade tissues and spread. This phytochemical also inhibits inflammation, a key player in cancer development.

Brain Protection

Accumulating evidence suggests that frequent consumption of blueberries slows down brain aging. The polyphenolic compounds found in blueberries exert their beneficial effects by reducing free radical damage, protecting brain cells from neurotoxins, and inhibiting inflammation inside the brain—all of which contribute to brain aging and brain disease. By improving signaling and communication between nerve cells, memory is improved. Flavonoids in blueberries have actually been shown to reverse age-associated memory and learning deficits in aged animals. Blueberry supplementation prevents behavioral deficits in an Alzheimer disease model.

With so many health benefits, why not include them as a stable in your diet? Not in season? Unsweetened, frozen berries will do!

Contributed by Wildwood’s Lifestyle Center

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Overcoming Anxiety

dwildwoodhealth.org/blog/2013/06/28/overcoming-anxiety/

Posted on June 28, 2013 by wildwoodhealth
Posted in

By: Elizabeth J. Hall

Anxiety disorders are the most common form of mental disease in the United States. They change the brain’s hierarchy. Ideally, the brain should govern from the top down. The anterior portion of the front brain should determine what is good and bad and discern and define legitimate fears and concerns from ungrounded ones. However, in anxiety disorders, the activity within the brain changes so that the brain areas which deal with anxiety (amygdala, insula) become overactive. The connections between the front brain and these other organs are not working well. We can succumb to anxiety.

Uncontrolled anxiety robs the health. Individuals with generalized anxiety disorder tend to have elevated LDL-cholesterol levels, elevated blood fats, and a decrease of the beneficial HDL, all of which contribute to blood vessel disease.(1) Sustained or chronic anxiety is associated with a significant increase in thickness of the innermost and middle layers of the common carotid arteries – arteries important in nourishing the brain.(2) This thickening is usually caused by build up of cholesterol-containing material. In fact, chronic high levels of anxiety could accelerate the development of atherosclerosis in these important arteries. Those with anxiety disorders have high pro-inflammatory markers. This is important because inflammation fuels chronic diseases. Individuals who experience panic attack are more like to develop undesirable clotting.

Anxiety pales the stomach mucosa (lining) by causing the tiny blood vessels leading to the stomach to constrict. This interferes with optimal function and can set the stage for ulcers. Stress slows the emptying of the contents of the stomach. Studies on rodents suggest that rats genetically predisposed to anxiety have hypersensitive abdominal organs, especially the colon.(3) High levels of anxiety also reduce the efficiency of the immune system.(4) Anxiety also increases many pro-inflammatory agents that fuel chronic disease.

Dealing with Anxiety

By understanding what contributes to anxiety, we can gain an upper hand in overcoming it.

1. Distorted Thinking Patterns

In selective filtering, an individual usually focuses so heavily on one or more negative matters, that he/she cannot see the positive. “My husband never really communicates with me.” “Only rarely does he tell me he loves me.” “My marriage is not a really good marriage.” His spouse might overlook the fact that he has held down a steady job for 20 years, faithfully pays the bills, changes the oil in her car, takes an interest in the children’s extracurricular activities, attends church regularly with the family, and occasionally take her out on holidays. Selective filtering leads to discontent and anger because our hurts are taken out of context of the greater blessings.

Individuals with all-or-none thinking have unrealistic goals because they tend to see everything in absolutes. There are no in-betweens. Either red or blue. No pastels. No pinks or lilacs. They either fail or succeed. “I feel crummy. I didn’t make my usual ‘A’. This ‘B’ makes me feel like I have failed.” This mode of thinking discounts the fact that we learn from our mistakes and failures. Since it strikes God’s grace in the face, it can lead us to become intolerant of others’ shortcomings and sink us into shame with our own ineptness. Our relationships can deteriorate because we become either impatient with others or absorbed in pursuing unrealistic perfection to the neglect of significant relationships. Unrealistic goals cause intemperate living. Intemperate living erodes our personal peace and the peace of our families. In all-or-none thinking, all mistakes or conflicts are seen as inherently evil, instead of means from which we learn. This can produce anxiety whether we admit it or not.

Mind-reading is another faulty thinking pattern which produces anxiety. In mind-reading, a person is sure he knows what another person thinks. “She didn’t smile at me. She must be mad at me although I don’t know why.” This fails to realize other reasons for her actions. Jean was a persevering middle-aged lady who had struggled with anxiety and depression for many years. One day her boss approached
her quite seriously. “I want to see you in my office tomorrow!” No smile. Not his usual upbeat self. The week had gone quite well for Jean. Suddenly she found herself spiraling down into a severe, anxious depression. She prayed. The question came to her mind, “What were you thinking before you got depressed? What is the problem? There must be a problem with me. Was the staff unhappy with my performance? The rug is going to be pulled out from under my feet.” Then she realized that she was mind-reading. She really didn’t know what her boss wanted. “Perhaps he wants to tie up loose end, before going on a six-week business trip,” she thought. That ended up being exactly the case.

Lowergeneralization is assuming that bad events will happen over and over or that things are always going to follow a certain pattern. This will also produce anxiety. A person who was fired from his job once can relive that trauma every time his boss wants to see him. “I lost my job once before. I will probably lose this one.”

Should thinking is setting arbitrary requirements without considering consequences. “I should be able to rear two children alone, climb the corporate ladder, take continuing education classes, work out at the ‘Y’ three times a week, and keep a spotless home. Many single workers have done this, so should I.” Not considering the consequences of the whirlwind of either physical or mental activity accrues anxiety and eventually can leave us feeling bankrupt. Establishing realistic goals, and evaluating costs and consequences of personal action makes us wiser and better able to prevent or handle anxiety.

One of the pivotal steps in overcoming anxiety is to recognize the faulty thinking patterns that contribute to it.(5) Many professional or pastoral counselors can be of assistance. Since expression of our anxiety can deepen its impression on the mind, it would be wise to voice our anxiety only to those who know how to help us. The psalmist suggests that it is always appropriate to convey our anxieties, fear, and anger to God. Many times faith in a loving God can reduce the impact of stress.

2. Threat of Loss

Fears of loss reinforce anxiety. In order to overcome anxiety, we need to not only recognize our faulty thinking patterns, but our underlying fears.

Conscious loss of a loved one, a physical capability, or a job, often reinforces anxiety and underlying depression. Fear of losing someone or something valuable to us can propel us into the throes of a frenzied anxiety. When this happens to me, I find it helpful to realize that in some ways I was happy before I even had the desired relationship or object. Teaching, for example, is very dear to me. Sometimes I have nightmares about losing my job or the capacity to teach. Objectively however, I realize that I was just as happy, even somewhat happier, when I was working as a patient-care worker. I would be sad for a little while if I didn’t teach, but there are other jobs, just as meaningful, that I could do that would give me a sense of satisfaction.

Sometimes we have suffered losses of which we are unaware. We hadn’t missed them until it came to our attention that they were gone. These losses can drag us into shame and embarrassment, pushing us off-balance into insecurity. Insecurity comes in so many garbs that it is not always easy to discern. These may be especially painful when love and esteem have finally been achieved – and then we lose them to some degree. What can we do when this happens?

It is truly humbling to write regarding these experiences of pain. Perhaps you have suffered more than I have. I hope not. But some readers of this article have. I discovered a helpful suggestion one night when I was feeling especially anxious. I considered each of my major losses, and to my amazement, for every loss I was able to realize a definite gain.

There was the loss, from a cruel mental disease, of my mother’s loving care. After spending much time and money working through issues related to this, I can see that I am much more sympathetic and insightful than I would have been without this experience. Then there was my indifferent dad. Years later, when he died, he left a small inheritance – enough to pay for a couple of years of much needed counseling. A speech impediment and a form of audible dyslexia have limited me some, but I certainly have taught foreigners how to read standard English. Their mistakes mirrored my mistakes well. My speech therapy, it seemed, helped more people than just myself. Fortunately, I work for an institution, which has given me room to grow professionally. Bounced from a job, I got another job in a rural elementary school in which I learned much that helped me in character development and professional growth. Several years later, I lost a class I enjoyed teaching. I was determined to make the best of it. I was given a more advanced class, and the research I did for that class made me a much more persuasive teacher in the classes I currently teach. The list of my gains by losses could continue for another page.

We can confront the underlying fear of future loss by taking time to review how God has transformed the past losses into some kind of gain. If we can’t see this in our own upheavals, we can listen to people who have. We can read inspiring biographies of those who triumphed over losses. Study the Scriptures that show how God turned defeat into victory.
I remember hearing newscaster Maria Shriver give an inspirational graduation talk. She had taken a certain stand on an important issue in one of the major news networks. She feared that it would cost her job. It did. The experience has proved valuable to her, for she has known ever since, that she made the right decision and she will never have to struggle with that same kind of fear again. She learned that courage is not the absence of fear, but the going on in spite of fear. Peace of mind doesn’t necessarily mean the absence of conflict or loss, but the consciousness of right doing and the eventual triumph of good in the face of adversity.

3. Integrity Counts

Missing links in our integrity create anxiety. Integrity to principle underlies all true development.(6) I like to define integrity as the harmonious movement of the intellect, the will, and the emotions into the will and purposes of God. To the extent that this happens, we have happiness and good mental health.

Character has a number of different aspects – the will, emotions, personal relationships, the intellect, and our physical being. Usually, one or more of these lags behind the others, and this character imbalance fosters anxiety. We know we should do differently, but somehow we don’t. The stunted area(s) in our lives produce anxiety. Sometimes it is sitting on a fence in the valley of decision. At other times deeper, unresolved psychological and spiritual issues confront the soul. Sometimes God allows disturbing thoughts to come to us, to prompt us to deliberately choose to eliminate contaminating influences that erode character and contribute so much to anxiety. By acknowledging our weaknesses and working through character-dwarfing pain, we can eventually learn to make decisions that are true to our chosen values, and using our talents in harmony with them, we can avoid anxiety-producing guilt.(7)

Anxiety can also come from our subconscious past. A toddler is happily picking pink flowers. Suddenly, buzz, buzz, buzz. Welts appear all over her body, and she struggles to gain her breath. Twenty years pass. She has been happily married. It is her anniversary. She is looking forward to her husband’s return. He usually brings her such interesting gifts. But when she receives pink flowers she feels utterly disappointed. Her mind seems to become vacant, then apprehensive. But – sudden recognition and a flash of insight – no, these are not the same flowers as those of her previous encounter. Although the shape is different, the color is the same and the size of the petals are similar to those she picked when she was so severely stung as a youngster. She can’t seem to disassociate the insect stings of the past from the pink flowers of her anniversary gift because her mind is working on an unconscious level.

It is helpful to recognize the connections of past events to our current anxieties and to realize that conditions are different. We aren’t in the same environment. We are more mature in taking care of our own needs, and making necessary provision to protect ourselves. In the previous scenario, that would be keeping self-injectable epinephrine handy to counteract anaphylactic shock when bees and hornets are out.

4. Core Beliefs and Priorities that Contribute to Anxiety

Self-absorption is another cause of anxiety. We must certainly attend to our needs. But when my job, my health, and my goals threaten to engulf me, I need to escape this tunnel vision. The remedy for this kind of anxiety is to become involved with meeting the needs of other people and, with them, to develop a realization of the value of ministry and a habitual attitude of ministry.

Perhaps you are not well yourself. Even flashing a smile, expressing genuine gratitude, or offering a sincere prayer makes this world a better place for someone.

Sometimes having too many things to do triggers apprehension and worry. What to do if this is the case? Check your motives. Psychologists have identified three basic core beliefs or motivations that produce anger, anxiety, or depression.

Conformity core beliefs lead us to try to please others to the extent that we don’t take enough time to protect our health – physical, mental, and spiritual. This conflict easily creates anxiety.

With performance core beliefs we think that perfection in every single little thing we do is required. I was living in a small dorm with the dean and her family. Our dean was a tough but loving lady. She had escaped Nazi Germany when she was only three or four years old. She tells the story of how her foot was painfully inflamed with osteomalacia which made it very difficult for her to walk. Her mother had pointed to the corpses surrounding them and said, “Do you want to be like these? Don’t walk then! You must walk to keep alive.” Years later, happily married with two young children, this enterprising dean would garden, can food, keep an immaculate home and supervise her young ladies well. However, she would end up with a migraine headache every Sabbath after working all day Friday preparing a delicious Sabbath meal and laboring to make homemade wheat rolls. Finally I said, “Molly, you don’t have to make the rolls every Friday. Take it easy. Cook simply.” But no, to her, rolls on Sabbath was a family tradition and could not be broken. Eventually she did learn to relax and rest although it took major set backs for her to learn this essential lesson.
We do want to do our work as carefully and thoroughly as possible, but we fatigue ourselves too often by thinking the niceties of life are absolutely essential. We let our work define us, and drain our strength, when, really, our character and priorities should define our work and promote health.

Or perhaps we are suspicious and competitive. "If I don’t take this opportunity, I will lose it and Jim will get ahead of me." So we add an extra load. Maybe we climb another rung in the corporate ladder at the expense of our health, our relationships, and eventually our peace of mind. Such are the results of controlling core attitudes. Our distorted concepts of mission can obstruct our interpretation of who we are.

Identify your major long-term roles and then from these goals, derive specific, immediate goals. If you are overwhelmed with too many tasks or responsibilities, eliminate or delegate responsibility for goals that do not contribute to healthful fulfillment of your mission. Remember to re-evaluate periodically to maintain realistic goals.

Suggestions for Dealing with Anxiety

**Physical Lifestyle Habits**

Get a good medical evaluation: Physical problems like overactive thyroid activity, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, heart failure, heart valve prolapse, vitamin B₁₂ deficiency, withdrawal of certain drugs, and other problems could be the source of anxiety and should be ruled out by a competent physician and appropriate testing.

View only the positive, the true, and the noble on television. Much of what is shown on TV stimulates the adrenal glands to release stress hormones that aggravate and perpetuate anxiety. We deliberately choose to lower our threshold to anxiety by watching violent programs or movies, and living the action vicariously.

Eliminate caffeine. Caffeine magnifies the effects of adrenal stress hormones and messes up an important brain chemical, GABA (gamma-aminobutyric acid). This chemical helps us to focus and remain calm during stress. Caffeine can be a contributing factor in post-traumatic stress syndrome. It lowers the threshold to anger and decreases the level of contentment. Caffeine is bad news indeed for anxiety control.

Physical exercise helps. Twenty minutes of continuous walking (done daily for 10 weeks) improves anxiety.(9) Physical exercise is linked to good health. Physical fitness can buffer against the harmful effects of mental stress. In the elderly, exercise improves the quality of sleep, and the perception of personal control and self-efficacy. It helps control an inherited tendency to anxiety and also increases contentment. Regular, moderate exercise also helps to reduce pro-inflammatory chemicals in the body which are commonly elevated in anxiety.

Enjoy an anti-inflammatory diet. Since anxiety fuels inflammation (and inflammation fuels chronic conditions), adopt an anti-inflammatory plant-based diet which includes leafy green vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and omega-3 fats. Avoid liberal use of refined oils and sugar as these fuel inflammation.

**Abiding Trust in God**

Trust in Divine Providence reduces anxiety. Juanita was a dynamic, active church member and a mother of three active teenagers. Many years ago she had been involved in a car accident and suffered such serious headaches she feared she was losing her sanity. One doctor after another could offer her no cure for such terrible pain. (This was in the mid-20th century, before CAT scans were available.) She feared long-term institutionalization. “Who will take care of my precious children? My husband is gone so often because of his job. I must do something or I will lose my mind.” As a Christian, she decided she must break down the pain in her life into five-minute intervals. The end of each five minutes was punctuated by a short prayer. She remembered that the highest mountain is conquered step by step.

This step-by-step approach, reinforced by faith in God, accomplished what no other therapy had. Slowly she improved until one day she realized she had no more headaches. Her experience led her to venture out on a faith ministry that helped her reach some of the unfortunate people in New York City. Many times there were no funds and sometimes vehicles necessary for her ministry broke down, but she never indulged in anxiety or complaining. God always in some unpredictable way provided.

Anxiety can nullify the benefits of our faith, but it doesn’t necessarily. Anxiety signals something is wrong. Perhaps it signals a physical disease, a distorted thought pattern, a misplaced priority, or a pseudo-god. If anxiety is honestly acknowledged, its causes ascertained and
sufficiently recognized, we actually can become stronger in our faith. As the psalmist states “What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee.” Ps. 56:3

You, too, by understanding some causes of anxiety, making the suggested changes in thinking and behavior patterns, and instigating the positive measures we have discussed, can overcome anxiety. And this can be done in a way that builds a balanced, trusting, cheerful, helpful character and personality – a whole, sound person – spiritually, socially, mentally, physically.

References


Additional references:


Von Kanel R, et al. Hypercoagulability, in working men and women with high levels of panic-like anxiety. Institute for Behavioral Sciences, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich, Switzerland. roland.vonkanel@insel.ch
“Over the last few years, I have been gaining weight, particularly around my waist. I gained about fifteen pounds and began to notice the change in appearance in my body.

Recently I became concerned when I was informed that extra weight around the middle could trigger the onset of diabetes. My blood pressure and cholesterol were higher than they should be too. When I discovered that Wildwood Lifestyle Center had a weight loss program, utilizing natural remedies along with exercise, I decided to enroll.

On the day of my physical examination, I weighed 188 pounds, and the sodium content in my blood was a bit high. The doctor determined that I was taking much more of a certain prescription drug than I needed, and that there was one other that I did not need at all. So, one prescription drug of the three I was taking was eliminated, while another drug was cut down and a natural supplement was prescribed. I was told to remain on the last one. I started to increase the water I was drinking and walk more.

During my time at Wildwood, my stamina has improved. In addition, both my blood pressure and cholesterol readings are now normal again, and so far I have dropped four pounds in eleven days. I am looking forward to losing even more as I continue to implement these changes in my lifestyle. The sodium content in my blood has normalized too.

I have learned much from the cooking classes and dietary lectures, and plan to incorporate this knowledge into my new lifestyle. I am happy that I chose to come to Wildwood and this experience has begun to change my life for the better. With God’s help I will achieve my ultimate goal of losing more weight and using less medication.”