



THE NEW CALM COURIER

SPRING 2001

Phobic Devices *Parting with Old Friends*

It's time to take a trip. Maybe you're driving yourself, maybe you're still in the passenger seat, but at least you're out of the house. You check the supplies one more time before you leave. Once you're on the road it's too late to discover that you've forgotten something essential.

Xanax bottle? Check. Water bottle in case you need to take xanax? Check. Bottles of all other meds so that emergency personnel will know what you've taken in the event that your unconscious? Check. Cell phone, with Dr. Glanz's pager number set for speed dial, in case of heart, or panic, attack. Check. Quarters for the pay phone in case the cell phone doesn't work? Check. Mints to clear your nose if you have trouble breathing? Check.

The route has been carefully planned. You know where every pay phone is located along the way—hopefully they're all in working order. The trip will take you a little out of your way, but it's worth the peace of mind of knowing that you'll pass an EMS station along the midway—just in case. You always feel extra anxious at that point, anyway, knowing that you've crossed the imaginary line that makes you closer to your destination than you are to home. As you pass by, you pat your coat pocket. The lump that is your cell phone assures you that you are seconds away from being able to summon help. What a relief!

What exotic destination could be worth such elaborate planning, worry, and precautions? A cross-country drive? A flight to Europe? Maybe. But, for us, it's more likely to be a trip to the grocery store, or the mall, or work, or a friend's house.

We feel proud. Not long ago, a trip like this would have been uncomfortable at best, terrifying most of the time, and impossible to do alone. Now, here we are, on our own and heading for adventure. Or, at least, what passes for adventure for us. But, are we really on our own?

Not really. We've brought along as many friends as possible. They are our constant companions when we venture into territory that once scared us out of our wits. We take great comfort in the fact that they are with us and feel confident that they can rescue us from any and all peril, real or imagined. And, amazingly, these friends in whom we place so much trust, to which we attribute our ability to take our place in the world again, don't have a brain among them. They are our phobic devices, our cell phones, medications, water bottles, memorized pay phone locations, etc., etc.

These friends, our phobic devices, are not to be dismissed lightly. After all, it was with their help that we developed the confidence to step into the world again. We couldn't always have a living, breathing friend with us when we wanted to practice walking to the mailbox or around the block, or driving to the corner store. Telephones eased our fears a bit. We could get help to calm down if we needed it. And, little by little, we expanded our boundaries. Our friends served us well.

And then, one day, it happens. As you enjoy yourself deep in the heart of the department
(Continued on page 2)

EDITOR'S NOTE

The New Calm Courier is published four times a year. It is intended to inform and communicate with people who are interested in the anxiety disorders.

Subscriptions are \$10, and can be obtained from the Editor.

The mailing address is
CDTA, Inc.
155 N. Craig St.
Pittsburgh PA, 15213.

You can phone 412-687-8700 for information on subscriptions, or to discuss your questions about anxiety with the editor, Lawrence M. Glanz, Ph.D.

E-mail:
glanzlarry@yahoo.com

The New Calm Courier is a publication of CDTA, Inc.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Q & A ABOUT ANXIETY	2
DAVE'S ENCOUNTER WITH ANXIETY	3
THE INTERNET GUY	3



EDITOR:

LAWRENCE GLANZ, PH.D



MANAGING EDITOR:

SANDRA POOLE

Frequently Asked Questions About Anxiety

As a psychologist who sees patients with anxiety disorders, I get many questions about the subject from patients and their families. Here are some of the more commonly heard questions, and some answers I sometimes give:

Is there a cure for anxiety?

This is the number one question. When people ask it, I always feel like telling them what they want to hear. The truth is anxiety is not the same thing as an infection. You can cure an infection. However, anxiety is a normal emotion, and I would never want to cure it—even if I could. I can help people cope more effectively. I can help people learn that anxiety need not run their lives. I can teach and coach, and do therapy, and coax, but cure I cannot do.

Can I give it to my kids?

There are many variations of this question. Some people blame themselves if their children show even the slightest indication of anxiety. It is easy to understand that anything you worry about in your own life, you are going to care about in your child's life. Even those with no children worry about passing it along to their future kids. Some even delay having children for this reason. I tell all of these people that you are not to blame. Anxiety is something you would not willingly give to anyone. If your child shows signs of it, do not jump to conclusions. Keep your eyes and ears open, and don't be afraid to speak with your child's pediatrician or a psychologist who specializes in child development.

Why me?

This is probably the most difficult question of all to answer. It certainly reflects the anger and frustration felt by so many people with anxiety disorders. Some times we just feel like shaking our fists at the heavens and cursing the unfairness of life. I encourage people to do this if they feel so inclined. Then I look at my watch and ask them if they are quite done. We have a lot to do, I tell them. When you are ready to get to work on the problem, let me know.

Well, those are some of the questions I find most difficult to answer, as you can plainly see. The questions are understandable. Please let me know how I can answer them better. Drop me a line, or send me an e-mail. I'm listening.

Continued from Page 1

store, you realize that your cell phone is in the car. Suddenly, your chest is tight, your head is foggy, and your legs are weak. You don't know how you'll get back to the front of the store, much less to your car. Why? Because your cell phone is not with you! Obviously, your cell phone did not turn you from a healthy person enjoying the day to a sickly person about to keel over from a heart attack. Yet, your brain has given this power to your cell phone and your other trusty phobic devices. You've become psychologically dependent on these devices for your courage. You're addicted.

The good news is that, as with anxiety, we can break away from our dependence on phobic devices through small steps. For me, the cell phone became my greatest friend and worst enemy. I couldn't walk from my desk to the water fountain without it. I was now anxious without my phone...a new source of anxiety! I had to do something before the phobic devices increased, instead of decreased, my anxiety.

I began by leaving my phone in my coat throughout the workday, except when going to meetings in other buildings. Eventually, the phone stayed behind for meetings as well. Having a carpool mate that works across town hold my phone through the day was the next step away from dependence. I hid the phone in the car when I went into a store. The same approach worked with other devices, like water bottles, carrying unnecessary meds, etc. Gradually, I began to attribute my ability to be independent to my efforts and not the devices that I used to carry with me. Now, I feel like I'm truly on the road to independence. I'll give a call after I get there...I don't have my cell phone with me.

The Happy Panicker

Support Groups

UPPER ST. CLAIR
OUR REDEEMER
LUTHERN CHURCH
Rt 198 & Gateshead Dr.
Washington, PA 15301
CONTACT: Kate
(412) 531-4748

NORTH HILLS
OUTREACH
CENTER
1975 Ferguson Road
Allison Park, PA 15101
CONTACT: Marilou
(412) 487-6316
(412) 251-5363

OAKLAND/
SHADYSIDE
FRIEND'S MEETING
4836 Ellsworth Ave.
2nd Floor
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
(412) 578-2450
(412) 578-2450

SOUTH PARK
GRACE LUTHERAN
CHURCH
6810 Hilldale Drive
Pittsburgh PA 15236
CONTACT: Bonnie
(412) 653-6132
(412) 261-5363



Dave's Encounter with Anxiety

~~~ *By Dave* ~~~

Dealing with my anxiety has been very difficult. It started when I was a senior in college. I didn't miss my classes, but I always felt uncomfortable in them. I used to avoid going to parties or doing things with my friends.

Then I went straight to graduate school; hundreds of miles away from anyone I knew. My classes were three-hours long. I used to skip class, or if I did attend, I made a point to figure out a good time to get up and leave for a few minutes. Sometimes I boasted that I got a B+ in a class I only attended four times during a semester. Really, I know I could've done better if I didn't avoid class.

I missed my graduate school graduation ceremony because I didn't want to sit for 90 minutes in some place I didn't know. Some place I didn't really want to be. I was worried about what would happen.

Going for job interviews was very difficult. Usually I would find a bathroom and stay in there for ten minutes or more to try and calm down before meetings with potential employers. I know I did poorly during several interviews because I was more focused on my anxiety than trying to sell myself to the employer.

My occupation requires me to go to meetings. This has been a career choice that I have wanted since early in college. For my first job out of school, I tried very hard to go to the minimum number of meetings necessary. This didn't produce results, and it began to show. That is when I decided a new position would be beneficial for me to start over. I seriously considered changing my career choice to avoid meetings. However, I stayed in the same profession because I get so much personal joy out of the end result.

Finally, three years after graduate school, I broke down at my doctor's office and asked for help. I knew I couldn't go through life not being able to deal with my anxiety. It took time for me to be able to tell my fiancé and my family. I still haven't told all of my friends, mainly because I am ashamed that I let my worries take over my life and my lifestyle.

I've been getting professional assistance for more than 18 months now. I've been able to learn to deal with problems that arise with anxiety. I know how to rationalize my thoughts to counteract the irrational thoughts. Panic attacks aren't as scary. Lately, I've noticed more often stories about anxiety in the media. Others, in a more public role, go through what I am going through. I am not alone.

I know that feeling anxious is a normal trait. I know that people get nervous for many different reasons. What has been most difficult is realizing that it is okay to feel nervous. The more I accept it, the better I am.

### THE INTERNET GUY

In these columns I like to tell you about websites that you might be interested in visiting if you want to learn more about anxiety. The great thing about the web is that you can find anything about any subject in the world. People are using it to get information about all kinds of stuff, and I think that's good. But you never know whether the information is accurate or not, because anyone can put things on the web. So you have to be just a little bit careful, and you have to remember not to trust everything you see on the web.

Here is one site I found that I like a lot when it comes to anxiety. It has lots of information which checks out as factual, and lots of links to other sites. It is called About.com. On this site, you can find information on health and illness, very well organized. I looked up panic disorder on this site, and it came back with a very comprehensive and useful response. This included a feature article called *In the Spotlight*, and a list of subjects that you could delve into if you were so inclined.

The featured article on this particular day was on guilt. It discussed the ways in which guilt can lead to depression and stand in the way of recovery from anxiety. A related article detailed ways to overcome chronic worrying. Another article described the increase in anxiety levels in American adults as well as children. All very interesting.

The site can connect you to ongoing discussion groups on topics relating to anxiety. It can also direct you to resources for getting help almost anywhere in the country. If you are interested in some specific related subjects you can learn about Post Traumatic Stress Disorders, Social Anxiety, Phobias, and lots of other topics. There are links to online support groups, information for friends and family, and information for professionals as well. I really like the way this site is organized. It makes everything easy to find, and it is well thought out. I recommend it to you highly.

TO SUBSCRIBE OR RENEW YOUR  
SUBSCRIPTION TO:  
THE NEW CALM COURIER  
SEND YOUR NAME, ADDRESS, AND  
\$10.00