

How to cope with anxiety and stress

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Topics of discussion:

- * Anxiety Quiz
- * Identify what stress is.
- * Identify what anxiety is
- * Difference between anxiety and stress
- * Fear
- * Reframe negative self talk
- * Fight or flight response
- * Stages of development
- * Self care
- * Ways to reduce anxiety
- * When to see a doctor
- * How to measure anxiety
- * Psychiatry
- * How SSRIs work
- * Neurotransmitters

Anxiety & Stress

Stress

When faced with a situation we have not coped with before, our “fight or flight” response is activated, adrenaline is increased, heart rate rises, and our immune system is shut off to protect us from the perceived threat.

Stress symptoms commonly include:

A state of alarm

Adrenaline production

Short-term resistance as a coping mechanism

Exhaustion

Irritability & Anger

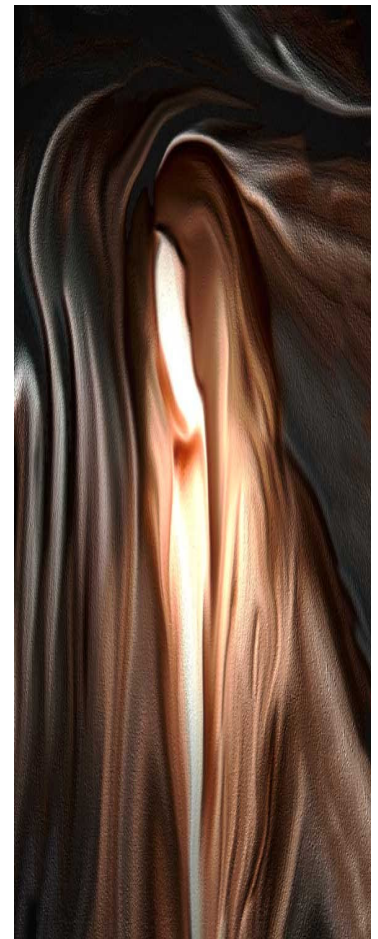
Muscular tension

Inability to concentrate or make sound decisions

Variety of psychological reactions such as headache, sweating, and elevated heart rate.

Autonomic reaction:

Many times our body reacts before our brains do. Muscle tension, fear signals, adrenalin, increased heart rate, etc...



Give examples of when you felt stress

When have you experience these symptoms?

What was the event that preceded the stress?

How did you work through the stress?

Did your attempt to work through the stress work?

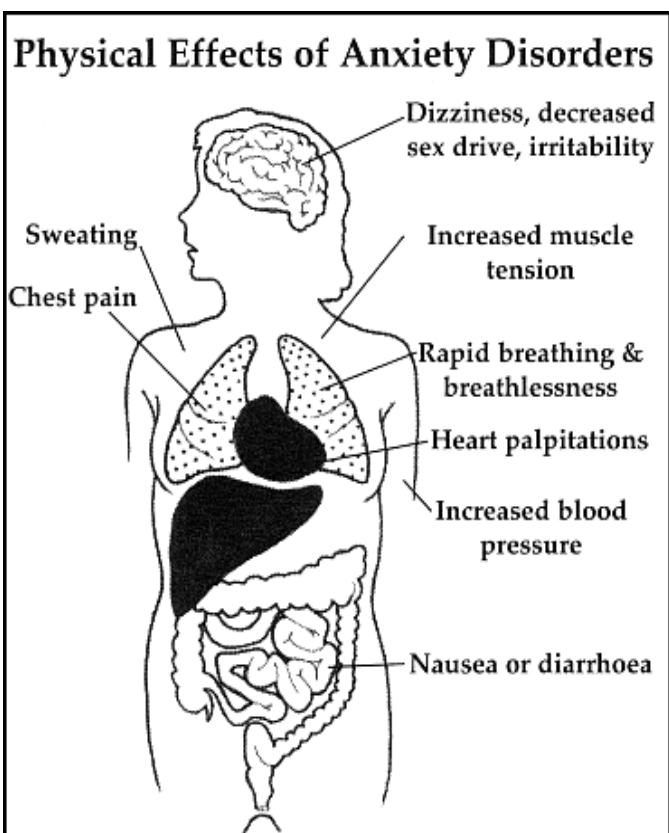
Anxiety

Anxiety is the result of threats that are perceived to be uncontrollable or unavoidable. **Anxiety** is considered to be a normal reaction to stress.

Anxiety can also be described as uneasiness, apprehension, fear, or worry.

Anxiety can often occur an identifiable trigger. In other words, you can worry about things even without being faced with an immediate problem.

Fear, anger, muscle tension, and elevated heart rate are symptoms of stress and anxiety.



Symptoms of anxiety –

- Difficulty sleeping—insomnia
- Racing thoughts
- Being hypervigilant (you closely watch your surroundings)
- Feeling depressed
- Depressive symptoms may eventually evolve into hopelessness, low self esteem, helplessness.
- Irritability
- Stomach upset
- Gastric pain
- Bowel problems or Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Body aches and pains for no physical reason
- Sweating
- Increased muscle tension
- Heart palpitations

Give examples of when you felt anxiety

1. When have you experience these symptoms?
2. What was the event that preceded the stress?
3. How did you work through the stress?
4. Was your attempt to work through the stress successful?
5. What changes took place when faced with a stressful situation again?
6. On a scale of 1 to 10 what was your anxiety?





What is the difference between anxiety and stress?

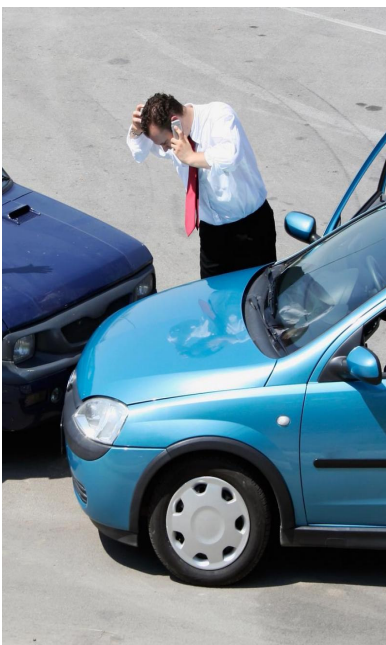
Anxiety is the manifestation of excessive fear, worry, and physical symptoms which adversely affect daily living. A pattern of these symptoms may develop followed by attempts to cope with the anxiety, or accommodate the anxiety. Depression may also be present and accompany anxiety.

In other words, when stress becomes unmanageable despite attempts to control it or stop thoughts related to stress.

Fear

False **E**vidence **A**ppearing **R**eal

Additionally, fear is related to escape and avoidance. Fear occurs in the presence of an observed threat that is unfamiliar and the solution of the threat is unknown. The threat can be physical or emotional. When fear is not worked through, it remains in the subconscious and may manifest into anxiety. When fear becomes excessive and dominates the consciousness, it can be anxiety.



Does the body or brain react first to fear?

Fight, flight, or play dead response.

When faced with an unfamiliar or stressful situation the body has automatic or autonomic responses. Examples of this response increased heart rate, muscle tension sweating, etc. Imagine if you were driving your car in the rain and the car in front of you suddenly stopped. What would you experience? You may grip the wheel, scream or gasp, your heart rate may have increased, and several other automatic/autonomic symptoms.

A neuro-chemical response takes place which causes the body to react in such a way to preserve itself. All of the body's energy is focused into the immediate danger. The immune system is slowed down and the frontal lobe of the brain is flooded with neuro-chemical activity. Decision making ability becomes limited and the brain is only able to focus on the immediate stressor.

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- ⇒ Exposure to intense fear or pervasive fear as a child can result in being conditioned to feel anxiety and experience anxiety as a normative behavior.
 - ⇒ In other words, anxiety can seem normal if you have been conditioned to experience it.
 - ⇒ As human's develop, the level of success through these developmental stages determines how they progress and are able to cope with tasks, relationships, and manage their lives.
 - ⇒ If a child is exposed to stressful situations during childhood such as being subjected to or witnessing violence, emotional abuse, or neglect, or abandonment, then the child's awareness level may be hyper vigilant. The child may not develop coping mechanisms or learn how to make decisions. As a result, learned helplessness, depressions, and anxiety may become the conditioned behaviors.
 - ⇒ Incongruent behaviors from parents may also contribute to the development of anxiety.
 - ⇒ What are examples of incongruent behaviors from parents?
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What is self efficacy?

Person's belief about his or her ability and capacity to accomplish a task or to attain goals. Self efficacy is related to specific goals and accomplishments that have been achieved.

How do we learn this?

By forming self identity, values, and experiences which include successfully attaining goals and thus forming the belief that we can overcome obstacles.

What is self esteem?

The overall appraisal of self worth.

How does self esteem and self efficacy help our anxiety?

We are conditioned to believe we can overcome obstacles and solve problems. When problems are viewed as unsolvable, anxiety and stress are eminent.

How do we get it?

Problem solving techniques. Remember when faced with a similar problem and what was done. View how others may have solved the problem. Not viewing the task or problem as unfair, and reframing the issue or problem simply as a task that needs to be completed.

Giving credit to ourselves for achieving the task(s). Praising other for achieving task(s) by giving content praise rather than process praise.

Content praise: Praising another by giving specific examples of what you liked about what he or she did. This helps others know exactly what was being praised and reduces confusion/anxiety.

Process praise: "That was great" - does not specify what was being praised and may create confusion/anxiety.

Expectations:

Expected outcomes that include rigid expectations are not likely to be accepted.

Follow a schedule exactly, getting a B instead of an A, not getting an expected raise.

Accept what we cannot change, have self efficacy to be able to change the things we are able to change, and have the wisdom to know the difference. - (Sound familiar?)

Beliefs:

Our beliefs construct our character and our acceptance of others determines our grace. Our ability to cope is developed as we are faced with overcoming obstacles and challenges. Our belief that we can overcome these challenges is constructed in our thoughts and memories. Self talk is created which tells us "you can do that" or "I can't do that". Negative self talk can add to our anxiety and form our beliefs about whether or not we can accomplish the task.

Negative self talk

Shoulds and oughts

You out to be

You should have....

You can't do that...

Write 5 examples

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

How would you like to refrain the above negative self talk?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



Stages of Development

For example, if an infant's physical and emotional needs are met sufficiently, the infant will most likely develop an ability to trust others. However, if the infant's needs are not met sufficiently, he or she will go on to the next stage but may not develop a strong sense of trust.

For instance, if a toddler is not allowed to learn by doing, the toddler develops a sense of doubt in his or her abilities, which may complicate later attempts at independence. Similarly, a preschooler who is made to feel that the activities he or she initiates are bad may develop a sense of guilt that inhibits the person later in life.

- ⇒ According to stage theorist and psychoanalyst, Eric Ericson, human's develop through emotional and psychological stages of development.
- ⇒ As human's develop, the level of success through these developmental stages determines how they progress and are able to cope with tasks, relationships, and manage their lives.

Infant

Trust vs Mistrust

Needs maximum comfort with minimal uncertainty to trust himself/herself, others, and the environment

Toddler

Autonomy vs Shame and Doubt

Works to master physical environment while maintaining self-esteem

Preschooler

Initiative vs Guilt

Begins to initiate, not imitate, activities; develops conscience and sexual identity

School-Age Child

Industry vs Inferiority

Tries to develop a sense of self-worth by refining skills

Adolescent

Identity vs Role Confusion

Tries integrating many roles (child, sibling, student, athlete, worker) into a self-image under role model and peer pressure

Young Adult

Intimacy vs Isolation

Learns to make personal commitment to another as spouse, parent or partner

Middle-Age Adult

Generativity vs Stagnation

Seeks satisfaction through productivity in career, family, and civic interests

Older Adult

Integrity vs Despair

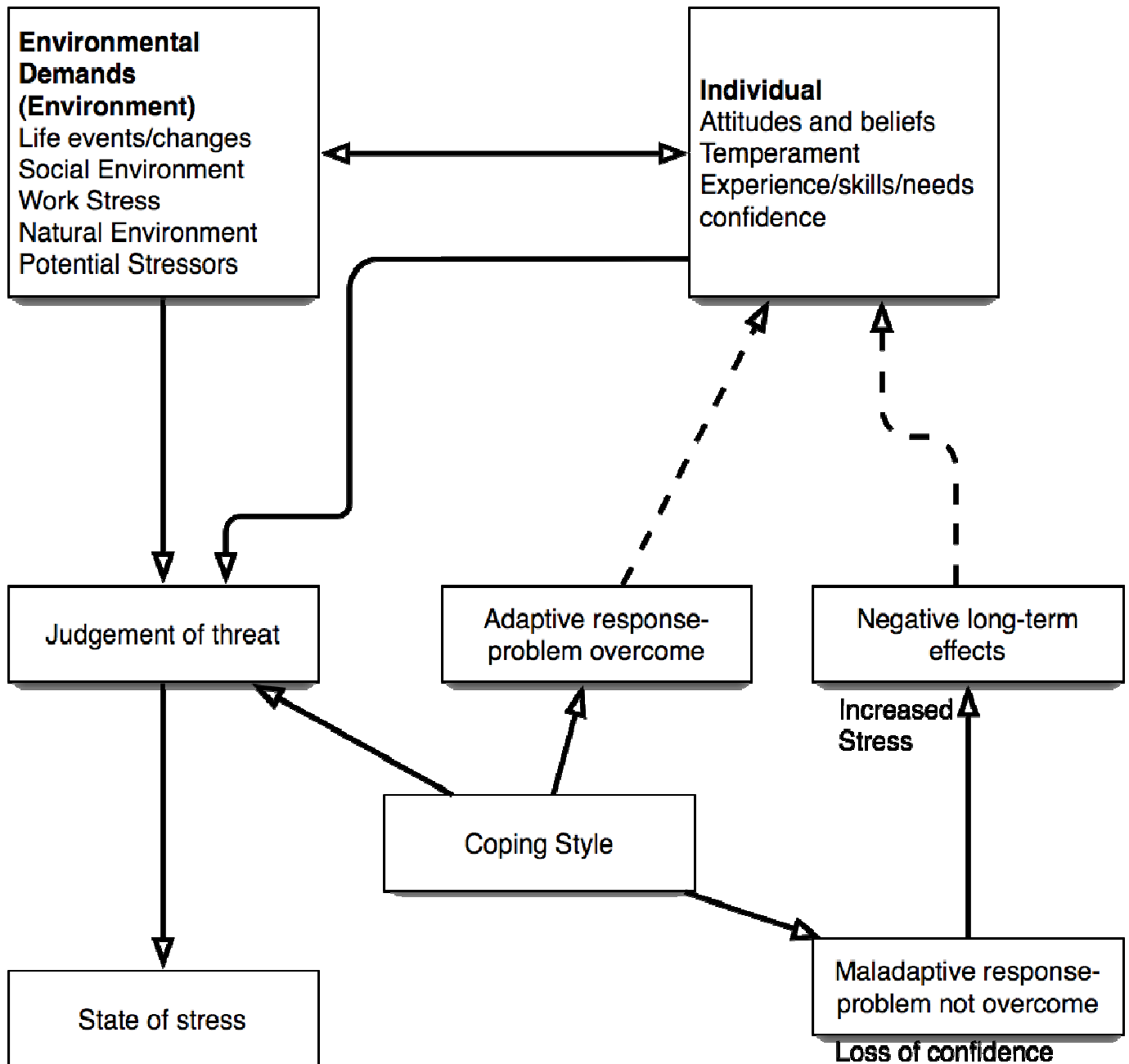
Reviews life accomplishments, deals with loss and preparation for death

Nature vs Nurture:

In the diathesis–stress model refers to a biological or genetic vulnerability or genetic predisposition which is referred to as (diathesis). This genetic predisposition or (diathesis) interacts with the environment and life events (stressors) to trigger behaviors or psychological disorders.

In other words, we may be more likely to have an illness or experience anxiety at a higher rate from or genetics. If we are exposed to a stressful situation, our body or brain may become ill.

Is anxiety caused by our genetics or our environment?



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elf care and home treatment



What has worked for you before when you tried to relax?

Time out for yourself and focus on activities that provide a break from the worry such as a good movie, trip to the beach, dark room or taking a long, warm bath.

Sleep hygiene:

Make sure you cannot see the clock.

Room needs to be dark

No Television in the room

Practice deep breathing before you try to sleep

If you cannot get to sleep within 10 minutes, get up and do a non stressful activity that may cause you to be tired. (Painting, reading, puzzle).

Relaxation techniques:

Deep breathing exercise:

Breath in slowly as deep as you can and picture yourself at a resting leisurely place. *Breath out slowly and let your shoulders drop.*

Breath in slowly and picture your surroundings at your peaceful place

Breath out slowly and relax the muscles in your face.

Breath in slowly and picture yourself laying down at your peaceful environment

Breath out slowly and relax the muscles in your arms and legs relax.

Exercise:

Cardio vascular exercise 3 times weekly for 30 minutes each time.

Balanced Diet:

Eat healthy and small amounts often if possible. Avoid taking in stimulants such as caffeine, or substances such as drugs, alcohol or cigarettes. These stimulants cause your heartbeat to speed up, and may trigger symptoms of your anxiety disorder.

Seek emotional support

Talk to someone who is willing to listen and offer positive feedback. A counselor/psychotherapist can be very effective and help you to self manage your anxiety.

Rate your anxiety:

On a scale of 1 –10 rate yourself daily and keep a log.

10 is feeling your best and representing low anxiety and depression

1 would represent feeling your worst with high anxiety and depression.

Ways you can help your anxiety

Become self aware of your anxiety - What triggers your anxiety? Describe daily situations that cause you to be anxious.

Determine the cause of the anxiety - What in your life is adding to your anxiety? Examples: Schedule, job, relationships, family, being late, not setting boundaries, not sleeping well, not eating well, self esteem, self efficacy?

What changes can you make?

What would you give up if you made these changes?

What is the payoff for not making the changes? Are these behaviors or actions worth continuing?

Journaling

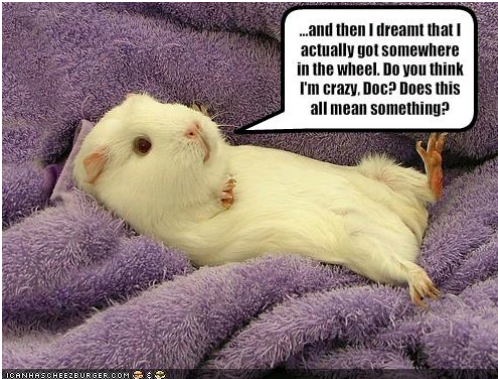
- ◇ Try journaling 3 times weekly and writing (or typing) about your experiences which lead you to be anxious.
- ◇ Record your thoughts which occur while you feel anxious.
- ◇ Write down your negative thoughts (self talk) and then reframe your negative self talk.
- ◇ Rate your anxiety/depression from 1 - 10.
- ◇ Identify the ways in which you currently use to cope with your anxiety. Assess how these ways are working for you.

Friends, relationships and communication with others.



- ◆ Who do you share personal feelings with?
- ◆ Who is in your social network?
- ◆ Is it appropriate to share feelings, fears, aspirations with them?

When to get help.



When your efforts to try to alleviate your anxiety or depression on your own are not working and you are experiencing symptoms that are affecting your life, then it may be time to consider seeing a therapist/mental health counselor. Therapy combined with medication can be considered when anxiety or depression is more severe.

When to see a Mental Health Counselor/psychotherapist

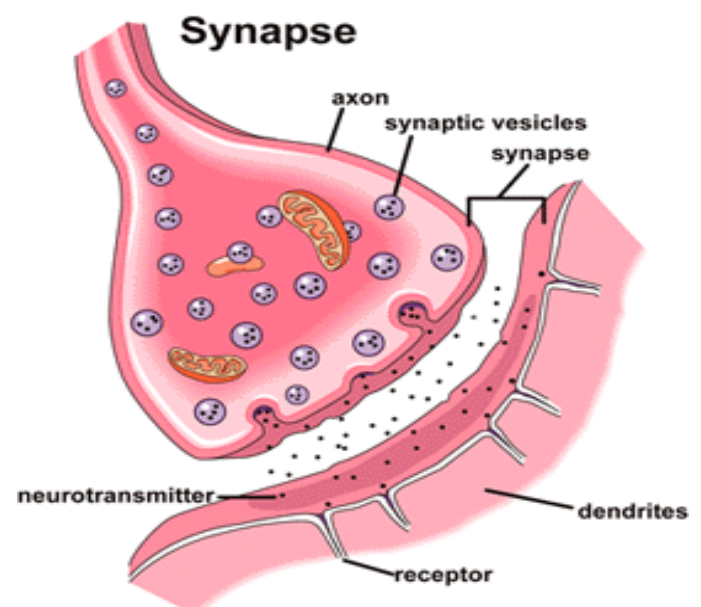
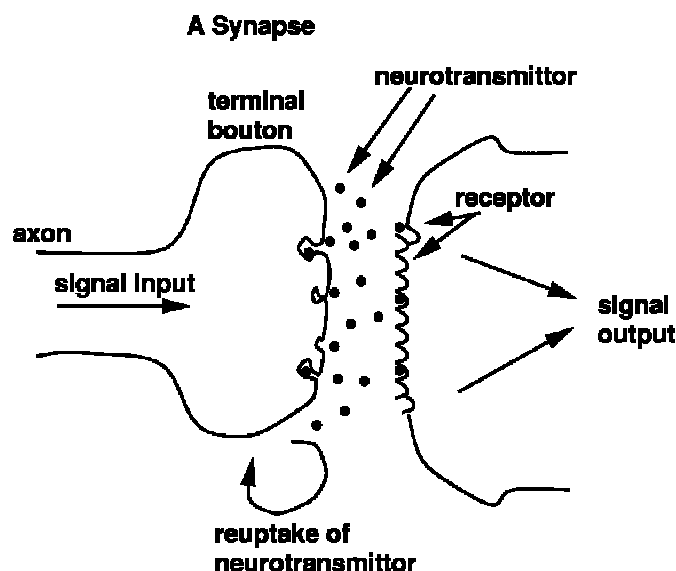
If your efforts to alleviate your anxiety do not get you your desired results, you may consider seeking help from a mental health counselor/psychotherapist.

You may also consider taking medications along with therapy to help alleviate the symptoms. You can discuss your options with a mental health professional and decide what the best plan of action is for your treatment. The combination of talk therapy and medications can be very effective.



Below are two basic illustrations of some of the processes that take place in the brain.

The brain is made up of millions of interconnected brain cells (neurons). Messages travel along these cells rather like electricity down a wire, but when the message reaches the end of the neuron, it has to jump the gap (synapse) to the next cell or group of cells.



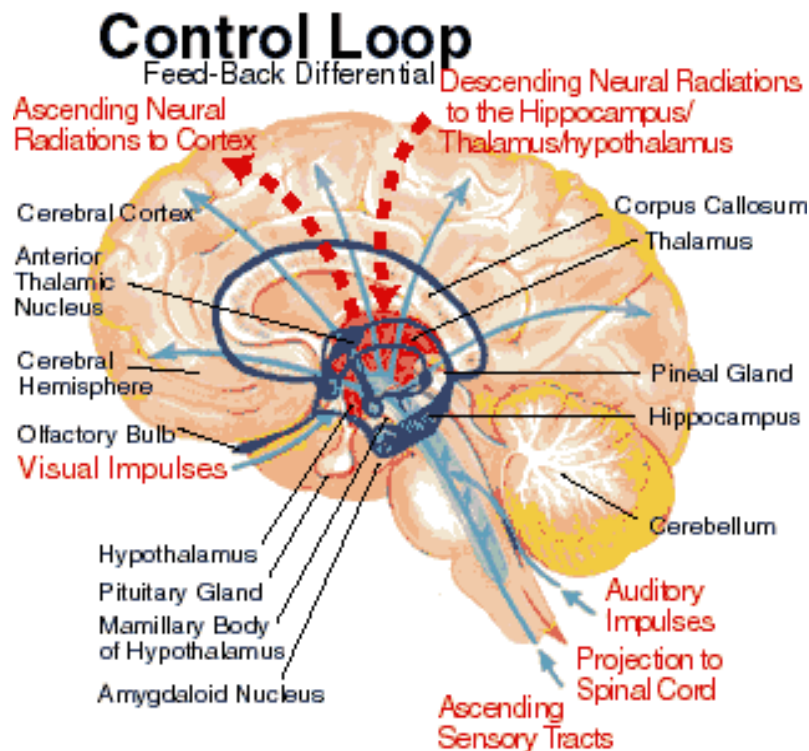
Neurotransmitters and brain functioning

The receiving neuron has many places on its surface which act rather like locks, for which the appropriate neurotransmitter is the key. These are called receptors. When enough of the neurotransmitter has locked on to these receptors, a nerve impulse is started in the new nerve, and thus the message gets from one nerve to the next.

In order to allow the nerve to recover and receive the next message, and in order to replenish stocks of the neurotransmitter in the original neuron, ready to send the next message, the body has a clever way of removing the neurotransmitter from the receptors, and allowing it to be taken back into the originating nerve (re-uptake).

In depression & anxiety certain neurotransmitters are relatively lacking. One of those is *serotonin*, also known as 5-hydroxytryptamine or 5-HT. The SSRIs (Selective Serotonin Re-uptake Inhibitors) slow down the process of returning the serotonin to the end of the neuron it comes from. This leads to the chemical remaining in the vicinity of the receptors for longer, making it more likely that enough will build up to set off the impulse in the next neuron.

Thus, the SSRIs work by allowing the body to make the best use of the reduced amounts of serotonin that it has at the time. In due course, the levels of natural serotonin will rise again, and the SSRI can be reduced and withdrawn.



SSRI Medications

General anxiety medications include SSRIs (Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors) Zoloft (Sertraline), Paxil (Paroxetine), Prozac (Fluoxetine), Lexipro (Escitalopram), Celexa (Citalopram)

Anxiety Quiz

- 1) Do you feel excited and overwhelmed in public places with no quick exit?
Yes
No
- 2) Does your heart feel as if it is skipping beats or feelings of sharp pain?
Yes
No
- 3) Is there a constant feeling of dreadful thoughts?
Yes
No
- 4) Have you lost interest in regular activities?
Yes
No
- 5) Do you have feelings you might hurt someone you love?
Yes
No
- 6) Do you have feelings of constant fear?
Yes
No
- 7) Do you experience body aches and discomfort without any activity?
Yes
No
- 8) Do you feel nervous and fearful of doing your normal everyday activities?
Yes
No
- 9) Do you experience lightheadedness?
Yes
No
- 10) Does it feel like your looking through pop bottles or have blurred vision?
Yes
No
- 11) Are you having feelings of unreality or that you are not part of the world?
Yes
No
- 12) Do you feel afraid to leave your home or venture far away from home?
Yes
No
- 13) Do you have feelings loneliness?
Yes
No
- 14) Do you feel as if your going crazy or losing control?
Yes
No