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Reversing the Cycle of Anxiety or a Panic Attack

I previously discussed the fact that during a panic attack the body is in “fight or flight response” resulting in physiological symptoms which in turn cause racing fearful thoughts and the process is cyclical in that these racing thoughts in turn increase the physiological symptoms.

Moreover, racing thoughts can bring on a panic attack. I mentioned that we could turn this process around and make it work to our advantage. In order to accomplish this task, we need to apply what we’ve just learned about the above mentioned cyclical process.

Here’s the key: Being aware of what we’re doing when we experience a panic attack.

Let’s look at some examples.

Many people when feeling anxious or while having a panic attack, will talk faster, some people will talk very loudly, some will pace back and forth, some will hold their head in their hand, some will continually sigh with anxiety, some will cry, etc.

The point is that everyone has things they do when having a panic attack. The best thing to do is write down what you in particular you do during a panic attack. Of course this might not be feasible for you if you’re having a panic attack but you can do it after it’s over.

Next: What to do with this information. Once you have a list of your tendencies, you now need to think in terms of opposites. In other words, if you talk fast, talk slower, etc.

So if the next time you’re feeling really anxious or in the middle of a panic attack, start doing some of the things that would be the opposite of your normal tendencies.

For example, if you typically would pace back and forth and hold your head in your hand, then remain still and hold your head up straight instead of holding your head in your hand.

If your reflex is to speak quickly then speak slowly and softly. Initially you’ll probably resist this approach. However over time you’ll notice that you are able to reduce your physiological symptoms and regain control.

What is going on here?

Rather than feeding your physiological symptoms with actions that would increase them more and more, you actually are taking actions that have the opposite effect. It seems that the brain receives a message that there is no need to continue the “fight or flight response.”

This means that your symptoms decrease and in turn your racing thoughts and the overall cyclical process of the panic attack gets reversed.

This process works because you’ve recognized that the process of a panic attack is cyclical, and you’ve taken actions which are the opposite of your “fight or flight” reactions and are using the cyclical process to your advantage.

I urge you to really give this a try the next time you’re feeling anxious or having a panic attack.

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