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One of my subscribers asked:

“Do you know anything about support groups / forums for panic attacks, anxiety and agoraphobia, and what do you recommend?”

I think that while others can certainly inspire us, sometimes they also can be very unhelpful for our recovery.

What do I mean?

Have you ever noticed that when you're around negative people they seem to bring you down?

A friend of mine who used to sell cars told me a story one time that illustrates this concept. He worked with an older car salesman who constantly would talk about all the negative things in the world and talk about how impossible it was to sell a car. Each day he seemed to be an endless source of negativity. Although my friend would attempt to come to work with a smile on his face and remain motivated to work, once he was subjected to this man's complaining, he soon began to feel very bad. Other salespersons who worked with this negative man also reported the same thing. Ironically, after bringing all the other salespeople down, once a customer came on the lot, however, this older salesman would then approach the customer and often proceed to successfully sell him/her a car.

Two things are important to note here:

Firstly, although this man professed that it was impossible to sell anything, he nevertheless managed to sell cars.

Secondly, and most importantly, this man's negativity influenced the others' emotions in the group and effectively rendered them useless, useless in the sense that they were unable to sell cars.

Now that we are aware of these two points, it becomes clear that if we're constantly surrounded by negative people then it will not only affect our emotions, it detracts us from being able to accomplish the things we wish to accomplish. In the case of the

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sufferer of anxiety, panic attacks, and agoraphobia, this means negatively affecting our ability to get better.

When you think about it, understandably, people suffering from anxiety, panic attack and agoraphobia are in a negative state, not intentionally, but as I said understandably; understandably because of the emotions they're going through and because of the fear and distress their experiencing.

When you have people in a group discussing all these negative things, like the car salesman we discussed, it tends to bring everyone down in the group. This is certainly not my idea of recovery. Admittedly, if you have a group that has a very skilled and qualified therapist and the therapist really does a good job leading the group then this can be effective. However, my experience with many support groups is that the group dynamic involves one person complaining about how bad things are for them and then you have other people who then try to out do the others with their complaints.

Naturally, sharing our feelings with others can feel good at the time, but without having proper leadership and without receiving practical suggestions as to how to get better, the session will not be that helpful.

One must exercise caution when approaching forums and groups that supposedly help them get better from panic, anxiety and agoraphobia.

However, connecting with people who have a positive outlook can have the opposite effect of what has been discussed. In other words, it can be very helpful for our recovery.

In my opinion, the best people to connect with (of course in addition qualified therapists) are persons who have experienced and recovered from anxiety, panic attacks and agoraphobia, provided they are willing to share with you what's helped them do so.

The content of my free newsletter (sign-up details below) thus far has included me sharing what's helped me and others recover from panic attacks, anxiety and agoraphobia. I know many people have learned, just as I did, that it can be very helpful to connect with someone who has suffered and recovered from anxiety panic attacks and agoraphobia. Their methods of getting better can be a guide, an example, and an inspiration for all of us.

Warmly,

Matthew Wagner

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