

Little Anxieties can be hazardous to Your health?

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Abstract: While much has been written about the major forms of anxiety, there are a number of small minor anxieties that are pervasive, and which can cause much consternation and stress. In addition, many of these small anxieties can be cumulative in nature upsetting one's quality of life and mental health. This paper addresses some of these concerns.

Keywords: Anxiety, Stress, Relaxation, Coping.

INTRODUCTION

The realm of anxiety is a pervasive one. This paper reflects on the number of small items which can bring about anxiety and stress and discusses the importance of reviewing the small positive items which can assist us in our travails.

Math anxiety, test anxiety, performance anxiety, generalized anxiety disorder, anticipatory anxiety are all recognized kinds of conditions which permeate the psychiatric nosology and the practice of most clinicians.

Shaughnessy and Johnson (2018) have discussed anxiety and its components just prior to 2020.

Shaughnessy followed up with a discussion of anxiety and its variants in an age of COVID 19.

Shaughnessy (2021) has explored the mental health needs of people in this very tumultuous time frame.

The time period just prior to COVID and even today has been a tumultuous one with rampant fear, stress and of course anxiety about contracting the disease, being hospitalized, and dying.

The COVID period found anxiety reaching new heights as people were confronted with situations never encountered. Masks were required, relatives could not be visited, school and other places were closed, and seniors missed their high school graduations and athletes could not engage in athletics, and musicians could perform minimally.

Hand washing became important and suddenly, doorknobs were seen as potentially lethal.

Anxiety became pervasive and stress followed individuals back to their cars if they had forgotten their masks. Testing for COVID became another anxiety provoking event as lines appeared for nasal swabs and waiting for results.

All these small minor inconveniences became cumulative- and especially impacted those who lacked coping skills and were thrust into a highly charged emotionally laden situation.

The COVID situation has sensitized many mental health workers to the issues of a continual stream of small anxiety provoking events (nasal swabs) and lack of social stimulation and apprehension and fear as to what may transpire in the future.

The Realm of Mini Anxieties

There are many small anxiety provoking events which impact the heart, blood pressure and overall mental health..

Forgetting one's keys is a small example, and misplacing one's keys can be even more problematic. At work, a new platform appears to be learned ASAP--as soon as possible.

An ISF- Insufficient Funds letter or e-mail appears, and you are going to be charged \$50 dollars by your bank. A Zoom conference is to be held and your computer has not been turned on and when it is, one cannot seem to locate the passcode or password or is unable to enter the Zoom meetings.

Even communicating in Zoom is anxiety provoking-One wonders if they will be heard, understood and if the other recipients can hear clearly.

A car that fails to start or a light that appears on a dashboard could be a portent of something worse about to happen,

Realistic Anxiety

When one is about to meet a new friend or colleague, there should be a small amount of apprehension, fear, trepidation about the upcoming existential encounter. A religious leader about to preach a sermon might feel a good deal of angst about the message they are about to send to the congregation.

Professional athletes should have a certain amount of concern about performing their best at an event and musicians before taking the stage may want to take a deep breath and compose themselves before performing.

There are positive anticipations and there are negative anticipations that are foreboding. One small anxiety producing event may start a chain reaction and avalanche of smaller anxieties later.

A flat tire may herald apprehension about later pending events that could cascade into a mountain of negative vibes or feelings.

Male vs Female Anxieties

Certainly, there are differences between male and females in their level of anxiety and what triggers major anxiety and minor anxiety.

Valentine's Day recently occurred, and men were in a quagmire as to what to get for their significant other- flowers, candy, jewelry, a card, money? And much time was spent perusing Valentine's Day cards to find "just the right one."

Birthdays, anniversaries, and other events cause a minor amount of anxiety- particularly if one is searching for just the right item.

Men may have a slightly different amount of anxiety to different female pronouncements. For example, the phrase "we have to talk" may increase the blood pressure of the male significantly.

While there is some humor to this- there is also a very real amount of truth. Yes, for some there is an amount of worry- but for others real anxiety.

Females have their own anxieties—about their hair, their shoes, what dress to wear, what earrings or necklace to wear to complement their hair or face or eyes. Some examples follow:

- 1) Making coffee---will it be strong enough- will my fellow workers like it? What if it is too weak? What if I am told that I should not be making coffee- that this is a man's job? What if there is no sugar or cream?
- 2) Do I have my lipstick on? Is it the right shade? Will people comment on it? Will my current significant other like it?
- 3) The light on my telephone is flashing- who could it be? What might it portend?
- 4) What about lunch? What about dinner? What if my co-workers and I go out to eat? Who will pick up the check?
- 5) Will my secretary call in sick today? She typically calls in sick on even days-but today is an odd day.
- 6) Things to remember- my cell phone- is it charged? Do I have gas in the car? Do I have to check the oil? The engine light is on-what does that mean? Does it mean my extended warranty is expired? Where are the keys to my car? Or the fob? My sunglasses?
- 7) Is the bank open today? Do I have deposit slips?
- 8) Reviewing one's calendar or list of things to do may bring about some anxiety as we see a DP (Difficult Person) on the list.
- 9) A lot of paperwork that is due may be a mini or major anxiety provoking event.
- 10) A pending dental appointment with the words "root canal" having been mentioned.

Making the Most of Small "uplifts "or Mini Positive Events

While minor anxieties are problematic, they can be offset by small positive uplifts.

For example:

- 1) If one is dieting and gets on the scale and sees a decrease in weight- that should be celebrated, savored, and rejoiced!
- 2) Small praise from a boss can make a noticeably big impact. I think it was Mark Twain who said "I can live for a month on a good compliment.
- 3) Good coffee! A nice warm cup of coffee on a chilly day can be savored and enjoyed.
- 4) A good uplifting sermon at a Sunday service.

- 5) For some people, the car simply starting on a frigid day is something to be relished.
- 6) A full tank of gas and the relief of not having to "pay the pump" those exorbitant prices.
- 7) The good behavior of your kids may be worth noticing and the quiet should be enjoyed.
- 8) A satisfactory ending to a movie or the pleasurable reading of a good book.
- 9) Really good satisfactory relationships are enjoyable- especially if there is good give and take conversation.
- 10) We have all experienced the delight of finding a 5- or ten-dollar bill in a pair of pants or suit that we have not worn for a while.

Recently Daniel Amen (2023) has conceptualized these "uplifts" as micro-happiness. In his mind these "micro moments of happiness" may ward off depression. He and I speak the same language in those uplifts, as originally conceived of by Richard Lazarus may ward off stress and anxiety and impending doom.

Further these micro moments of happiness may ward off the many micro-aggressions that our employers or supervisors subject us to! For further information and to delve into this area see below. Amen has subdivided these micro moments of happiness as possibly occurring in different realms – for example—food, social, spiritual, and interpersonal. Personally, I always look forward to some micro moments of happiness with my dogs!

https://www.amenclinics.com/blog/look-for-the-micro-moments-of-happiness-to-ward-off-depression/?utm_source=Klaviyo&utm_medium=email&_kx=NJK-e272vKsNau0DOC6M3IZ8-Dr4B9hYvn4h6JmIKmvf68Hq2LGIJwy0QSXkoQFFi.WiZ6mG

For Research Purposes

There is a scale that attempts to measure the impact of "hassles" or small stressors or herein called "mini anxieties"

Here is a link to that scale:
<https://unit3and4psychology.files.wordpress.com/2016/11/hassles-and-uplifts-scale.pdf>

Clarification and Discussion

Little anxieties- are they little "hassles" or little stressors or are they inept coping skills or situations that are cumulative?

The work of Richard Lazarus (1981) and many others have investigated this issue. McIntyre and co-workers (2008) discussed "sweating the small stuff" but what is small stuff for one person can be a major stressor for another. What is a hassle or aggravation or exasperation for one can be a trigger for a migraine or the beginning of an unbelievably dreadful day and the start of a downward spiral for others. Haupt (2023) has written provocatively on the need to find some small things that encourage us during our darkest times.

Summary and Conclusions

While we all must deal with stressors, some things are more difficult than others. This paper has reviewed some of the insignificant things that may be anxiety provoking and offered some trivial things that may offset those minute details and events that drive us all crazy.

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