

PARENTING MATTERS

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Newsletter

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I hope everyone's summer has been somewhat relaxing and filled with some fun family moments! I am hoping to enjoy the lull in August before the "back to school" rush is here.

We rented an RV this year for our first time and went camping on the Island. It was a great experience for all of us and I wouldn't have been able to last camping on the ground for one week if it wasn't for the RV.

As I mentioned in my last Newsletter, I have been reading the Anxiety and Phobia Workbook by Edmund Bourne, Ph.D. and would like to continue to share some interesting information with regards to traits that are common in people who have anxiety.

The NEED for Approval and Control

Anxiety can be found in many forms. Some common traits found in people who have anxiety are: perfectionism, excessive need for approval, tendency to ignore signs of emotional and physical stress and excessive need for control. This article will focus on the remaining two traits, the "excessive" need for approval and control.

Being accepted by others is a universal need. For many people who are dealing with anxiety, they can become overly concerned with approval. This can often cause a person to feel they are flawed or unworthy. This leads to the belief that they are not "good enough" just the way they are and therefore others won't accept them.

When a person has an excessive need for approval, they constantly seek out validation from others. This can take the form of always agreeing with or doing things for friends, family members and colleagues, while at the same time ignoring their own feelings and needs. Their personal boundaries become blurred and they stop being able to prioritize what is truly important in their life. Years of behaving in this manner can often lead a person to have built-up resentments and frustrations from not taking care of their basic needs. This build-up is the very thing that can cause chronic anxiety and tension.

Below are some statements that *people pleasers* believe.

1. "If someone isn't friendly to me, then I must have done something wrong."
2. "I think I'm a nice person. Shouldn't everyone like me?"

3. "I give my children everything they want, but they still don't spend time with me."

Here are some ways that will help a person "let go" of their neediness for approval.

1. Develop a realistic view of other people's approval. (Write down your belief and then write a more realistic view point.) In the example #2 above, a more realistic statement could be: "There will be people who will like me and others who don't. It is unrealistic to think that I can please everyone."
2. Deal with Criticism in an Objective Fashion. Ask yourself these questions: Is the person making the criticism qualified to do so? Ask for details if it pertains to a general statement at work, for instance. Decide whether this is a valid criticism that you can learn from.
3. Recognize and let go of Co-dependency, Examples of co-dependency beliefs are: "I should keep people I love happy." "It's usually my fault someone I care about is upset with me." "Giving is the most important way I have to feel good about myself." To counteract these beliefs, you need to learn to love and take care of yourselves. Practice affirmations that will boost your self-esteem. For example, "It's good for me to take time for myself." "It's OK to ask for what I want from others." I don't have to be perfect to be accepted and loved."

The Excessive Need for Control

People who have a need to control their environment, want everything in life to be predictable. They have a hard time letting go and trusting life's journey. Dr. Bourne writes that often people who have a need for control have experienced some trauma in their personal history that included feeling vulnerable, frightened or powerless. From this, the person's trigger is feeling insecure or when they feel their safety is being threatened. Overcoming the excessive need for control takes time and persistence.

Here are some ways that might be helpful:

1. Acceptance. Try to live more comfortably with the unpredictability of life. A willingness to take life as it comes. Use humor, and keep trying to "let go" of your perfectionistic tendencies.
2. Be Patient. Allow yourself to tolerate ambiguity while the situation unfolds.
3. Trust that most problems eventually work out. Developing trust goes along with being patient with yourself and in what life throws your way.
4. Develop a Spiritual Approach to Life. Find a way to "let go," and accept that there is something greater than us at work.

In summary, there are many people with anxiety whose traits include perfectionism, tendency to ignore physical and psychological signs of stress, excessive need for approval, and excessive need for control. To lessen the impact of these traits on your life, challenge your mistaken beliefs, let go of your need to be liked by everyone and start enjoying the freedom your new personal boundaries will give you.

CHRISTINE KUTZNER COUNSELLING SERVICES 604-339-5774

Christine Kutzner, M.Ed. is a Registered Clinical Counsellor providing services to children, parents and families in Vancouver, North and West Vancouver. To inquire contact Christine at www.ckcounsellingservices.com.

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