Don’t Try Harder, Try Different

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Four Basic Fears

Threats to the integrity of:

* Physical Status
* Mental Status
* Social Status
* Spiritual Status
Common Distortions

• Severity
  – It will be the worst thing in the world and I will die.

• Probability
  – It will definitely happen, no question.

• Efficacy
  – I will not be able to handle it.
Don’t Try Harder, Try Different
• Should
  - When was the last time you used the word should to describe something that went well?
  - Should is always negative.
  - Should is an opinion.
  - What if we made shoulds come true?
Can’t - vs. - Won’t

• If you say that you can’t do something, then that is exactly what is going to happen.
• If you can’t do it, then no therapist or medication will ever be able to help you with it.
• Can’t implies that you lack the ability to do something.
• Stress and Anxiety are not about something you can’t do, they are about something that you won’t do.
Practice makes __________

• Practice does not make perfect.
• There is no such thing as perfect.
• Example – Name the perfect appetizer.
• Practice makes ROUTINE.
• Routines can be modified – some work for you and some do not. The goal of therapy is to modify the ones that are not working for you.
Control is an Illusion

• Control is often attempted through worry.
• Worry serves two functions –
  - If I worry about something hard enough, I can prevent it from happening.
  - If I worry about everything bad that might happen, then I can be prepared for everything bad that might happen, so then I won’t need to worry about it anymore.
Specialness

• The rules of the world apply to me differently than they do to the other 6.5 billion people that live on the planet.

• Try these exercises:
  – Today, treat yourself as if you were your very best friend or most cherished loved one.
  – Tomorrow, treat everyone like you would normally treat yourself (or maybe just think it in your head instead).
Neutrality

• From an anxiety perspective, nothing is actually scary or horrible or wonderful or great.
• Everything that anyone is anxious about is actually neutral.
• Elevator example.
Perception

- Everything that people are anxious about is subject to their perception or opinion.
Anxiety in reverse

• Should
• Can’t
• Perfect
• Control
• Specialness
• Neutral
• Perception
What maintains Stress?

• Avoidance
• Reassurance seeking
Rewards

• **Short Term** - People with anxiety want to feel good right now, so they do rituals to get that immediate good feeling, or they avoid what it is they are afraid of, or seek a great deal of reassurance.

• **Long Term** - In order to overcome anxiety, you need to practice being anxious right now so that you can learn that you can handle the anxiety. That anxiety will dissipate, therefore allowing you to feel better in the long run.
CBT Model of Stress: Phobia Example

Fear Stimulus

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Misinterpretation of threat

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Anxiety

↓

Avoidant Coping

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Absence of Corrective Experience

Great America

If I get on a roller coaster, it will crash and I will die.

Anxiety

Refuses to ride the coasters, even though friends are riding them and there are no problems with them.

Does not learn that thinking there will be a problem does not mean that there actually will be a problem.
Correction of a Potential Stressor

Fear Stimulus

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Misappraisal of Threat

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Anxiety

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Adaptive Coping

Corrective Experience

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Adjustment of Threat Appraisal

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Adaptive Emotional Response

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Accurate Threat Appraisal

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Adaptive Behavior

Next Presentation of Fear Stimulus
Exposure and Response Prevention

- Make a list of feared stimuli/situations.
- Arrange stimuli in hierarchical fashion.
- Develop and implement plan of systematic exposure to stimuli/situations, using the hierarchy.
- Goal is to get a person to confront their fears and learn that they can handle the situation.
- The exposure is assisted by the therapist and is never forced on the patient.
Books by Dr. McGrath

Don’t Try Harder, TRY DIFFERENT: A Workbook for Managing Anxiety and Stress

THE OCD ANSWER BOOK
Professional Answers to More Than 250 Top Questions about Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
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