

## The Art of Stress and Anxiety Management Across the Lifespan

I find that the best way to approach anxiety is with a stress log as the course suggests. Often it becomes clear that the anxiety stems from ruminating either on the past or the future. Most often the experience of anxiety is related to unresolved issue around control, some sort of fear, perfectionism or comparing with others. The log helps uncover the underlying reasons for the experience of anxiety and when those issues are resolved the client could recognise better when anxiety shows up. The goal is to learn coping mechanisms and to change old beliefs with new beliefs and lifestyle. The one I like the best is to find a distraction – either a distracting thought or doing something that will get my mind off the anxious thought. Depending on the level of anxiety if anxiety is very severe one could form a support network to reach out to when things get rough. However, I find that people feel safe within their support network and are not willing to work towards becoming independent. Sometimes people get too attached to their anxiety that they do not know how to live without it. Some don't even remember a time without it. Coming with alternative beliefs and way of being could be quite challenging for some. Sometimes they don't even see how the way they think or the way they are being is hindering them.

As the manual suggests I have also discovered that food and the amount of sleep is also directly affecting the intensity of the experience.

Through my daily practice of breathing and meditation I feel I have a good control over my anxiety. I feel anxious as most people do when I have to speak publicly. However, over time if I am speaking about something that I am passionate about or something I have a good knowledge of I find my anxiety is less severe. When I take on a lot of tasks or I feel I have lack of time in performing all my tasks also become a cause for anxiety. I try to manage this by reminding myself to prioritize better and to look for a better balance. In its essence, the more a person knows themselves the less likely they will feel anxious. If someone has a clear goal then making choices is not difficult. Creating a good relationship with oneself would allow a person to create a good relationship with the world around. Only when we are unclear about ourselves or what is important, confusion arises which leads to anxiety. When I am faced with difficulty or conflict I take it as an opportunity for growth and usually look for a lesson. Through my yoga practice I have been able to do a lot of inner work and create an authentic relationship with myself. What has helped me the most is the realization that no matter how difficult a situation is, it is for my highest good because most difficulties lead to personal growth. I try not to miss the opportunity to learn the lesson that each difficult situation brings to me.

Working through dysfunctional thinking is a great way to resolve underlying issues. We all carry some false beliefs that have been imbedded in us either by ourselves, our parents or society in general. Feelings are also directly related to thoughts. A thought occurs which triggers a certain kind of emotion so recognizing the thought that triggers the feeling is another great way to work with feelings and emotions. While most emotions are beneficial becoming emotional is not. To recognize a thought that cause us to become emotional will help one to lead a more stable life. In reality, I believe anxiety does not exist. What people call anxiety is allowing oneself to entertain thoughts that are ineffective and unproductive. All one needs to do is to train the mind in channeling only the right thinking which in some cases could take time. As a counsellor, I think the most important thing is to teach a client the process of eliminating unproductive thoughts so that they could work through issues in the future on their own. I liked the list of questions in the workbook that are used to evaluate one's own thoughts.