

MAKING SENSE OF ANXIETY

CONTENT

The course is divided into two parts: theory and application. The first three sessions are dedicated to unfolding a model of anxiety that has universal application. Given that anxiety is such an enigma, shedding light on its roots is absolutely essential to addressing the problem. Once the key insights are mastered, the implications and applications flow rather logically.

Part One - Neuroscience of Anxiety

The focus of part one is the neuroscience of anxiety. The key discovery here is of a complex and comprehensive human alarm system.

1. The anatomy of the alarm system (Van der Kolk, Bessel. 2014)
2. how the alarm system is meant to work (LeDoux, Joseph. 1996)
3. three possible alternative outcomes to being alarmed,
 - a. caution (LeDoux, Joseph. 1996)
 - b. adaptation (Vingerhoet, A. 2013)
 - c. courage (Neufeld, Gordon. 2014)
4. Before the alarm system can function optimally however, the child or adult must be capable of
 - a. adaptive functioning (Vingerhoet, A. 2013)
 - b. integrative functioning (Sameroff, A. J. and Haith, M. M., eds. 1996)
5. Deficits in this functioning can result in chronic and untempered alarm (Van der Kolk, Bessel. 2014)
6. The personality attributes associated with a healthy working alarm system are presented (Neufeld, Gordon 2014)

Part Two - Anxiety, Attachment & Vulnerability

1. To discover what alarms us, we need to go to the science of attachment and redefine our understanding of human threat - that of facing separation in all its various forms (Bowlby, John. 1973)
 - a. a comprehensive understanding of attachment (Neufeld, Gordon and Maté, Gabor. 2013)
 - b. provides the insights required to make sense of what is happening on the neurobiological level (Van der Kolk, Bessel. 2014)
 - c. vulnerability theory, as we realize that facing separation can be a vulnerability too much to bear. (Bowlby, John. 1973)
 - d. the resulting blindness cripples the alarm system and divorces the anxious symptoms from the underlying alarm (Ramachandran, V.S. and Blakeslee, Sandra. 1998)

Part Three - Working Model of Anxiety

In this session, the insights are combined to create a working model of anxiety.

1. the severity of defendedness (Ramachandran, V.S. and Blakeslee, Sandra. 1998) gives rise to three kinds of alarm problems:
2. anxiety-based, agitation-based, and adrenalin-based, with a whole spectrum of manifestations (Neufeld, Gordon. 2011)
3. The primary focus of this session, however, is understanding where obsessions and compulsions come from and outlining seven classical themes in our anxieties (Neufeld, Gordon. 2014)
4. Recognizing the signs of anxiety is key to addressing the underlying alarm. In preparation for the application part of the course we will consider reasons for the escalating anxiety of our children (Neufeld, Gordon 2014)

Part Four - Addressing Anxiety

Six solutions for intervening with anxiety will be presented:

1. limit separations (Bowlby, John. 1982)
 2. provide rest and safety (Perry, Bruce and Szalvalvitz, Maia. 2006)
 3. accept anxiety (Neufeld, Gordon. 2014)
 4. provide substitutes for anxiety reduction (Neufeld, Gordon. 2014)
 5. encourage tears and develop courage (Vingerhooft, A. 2013; Neufeld, Gordon. 2014)
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