



Counselor Connection

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BY MARCI PAYNE, MA, LPC

Handle Your Worry, Before it Handles You!

A man notices his heart is racing, his breathing is faster, and he's feeling nauseated. A woman's mouth is dry, her face is flushing, and she feels the urge to urinate. Both of these individuals are experiencing the stress response. The stress response may be triggered by any threat or change, such as (but not limited to) the following: job loss, public speaking, terminal diagnosis, car accident.

When a person is in danger, whether real or perceived, a physiological process occurs in the body. This stress response is also referred to as the "fight or flight response," in which hormones are released in preparation for intense muscular activity. For instance, blood is sent to the large muscle groups away from digestion. Some bodily systems slow down, while others speed up to a hyper-alert state. The body also releases hormones to bring the body back into balance, or to the individual's baseline.

An individual's baseline varies primarily due to that person's level of chronic anxiety. Dr. Michael Kerr (2009) defines chronic anxiety as a person's "ongoing anticipation of rejection, disapproval, or expectations from the other." It is the perception that there is a threat to oneself or one's loved ones. The more chronic anxiety one experiences, the harder it is to adapt to changes and challenges that arise in one's life. Most of the time people don't realize they are acting based on a perceived threat, yet everyone carries some level of chronic anxiety.

It may take some coaching to learn how to recognize and manage chronic anxiety. Worry can be defined as anything that hasn't happened yet, so it is future focused. Start by being a good observer of yourself. Recognize anytime you are acting based on "what if's" or "what could be." [How much energy do you want to give the "what if's"?](#)

Separating your thoughts from your feelings is the first step to managing your worry better. Next, identify ways to interfere with the

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**Marci Payne, MA,
Licensed Professional
Counselor**

**1272 NE Windsor
Drive**

**Lee's Summit, MO
64086**

816-246-4465

info@marcipayne.com

I'm on the Web!

www.marcipayne.com

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Marci Payne, MA, LPC

stress response you are experiencing. What helps you feel more relaxed, clear-headed, or grounded? This is where some people turn to substances, yet there are many ways to reduce one's anxiety. (See my top 5 below.)

Lastly, find a way to balance your stress response. Thinking in a balanced manner takes into account both positives and negatives. This will allow you to think more objectively. What is the purpose for the stressor? You may still feel anxious, stressed, or worried, yet it will be manageable when you hold onto your goal and/ or meaning for the task.

Whether your heart is racing or face is flushing, you are experiencing a stress response. Stress cannot be avoided. Instead, recognize the worry underlying the physical sensations. Find a way to reduce and/or balance the stress response you are experiencing. You will be on your way to staying on top of your worry instead of it being on top of you!

Reference: Kerr, M. (2009). *Uni-disease Concept* (Conference). Kansas City, MO.

To schedule a consultation or presentation, call 816-246-4465 (ext 2).

Stress & Anxiety Resources

The Anxiety & Phobia Workbook by Bourne

The Dream Jar by Bonnie Pryor (Children's book)

Souder Sleep Meditations: <http://soundersleep.com>

The Spiritual Art of Creative Silence: Lessons in Christian Meditation by Jeanie Miley

When I Feel Afraid by Cheir Meiners (Children's book)

Under the Bed by Paul Bright (Children's book)

Yoga Alley: <http://www.theyogaalley.com>

Marci's Top 5 Stress Reducers...



1. Reading
2. Exercise (Walking, Yoga, etc.)
3. Music (listening, creating, dancing)
4. Solitude Retreat (silence, nature, God)
5. Separate worry from facts

