

Managing Your Fear of Recurrence

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Anxiety is...

a common and normal
response to new or
stressful situations

What is anxiety?

- Adaptive “healthy” anxiety – tension
 - Small amounts of anxiety can be helpful: i.e. a little anxiety about a doctor’s appointment insures you are on time and attentive
 - Can help people do something well
 - “Stress Addicts” – work, risk takers, roller coaster rides

What is anxiety?

- Maladaptive “harmful” anxiety
 - Such generalized anxiety about a doctor’s appointment that you don’t sleep or eat the day before and find yourself unable to concentrate on what the doctor tells you
 - When these feelings are strong and contain fearful thoughts they get in the way of everyday living

“Basic Fears” after breast cancer

- Main categories of anxiety (or more generalized fear)
 - Fear of losing control
 - Fear of not being able to cope
 - Fear of failure
 - Fear of rejection/ abandonment
 - Fear of death or divorce
 - Fear of intimacy

What sets us up for anxiety?

■ Perpetuating factors:

- Avoidance of anxiety provoking situations
- Anxious self-talk (“I can’t do this” or “I’m never going to make it through this”)
- Erroneous/mistaken beliefs
- Withheld emotions and feelings
- Muscle tension
- Dietary factors
- High stress lifestyle (no “down” time)
- Lack of meaning and purpose in life
- Difficulty self nurturing and asserting yourself (sometimes we need to put ourselves before others)

Triggers

- Anniversary of diagnosis, death of a friend or loved one
- Illness of a friend or family
- Media attention
- Reduced medical visits or completion of treatment
- Physical symptoms
- Impending medical visits or tests
- Family concerns

What does anxiety feel like?

- **Physiological signs and symptoms of anxiety:**
 - Acute (brief, last usually less than an hour):
 - Palpitations or chest pain
 - Shortness of breath
 - Nausea or upset stomach
 - Choking or difficulty swallowing
 - Dizziness, numbness/tingling
 - Sweating
 - Trembling/ shaking
 - Feeling like things are unreal or surreal or detached from things
 - Fear of dying or losing control or going crazy

What does anxiety feel like?

- Physiological signs and symptoms of anxiety:
 - Chronic
 - Muscle tension
 - Headaches
 - Irritability
 - Feeling restless or on edge
 - Fatigue
 - Difficulty sleeping
 - Difficulty concentrating
- Psychological and emotional symptoms of anxiety:
 - Feeling overwhelmed
 - Unable to relax
 - Frequent worried thoughts which you have trouble shutting off
 - Thinking about the future instead of the present
 - Racing thoughts

Behavioral Responses

- Body checking
- Seeking advice, family and friends
- Limited planning for the future
 - “So what?”
 - Travel insurance
 - Getting stuck in the “shoulda coulda woulda”

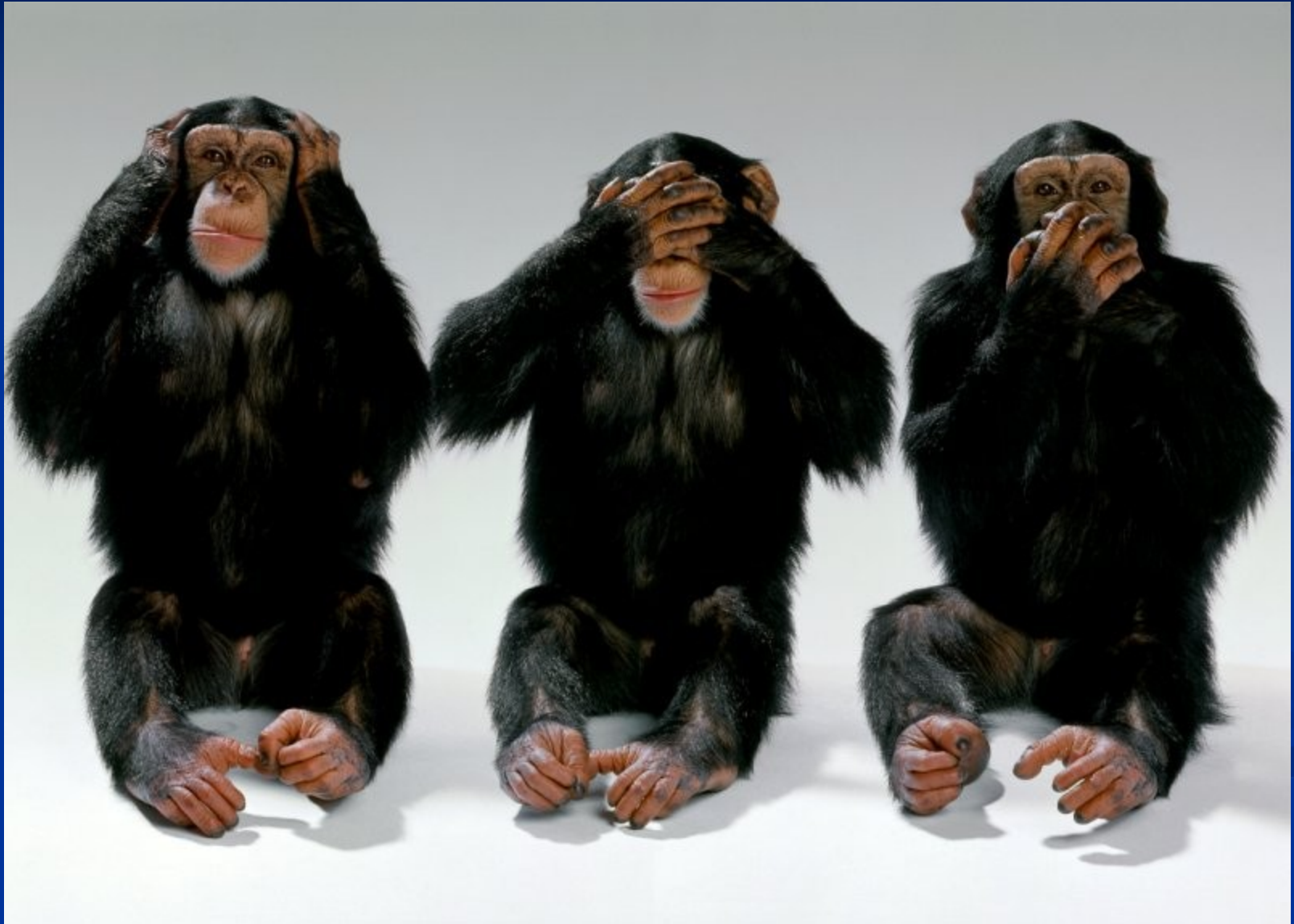
We Can Face Our Fears In Stillness



In Motion



Or Ignore Them



What to do

- First identify what thoughts (fears) are causing the anxiety
- Talk to someone who has been through the situation
- Engage in pleasant, distracting activities
- Work on developing companionships
- See a counselor for a jump start
- See a doctor for an evaluation
- Use relaxation techniques

A Counselor Can:

- Challenge your way of thinking
- Help you counter negative self-talk
- Help outline a healing pathway
- Give you tools to master relaxation
- Provide a healthy avenue to vent
- Help you identify a sense of meaning and a larger purpose in life - spirituality

Ways to reduce your emotional vulnerability to fear and anxiety --

- Get enough sleep
- Use alcohol in moderation if at all (less than one glass per day for women)
- Exercise – 20-30 minutes per day, 5 days per week if your health permits.
- Eat a healthy diet – limit refined sugars, balanced diet, do not skip meals
- Reduce or completely eliminate caffeine – even small amounts of caffeine can cause anxiety
- Make some time for yourself everyday – this should be time for quiet and relaxation

Ways to reduce your emotional vulnerability to fear and anxiety

■ Medical

- Tumor markers
 - CA 15-3
 - CA 27.29
 - Estrogen/progesterone
 - HER2
 - FISH Test
- Tests
 - Bone Scan
 - PET scan
 - Chest X-ray
 - MRI
 - CAT Scan

■ Complementary Alternative Modalities

- Acupuncture
- Music and dance therapy
- Reiki
- Guided Imagery
- Yoga
- Support groups
- Journaling
- T'ai chi
- Meditation

Connecting with self and others

- Find quality time together and joy in activities.
- Finding pleasure in sex again or intimacy makes you feel whole and normal.
- Communicate openly to elevate anxiety and strengthen your relationship.
 - State a fact, belief and feeling and then action
- Support groups

Depression

Feelings of overwhelming sadness, discouragement, pessimism or despair for several weeks or months *and* these feelings interfere with activities of daily living

The Double Whammy!

- Coping with psychological factors
- THEN there's the physiological factors!
 - There's a direct link between lack of estrogen and depression
 - Sudden and irreversible menopause
 - A comparison of > 1500 women showed those with surgical menopause were 2 X as likely to be depressed than women with naturally occurring menopause

The Present

“Life can be found only in the present moment. The past is gone, the future is not yet here, and if we do not go back to ourselves in the present moment, we cannot be in touch with life.”

–Thich Nhat Hanh

The Breath

Breath is the bridge which connects life to consciousness, which unites your body to your thoughts.”

–Thich Nhat Hanh