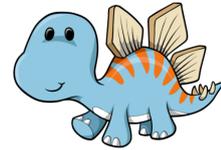


Anxiety and How it Affects Us.

The brain is pretty complex how it works. This is showing you how it works and what it does to our bodies when we are anxious or worried about something.

Everybody get anxious at sometime in their lives. It can make you feel like you have no control. Understanding what happens to our bodies can help us to take back this control



We all react to anxiety, the brain does this to protect us. Back in the time when we had the threat of being eaten alive our brains would use the FIGHT, FLIGHT (RUN) OR FREEZE.

Today we don't often face dinosaurs, however our brain still reacts to threats, whether these are real or not, exactly the same way.

So what happens?

First of all, we need to know some of the parts of the brain that are involved with this process. To make things easier, we could give them some easier names:

They are:

THE AMYGDALA: AMY

Responsible for Flight/Flight/Freeze



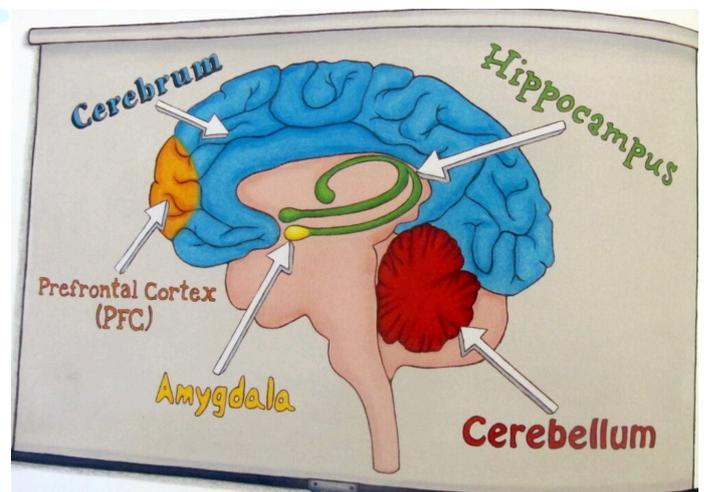
THE PRE-FRONTAL CORTEX: REX

The thinking part of the brain



THE HIPPOCAMPUS: HENRY

Collects and stores memories



When there is a threat (it doesn't matter whether this is real or not), the body automatically takes control. What happens is that **AMY** takes over as her job is to protect you and because of this, **REX** shuts down and goes off-line. **AMY** sends a surge of 'superhero fuel' into the body. This is made up of extra oxygen, adrenaline and hormones.



When this happens, and it's a false alarm there is nothing to burn off the superhero fuel. (The fuel is safe, however when it builds up it can make us feel yuk, and this explains why you can feel the way you do.)

Some people might feel:



BREATHLESS - this is because the oxygen we usually breath in and out is being sent to the muscles, getting them ready to run or fight.



RAPID HEART BEAT - The heart is working extra hard to pump the superhero fuel around the body to where it's needed. This can feel really scary, the heart is doing it's job.



DIZZY/CONFUSED - Have you ever taken lots of quick breaths in and out? This can make you feel dizzy or confused. This can happen when we are anxious, because there is nothing to fight or run from, there is nothing to burn off the extra superhero fuel in your body.



WOBBLY ARMS/LEGS - Again, the superhero fuel has been sent to your arms and legs, ready to run or fight.



SWEATY - This happens because the body is trying to cool itself down; it doesn't want to overheat.



ANGRY/TEARFUL - **AMY** works with emotions too! Because she's working so hard you might get angry or emotional at all kinds of things, or nothing at all. This is a normal part of anxiety.



SICK/DRY MOUTH/BUTTERFLIES - Along with sending **REX** offline, **AMY** does the same to the digestive system. It's not needed to run or fight. **AMY** does it to save energy, but the down side is that it can make you feel or be sick. It feels really yuk! But, it won't hurt you.

Some or all of these things happen to help keep you alive. The body is driven by the brain, and it responds the way it does because it feels under threat. Scary, but pretty neat too - except when the brain is convinced there is a threat and you know that there isn't really.

So what can you do?

Firstly, an anxious brain is just as healthy and as strong as a non-anxious brain. It is brilliant, creative capable and sensitive.

However, you need to tell the brain that **YOU ARE THE BOSS!**

AMY does what she does, because she wants to keep you safe. She'd probably prefer to give you a big hug and then walk just in front of you, to protect you - but can't, so she has to do it the only way she knows how to. Sometimes she gets it wrong and is just being overprotective.



The best thing to do is to get **REX** back online and in control. He needs your help, especially if he hasn't done this before. He will help you to feel better and braver. **AMY** need to think you're safe, and this needs to come from **YOU**.

How?

Let them know "I've got this, you can stop worrying!"

BREATHE DEEP -



This is already there inside your brain, unfortunately it doesn't work until it's taking some deep breaths. Imagine you have a cup of hot chocolate; take a deep breath in through your nose and smell it... hold that breath for a count of 4, then slowly blow it out over the hot chocolate to cool it down. You need to do this a few times.

This helps **AMY** to relax, kick back and start to chill out. **REX** can then start to take control, and get rid of the extra oxygen, adrenaline and hormones.



As things start to settle you realise you're back in control and you are the Boss again. It doesn't always work straight away, like most things, it takes practice, it does help and will reduce the anxiety and you will feel braver and stronger.



There are other things you can do:

GET ACTIVE - this helps to burnout the extra fuel and can reduce the awful feelings you've been having.

BECOME AWARE - When you're anxious you can become very aware of what is happening inside your body. Your brain keeps looking for worries and what if's. By getting your brain to focus on what is going on around you, this can help reduce your worries.

Feel your feet on the ground below you; touch your arms with your fingers, or squeeze your knees if you're sitting down; feel the breath coming in and out of your body (imagine seeing your breath on a cold, frosty morning); is today hot or cold?; what else can you see, hear, smell?

BE ORGANISED - some people find it helps to write out what they're going to do each day. Remind yourself of all the things you need to do before you go out. (Have breakfast, shower, clean teeth, pack bag, put on shoes, coat.....) this helps you to realise that you're in control, even if sometimes you feel like you're not.

TRY TO SLEEP - this allow the brain time to settle, rest and heal.

Lavender - is know to help the body and mind to relax. You could add it to a relaxing bath, or spray some onto your pillow (read the instructions first)

Anxiety and courage live alongside each other. An anxious brain = a brave brain. An anxious body = a brave body and an anxious person = a brave person.

Finally,

