



CAN ANXIETY BE GOOD FOR YOU?

Emotions have a function – they tell us things about our situation, and they serve as a call to action. Anxiety can function to alert us to potential threats in our environment, and that we need to take protective action. In fact, a certain amount of anxiety is useful, if not essential, for us to grasp the vital importance of a particular task at hand, or for a decision to be made.

So, if you are preparing for something important like a major presentation or event, or an exam of some kind, or facing a big decision like buying a house or a car, or choosing an investment, it makes sense to expect some anxiety. It can be helpful, to alert your mind to the risk and provide some extra mental focus to think through your choices. If you just leapt in without assessing the risk, you could make some serious mistakes. If you did not prepare for the presentation or exam because you felt no anxiety, it is sure to end badly for you!



One way to think about anxiety, is that it is like an alarm system for your home or car. Removing all traces of anxiety would be like successfully dismantling this security system. Things may be quieter and more relaxed, but you would not know you were in trouble until it was too late. Anxiety can be helpful if it is channeled well. It encourages you to get that lump or strange mole checked out, or to talk to Healthcare Professionals about symptoms you cannot explain. It can also encourage you to seek support when you are facing an overwhelming situation like being retrenched or after a trauma.



CAN YOU HAVE TOO MUCH ANXIETY?

Your mind can become overwhelmed and unable to think with too much anxiety. It can take the form of acute anxiety, like panic or a more ongoing form with endless worry. It is hard to think clearly this level of anxiety is going on, and it's equally difficult to separate a real from an imagined threat, making it difficult for you to effectively deal with the situation. This leads to more anxiety, and the cycle continues.



INSTEAD OF FOCUSING ON THE WORRY, RATHER ASK YOURSELF:

- What is there to worry about?
- What aspect of the choice has not been fully considered?
- What risk have you not been sufficiently mindful of?



It's useful to do an inventory of your typical worries, from time to time, to get a sense of whether they are realistic or not and need to be addressed or not. It is also good to be aware of the situations that make you anxious, and whether you could benefit from some help in dealing with them. You may not always need professional help to deal with it, but it can help to familiarise our internal states and allow you to become more mindful of what they might be trying to tell you.

