

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE ANXIOUS SELF

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Some family patterns seem to increase the frequency of anxiety problems for adults. The patterns involve parental control through overprotection or rejection.

THERE ARE FOUR COMMON FAMILY OF ORIGIN SCENARIOS:

- 1. One pattern occurs when the child worries about being rejected or abandoned,** sometimes because of overt threats by the parent, sometimes from abandoning and neglecting behaviors.
- 2. In a second pattern, the child becomes the companion of the parent and is parentified.**
- 3. The situation in which the parent has difficulty letting the child be autonomous** and has difficulty letting go of the parental identity is another problematic configuration.
- 4. Lastly, is the model in which the child worries about the survival of the parent** because of threats of suicide or because there has been parental violence.

THE DIFFICULTY: REGULATING FEAR-TERROR

Some emotion theorists characterize anxiety problems as difficulty regulating the range of feelings known as fear-terror. Our experience of anxiety can swing back and forth between feeling the fear, and avoiding stimuli that might trigger the fear. The different general groups of anxiety “disorders” are characterized differently.

Sometimes the fear is in the forefront and we feel a greater need of being connected with our primary strong and safe people (called “attachment figures” in the psychological language). When we are in this mode of anxiety we also usually internalize.

Sometimes, on the other hand, avoidance is in the forefront, and we externalize and don’t experience attachment needs.

THE ANXIETY DIAGNOSES

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

When fear- felt as preoccupied anxiety about several life areas- is primary. There may be no avoidance. Role reversal (the child being the caretaker of the parent) and rejection in childhood are usually the basis for GAD.

Panic Disorder

Terror is experienced along with the fear. Physical symptoms often occur. Often the care giver was lost when the person was a child and/or there was extremely inadequate parenting.

Agoraphobia

With agoraphobia, the person is fearful being in public and avoids it by staying inside. Early

family dynamics associated with agoraphobia usually involve separation from the mother and parental divorce.

Phobic Disorders

Here people mostly avoid the feared stimulus. When we can't avoid, the fear predominates.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorders

Fear is the primary experience –when the obsessive behaviors (compulsions) are not carried out. The compulsions are the avoidant aspect of the OCD.

Dr. Jane Bolton, a marriage and family therapist, master results coach and contemporary psychoanalyst and is dedicated to supporting people in the fullest self expression of their Authentic Selves. This includes Discovery, Understanding, Acceptance, Expression, and Empowerment of the Self. <http://www.Dr-Jane-Bolton.com>