

Making Sense of Anxiety

*A presentation of Dr. Gordon Neufeld's material
Presented Colleen Drobot, Faculty, Neufeld Institute*

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For more information regarding Colleen's private practice, presentations and courses, please consult www.drobotcounseling.com or email colleendrobot@me.com

Making Sense of Anxiety

Presented By Colleen Drobot

Question # 1

What is anxiety and where does it come from?

What is anxiety?

... a vague sense of unsafety and unease, characterized by apprehension and restlessness

Where does anxiety come from?

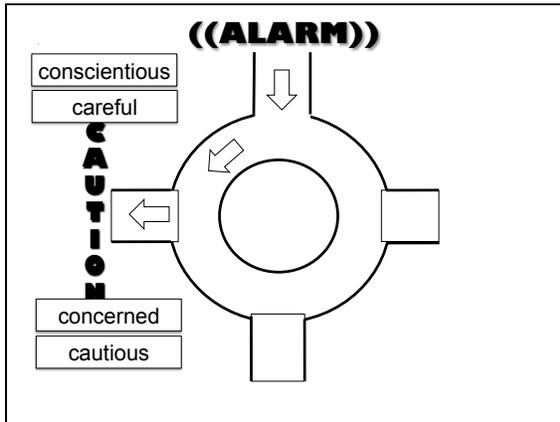
from an activated alarm system

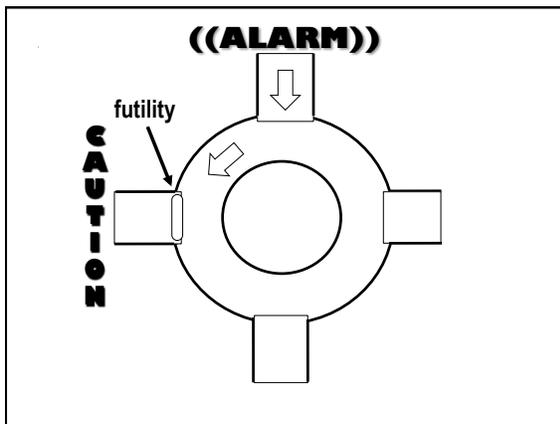
What is anxiety?

... a vague sense of unsafety and unease, characterized by apprehension and restlessness

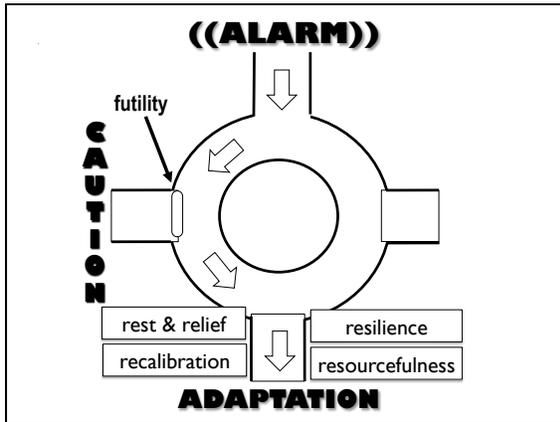
... one's subjective experience of an activated alarm system

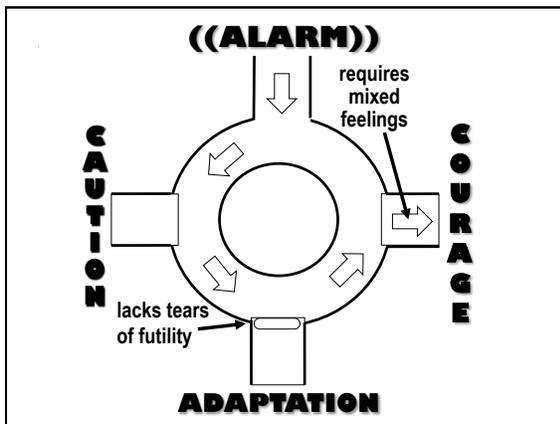
How does the alarm system work?

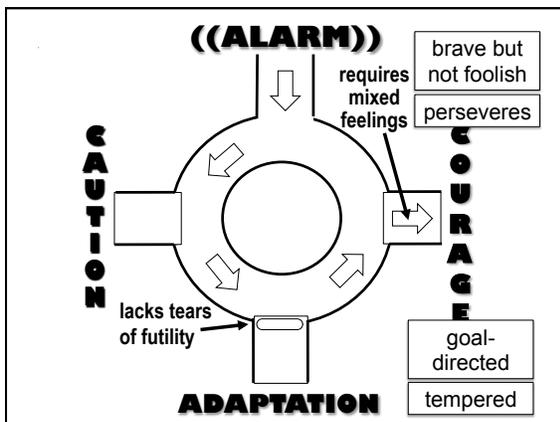




Some alarming futilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• not being able to hold on or keep close• not mattering as much as you would like• the loss or death of those attached to• not being wanted, chosen or preferred• not being the priority or someone's favourite• not being truly seen or understood• the loss of affection or significance to another• the inevitability of death and the passing of time

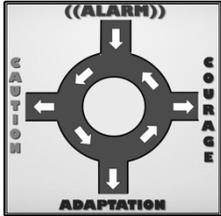






Feeling ALARMED should move us ...

- ... to CAUTION is that is possible
- ... to CRY if that is futile
- to take COURAGE if what alarms is in our way.



Question # 3

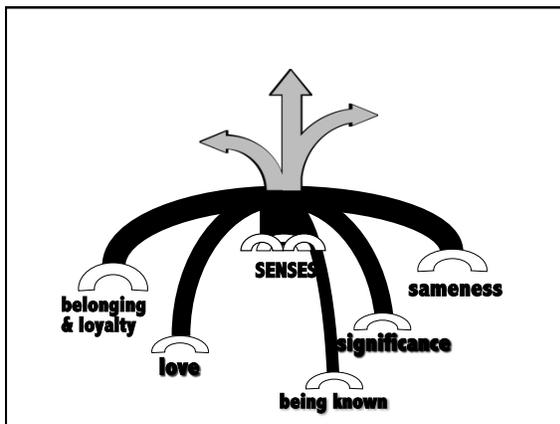
What is it that alarms us so?

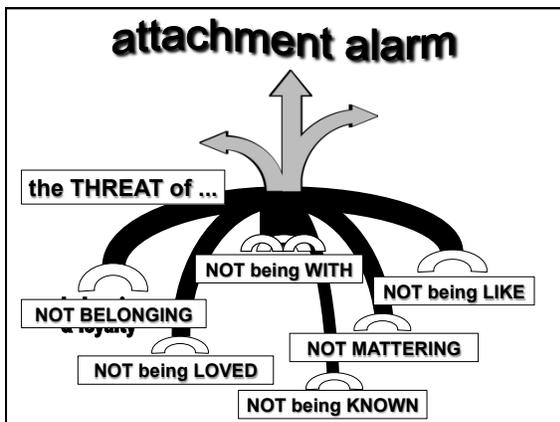
What is it that alarms us so?

facing the lack or loss of proximity with what or whom we are attached to

Attachment

... that drive or relationship characterized by the pursuit and preservation of proximity





What is anxiety?

... a vague sense of unsafety and unease, characterized by apprehension and restlessness

... our subjective experience of an activated alarm system

... a response to facing separation

typical experiences of separation

- birth, bedtime, arrival of a sibling, moving
- parents working, going to school, daycare, camp, shuffling between parents, boarding school
- not being chosen, wanted, liked, recognized, significant, valued, favoured, by those attached to
- facing death, realizing the inevitability of death, the realization that bad things can happen to those attached to
- experiences of adoption and divorce

some hidden faces of separation

- Becoming a separate being
- Feeling responsible for parents feelings or actions or responsible for preserving the proximity with parents
- Possessing a secret that could divide
- Undeveloped attachment
- A fear of not measuring up
- Success, especially if you take credit for it
- The dawning realization that parents cannot keep one safe or that bad things can happen to them

What is anxiety?

... a vague sense of unsafety and unease, characterized by apprehension and restlessness

... our subjective experience of an activated alarm system

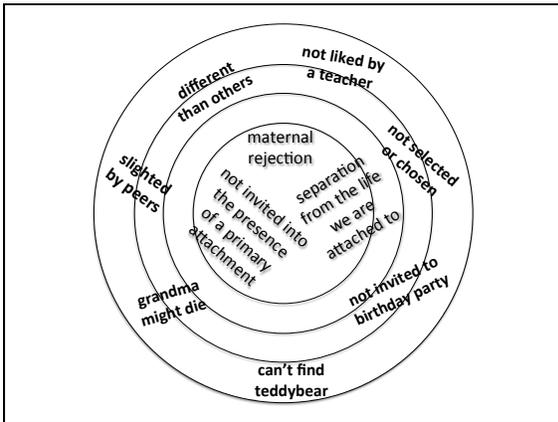
... a VEILED response to facing separation

Question # 4

Why is it so difficult to see the separation we are facing?

Why can't we connect our anxiety to the separation we are facing?

We are protected from seeing that which would make us feel too vulnerable or too wounded.

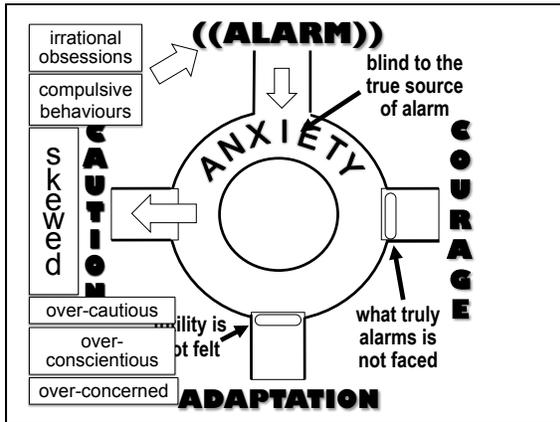


We become blinded by the experiences that affect us the most.

- > orphans the feelings of alarm, divorcing them from their cause
- > displaces the alarm to what CAN be seen (to that which is less blinding)
- > gives rise to alarming **OBSSESSIONS** ie, irrational reasons for alarm (cognitive backfill)

What is anxiety?

- ... a vague sense of unsafety and unease, characterized by apprehension and restlessness
- ... the subjective experience of an activated alarm system
- ... a **VEILED** response to facing separation
- ... 'alarm without eyes'



compulsive anxiety-reducing behaviours

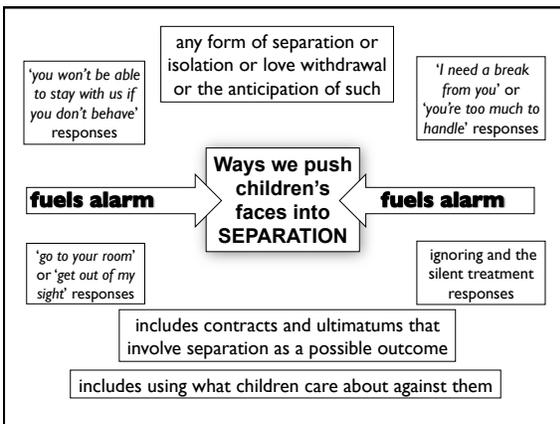
- oral activities such as sucking, chewing, nail biting & eating
- rhythmic activity and stimulation (eg, rocking, pacing, music with a beat, swinging, flickering fire, watching waves, worry beads, stroking, twirling hair, masturbation)
- seeking comfort through contact with transitional objects
- physical exertion
- drug taking (eg, nicotine, alcohol, marijuana and most prescription drugs)

Question # 6

Why is anxiety increasing in our children?

Reasons for escalating anxiety

1. Unprecedented separation from parents.
2. Children are becoming more peer oriented.
3. Children are becoming more alpha.
4. Parents are resorting to alarming their children.
5. Separation-based discipline is becoming the norm.



ADDRESSING ANXIETY

Six surprising solutions to a growing problem

Solution # 1

Reduce the separation the child is facing.

Reduce Separation

AVOID any separation that can be avoided

REDUCE experiences where child faces separation

REFRAIN from separation-based disciplines

BRIDGE any separation that cannot be avoided

Bridge what could divide

Solution # 2

Provide a sense of rest and safety.

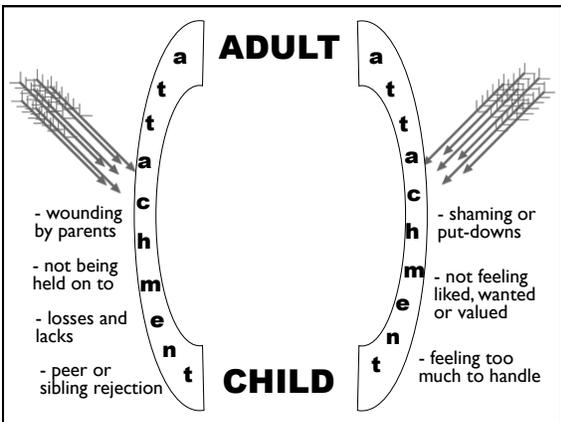
PROVIDE REST & SAFETY

DON'T overwork the alarm system

ACCEPT the work of the relationship

ASSUME the **ALPHA** ROLES in a child's life

SHIELD from wounding by others



Solution # 3

Foster an accepting attitude to
alarm & anxiety.

ACCEPT ANXIETY

DON'T MAKE anxiety an alarming experience

DON'T BATTLE symptoms or irrationality

NORMALIZE and depersonalize the experience

ANTICIPATE and make room for the experience

Solution # 4

Help find acceptable substitutes for
reducing anxiety.

Solution # 5

Bring the alarmed child to rest and build resilience by helping to find the tears of futility when appropriate.

Solution # 6

Cultivate courage first by fanning desires that will answer their fears, and then by helping to find the mixed feelings when ready.

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