



Beware the Contagious Disease of Anxiety

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As heard on "This Thing Called Life"

Beware the Contagious Disease of Anxiety

Today, I am going to talk about the danger of anxiety and how to avoid it. Recently I read an article by a prominent psychiatrist telling us that anxiety is contagious. We are so familiar with the idea of contagious diseases that everyone accepts the fact without comment, but who ever heard of anxiety being contagious?

Who ever thought that children and dogs and cats and perhaps goldfish could be affected by the mental atmosphere of those around them? Well, they can be. It seems funny, doesn't it, to think of a neurotic dog or a disconsolate goldfish. The world has come a long way in the last twenty-five years. Modern psychiatry is helping us to see how necessary it is that the atmosphere of the home be bright, cheerful and happy. The home is the most important institution on earth.

Anxiety is contagious. Perhaps there is such a thing as a mental germ of fear that infects our minds just as a physical germ infects the body. If so, this mental germ is a thing of thought. It is a mental and emotional attitude. It is a way of thinking.

We are told that we can acquire an anxiety complex by listening to those who are anxious. They also tell us that people who are anxious should have someone to talk over their anxiety with, someone they can unload it on. Otherwise, the anxiety piles up in the mind until it finally becomes unendurable. Perhaps this is why the Bible tells us to confess our sins to one another, always, of course, remembering that the original meaning of the word "sin" is making a mistake, or missing the mark. And surely anxiety is a mistake, for it is missing the mark of happiness.

All anxiety is based on a feeling of insecurity. Jesus said that we should take no anxious thought for tomorrow, but live in such complete faith today that tomorrow will take care of itself. Perhaps if we were to follow the teaching of Jesus we would be relieved of most of the strain of living. He knew a great deal more about these things than we do, and he told us of a friend in whom we may confide, who will share all our burdens and finally lift us out of unhappiness and fear.

Jesus called this friend "our Father which art in heaven" - not just your Father and my Father, but our Father, everybody's Father, the Father of us all, the Spirit that is over all in all and through all, and closer to us than our very breath. Didn't he say that God is in heaven and heaven is right where you are, within and around you?

We all need a friend, one upon whom we may rely, one who will always be there. We need a friend whose wisdom is great, in whom we may have implicit confidence, and one who will never let us down. This Thing Called Life had this all figured out long before you and I were born and it implanted a spiritual self within each one of us, the real you. This friend is always with you, goes wherever you go, knows everything you think and can answer your every need. It isn't necessary to be anxious at all. It isn't necessary to be afraid of anything.

And now let's look at this proposition from another angle. If anxiety is contagious and can produce all kinds of unhappy results, why won't an opposite mental attitude produce an opposite result? In other words, faith alone can heal fear, just as love alone can erase hate.

But faith is more than just saying, "I am not afraid of anything." Faith is more than whistling in the dark to keep up your courage. Faith rises from a deep conviction that there is a power upon which you may rely greater than you are - the power of This Thing Called Life. Faith is an assurance, both emotional and intellectual (that is, both of the mind and the heart) that God is right where you are, that good is available wherever you may be.

Faith is just as contagious as fear, and more so, because faith is built on a reality which is substantial and changeless and eternal, while fear is built on the belief that evil is equal to good. And this would be as absurd as to believe that darkness is equal to light. For just what happens to darkness when you bring in a light? It isn't there.

What happens to fear when you introduce faith? It no longer exists. What happens to your anxiety when confidence is restored? It disappears as a thief in the night. There is a place in your mind where thieves cannot break through and steal, where darkness cannot penetrate, where fear is unknown.

It is interesting to know that anxiety and fear are contagious. It is one of the best things that ever happened to us to have scientific evidence that this is so. But if we didn't go further than this we would never discover a real healing. Any physician will tell you that a correct diagnosis of your case is essential to its healing.

This is why so much time is spent in diagnosis in the modern medical clinics where men of science are devoting their lives to the well-being of humanity. To find the cause of the trouble is the first intelligent step in knowing how to erase it. And the same is true in modern psychiatry, finding the emotional reason back of a large portion of our physical ailments.

The physician is doing a wonderful job and so is the psychiatrist. But we need something else. For just as we need a physician to the body, one who can determine the cause of our physical troubles, and a physician to the mind to find the seat of our emotional disturbances, so we also need a physician to the soul to find out why it is that we do not have a right relationship to This Thing Called Life. This is why Jesus is so often referred to as the Great Physician, for he introduced the idea of the availability of spiritual power.

It is well known that physical laws must be obeyed, if one hopes to be physically well. It is also well known that mental and emotional laws must be adhered to or we won't be mentally and emotionally balanced and poised. When it becomes equally known that spiritual laws also must be obeyed, we shall have completed the cycle, we shall have established a firm foundation for health, happiness and success.

You can employ a good physician who will do everything in his power to help you physically. You can employ a wise counselor who can help you to straighten out your emotional difficulties. But you cannot employ somebody to live for you. This is impossible. This is what is wonderful about This Thing Called Life. Its power is already implanted at the center of your being. Life has made the gift, but you will have to accept it. And you will have to use it.

If anxiety and fear are contagious, then so are unhappiness and doubt. They have mental germs of thought, too, that enter the mind and infect and stagnate and congest. Discouragement is contagious, hostility is contagious, animosity is contagious - each having its own germ of thought, each producing an effect like itself.

In medical science they try to set up an immunity to disease. They inject serums in the body so it won't contract disease. And when people lack faith and confidence in life they also have to have something injected in them that will make them immune to unhappiness and failure. For every doubt they must find a faith that overpowers it.

This healing power with which you must become inoculated, so that when you enter an atmosphere of anxiety you won't catch it, when you are surrounded by uncertain conditions you will not lose confidence because the germ of fear has entered your thought - this healing power that will protect you is confidence in Life itself. It is coming to know yourself as the Bible says, "hid with Christ in God."

This is no mere figure of speech. It means exactly what it says and says exactly what it means. For Christ means Emmanuel, or God-with-you. And to be hid with Christ in God means that you become aware of this Divine Thing within you - the

Presence that is in everything, the Power that flows through everything and the Love and Harmony that govern everything.

It is in this Spirit that you are to confide. It is with this Spirit that you are to commune. It must become more real to you than anything else in life - the supreme reality. The Spirit within you already, as Jesus said, knows what you have need of, knows how to plan your life with you. It is your friend who will never desert you. It is a power within you that knows nothing about weakness. It is a confidence within you that knows nothing about fear. And it is a warm, loving presence filled with light.

"Oh, but," you may say, "how am I going to come to discover and know this wonderful thing within me? How am I going to make it real?" This is an amazing thing, all you have to do is to act as though it were true. It isn't as though you had to learn some deep secret or discover some unknown river of life, or concentrate some power or hold a lot of thoughts or develop a terrific will. It has nothing to do with any of this. All you have to do is to lay down your burdens and say, "Here I am, God." And in an instant you will know that you are dealing with reality.

There isn't anywhere you go to find this power. You do not have to develop it. You didn't put the power there at all; it is already there, you merely use it. But you have to use it in confidence and trust.

There are a few simple rules that it would be wise for you to follow. First of all, if fear, anxiety and doubt, uncertainty, unhappiness and discouragement are contagious, just don't think about them, don't read about them, don't listen to them. And if you find it necessary to be in their presence, just do what the Bible called putting on the whole armor of faith. Nothing negative can penetrate this faith. When you put on the whole armor of faith nothing can assail you.

And now, because faith is contagious, you will soon discover that people around you will begin to catch it. But this is a good germ. This is something we all want to become inoculated with. When you have a feeling of love this, too, will be contagious and you will be helping to dissipate any atmosphere of animosity around you.

What the world needs today, more than anything else and above all other things, is the actual proof, the real demonstration, the tangible result of an ever-growing number of people who are willing to try the greatest experiment in which the human mind can engage. Why don't you become a specialist in this field - first in your own life, next in your family, and next in all of your associations?

You have the power within yourself to change your own life, to have love and harmony around you, and to do your bit in helping the world. Surely, this is a

happy adventure. It is wonderful to discover a gold mine or an oil well, but here within you is the oil of the Spirit and the only real wealth there can be. Here in you is the well-spring of life, the eternal good and the everlasting peace.

Dr. Holmes MEDITATION as heard on "This Thing Called Life"

Let us take this thought for our meditation today: "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Affirmative prayer is our direct line of communion with God. Affirmative prayer means that we clear our minds of doubt and fear, and turn in faith to the great Giver of Life. It means that we become aware of the presence of God within and around us, here and now. It means that we affirm this presence and accept it, quietly, confidently and peacefully. Say to yourself, with deep but simple conviction:

I am now letting go of every anxious thought. I am now surrendering any doubt or fear into the great heart of love. I am looking out upon the world and saying, "This is my world because it is God's world." I am now thinking of all people, "These are my friends because they live and move and have their being in the Father of us all." I am now receiving confidence and inspiration from the Source of all life.

I believe that love is guiding me. I believe that there is a Divine Power that goes before me and makes perfect my way in joy and happiness. I believe this Power is flowing through me to the joy and happiness of those around me. I have a faith, a conviction; an assurance at the center of my being. I have a love which envelops everything I contact and every person I meet. I have a friend within me who knows all my needs.

I accept the Kingdom which God has given. I accept the life which He has implanted in me, and this life reaches out to everything around me, in joy and gladness, and with the blessed assurance that all is well.