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The Instigation of Anxiety

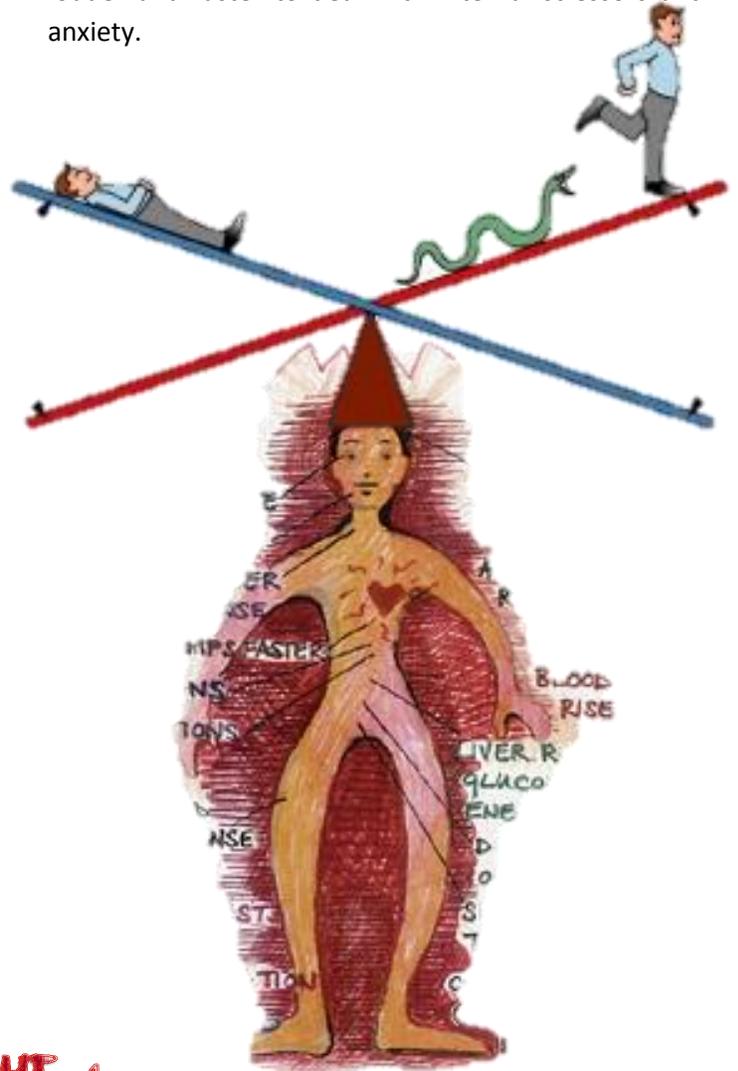
Through *the* Rupture of Connection

Crystal Anzalone MS, LMHP, LPC, NCC

TALK ABOUT A RUPTURE OF CONNECTION, last year, even Verizon Wireless came to the place where they disconnected the famous cell phone commercials, “Can you hear me now?” guy. But those famous words linger on in our unconsciousness with more meaning than implied in the commercial. Connectivity is such an important part of the human experience. What happens when we experience the loss of connection, the loss of being understood, and the loss of feeling felt by an important other? According to Clinical Pastoral Counselor, Dr. Harville Hendrix, this is the **Instigation of Anxiety** and refers to this phenomenon as **The Human Condition**. He said, “Most of us don’t find ourselves connected. A lot of us find ourselves **not connected**, isolated, alone and scared.” Then with that loss of connection, in anxiety we attempt to repair a breach in relationship to become reconnected while paradoxically making things worse.

OUR CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM has two modes; sympathetic and parasympathetic. Depending if one has habituated in the sympathetic or parasympathetic mode will determine how the person will deal with anxiety. What has been coined, the *turn away* is how someone in the parasympathetic mode deescalates and withdraws, thus, turning away, to deal with anxiety. Watching the film of the baby in The Still Face Experiment, exemplifies in a 2 ½ minute clip the escalation of anxiety with insignificant reparative attempts to the point where the baby *turns away* and gives up on mom with *the still face*. This action is

similar to a man who retreats to his, “man cave” to avoid conflict. He will gather his thoughts by removing himself from the conflict to calm himself. The one who is in a *state of arousal* is operating in sympathetic mode. This is the person who escalates and talks louder and faster to deal with internal stressors and anxiety.



This explains the physiological response to what happens internally to others as they are experiencing something that is anxiety producing.

The Human Condition, as Dr. Hendrix points out, is the lost awareness of connection and this spawns anxiety in humans. Please notice the emphasis, the *LOSS* of the awareness of connection. You cannot lose the connection but you can lose the awareness of being connected.

As with The Still Face Experiment, the mother turns her back on the baby and then turns to face baby but with a *Still Face* (stone face). The mother does not respond to baby's overtures. When mother turns away something dramatic happens, you see the baby's shock. Dr. Hendrix coined this, the SHOCK of the RUPTURE of Connection. The attuned energy of "feeling felt" is not there anymore. Since we are connected beings, the loss of connection and the absence of being felt *promotes rupture, that is the shock, that is the wounding, and this becomes the wounding of all human beings; the Instigation of Anxiety.*

Adapted from: Harville Hendrix PhD. (2012). *Imago, Letting Love In* **The 2012 Couples Conference: Attachment, Differentiation & Neuroscience in Couples Therapy.** CMI Education Institute 2012

For more information regarding
Anxiety and Tools to Deal
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from the
InSIGHTout
**Everyone thinks it,
but Cal speaks it**
Next Column-Cal's Column

I'm the Smartest Dumb Person I know

By Cal Kripke

The most important thing I have learned in the past 47 years is that I really don't know anything at all. A man should know his limits and for me, that is a work in progress, for I am continually at the precipice of incompetence. When one reflects on two and a half decades of sustained effort into a seminal lifetime investment, one tends to fall prey to a sound overconfidence. I am, of course, speaking of two and a half decades of marriage, one of the highest yielding returns on my life choices.

It begins innocently, uneventful, and without regard as unconscious incompetence; I don't know what I don't know. It is a dimension that escapes evaluation, assessment, and measure. It is where my seminal investment pays off. Without restraint she informs the uninformed, and I become consciously incompetent.

The distance between unconsciously incompetent and consciously incompetent facilitates a short, but painful journey. Not long ago my petite petticoat, rapidly moving through stages of "clean pain" accompanied by the reparative exercise of experiential acceptance, was a brimming blossom of revelation and healing. And in the exploration of her expression, I was decimated.

I never saw it coming. It was neither intuitive, fair, nor celebratory; it left me bereft of my sound overconfidence. My desire for this change, my work to encourage it, even the effort to foster solutions for it, proved no defense. I was a casualty.

In stunned reckoning I became suddenly, consciously, incompetent. Until that moment I worked to support my wife, now I demonstrated a different kind of support and strength, that of containment. I became more so I could become less, specifically, less of myself. I recognized the necessity of my dissolution. It was my portion, my ransom, my connection to her journey. It was the consummation of shared pain and joy, the treasure of new experience, and the moment to become consciously competent -- revealing me to be the smartest dumb person I know.

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InSIGHT 