



KMR COMMUNICATIONS

Examples of Press Releases for Dr. Sanam Hafeez

Neuropsychologist and Director of Comprehend the Mind

www.comprehendthemind.com



HOW TO SURVIVE AND THRIVE DURING THE SUMMER AS A SINGLE PERSON

www.comprehendthemind.com



Summer can be one of the toughest times to be single. There's nothing worse than looking at Instagram or Facebook and seeing your married/couple friends off on vacation in the South of France or spending the weekend at a BBQ in the Hamptons while you stare longingly at your dog in your cramped apartment wishing your fire escape could morph into the Caribbean Sea or a gondola in Venice. If you haven't met Mr. or Ms. Right by Memorial Day Weekend how can you salvage your summer? **Dr. Sanam Hafeez is an NYC Neuropsychologist who also happens to be a single mom of two boys.** This is no trivial matter. Loneliness can literally be a killer! It can lead to depression, substance abuse, suicidal thoughts, and other destructive behaviors. **Here she shares some ideas to socialize without a significant other during the dog days of summer.**

Take A Daycation

There is something called www.resortpass.com. While this is not yet available in every city, it does allow people to book day passes at luxury hotels and use their beach, pool, spa, and amenity facilities in some cases for as little as \$25.00 per day! Hotels such as Kimpton, W, Westin, Hyatt, Ritz Carlton, St. Regis and many others offer this. Not only does soaking up Vitamin D makes us feel good, who knows, your lounge mate could turn into an evening date!

Try a Meet Up

Meetup is about connecting people with something in common. From activities you love and hobbies you want to try, to ways you identify yourself and who you want to be, a Meetup group is a community. A community of people who come together because they care about the same thing. Mountain climbers, first-time parents, aspiring kite surfers, chefs, coders... you name it, there's a good chance there's a Meetup group for it. You can join online or through the app and find a Meet Up group that fits your exact interest.

Don't Let Being Single Ground You or De-Rail Your Travel

Let's face it, unless you are an extraordinarily confident and independent person, it can be unsettling to travel solo to a foreign country and eat meals alone and wander around with nobody to converse with. This need not be the case! There are many travel groups that build their business around single travelers who are more mature than Club Med. Once such company is <https://www.singlestravelintl.com> Their vacations run the gamut from weekends, cruises, adventure travel, and international travel. And they are just one of many companies who do this.

For the Single Person in Recovery From Drugs or Alcohol

Very often, "Singles Vacations" can mean party time and this can be challenging for those in recovery. There are hundreds of thousands of people who fall into this category, and that's why sober vacations exist.

<https://sobervacations.com> is one company that has been around since 1987, however numerous others exist.

Summer Camp for Adults

If you were lucky enough to go to summer camp as a kid, doesn't that bring back great memories of camp fires and roasting smores? You can recreate that experience in a co-ed environment! Adult summer camps are a "thing" and they are popping up all over the country. www.campbonfire.com is an example where the activities are so varied and sundry from rock climbing, pool parties, Thai massage, kickball, survival skills, or doing nothing at all!

Volunteer

What do you like? Pets? Art? Kids? Try any place where they can be found, like a shelter, museum or hospital. It really gives you a boost to give unconditionally.

Find an Extra Job Doing Something You Really Enjoy

Only do so if it won't add unwanted stress to your life. Look up freelance opportunities in your area doing what you're skilled at. The extra income will make you feel better and give you more cash to spoil yourself.

Swap Your Home/Apt With a Friend Temporarily

It beats the cost of a hotel and can certainly get you out of a rut and in front of new people! Perhaps, you're a woman living in New York and are not feeling it with the men in the big apple. Maybe you have a friend in LA you can swap homes with to see how you vibe with the pace and the people on the west coast. It gives you a chance to feel things out without making a long-term commitment.

"The bottom line," says Dr. Hafeez, "is that with some well thought out planning, you need not be single and lonely during the summer months. You can fill your

time with people, sun, fun, adventures, new cultures, and in the process of doing so, you just might find “the one.”

APRIL IS ALCOHOL AWARENESS MONTH

Are You Enjoying Alcohol Socially or Using It As A Crutch?



www.comprehendthemind.com

April is alcohol awareness month which means many organizations across the nation increase their already significant efforts to educate the public and raise cognizance about alcoholism, its causes, effects, and proper treatment.

Studies have shown that large groups of people believe their drinking is solely social. Research shows that in many cases social drinking is used as a crutch. Professionals under a lot of stress such as police officers have been studied and correlations have been found between the stress of fitting in socially with coworker and drinking.

We also know that college drinking can be disastrous for young students away on their journey to a bachelor's degree. Researchers found that one of four motives for college drinking was the need to conform to the social norms.

According to a report published in the academic journal, JAMA Psychiatry, almost 33% of adult Americans suffer from an alcohol abuse disorder at some

point in their lives. Out of that one-third of Americans, only 20% seek professional help. The CDC has also published fact sheets stating that the number of lives lost to alcohol was around 88,000 per year from 2006-2010.

So how do you assess when your drinking is stepping into a danger zone or if your motives for drinking are unhealthy? **NYC Neuropsychologist Dr. Sanam Hafeez outlines the differences between social and problematic drinking.**

Here are 5 signs that your drinking has become problematic.

You Feel the Need to Hide Your Drinking

Dr. Sanam Hafeez says, "People who find themselves escalating from social drinking to actual alcoholism, attempt to conceal their alcohol consumption from their friends and family." Dr. Hafeez explains that the issue is the cognizance of the drinker that they are taking it to the next level and that those close to them would be alarmed at how much they are drinking.

Failing to Deliver on Your Responsibilities

"Alcoholics tend to miss work, meetings, and other responsibilities," Dr. Sanam Hafeez says. "If problematic drinking habits begin in college, students may begin to sacrifice study time and class time in order to recuperate from the previous night's hangover" states the NYC Psychologist.

Not Sticking To Your Limit

Many people set out limits for themselves before going out with friends. "I'll only have two drinks tonight!" they profess. However, Dr. Hafeez explains that if you can't stick to your own parameters you might have binge drinking tendencies. "If you are making a deal with yourself and you cannot follow your own rule for the night you need to observe the reasoning. It might be a case of using alcoholism as a crutch to fit in or have fun. When alcohol becomes a stepping

stone for 'fun' it becomes a necessity and this is when you can develop a dependency on it," she says.

Blacking Out Becomes Routine

Blackouts and hangovers happen to everyone at some point. It is part of learning your limits. But if blacking out becomes routine to you, Dr. Hafeez says this might be a sign you are in the red zone for dependency. "If you become nonchalant about repeatedly blacking out throughout the weekend or in extreme cases throughout the week, there is a problem. Modern medicine tells us the effects of constant and consistent episodes of blackout on your brain can be terrible. If you are dissociating these episodes of memory loss, incoherence and hangovers from the consequences they can bring down the line it could mean you are trying to numb anxieties or insecurities with alcohol and you don't care about the results of such heavy drinking.

You Need "Liquid Courage" Prior to Any New Social Experience

This is common in college students and recent grads who are trying to navigate the world of adulthood and socializing. "Studies show us that one of the major motives why college students over-drink is the need to fit in. They don't believe they can do so without alcohol. This is problematic because it creates an urgency for the substance in order to make any friends," says Dr. Hafeez.

What to do if you're not sure you have a problem

Dr. Sanam Hafeez suggests, "If you are not certain you are an alcoholic, seek the advice of a therapist or counselor. Shadowing an AA meeting and speak with those who have long term sobriety can also demystify and destigmatize the notion of seeking help and community.

If you begin to realize that you require more than therapy and counseling to stop drinking, inpatient treatment (rehab) may be the course of action you need to get both the therapy and tools to live a sober life.

Want to Work From Home? There May Be Some Pitfalls, According To An NYC Neuropsychologist

www.comprehendthemind.com

Dr. Sanam Hafeez, NYC neuropsychologist, points out some essential things to consider before choosing to work from home.



Studies, surveys, and census information show that about 8 million Americans work from home at least part of the week. This amount is considerably higher today than it was back in the early 2000s. This section of the workforce is expected to grow in the coming years as online resources continue catering to this setup. The improvement of internet connectivity, collaborative applications, and software, as well as the proliferation of studies showing increases in

employee productivity when working from home, have contributed to the general change of mind on this work/lifestyle choice.

But is working from home for everybody? What characteristics make for a more successful remote employee? What are some of the drawbacks for individuals working at home?

Dr. Sanam Hafeez is a Neuropsychologist in NYC with a Faculty Appointment at Columbia University. She points out that “as online tools and telecommuting become more commonplace, more conversations need to be had about what characteristics and job responsibilities a team member needs to have in order to carry out their duties successfully while working from home.”

Dr. Hafeez explains that not all personalities are the same and that employees need to be assessed in order to “determine where they would, not only feel happiest but also be more productive.”

Here Is What You Should Take Into Account If You Are Thinking Of Working Remotely:

1. Isolation

Everyone who has ever had to wake up to go to work on a Monday with little sleep, low energy or a personal issue gnawing at their mind, has felt the annoyance of having to go to the office and attend a Monday meeting. This does not mean, however, that working from home is ideal for you, explains Dr. Sanam Hafeez. “Nearly everyone will experience that feeling of wanting to stay home instead of heading into work. For the majority of people going to work adds meaning and stimulation to their day. Introverts may have an easier time acclimating to the lack of human interaction in a work-from-home situation, but for extroverts, the lack of camaraderie and the isolation they may feel at home may be an essential deterrent that leads them to opt for an on-site position,” says Dr. Hafeez. In a 2-year Stanford University study on productivity and remote

work, more than half of the study group felt too isolated at home and indicated their change of heart when it came to working from home 100 percent of the time.

2. Little Separation of Home and Work

Home is where the heart is. For many of us, opening the door to our house or apartment after a long day brings a feeling of calmness from the constant stimuli of the workday. "For people who consistently work at home there might be issues separating work from play, rest and family," says Dr. Hafeez. For an organized person who can confine their work to an established workstation within the home, this might be less of an issue but for those of us who study in bed, or like to work on the dinner table or couch this presents a challenge. "Sleep Hygiene is one of the areas where this also comes to play because our bed should be for sleep and sex. If you are scattering papers across the place you sleep and spending hours upon hours working in bed, there is no signaled change to the brain that the bed is for sleep. Making it difficult later on to wind down," explains Dr. Hafeez.

3. Distractions

A cardinal rule for determining whether to work at home or in the office should always be, know thyself. "This means you are being honest with yourself as to your abilities to navigate and ignore temptations and distractions on your own without the structure of an office and team environment," says Dr. Hafeez. People who are self-disciplined tend to do well working from home because their personality is conducive to holding themselves accountable. But if you know that in the absence of a manager or co-workers you would fall victim to distractions like the TV, food, or other to-do items, then choosing to stay in office may be an important self-reflective decision you need to make for you and your career.

4. The Dependence of Family on Your Time

One problem with working at home if you have a lot of dependents or people that count on you is the perception to those around you that you are not busy. "This means that if you are at home and something comes up, even if not urgent, you may be asked to deal with it," warns Dr. Hafeez. This is something to consider and a conversation to be had with those you care about. People who are people-pleasers may have a difficult time adhering to their work in a moment when someone they care about needs a favor. If you still decide to work from home "consider having systems in place to deal with needs that come up. Such systems might include pharmacy delivery services, food delivery and medical transport for older adults. This may help in navigating some issues," suggests Dr. Hafeez.

5. A Decrease In Company Rapport

For those of us with an invested interest in growing within a company and investing in our career, working from home may not be the best choice in lieu of an office option. While many companies are growing off of a collaborative and entrepreneurial spirit of remote work, companies that have headquarterd spaces need people present. "Presence breeds familiarity and familiarity drives rapport," affirms Dr. Hafeez. If a big client crisis happens, the first to know are those in the office, and if you are at home, working remotely, you might lose out on the opportunity to give your input. While people who are great multitaskers may still be able to navigate these types of situations by checking in with the in-office team regularly, those who tend to stick to their to-do list and work more reactively may find themselves plateauing with the company after some time.

High Anxiety: 5 Things that Set Us Off and What to Do



Anxiety is defined as a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome. It's future thinking in a negative way. While it's normal to have concerns from time to time, chronic anxiety leads to loss of appetite, insomnia, compromised immunity and other diseases. Dr. Sanam Hafeez PsyD a NYC based licensed clinical psychologist, Teaching Faculty Member at the prestigious Columbia University Teacher's College and the founder and Clinical Director of Comprehensive Consultation Psychological Services, shares 5 common anxiety triggers and offers insights and tips for what we can do to get back into ease.

1. Retirement

Once people hit 40, they feel as if the years are going quicker and the money is running out. They panic. They look at the math and it simply doesn't add up to a life of abundance. They're plagued with thoughts of an unknown future with medical expenses, costs for housing, food, and with every item added to the list, they get more and more anxious. "Some people go into denial because they feel such an intense of fear. While it's normal to want to shift your thinking, avoidance only leads to more anxiety," explains Dr. Hafeez. She suggests settling the mind with information and action. "The more you know about your retirement goals and create a plan of action, the more you can include other family members, shift finances and get clarity on what's real. Information combined with action will give a sense of control."

2. Job Loss

Years ago, people would rebound faster from job loss. Within a month they would find another job often at a higher salary. Saving a bit of money as an “emergency fund” to keep up with expenses should there be a job loss was also a possibility. Times are very different now. These days people lose their job and it creates a complete upheaval in their lives. Finances are depleted and it could take months before getting another job and at times, people accept less money just to have a salary. “I have patients with good careers anxious that there will be a cut back and they’ll be let go without any idea what to do next. This scarcity mindset leads to anxiety. I always remind them to explore other income generating options of interest to them currently so they don’t feel as if their well-being is solely determined by their employer. Anxiety is rooted in fear and this fear is quite common, unfortunately,” says Dr. Hafeez.

3. Health

When you’re anxious about your health, it dominates your mind. “The worst part about health-related anxiety is that it makes you feel worse and prolongs any kind of recovery,” warns Dr. Hafeez. A lot of people make the mistake of researching different conditions online and self-diagnose. They get overwhelmed with all the possibilities of what may be. “The best thing to do is take control of your health by staying current with doctor visits, exercise, eat healthily and focus your attention on optimal health,” she advises.

4. Divorce

Marital strife is a common cause for anxiety. “It’s very common for people who are going through divorce to lose weight due to anxiety and stress. Night anxiety is also common which is when you can fall asleep, but then suddenly awaken out of a sound sleep feeling sad, panicked, unable to go back to sleep,” Dr. Hafeez says. “When anxiety interferes with one’s ability to eat and sleep, consulting with a therapist can be helpful. Divorce is a major life event that radically changes one’s life. Depression and anxiety are common,” she adds.

5. Terrorism and other acts of violence.

We live in a very different world today. Unfortunately, every time we board an airplane, enter a shopping mall, go to a concert, the movies or send our kids to school, we get anxious. Terrorism is intended to make people fearful and

anxious. What can we do? "Again, anxiety is triggered by a loss of control. It's rooted in a feeling of possible danger without warning. So be vigilant. Observe your surroundings. Report anything that seems suspicious. Put an emergency plan in place with family and loved ones. When triggered by anxiety ask, what do I need to know here? What can I control in this situation? Then do what you must to feel better and prepared," recommends Dr. Hafeez.

The common thread here is to first acknowledge the feeling of anxiety, then assess the source of it, then access information and make an action plan to make you feel more in control.

HOW TO BEAT SWIMSUIT SEASON ANXIETY

Even if you didn't meet your weight loss goals...



Since January we've been bombarded with ads urging us to slim down and "get your body in shape by summer." "Lose weight by Memorial Day." While some women manage to meet their weight loss goals in time to feel confident in their swimsuit, the majority of us don't. While we can disguise unwanted pounds in heavy layers during winter, in summer there's nowhere to hide when you're invited to that pool side BBQ. Why should we have to hide? We turned to Dr. Sanam Hafeez, New York City based neuropsychologist and Teaching Faculty Member at the prestigious Columbia University Teacher's College to give us some tips on how to boost body image despite the number on the scale.

1. Recognize (and Stop) all the fat talk.

"Women are notorious for commiserating when it comes to body image," says Dr. Hafeez. If a woman says, 'I'm so fat,' the other woman might feel like she has to say 'no, I'm the fat one.' 'Have you seen my thighs?' Then there's this back and forth over whose body is worse to elevate the other person. "Even women who don't feel negatively about their bodies will engage in this behavior and eventually, it can make them feel worse," says Dr. Hafeez. Dr. Hafeez suggests taking the lead in offering compliments to friends and steering the conversation away from negative self-talk which serves no one.

2. Don't compare yourself to the 'Insta thin.'

Comparing your "booty" or thighs to the countless fitness influencers on Instagram will do nothing to bolster your self-image. Instead, follow and like beautiful photos of healthy foods, plated and perfect. "You want to encourage well-being not get yourself down by comparing yourself to women who work out with trainers, are significantly younger and whose livelihood it is to be a swimsuit model. Comparison leads to discouragement, warns Hafeez."

3. Focus on improvement.

When it comes to your body, focusing on what you think is a problem area is just going to make you feel worse. Once you've acknowledged what you want to work on, focus on ways to improve and celebrate what you've accomplished so far. "If you haven't reached your fitness goal understand it is a work in progress. Stick with it. Working out will also raise your endorphins which help to induce feelings of pleasure and reduce anxiety naturally," says Dr. Hafeez.

4. Be kind to yourself and commit not to a size, but to a lifestyle.

Doing something kind for your body serves as positive reinforcement. "You want to stay focused on the bigger picture. It's about a healthy lifestyle not looking like a swimsuit model," says Dr. Hafeez. Did you try new healthy recipes, opted out of dessert, drank water instead of coffee or diet sodas? Then praise yourself and treat yourself to a massage, a nice long uninterrupted shower with music, a pedicure, a facial or a delicious smelling body lotion.

"By taking some time for you, and doing something that makes you feel physically great, it'll help you'll feel well emotionally," Dr. Hafeez explains.

5. Undo the negative programming about your body.

Undoing negative thoughts about our bodies doesn't happen overnight. Here are a few questions to consider when feeling down or anxious about your body.

How would it feel to savor the sensation of warm sun on my skin?

How would my body feel immersed in water on a stiflingly hot day?

How might swimming help me relax or exercise more?

What am I willing to do to reach my goal weight?

What 3 things can I appreciate about my body right now?

"It may also help to remind yourself that most people at the beach or pool are feeling sensitive about their bodies, too. They may not show it, but that doesn't mean they are totally secure, happy and confident with their body."

6. Focus on the fun!

The majority of us live in climates where the summer is over quickly. Do you really want to spend the summer complaining about your body or, would you rather have fun? Think about how relaxing it will be to enjoy that good book with the sound of the waves in the background, napping under the umbrella, warmer temperatures, backyard get-togethers and night swimming in the pool. "You can spend your summer obsessing over cellulite or, you can enjoy time with your kids eating homemade fruit pops. Always choose fun," suggests Dr. Hafeez.

7. Finally, remind yourself why you are here?

You are so much more than your body. What are you doing with your life, besides obsessing about your body? Are you a parent who is raising confident kids, a student advancing your education, a loyal friend, pet owner, or a self-employed trailblazer? Focus on all you do, and want to do, with your mind and body. You'll quickly realize you have more to offer the world than a 24-inch waist.

DO YOU SUFFER FROM PANIC ATTACKS?

IF SO, YOU HAVE SOMETHING IN COMMON WITH A- LIST CELEBS

Here's what to do to cope without breaking the bank

www.comprehendthemind.com



Over 40 million adults in the U.S. suffer from anxiety and panic disorders. And as privileged as they are, celebrities are no exception when it comes to panic attacks. Whether it's a one-time event or something they consistently struggle with, dealing with a panic attack is never easy. Most recently, in the media and her new book, **Gisele Bundchen** described the debilitating panic attacks she experienced when she was younger and how they almost led her to suicide. Gisele is not the only celeb who has confessed to former or current panic attacks. Others include *Lena Dunham*, *Caitlyn Jenner*, *Emma Stone*, *Ellie Goulding*, *Amanda Seyfried*, and *John Mayer*. **We turned to New York City-based neuropsychologist and Teaching Faculty Member at the prestigious**

Columbia University Teacher's College for some insight on what average Joe and Janes can do to overcome panic attacks. The good news is, recovery is possible does not take an A-listers budget.

What is a panic attack?

Panic attacks typically begin suddenly, without warning. They can strike at any time — when you're driving a car, at the mall, sound asleep or in the middle of a business meeting. You may have occasional panic attacks, or they may occur frequently. Panic attacks have many variations, but symptoms usually peak within minutes. You may feel fatigued and worn out after a panic attack subsides. Dr. Hafeez states that "One of the worst things about panic attacks is the intense fear that you'll have another one. A panic attack occurs when the body experiences a sudden surge adrenaline out of proportion to any perceived danger or threat."

What is a panic disorder?

You may fear having panic attacks so much that you avoid certain situations where they may occur. It can become so severe as to cause agoraphobia where people become housebound. When this occurs, it is known as panic disorder." She adds, "the word 'attack' is actually a misnomer as nothing is being attacked. Panic occurs when the body goes into a state of fight or flight even when no real danger is present. A person can be sitting at their desk typing, yet feel as if they are being chased by a lion and the body is responding with adrenaline appropriate to a dangerous situation, but not realistic for the situation the sufferer is actually in." Dr. Hafeez stresses to those who suffer from the panic that, "Nobody has ever died from a panic attack! A person may feel as if he/she wants to die, or death is imminent, but it simply will not happen!"

How did Gisele Bundchen reduce her panic?

As Gisele Bundchen has mentioned, her panic attacks subsided when she made lifestyle changes such as not drinking a bottle of wine per day, stopping a pack a day smoking habit, incorporating meditation, yoga, and cutting out sugar. After a few months, she says she stopped experiencing any panic attacks and had a new outlook on her life and her health.

What can you do to reduce and cope with panic?

Calm breathing

Dr. Hafeez says that “Taking control of breathing is the first step to controlling a panic attack. The goal is to create a slow stream of air by breathing in and out. This prevents hyperventilation and a buildup of carbon dioxide in the blood. It is helpful to practice mindful breathing outside of panic attacks. This equips people who experience panic attacks with the techniques designed to stop them. There are apps and YouTube videos people can watch to practice breathing techniques for panic. “

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Another helpful strategy is learning to relax the body. This technique involves tensing and untensing various muscle groups. This lowers overall tension and stress levels that can contribute to panic attacks. Start with the feet and work up to your forehead. Tighten the muscle while taking a deep breath in, hold for a few seconds and then release the tension while breathing out. Move up the body, one muscle group at a time.

Mindfulness

This is the act of accepting thoughts as they come, but not letting them blow out of proportion. It is a mental framework designed to help people stay present at the moment without overanalyzing the stressful elements of life. Mindfulness incorporates many relaxation and meditation techniques.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Panic attacks can originate from thoughts that spiral into deep-seated worries. Cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) is an effective, lasting treatment for controlling panic attack symptoms. CBT is a helpful option for people who experience repeated panic attacks. CBT challenges fearful thoughts. What are you afraid will happen? Is there evidence to support these fears? A practitioner trained in CBT can equip an individual with the tools to successfully control and defuse a full-blown panic attack.

Yoga

There are many uncomfortable physical symptoms of panic and anxiety, such as feelings of tension, tightness, and pain sensitivity. Yoga postures, known as asanas, help ease the physical discomfort that is caused by anxiety. Asanas work to stretch, lengthen, and balance the muscles. These postures can assist in releasing built-up muscle tension and stiffness throughout the body.

Cut Down on Sugar and eliminate caffeine

Although many people can't start their day without a "cup of Joe," Dr. Hafeez says that "for panic sufferers, caffeine can trigger panic attacks because it is a stimulant and can cause people with anxiety to have palpitating hearts and shaky hands. Sugar can cause blurry vision, difficulty thinking, and fatigue, all of which may be interpreted as signs of a panic attack, thereby increasing worry and fear. A sugar high and subsequent crash can cause shaking and tension, which can make anxiety worse. While dietary changes alone cannot cure anxiety, they can minimize symptoms, boost energy and improve the body's ability to cope with stress."

Stop Smoking

"If you think smoking calms you down, think again," says Dr. Hafeez. A study of thousands of smokers shows that they are three times more likely than non-smokers to have panic attacks and panic disorder. Tobacco smoke may induce panic attacks in susceptible individuals. "There can be other mechanisms by which smoking induces panic: the effect of nicotine for example," says Dr. Hafeez. "Nicotine has a stimulating effect on the brain."

Reduce or eliminate alcohol

There are clear links between alcohol and anxiety, and between alcohol and panic attacks. Alcohol can trigger panic attacks because on a physiological level drinking can cause low blood sugar, dehydration, increased heart rate, and increased levels of stress. Dr. Hafeez offers that, "A drink from time to time is not harmful, but when people use drinking to deal with anxiety and panic, they can experience severe consequences. Like other frequently abused substances such as caffeine or cocaine, the combination of alcohol abuse, hangover, and withdrawal can lead to an increased risk of panic attacks. As a consequence,

this kind of abuse can result in both an alcohol addiction and more severe anxiety and panic disorders."

Medication

There are many anti-depressants, mood stabilizers, and benzodiazepines like Valium, Ativan, Clonopin, and Xanax that can help keep panic under control when combined with therapy. Antihistamines (such as hydroxyzine) and beta-blockers (such as propranolol) can help mild cases of anxiety as well as performance anxiety, a type of social anxiety disorder. Patients need to keep in mind that benzodiazepines carry the risk of tolerance and addiction and are better suited for short-term or "as needed" usage.

Smartphone apps to assist with panic disorder

There are many great ones that exist such as Dare, Rootd, Anxiety No More, ACT Companion and Pacifica among many others.

5 Ways to Learn Fast and Retain More



The sooner you realize that learning never ends, the more willing you'll be to expand, elevate in your profession, thrive in your life and even generate more income. Learning and studying can be difficult once we are long past our college years. For all the old dogs who might be reluctant to learning new tricks, **we tapped the expertise of Dr. Sanam Hafeez, a New York based Neuropsychologist and Teaching Faculty at Columbia University** to share 5 ways to learn fast and retain more so we can quickly grasp new concepts, technologies, business strategies and up-level our willingness to learn.

Independent learning is the hot new brain trend. Thanks to digital media, we see a new renaissance when it comes to learning. On the professional side, nearly two-thirds of U.S. workers have taken a course or sought additional training to advance their careers, according to a March 2016 [study](#) by Pew Research Center. On the personal development side, a simple Google search can lead anyone to a plethora of courses on everything from mastering personal finances, parenting, our relationships, nutrition, cooking, designing clothes, home organization and design.

“The key to longevity is the learning and application of new things. When we stop learning, we stop growing and that is a slow death to our brains and bodies. Luckily today there are online seminars and other ways to learn that

speak to our interests. It's also incredibly convenient to learn," explains Dr. Hafeez.

What are the best ways to learn new things quickly? Dr. Sanam Hafeez offers the following 5 ways to learn fast and retain more.

1. Learn in quick sprints. There's a sweet spot for learning in the 30-50 minute timeframe. Dedicate that amount of time to learning and then take a 10 to 15-minute break to end a learning segment before starting a new task. "You're more likely to retain more when you focus for a shorter amount of time at once," explains Dr. Hafeez who helps people with ADHD to enhance their ability to focus and learn. "Using tools like notecards with quick points helps the brain absorb concepts even more," she adds. Which leads to...

2. Take written notes and use color! Ditch the laptop and go old school with a pen and paper. Outline important points with a different color pen or highlighter and if you can draw a concept out in the margin, go for it. Writing fuels comprehension and enhances listening skills. Studies out of UCLA and Princeton found students who took notes on laptops didn't perform as well as students who wrote by hand. "When we handwrite notes we listen then process the information before writing. When we type on a laptop, we transcribe what we hear without any self-interpretation which is where the actual learning comes into play," offers Dr. Hafeez.

3. Give your brain time to rest and recharge with sleep. People brag that they work so much and sleep so little. Arianna Huffington's book, "The Sleep Revolution," and choice to add nap rooms at her Huffington Post offices turned the light onto sleep as a performance enhancer. "People who get a full 8 hours of deep uninterrupted sleep retain what they learn and have bandwidth to grasp more information quicker. We often feel tired after a course or following instructions. This is because focusing requires energy. Naturally, when we rest we get to reboot the brain," says Dr. Hafeez.

4. Read out loud, record, replay. Research has shown that reading out loud engages both senses of sight and sound which heightens retention. "Recording yourself reading and elaborating with your own idea of how the concept resonates then replaying the recording a day or two later, is a great technique

that fires up the part of the brain that processes concepts like a computer filing information for later use," explains Dr. Hafeez.

5. Break things down and relate it to what you already know. We all heard of the math teacher who used the example of rock concert ticket sales to get kids to grasp algebra. According to Dr. Hafeez, "when we take a concept and link it to something we already know about or have genuine interest in, we retain that concept. Anytime we can internalize a concept it has resonance. It sticks."

Are You Dating A “Narcissist”? 7 Red Flags Not to Miss

www.comprehendthemind.com



With more and more people turning to dating apps and websites to meet people, we see a relatable pattern. You see someone's photo. You're attracted. You read their profile or brief description of who they claim to be. You reach out. You exchange emails. You text. Maybe you'll speak briefly and then, you meet. You're hitting it off. Things seem great. However, it seems almost too good to be true. Is it?

According to **Dr. Sanam Hafeez**, a NYC based licensed clinical psychologist, teaching faculty member at the prestigious Columbia University Teacher's College and the founder and Clinical Director of Comprehensive Consultation Psychological Services, narcissists are everywhere and in varying degrees. She explains that the current “swipe right” dating culture only feeds their agenda, it's important to understand who they are and how to spot them.

What is narcissism?

Many mental health specialists agree that narcissism is basically an individual who has an excessive interest or admiration of a false self they created to cope with early hurts as children. "Narcissists are disconnected from their true selves and are constantly working to appear better than others. They have an idealized self-image and are in love with that image which hides their true wounded self," says Hafeez.

Dr. Hafeez shares some "red flag" characteristics of narcissists along with tips and insights that can spare many people the heartache and mental anguish that comes with dating a narcissist.

1. Narcissists are off the charts charming. They are incredibly upbeat and bombard you with compliments. Immediately you are captivated by them and their focus on you. They have quick wit, can read people and know what to say to make them feel good. "Narcissists are great at building rapport quickly; however, they are doing so to serve themselves first and foremost. In other words, they feed off the attention, admiration and validation of others so they charm with an agenda," cautions Dr. Hafeez.

2. In their mind, it's really all about them.

The interesting thing about the narcissist is that they make it seem as if they are interested in you however they will always turn the conversation and back to them. "These are not team players. They look to their partner to be the source of their happiness and much of that happiness comes from getting approval or even sympathy," explains Dr. Hafeez. "Early on in their childhoods the narcissist didn't get the nurturing they needed to feel secure. They were neglected or made to feel as if they were bad, so they spend their time and energy showing how great they are," she adds.

3. Rules don't apply to the entitled narcissist.

They're most likely to have a handicap tag hanging from the rearview mirror of their Porsche. When asked about the handicapped tag they'll launch into a descriptive, detailed 20-minute story about how they injured their knee, entitling them to the handicapped tag. They want to gain your sympathy. Other rule breaking behaviors, disobeying traffic laws, parking illegally in front of places leaving you waiting as they quickly "run in," cutting lines, and even stealing.

"They truly believe the world revolves around them and expect others to cater to their needs. This is due to needs being unmet earlier in life," says Dr. Hafeez.

4. They disrespect boundaries. Be mindful of your boundaries! Narcissists will do things like invade your physical space, borrow or take belongings or even money without returning or repayment. They break promises without remorse and may even blame the victim. "Protecting your boundaries is incredibly important when dealing with a narcissist. When over stepping is permitted, it leads to codependence and a lost sense of self," warns Dr. Hafeez.

5. They look great on the surface.

Their desire to impress others may lead them to a lot of time and money on their physical appearance. They are all about status and achievement. They'll brag about their education, their possessions, who they know, their accomplishments and typically, it's exaggerated. "This again stems from the desire of approval. They care what others think of them so much that they use people and situations to fuel the false self they created," explains Dr. Hafeez.

6. They'll disappear like a ghost and you'll feel discarded.

Narcissists will put you on a pedestal as they complement and charm you. You will feel incredibly special, caught up on their intent gaze upon you. However, once they see you're just as interested in your own well-being, that you're protective of your boundaries, that you have other interests and put them in their place; they swiftly move on. When they see you won't allow manipulation, they disappear and will be incredibly cold. They may even give the silent treatment and blame you.

7. Their past relationships are all drama.

They will make it seem like their exes were all crazy, will share horror stories and make you feel as if you are the best thing they found. They paint themselves as the victim and may add that their ex still wants them. "Pay very close attention to how the person speaks about their past relationships," advises Dr. Hafeez. "Narcissists typically won't keep answers brief, positive and forward moving when it comes to past relationships," she adds.

Fast Facts on Sexual Assault from PTSD Expert and Licensed Clinical Neuropsychologist, Dr. Sanam Hafeez



In the wake of accusations against Matt Lauer, Charlie Rose, Harvey Weinstein and other powerful notable public figures from entertainment and politics, sexual assault is a hot topic in the news and on social media. Many argue that not enough is being done to protect women inspiring a “me too” campaign which has spread on social media inspiring women to share an incidence of inappropriate sexual advances. Dr. Sanam Hafeez, a NYC based licensed clinical psychologist, teaching faculty member at the prestigious Columbia University Teacher's College and the founder and Clinical Director of Comprehensive Consultation Psychological Services, is incredibly passionate about the topic given she sees the negative long-term consequences of sexual assault. In this open honest, Q&A Dr. Hafeez shares insights to offer clarity and help drive the conversation forward.

Who typically commits sexual abuse or assault.

Sexual abuse or assault is most commonly reported as being committed by a relative, a parent or a sibling. It can also be a close family friend. Such assault usually takes place at home, and for years, goes unreported or unaddressed. Sexual assault can also take place in the workplace or with a work colleague outside of the office location. This is what we are seeing in the news as more and more people become comfortable coming forward.

It is important to note that sexual assault also occur in dating, committed relationships, even marriage. If one person feels uncomfortable and clearly declares their unease or fights a certain type of intimacy, it is assault if it is forced on them. Often, women ignore such assaults as just part of their relationship.

What is the mindset of the assailant?

Opportunity, a sense of entitlement and oppression over the victim. They want to assert power over the victim. Partly it's a pathology that leads people (often men) to coerce another person into a sexual act. It can be a form of control that someone feels they are lacking which drives them to dominate someone they perceive as weaker. It is definitely more psychological than physical, as the tactics are often based in domination, a sense of strength along with the satisfaction of 'owning' the victim.

What are the thoughts of the victim when it happens and after?

Typically, victims experience feelings of fear and guilt that they somehow helped precipitate it in some way. They also have a horrible sense of being bonded forever with the assailant in hiding the crime. They also experience rumination as they replay the event over and over leading to anxiety or depression, self-doubt and a sense of extreme vulnerability. They question their safety and ability to protect themselves.

Why do many people refrain from coming forward with an accusation?

Many fear persecution, losing family and loved ones, being 'tainted', not being believed and the "drama" of it all. They figure best to remain quiet as not to stir anything up. When it comes to the workplace, many fear losing their jobs or having their name linked to something scandalous. This is why they often remain silent. What we see currently in the news media is a momentum of more and more people coming forward because they see they will be protected once they do. We also see workplaces sticking to their core values as an organization regardless of how notable the accused is. The statement made by NBC after Matt Lauer's firing went in this direction.

What are the key things women must do when assaulted and why are they so important?

First, report the assault immediately to if not family or close friend, the police. Stepping forward to police prevents it from happening again to you and to others. It's incredibly important to keep the evidence, clothes, texts, etc. seek medical and psychological treatment. Document everything. This is more difficult for children who may cope through playing or with drawing. Parents should pay close attention to what their kids express during play. Oftentimes children who are sexually abused feel anxious or frightened that "something bad will happen" if they tell a grown up. Kids become paralyzed with fear and then deny or bury the memory of the trauma.

What should parents tell their children about inappropriate sexual advances from adults?

It is very important that parents make kids feel 100% safe should they ever have anything to share with parents. Having open discussions about their bodies so they understand what is and isn't appropriate is also key. Parents should tell their children that any contact that makes them feel uncomfortable is unacceptable and they should always tell their parent or a trusted adult. Kids must be empowered to be assertive and vocal to the adult making the advances. Finally, children should not feel pressured or forced to hug, kiss or be overly affectionate with anyone.

What are long term ramifications if children do not speak up?

They learn that the behavior is either acceptable or become timid and afraid to address it. It shadows their lives in other ways as well. They may bury the incident only to later develop anxiety, addictions to alcohol, drugs or food. They may develop an eating disorder, engage in cutting, or other self-damaging behaviors.

What are long term ramifications if adults don't speak up?

Trauma affects people of all ages. When adults keep the incident to themselves and try to forget it, it still lingers in their mind. Anything can trigger the memory or the feelings associated with it such as anxiety, fear and a general uneasiness. This may arise in intimate relationships where a person may be closed off sexually or emotionally without knowing why.

What is the treatment for moving past sexual assault?

One form of therapy that has been extensively researched and proven to be effective for treating trauma such as sexual assault is EMDR, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing. This combined with cognitive behavioral therapy and talk therapy helps heal.

Does admitting it happened and seeing the accused brought to justice help the person get over their experience if so why? If not what else must they do to heal?

Yes, many avoid the experience because if they admit it to the world then they have to admit it to themselves and relive it. In reality, having the accused brought to justice brings closure, hopefully a possibility that it won't happen to others but there's healing in the exposure. Exposure therapy is one of the best treatments for all trauma.

What else would you like people to know about this subject?

That sexual assault exists a lot more than people think and would like to believe. Yes, there are some guidelines to what constitutes it, but there are some rules of thumb when it comes to children in particular. For example, a child cannot consent to any form of sexual activity, period. When a perpetrator engages with a child this way, they are committing a crime that can have lasting effects on the victim for years.

Child sexual abuse does not need to include physical contact between a perpetrator and a child. Some forms of child sexual abuse include: exhibitionism, or exposing oneself to a minor, masturbation in the presence of a minor or forcing the minor to masturbate, obscene phone calls, text messages, or digital interaction, producing, owning, or sharing pornographic images or movies of children, sex trafficking and other sexual conduct that is harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare.

Education is a must, to help spread awareness and teach both adults and children what is and is not appropriate.

What are some ways parents can educate their children?

It all depends on the age, cognitive and developmental level of the child but at any age, a parent should try and instill some basics into their child about abuse. For instance; telling very small children or toddler about who can bathe

them or touch their private parts, teach them to have a healthy body image but understand privacy. As they get older, allow children to explore developmentally but have them be aware of their rights, such as even not kissing grandma if they don't feel like it. Giving children that control allows them to understand the ownership over their bodies and realize its value. Explain as they get older what types of actions constitutes assault but always, at all ages, explain, that they need to tell a trusted adult when someone hurts or violates them.

Top 5 Back to School Stressors and How to Bust Them



By Dr. Sanam Hafeez, NYC Licensed Neuropsychologist and School Psychologist

While the start of a new school year comes with excitement for kids, it also comes with stress. It's common for kids to feel overwhelmed this time of year especially as they navigate the challenges that crop up with a new school year. This stress can manifest itself in stomach aches, headaches, loss of appetite, even depression. Here are 5 common top back to school stressors and how parents can help their kids to bust them.

1. Facing the bully.

For kids who are bullied, summer break also means a break from the relentless verbal and at times physical abuse that can be crushing to a kid's self-worth. Oftentimes kids won't tell parents that they are being bullied because they are embarrassed or fear telling school administrators will only escalate the bullying. As the school start date approaches, pay attention to your kid's anxiety level. Communicate and ask them what they are looking forward to this school year. Ask them who are they most excited to see when they return to school. Listen for any negativity and seek to understand where it comes from. Ask if they ever witnessed bullying and what they would do if they did. If your child reveals that they don't want to see a certain group of kids ask why and get as much information as you can. You want to show your kid that they have your support without judgement.

2. Extra work!

Kids who once did great may enter the new year and feel overwhelmed with the additional school work. Perhaps they aren't grasping the material as quickly as they once did. This is common especially in math at the junior high level. Once parents can no longer help kids with homework, they may want to invest in tutoring. Before selecting a tutor it's wise to have your child be evaluated to get clarity on how they learn best. Some kids are visual learners making a math tutor who helps the student to "see" how the equations play out in visual analogy are tremendously helpful. Another solution that can benefit the whole family is hiring a time management or accountability coach to help the entire family to manage schedules effectively.

3. Tuition bills.

With the skyrocketing cost of education, many kids listen to parents discussing the stress they feel about college tuition and then take on that stress themselves. Money is a stressful topic because it is usually never spoken about openly and honestly. Some students may wonder if college is even a right option for them but fear voicing this opinion. Many feel that higher education leaves them ill prepared for "the real world." Many parents and kids question the value of the six-figure tuition price tag. There has been a slow shift away from traditional education in favor of entrepreneurship. Perhaps an internship at a small business a few days per week after school can provide them with more hands-on experience on a path that truly interests them and can be even more lucrative. Showing your kids there are many ways to achieve success, presents options they may not have ever known existed.

4. The unknown.

Whether your child is starting school for the first time or entering junior high, high school or even college; anxiety is common when we are uncertain. Anxiety doesn't discriminate and older kids get anxious about the unknown just the same as the younger kids do. It's common for small children to have separation anxiety at the start of school and for homesickness to strike college freshman living away for the first time. Touring the school, getting to know teachers in advance, and getting as much information beforehand helps kids to mentally prepare for what they can expect.

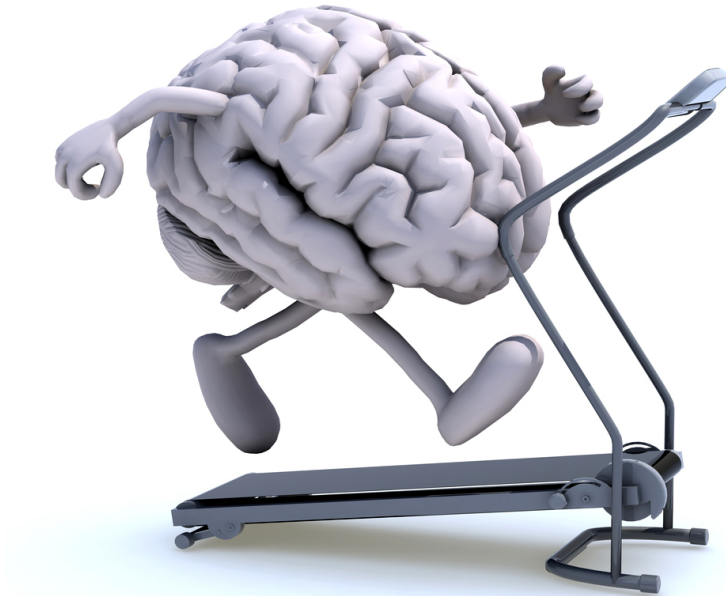
5. Social status and drama.

The return to school comes with the return to more kids and more social drama. Usually in the summer, kids stick to their immediate group of best friends. During the school year, they are forced to get along with everyone. The gossip and constant pressure to fit in can cause anxiety. Simple things like choosing clothing, hairstyle and over all appearance can cause a lot of pressure. Teens especially are trying to get a handle on body image and are often feel anxious about being judged by other kids. It's important to be supportive and understanding while reaffirming your child's strengths and larger goals. When your kids are busy focused on what they want to achieve and what they enjoy doing, they're less likely to have time to concern themselves with the opinions of others.

A BEAUTIFUL MIND

Mental Workouts To Strengthen Your Brain

www.comprehendthemind.com



Exercise Your Brain

Have you ever walked into a room and forgot what you went in there for? Perhaps you lost your train of thought mid conversation after being distracted by a noise. Maybe you forgot a name or a number or to buy milk. We're human! We forget things. However, the more we multitask, the less we focus and the verdict is out on how this affects our brains long term.

So how do we strengthen our brains? **Dr. Sanam Hafeez PsyD a New York City based licensed neuropsychologist and teaching faculty member at the prestigious Columbia University Teacher's College**, shares how we can exercise our minds and master our memory.

How do brain activities play a role in strengthening the brain?

Dr. Hafeez explains that just like physical exercise, brain exercises strengthen and keep the mind agile and active. "You have a cognitive reserve, a finite amount of memory, problem solving and visual motor even verbal reasoning skills that declines over time. The more you engage your brain, the longer you can hold on to your cognitive reserve," explains Dr. Hafeez.

What are some brain-boosting activities someone could do before work?

There are a lot of activities one can do to boost your brain. Research shows that any stimulating activity will "boost" circulation and activate areas of the brain. According to Dr. Hafeez things like writing with your left hand, trying to remember phone numbers, doing mental math calculations, the daily crossword, or looking up a new word in the dictionary on a daily basis, helps your mind stretch in ways you can't see but certainly feel. "The frustration that you feel when doing something that's mentally taxing is when you know your brain is getting a workout. It's good for you," she says.

How do brain-boosting exercises help when it comes to work life?

There are a lot of websites and computer generated programs that offer memory training and visual spatial exercises. Dr. Hafeez suggests looking for puzzles, numerical sequences, and recall activities that can help boost processing speed, attention and memory. Just like your body, the more you do, the more your brain can stretch and accommodate.

How does doing these exercises before work enhance our performance?

"Doing something stimulating and challenging, before work, gets your brain geared up for the day. If you run two miles in the morning, walking seems like a stroll. Similarly, if you perform math calculations as you're driving or insist on spelling words backwards for the fun of it will make the stuff you do at work every day seem like a breeze. It'll make you more aware and vigilant not to mention focused and almost raring to keep moving from one task to the next," Dr. Hafeez explains.

Can it enhance our performance in other areas of our lives? If so, which areas and why/how?

Mental health practitioners agree that over time, brain boosters such as learning a new language, a sport, a musical instrument, or painting, sewing, arts and crafts, boost the brain in bigger, more long-term ways. "It may even reduce or delay the onset on Alzheimer's and other mental decline, again by strengthening the cognitive reserve. Brain exercises are good for one's overall daily health and may actually protect one from more serious ailments. Daily smaller brain boosters can help with mental agility, daily memory, an active work and even social life, by helping increase attention, focus and creative, problem solving skills," adds Dr. Hafeez.

DON'T LET YOUR FEAR OF FLYING GROUND YOU THIS SUMMER

Psychologist Explains How You Can Conquer the Skies



www.comprehendthemind.com

More Americans will travel the skies this summer than ever before, an aviation trade group said in a recent study. Airlines for America said it expects nearly 260 million travelers will fly U.S. airlines this summer. Even with those statistics, as many as 25 percent of all Americans suffer some nervousness about flying and remain grounded due to fear. The most extreme sufferers have a condition called Aviaphobia, where the mere thought of air travel causes them to shudder. How can people break this cycle and see the skies as “friendly?” **We turned to NYC Neuropsychologist Dr. Sanam Hafeez, who discusses what people can do to prepare themselves to fly as well as during flight to prevent anxiety/panic.**

How to Ease Your Fears Before You Book a Ticket

Develop some knowledge of flying- Read a book called, "Ask the Pilot: Everything You Need to Know About Air Travel." By Patrick Smith. People are afraid when they don't understand what is happening to the plane and why. What do certain noises mean? Why does the wings flap in flight? Can turbulence cause the plane to crash? What's wind shear - and can it really rip the wings off a plane? How does a plane get off the ground? Why does the plane sometimes bump, jig, and turn at a high angle during climb out? Flying is statistically the safest form of transportation. It is far more mysterious to most than driving a car. By educating yourself through a consumer-friendly book written by a pilot, this will help to ease your fear and take some of your power back.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy- This is a form of therapy, also known as (CBT) If you change your thoughts, you can change your response and behavior. Addressing general anxiety can reduce the intensity during triggering moments, like being on a plane. The therapist may suggest exposure therapy, where your first assignment is to drive to the airport and walk into the terminal. The second assignment might be to take the shortest flight possible from your home with a trusted friend or loved one. The third time might involve a longer flight alone until the fear is de-escalated and flying begins to feel "normal." This type of "practice" is known as exposure therapy.

Attend a Fear of Flying Clinic- There are online courses such as <http://www.fearofflyinghelp.com/lessons-intro.html> There are also more tactile in-person groups such as www.fofc.com Fear of Flying Clinic has provided intensive therapy to familiarize anxious travelers with the airborne experience. Founded in 1976 and based at San Francisco International Airport, Fear of Flying Clinic includes 24 hours of instruction spread over two weekends. It involves a licensed behavioral therapist to teach coping mechanisms, as well as lectures from airline pilots, flight attendants, mechanics, and air traffic

controllers. Participants also familiarize themselves with the cockpit, control tower, and maintenance facility.

Hypnotherapy

Like any phobia, a fear of flying is rooted in your subconscious. You may have had a traumatic experience, watched a plane crash or saw a movie that disturbed you. Whatever the cause, your mind is trying to protect you. It thinks that flying is dangerous. Thus, fear is created to warn you away from flying. To conquer your fear, you must address it. Hypnosis finds out what triggers that fear in your subconscious. Over time, a hypnotist helps to reprogram the mind so that you are no longer afraid. Your mind relearns positive truths about flying. As a result, you can escape from your long-held fear.

Monitor Your Media Intake

This may seem like a no-brainer, but it's worth mentioning: Avoid airplane disaster movies, news coverage of plane crashes, or other scary media images. Remember that the vast majority of flights arrive safely, but only the problem flights make the news. Don't let that skew your impressions of flying.

How to Avoid Anxiety and Panic When Are Airborne

Talk to the Senior Flight Attendant Before you Board- Ask to board early by telling the gate attendant that you suffer from fear of flying and wish to talk to the flight attendant in the pre-boarding phase. They are accustomed to dealing with nervous fliers. Explain your fears to him/her. Perhaps it is take off that concerns you the most, or maybe it turbulence or landing. Tell them your seat number and ask if they could come and check on you during the inflight times that are most concerning to you. If you are traveling alone and your seatmate seems friendly, perhaps you could ask them to engage you in conversation during take-off to

keep your mind off things during this phase of the flight. Strangers can be surprisingly nice in flight.

Bring an Inflight “Tool Kit” Distraction is key to staying out of fear/panic. In your carry-on, pack crossword puzzles, coloring books, download books or movies that are “light.” Do not watch or read anything that includes topics of murder, terrorists, plane crashes, fires, death, or anything that can trigger fear. Anything you are reading or listening to, or watching should conjure pleasant thoughts. Brain games are great because they keep your mind occupied, and that is the goal. The last thing you want is to be clutching your seat handles waiting for every little air pocket. While you are at it, skip the inflight coffee or Diet Coke. The last thing you need is caffeine to make you jittery.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation- In progressive muscle relaxation, you tense a group of muscles as you breathe in, and you relax them as you breathe out. You work on your muscle groups in a specific order. When your body is physically relaxed, you cannot feel anxious. Practicing progressive muscle relaxation for a few weeks will help you get better at this skill, and in time, you will be able to use this method to relieve stress. You can use an audio recording to help you focus on each muscle group, or you can learn the order of muscle groups and do the exercises from memory. Choose a place where you won't be interrupted and where you can lie down on your back and stretch out comfortably, such as a carpeted floor. Breathe in, and tense the first muscle group (hard but not to the point of pain or cramping) for 4 to 10 seconds.

Benzodiazepines- If your fear is really intense and you have discussed this with your psychiatrist, they might feel it appropriate to prescribe you a low dose of a benzodiazepine such as Klonopin or Ativan which work very quickly to calm intense anxiety or panic. These medications are habit-forming, so it is best to use them only in extreme situations of panic when you are faced with a phobic situation. Remember not to mix them with alcohol. Sometimes just knowing they are there as a “rescue” can make the phobic person feel better.