Anxiety and Panic

Anxiety problems occur along a continuum, from mild, situational worries to extreme fears, panic attacks and even Agoraphobia. Lately, I have been seeing much more anxious people coming into my practice and I am often asked what causes anxiety. It is generally thought that anxiety is caused by both biology and psychology. Research suggests there is a definite genetic predisposition to anxiety – that is, you are more likely to have an anxiety disorder if someone in your family had one. There is also good evidence that stressful life events can trigger anxiety, especially a recent loss or perceived loss. So, if a life stressor lowers your “psychological resistance,” the underlying physical predisposition will “kick in” and start the anxiety process. While it feels overwhelming, people can overcome anxiety. However, there are some necessary factors toward success, such as: a strong desire to get over your anxiety; a willingness to experience the discomfort in order to work through it; a good therapist who can help you figure out and reevaluate your thinking and emotions; and, the patience to stick with a treatment program since treatment may take some time. There are also some basic “self-help” strategies that can help manage anxiety, such as reducing caffeine; getting rest, exercise and proper nutrition; good breathing techniques; a positive attitude; and time for relaxation and joy. Why I am seeing more anxiety these days is unclear to me, but I often wonder if the extent to which we are bombarded with stimuli has an affect. On a daily basis, the media expounds upon all the terrible things that are happening in the world, while expectations for individual success have made us all feel inadequate. Additionally, the constant stream of competing stimuli (calls, texts, emails, etc.) leads to a life in which we rarely take the time to be fully present in our lives and settle our minds and bodies.

“Smile, breathe and go slowly” Thich Nhat Hanh

\*\*\*\*This month I am starting an Anxiety Support Group and have 2 slots left. If you are interested, please call and we can set up an evaluation session\*\*\*\*\*