

A CASE STUDY

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PATIENT

Profile: Fifty-year-old businessman
Condition: Panic disorder, stress, and insomnia

If you would guess the qualities of the top executive of his own major corporation, one of the words that may come to mind would be confidence. To attain that level, you might think, one would need to present oneself with cool, calm and a self-assuredness that comes with years of success.

That was not the case with this 50-year-old industrialist, who suffered from anxiety so debilitating that he could not make presentations, avoided meetings and couldn't look people in the eye. More than once, when he forced himself to enter into the unnerving situations, he would break out into sweats, pass out and go to the nearest emergency room for fear he was going to die. But there was never a heart attack, or any other catastrophic illness; this patient had a panic disorder.

The patient entered treatment when he could no longer tolerate the disparities in his life. That although he was a giant in business, he had a meek mindset – whereas his thoughts and words were of great interest to those around him, he trembled when he said them.

He entered into individual treatment; his goals were to overcome presentation and other anxieties, reduce stress and sleep better. He was as successful in his recovery as he had always been in business.

With great speed, this patient replaced his negative thoughts and somatic responses with the new tools he was learning each week. Week after week on his home practice questionnaire, he reported feeling relaxed and energized, and more at ease. He was able to learn and then integrate the tools, and quickly apply them to his real life situations.

For example, he would use the 90 seconds that it takes to connect a conference call to mitigate his anxiety using new methods, rather than his old habit of festering it. He would then enter the call in a state that was the antithesis of anxiety – calm and restored.

At the end of the program, he could make presentations, felt fewer effects of stress and slept better. He summarized his gains in a piece he wrote: "I'm clearly more at ease inside in spite of what is going on outside. There is almost a detached inner calmness."

"My sleep has been great. I go to sleep focused on the present and not dwelling on the past or the 'what-ifs,' nor anticipating the future. Since I feel more at ease, it has been easier to deal with former anxiety and panic provoking activities. I've learned to listen to my body so I can feel and observe the stress levels rise and fall."

"I feel more productive and am enjoying every day events and relationships with family, friends, and business associates. Since I listen better, I am more attached to people. I have a sense of inner calmness. My mind is no longer caught in a sea of overwhelming negative thoughts."