

Question 0: I'm going through some things with my feelings and myself. I barely sleep and I do nothing but think about how I'm worthless and how I shouldn't be here.

I've never tried or contemplated suicide. I've always wanted to fix my issues, but I never get around to it.

How can I change my feeling of being worthless to everyone?

Answer 0: If everyone thinks you're worthless, then maybe you need to find new people to hang out with. Seriously, the social context in which a person lives is a big influence in self-esteem. Otherwise, you can go round and round trying to understand why you're not worthless, then go back to the same crowd and be knocked down again. There are many inspirational messages you can find in social media. Maybe read some of the ones which state that no person is worthless, and that everyone has a good purpose to their life. Also, since our culture is so saturated with the belief that if someone doesn't feel good about themselves that this is somehow terrible. Bad feelings are part of living. They are the motivation to remove ourselves from situations and relationships which do us more harm than good. Bad feelings do feel terrible. Your feeling of worthlessness may be good in the sense of motivating you to find out that you are much better than your feelings today.

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Answer 1: Hello, and thank you for your question and seeking advice on this. Feelings of worthlessness is unfortunately common. In fact, most people, if not all, have felt this to some degree at some point in their life. You are not alone. Changing our feelings is like changing our thoughts - it's hard to do. Our minds are so amazing that the minute you change your thought another one can be right there to take its place. Without your permission, another thought can just pop in there. The new thought may feel worse than the last one! My guess is that you have tried several things to improve this on your own even before reaching out on here. People often try thinking positive thoughts, debating with their thoughts, or simply telling themselves that they need to "snap out of it" - which is also a thought that carries some self-criticism. Some people try a different approach, and there are counselors out there that can help you with this. The idea is that instead of trying to change the thoughts, you change how you respond to them. You learn skills that allow you to manage difficult thoughts and feelings differently so they don't have the same impact on you that they do right now. For some people, they actually DO begin to experience less hurtful thoughts once they learn how to manage the ones they have differently. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy may be a good choice for you. There is information online and even self-help books that you can use to teach you the skills that I mentioned. Because they are skills, they require practice, but many people have found great relief and an enriched life by learning them. As for suicidal thoughts, I am very glad to read that this has not happened to you. Still, you should watch out for this because it can be a sign of a worsening depression. If you begin to think about this, it is important to reach out to a support system right away. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 1-800-273-8255. The text line is #741741. I hope some other colleagues will provide you more suggestions. Be well...Robin Landwehr, DBH, LPCC

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Answer 2: First thing I'd suggest is getting the sleep you need or it will impact how you think and feel. I'd look at finding what is going well in your life and what you can be grateful for. I believe everyone has talents and wants to find their purpose in life. I think you can figure it out with some help.

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Answer 3: Therapy is essential for those that are feeling depressed and worthless. When I work with those that are experiencing concerns related to feeling of depression and issues with self esteem. I generally work with my client to help build coping skills to reduce level of depression and to assist with strengthening self esteem, by guiding my client with CBT practices. CBT helps with gaining a better awareness of how your thought process influences your belief system, and how your beliefs impact your

actions and the outcome of your behaviors. This process isn't easy but it helps teach an individual that we don't always have control over what happens in our lives but we can control how we interpret, feel, and behave. CBT is good for individuals dealing with depression, anxiety, toxic relationships, stress, self esteem, codependency, etc.

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Answer 4: I first want to let you know that you are not alone in your feelings and there is always someone there to help. You can always change your feelings and change your way of thinking by being open to trying to change. You can always make yourself available to learning new things or volunteering so that you can make a purpose for yourself.

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Answer 5: Heck, sure thing, hun! Feelings of 'depression' have a deeply-rooted base in physical structures that may not be functioning very well at present; and, we can certainly turn them on again using means that you are able to find around the house and with relative ease :) After that, emotional and spiritual support will be liberally applied.

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Answer 6: You are exhibiting some specific traits of a particular temperament type. Seek out a counselor who provides NCCA temperament therapy and discover the joy of being you -- God loves you as you are!

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Answer 7: That is intense. Depression is a liar. Sometimes depression places these glasses over our eyes, these dark sunglasses that change how we see things. Depression tells us things like "you're worthless" "no one likes you" "don't worry about doing anything." And it is so easy for us to listen and to be tricked into thinking that just because we feel something means it is true. Please know that even if you are feeling worthless right now, that doesn't mean you are worthless. The first step to working through this is recognizing what is going on. Recognizing when depression is telling you the same story (ie; being worthless) with different words (ie worthless here, worthless there) and making an effort to talk back. While I can not give you a diagnosis of depression, reading what you are going through, it sounds like you might need help to get back on track. Seeing a counselor can open an entirely new option up wherein someone who is not involved in your life can help you without judgement and with an objective perspective. This can do wonders in unwrapping these kinds of thoughts. Wishing you the absolute best!

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Answer 8: It sounds like you may be putting yourself last. You wrote that you want to fix your issues but never get around to it. I wonder how you are spending your mental and physical energy. Are you spending time taking care of and doing for others? I also wonder where the thoughts and feelings of being worthless are coming from - are you around people who treat you poorly or are hurtful? Or do you feel it is more of a worry you have but aren't really sure how others feel? It may be helpful to talk to someone about your feelings - a counselor perhaps - to clarify your feelings and move forward from se that are hurting you.

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Answer 9: It must be really difficult to experience what your going through right now. It takes a lot of courage to reach out. It sounds like you want to get better, but perhaps need some help to get over the hump. Many of the symptoms you have described are consistent with a person who is dealing with depression. Depression is a treatable condition. Typically, if these symptoms have persisted for more than two weeks, then it is a good idea to seek professional help. Someone who is trained in dealing with depression. Initially, a comprehensive assessment would be completed to rule out any other causes for your symptoms and to determine the exact nature of your presenting concern. Then, in collaboration with one another, a tailored treatment plan would be developed, focusing on how to best help you reach your goals. The good news is that there is hope for getting better! You don't have to do it alone. Allow me to be your ally in healing.

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Answer 10: People who feel worthless were, in one way or another, were told that they are worthless. This is the lie that they are living with. The work of therapy is to help people see their true good selves. This gives them self esteem.

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Answer 11: I'm sorry to hear you're feeling this intense emotion of worthlessness. I'm glad to hear this has not reached the point of suicidal ideation; however, it does sound like you could use some additional support right now. I would recommend seeking out counseling to help you challenge the negative beliefs you have about yourself. Although many types of therapy would be helpful, cognitive-behavioral therapy has been shown to be a good approach for this type of struggle. A CBT therapist can help you identify your negative thoughts and beliefs, figure out the ways your thoughts are being distorted (for example, all-or-nothing thinking, or discounting the positives about yourself), and reframe your thoughts to be more positive. You might also consider EMDR therapy, which helps the brain reprocess traumatic or distressing memories and helps you move forward with more positive beliefs about yourself. Best wishes!

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Answer 12: It sounds like you may be struggling with depression. Depression can make you feel overwhelmed and paralyzed to change. I would suggest that you connect with a provider who can help you get to the root of where the worthlessness is coming from and help you develop a plan for recovery. In the meantime, small steps can go a long way. Self-care interventions such as journaling your feelings, mindfulness meditation, and regular exercise are all helpful to reconnecting with the present moment and gaining internal motivation. Focusing on one day at a time and bringing your thoughts back to the present can also be beneficial. There is hope!

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Answer 13: I'm glad you are interested in changing your feelings of worthlessness. Visiting your doctor is a great first step to address your lack of sleep. First, you want to make sure that you are physically healthy and that there isn't a physical condition causing your problem with sleep. Changing your feelings is something that is difficult to do, especially on your own. Make sure that you have someone you can trust and you can talk to about how you feel. This can be a friend or a family member. If you find that there isn't anyone you would feel comfortable talking to about this issue, find a therapist close to you who can help. One activity that people have found helpful in feeling better about themselves is keeping a gratitude journal. You can do this by journaling daily about the things that you are grateful for. There is no

right or wrong way of doing this, as long as you focus your journal entries on the things you are grateful for in life.

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Answer 14: You have

several things going on here. The sleep should be addressed with a primary care physician to rule out any physical issues. Sleep is the big reset and allows us to function in the day. What happens during a depression is that our thoughts race and it is as though our "brain won't shut off." Medication can help with this. I also use a Pranayama yoga breathing technique called the four fold breath which has great usefulness for relaxing us and often does work quite well with allowing us to sleep.. You can read about it here:

<https://billeavitttherapy.com/breathing-techniques-the-four-fold-breath/>Your thoughts on feeling worthless to everyone fall under a heading of thinking error in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) known as overgeneralization. In CBT thoughts lead to emotions, so we are going to pick the statement apart and then reframe it. First list

the evidence that contradicts the thought. Has anyone in the past made positive comments toward you? This might be hard to recall if we are in a rut, but at some point in life we frequently have had some positives expressed towards us by others. "Everyone" is an absolute. The

specifics on why you are thinking this need to be addressed. How are you arriving at this conclusion? There may be specific people that we want more validation from. Or specific people might have made offhand hurtful comments, (such as a family member, teacher or co-worker) but if I extrapolate that to a global and think that everyone thinks I am worthless, that thought is not rooted in facts.

What are

the Pros and Cons of thinking this way? What are the Benefits and Costs? There are very little pros or benefits to thinking this way. It's just going to continue to tear you down and make you feel bad. So can we reframe the thought about the situation? Is there another way of looking at the situation? Again, we need the specifics on how you are arriving at this conclusion, and a one on one therapist can definitely help you with this, but the thinking that you are using to arrive at the conclusion needs to be re-cast into a more helpful mindset.

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Answer 15: Hello, you sound like you have so much on your mind! I am relieved to hear that you have never tried or have contemplated suicide, but not being able to sleep, feeling worthless, and like you shouldn't be here are big issues that need addressing. Please get around to counseling. Having someone to listen to you is a gift to yourself. You deserve the help of someone helping you change your feelings of worthlessness. You have not been able to do this alone. It's time to reach out for help. You can do this! Best to you!

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Answer 16: It sounds like you are having some pretty severe depression. Depression can cause insomnia, and make a person focus on their own perceptions that they are "worthless". It is important to remember that other people may not truly perceive you as worthless. This is the depression talking. I

think that it is extremely important when you are this depressed, to sit down and write down some positives about yourself. What are your strengths? What are some positive things that you have done in your life? It concerns me that you are having suicidal thoughts. It sounds like now is the time to act on the idea of getting some help for yourself. If you feel like you might actually take your life, I would recommend that you go to a hospital emergency room, or a mental health crisis clinic right away to get some help. The most important thing right now is to keep yourself safe. If you are feeling like you are not going to hurt yourself despite your suicidal thoughts, I would recommend that you focus on finding a therapist as soon as possible. I don't know what your situation is in terms of insurance. The back of your insurance card should inform you how to obtain mental health services. There are also low cost services available with such places as Catholic Charities, and others. Your local county mental health agency should be able to refer you to some appropriate places. Good luck. Remember to identify your strengths, and the good things about yourself. Marie

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Answer 17: You can, for sure... and the first step is to believe you are worthy TO YOURSELF.

Recognizing you are in a quest is already a big first step. Taking the time to start figuring out who you are is definitely the next... do so with SELF COMPASSION and kindness. Know this is a process and just look forward for what you might find. I do recommend you find someone to talk to (there are many options out there that can fit the situation you are in), and I also recommend you start by giving yourself the importance to invest some time and effort in this quest. YOU DESERVE IT. There are some excellent TED Talks you can google, great books you can read, or even joining a yoga practice, team or some kind of hobby may help. Anything that shows yourself you are worthy of this effort. Have patience and start!!!! the answer is out there waiting for you. Asking these questions already set you on the right path.

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Answer 18: Oftentimes we can change our feelings about ourselves by building a better relationship with ourself. It sounds like there is a very critical aspect of your self that is alive and taking over. Sometimes when we are stuck it is because a part of ourselves, a way that perhaps we learned to cope with difficult situations earlier in our lives, has decided to run the show. Like a highly critical part that may actually be desperately attempting to protect us from a past hurt. Slowing down and even forming a relationship with this critical internal part will help you get some space from it. When we can begin to observe parts of ourselves, be curious about them, get to know them like a new friend, then we have room for other ways of being. Beginning therapy could be a great way to change this feeling of worthlessness. Beginning to build a better relationship and understanding of yourself will deeply influence the relationships around you. This first step may feel hard, to reach out to someone, and it could be the beginning step to a path of radically shifting your relationship with yourself and others in your life.

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Answer 19: Feelings of worthlessness often originate from what you learned about yourself when you were young. Improving your self esteem needs focus on that original message from parents, teachers or siblings that may be suppressed. Most of us need help to uncover the "lie" because you were born valuable!

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Answer 20: The feeling of being worthless is caused by your inside being not matching your outside result. Your comparison to others and you thinking you need to be someone other than who you are. You are not worthless. No one is worthless. You need to find your worth and not let yourself talk yourself out of

the good you find in yourself. I hope these words resonate with you and that you start looking for your worth even if it's as simple as I am able to get out of bed and call someone and make a joke.

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Answer 21: Hi there, I'm sorry you're feeling this way. Let me see if I can guide you in the right direction. Often when I talk to my clients about feelings of worthlessness we start with a little bit of self-exploration. We start with noticing. Start to notice when these feelings come up for you. Is there a particular time of day, a specific person who brings it out, a phrase you hear? Just start to notice. Usually it's tied to something but it may take a while to figure out what that something/someone is. Try to be patient. Next we start to explore. When did these feelings start? Where do you think they come from? Is there something - a statement - perhaps that repeats in your head over and over again? If so, whose voice is it? These are difficult questions, and just a few of them, so take your time answering them. (We usually do it over a few sessions.) It might even be helpful to write them down somewhere. If you have a journal that would be a great place as research has shown that our brain works differently when we put pen to paper versus typing on a computer. Now comes the good news. Our brains are able to rewire themselves. This allows us to change habits we don't want as well as statements we say to ourselves that are no longer serving us. The next step is to select an ally. Someone who is or has been in your corner, someone who is always rooting for you. If you don't have someone like that, that's ok - a lot of us don't - you can just make someone up. Close your eyes and try to describe that person in great detail from the way they look to the way they act to the way they sound. Now, pick a phrase you would like that person to say to you whenever you start to think that you're worthless. Something that will help you feel better about yourself - a characteristic, a skill, a great joke you tell, a physical attribute. This also takes time and may involve you asking for help from someone who knows you. Once you have all of that together - the noticing, answers from where these feelings and statement(s) come from, your ally, your new statement, you can try to put it altogether. When the feelings come up, notice what is bringing them up and then call upon your ally to try to change the statement in your head from the self-defeating one to the more positive, uplifting one. I hope this was helpful. Again, I do this with my clients over quite a few weeks, if not months, and I am there with them the whole time. It is quite an involved process and can bring up a lot of very difficult feeling/memories. If at any point you find it too hard to go at alone, please seek help. If you take anything away from this reply, know that there is help out there and that it is possible to change the way you feel.

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Answer 22: I am sorry you are feeling this way. We all have narratives that we say to ourselves whether it is valid or not. In your case it would be beneficial to explore when and how this belief began and rewrite your story. There are different ways to explore and rewrite. This process requires commitment, self-reflection and courage.

Question 23: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 23: Let me start by saying there are never too many concerns that you can bring into counselling. In fact, most people who come to see me for counselling have more than one issue they would like to work on in psychotherapy and most times these are all interconnected. In counselling, we work together, collaboratively, to figure out which issues you would like to address first and then together we develop an individualized plan of care. Basically, it's like a road map of where you want to go, how are you going to get there, looking at stopovers, some scenic routes others possibly not so scenic, however, necessary. Of course, these plans can also change due to internal (what we have control over like our thoughts, feelings and behaviours) or external reasons (those things that are outside our control). I would encourage you to take the next step and reach out to a professional you can trust and build rapport with by co-journeying through whatever concerns you have by examining what has been working so far as you have learned to

cope with some of your issues like insomnia, depression and anxiety, as well as being a breast cancer survivor. Then to help you by developing new coping strategies. Psychotherapy can be such a powerful tool to help you get to where it is you want to be. I know you can do it and you will see first-hand how psychotherapy will help you to move past these points in your life where you are feeling stuck. I like to quote Nike where their motto is, "just do it." You can do it.

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Answer 24: It is never too late to get help and begin making significant changes and improvements in your life. The right time is when you feel ready and open to change. Sometimes when we have a history of trauma, like sexual abuse, the impact of that trauma can affect many areas of our lives as adults.

Working with a therapist who specializes in trauma is a great way to begin developing skills to manage present day life, learn to regulate your emotions and nervous system when you become triggered, and then in a safe environment have the opportunity to process past traumas so you can live your present life with more ease and joy. People can and do recover from the impacts of trauma at any stage in their life.

It is never too late and you can feel better

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Answer 25: You have been through so much and it sounds like you have a lot of things that have compiled over the years. Regardless of the struggles you have been through, you do not have too many issues for counseling. Many times when someone starts out their counseling and healing journey, there are multiple things they would like to address and work on. If you decide to start counseling, you and your therapist can decide collaboratively what you would like to process and work on first. Be sure to express to your counselor if any of the above experiences you've been through is causing a lot of distress, as many times the first things addressed are the ones that are presently affecting your life or you emotionally. Often times when we experience negative situations in our life, but do not address them, they bottle up inside us and can manifest in other ways, such as depression or even physical symptoms like IBS or neck pain. Counseling can give these bottled up emotions and situations a release. Given the situation you shared, not only do I not think that you have too many issues for counseling, but believe that you will be a great candidate and can get a lot from it.

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Answer 26: Absolutely not. I strongly recommend working on one issue/need at a time. In therapy you will set smart goals and objectives that will help you reach your goals. I see you as a survivor and not a victim. Best wishes to you.

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Answer 27: Absolutely not! In fact, most people have many issues, A lot lot of the issues you are describing commonly go hand in hand (in "therapy speak" we call it co-morbid conditions) I would venture that most of the feelings you are struggling with stem from your early trauma. You would benefit tremendously from counseling! A good therapist will develop a treatment plan that addresses all of your needs. With help you could definitely live a happy life without all of your anxiety and depression getting in the way!

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Answer 28: This is a great question! I personally don't believe that any client could ever have too many

issues for counseling. In fact, that type of thinking may be stopping you from seeking counseling, so it may be hindering you from getting the help you need. In fact, all of what you described points to the importance of you seeking help in order to cope with the many challenges in your life. If you seek counseling, it will be important for you to understand that you may need to remain in counseling for a sustained period of time in order to work through each of these issues. All of these issues won't be able to be solved right away or in a brief period of time. Counseling will take commitment and hard work, but it is possible for you to recover and heal from all of the issues you described. Many clients come into counseling with numerous issues rather than just one particular thing. Most of the time, the issues relate to and exacerbate each other. We call these "comorbid" conditions, which means that two or more mental health problems exist at one time. A lot of the times, when you start to work on one issue, the other issues get better as a result. I encourage you to find a professional therapist that can help you learn how to cope with all of the mental health difficulties that you described. You deserve the help just as much as anyone else.

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Answer 29: Hi! Many people begin their therapeutic journey with histories just like yours and experience transformative shifts in their quality of life. I hope you are able to find a counselor you feel comfortable working with and do the work if you feel called. Best of luck on your journey!

Question 30: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 30: Absolutely not. It sounds like you have significant trauma and it will continue to impact your depression until it is dealt with. Everybody has issues, though some more traumatic than others yet it is best to just start somewhere. I would encourage you to begin counseling and work through some of your history at your own pace in order to begin to impact and reduce your depressive symptoms.

Question 31: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 31: Most clients have many issues that need working out. It is normal to have many events in our lives that trouble us and remain with us without counseling help. The right type of counsellor will help you focus on the main and most troubling issue you have first and work your way through all that you are managing step by step, goal by goal. Sometimes, working on one issue helps to bring other issues to light in the context of your main problem. This can help you resolve some other issues that are connected. Look for someone with experience and specialty in your most pressing issue...even though you have had breast cancer, you may find that grief from your past is more troubling. Then you would look for a bereavement or grief specialist.

Question 32: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 32: Just go! You start with the most prevalent issue by talking with your therapist. Healing one issue can have a ripple effect and heal other issues as well.

Question 33: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 33: There is no such thing as too many issues for counseling. Many issues are often interrelated and can all be worked on with some time and patience.

Question 34: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 34: Hi, people who have only a few issues and people who have several issues are perfect for therapy. There is no such thing as having too many problems for therapy. Therapy is great because it will help you process all that you are going through, heal from past and present pain, and gain clarity.

Question 35: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 35: Yeah, you might :)At least, it certainly feels like that, I bet...Not to mention that most counselors out there might generally feel overwhelmed with a "case" with so many problems. And, so, you will slog along week-to-week with gradual improvements occurring as she slowly does her best to chip away...The real issue is that these folks don't yet comprehend the integrative nature of each of these subjects and how generally simple it is to understand them, and then eradicate them.

Question 36: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 36: It could be said that you might be the perfect candidate for counseling! No one is beyond hope, and someone brave enough to be honest regarding their struggles, with the intention of reaching out for help is certainly a person a qualified counselor would be happy to assist. You may want to do some research on therapists in your local area who specialize in mind-body connection, or one of the struggles you have acknowledged in your post, in order to find a therapist that is best suited to meet your needs. Good luck on your search, and remember that the world is a better place with you in it.

Question 37: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 37: No, there are never too many issues to address in counseling. Therapy would begin by prioritizing what you feel needs to be addressed first. As one area improves, such as processing history of abuse you are likely to see improvement in other areas of your life...like sleeping better.

Question 38: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 38: Firstly, I would like to say how amazing that you have been able to live through breast cancer, sexual abuse as well as your depression and anxiety. You are stronger than you may believe at this moment for being able to continue to grow and live through these experiences. Take a moment to acknowledge your strength and know that this strength will be an asset during the therapeutic process that you will be able to tap into to find increased self esteem and more strength to address the concerns you are having. There are never too many concerns to address in therapy sessions. I hope you can find a great therapist who you can trust to listen and work with you to identify and address the most concerning issues first. Once you begin to do this you may find an alleviation of symptoms and feelings which could allow you to grow your capacity to manage difficult feelings and situations and address additional concerns. Before you even realize it the issues you are having will begin to feel more manageable.

Question 39: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 39: Absolutely not! It is never too much. The most important thing is that you are reaching out to get help. Therapy helps you to develop healthier coping strategies and that can help reduce the anxiety and depression as well as improve your sleep. This can all be done at a pace that is best for you. Your therapist can help you process all of this in a safe and supportive space.

Question 40: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have

anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 40: No, it is natural for us to have a number of issues going on if we don't address the concerns we have in our lives. Seeking counseling can assist you in working on these issues individually as well as ways in which they intersect and impact each other.

Question 41: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 41: The most direct answer is no. I would venture to guess that several of the things you are feeling (symptoms) are connected. I would recommend a trauma counselor. You have several strengths (resources) that you are able to pull from and I would encourage you to focus on them as you deal with the issues you have placed on the back burner for so long. Sometimes people are afraid to address things because they feel or believe that they won't be able to handle it. Compare it to a tornado. The storm has passed, but you are still in hiding for fear of the aftermath (the mess left behind). A good therapist is like a personal organizer to help you.

Question 42: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 42: It's not really a question of whether you have too many issues for counseling but more what would you like to work on in counseling? You control the direction of sessions and depending on how you're feeling in a particular day can predict what direction that session takes. If you want to work on all the issues you've listed it will just take some dedication on your part to see through the counseling long enough to find a resolution to each of the issues that is satisfactory to you. You work at your own pace in counseling and it does seem like you may be overwhelmed with the ever-growing list. But you may just be in search of self improvement and making yourself better, which is a great thing. It seems as though you may need some form of resolution to what has happened in the past and to work through the trauma you have experienced. That may be the base of your counseling needs in which self esteem and depression/anxiety may fall underneath it as well. If you want to start counseling don't let what you need to work on overwhelm you. Find the counselor that best fits with you and together you both can tackle any issue.

Question 43: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 43: A person never has "too many" issues to address in counseling. Participating in counseling with a licensed professional offers a safe place and therapeutic relationship where healing can occur. A trained therapist can help a person unpack and process past and/or current wounds (or events) which may negatively impact day to day living. They can also help make sense of thoughts and emotions that sometimes feel overwhelming and confusing. If you want to experience more emotional freedom and gain some tools to help understand and cope with depression and anxiety, I'd encourage you to schedule an appointment with a therapist in your area.

Question 44: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 44: There is no such things as "too many issues". Many of the issues cited here are connected. For example, in this case working on the sexual abuse will possibly address the depression, the anxiety, the self esteem. There may be some grief to process around the impact of the cancer. Our body, mind and spirit are parts of one system. They are interconnected. Addressing these issue are important so you can be relieved of the burden and feel more spontaneous and enjoy life even more.

Question 45: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 45: Of course not. Counseling is a process, whereby you and your therapist will help you create goals- starting with issues that are most pressing and interfering with your daily functioning. When anxiety and daily stress is more manageable then you and your therapist can examine more deep rooted or more chronic issues.

Question 46: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 46: You definitely don't have too many issues for counseling. In fact, counseling can help you understand how most of these things can be related to one another. For example, insomnia, depression, low self-esteem and anxiety are very common to experience after a traumatic event or events. Once you begin to work through processing these life altering events that you have experienced, the hope is that you would see a decrease in your other symptoms.

Question 47: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 47: You absolutely do not have too many issues for counselling. The fact that you are wanting to seek help is commendable and you should feel proud of yourself for reaching out for support. I know from my experience working with clients that some may say they have only one issue but when we explore it turns out they have many things that they want to discuss that are of equal importance. I believe that you deserve to feel happy, at ease and also get restful sleep amongst other things. Please do not feel hesitant because the fact that you know what you want to discuss and work on is amazing. You know the directions you want to go and the therapist just needs to help you get there. I suggest sitting down and making a list of what you want to discuss as well as what you feel is more important to address first. Perhaps the therapist can help you with that as well.

Question 48: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 48: Thank you for sharing your question. I imagine it feels overwhelming and discouraging at times if you feel like there are too many issues to address in a counseling session. I would encourage you to share these concerns with a counselor because a counselor can help you organize the concerns into a list of specific goals. For example, a list of goals may look similar to this:1. "I will learn about the effects of medication on the symptoms of depression and anxiety."2. "I will learn about the factors that affect insomnia."3. "I will learn about resources and support groups in my local area to help me cope with my traumatic experiences."4. "I will practice self-care exercises each day and write about my thoughts and feelings in a journal so I can measure whether or not I'm making progress."This is an example of some of the possible goals a counselor can help you work toward each week. Working toward a specific goal can lead to a feeling of accomplishment once you've completed it, and this may have a positive impact on your self-esteem. I hope this information helps, and I wish you all the best!

Question 49: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 49: There are never too many issues in living. In a way we take on too many issues at one time. Then we become over whelmed with "anxiety and depression." A skillful, caring therapist will help you find a place to start and deal with one issue at a time. when this helps the other issues. Then the other issues become more manageable. I gain. confidence I can take on life better and, importantly , enjoy living life more. My best to you. Dr. Spencer

Question 50: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 50: There are never "too many issues" to be addressed in therapy. Most people come in with multiple issues they want to address. The wonderful thing about therapy, is that often, as one or more significant issues begin to change and improve- the lead naturally without much effort to improvements in the other areas. (For example, as you begin to address trauma and betrayal from you past, you may find that the insomnia improves). Your therapist, with you input and direction, can help you to prioritize which problem areas to target first.

Question 51: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 51: You can be helped. Many of the people I see have multiple issues. These issues are often linked so that helping one issue will positively help the other issues.

Question 52: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 52: The short answer is: absolutely not! The longer answer is that it might take some time to process all of the issues, and it may feel quite "muddy" in the issues for a lot longer than is tolerable (which is why counseling may have been postponed to begin with for you.) It's important to be realistic when entering counseling of any sort, and that the therapist be realistic with you about what you might be able to expect working with that person (I use the words "might be able to expect" because therapy experiences can vary.) But that not having counseling about trauma that you have experienced much earlier in your life can play a significant role in the process and how long that process could take to unpack all that may have been buried over time. It might also be helpful in counseling to work with the therapist on figuring out where to begin, but to also manage the feelings of being overwhelmed that may make it hard to continue to show up and do the work required, week in and week out. It isn't easy work trying to process past pain that you experienced, and so consistent practice of self-care, including leaning on support systems outside of therapy, is key.

Question 53: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 53: Usually people who struggle with depression also have symptoms of anxiety. These symptoms come about as a result of underlying causes. The obstacles you have been overcoming such as abuse, cancer and insomnia likely bring about similar feelings and emotions in you which affect your self-esteem. Counseling is meant to support people who have layers of difficulties. We see the difficulties as layers to an onion, peeling away the many layers.

Question 54: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 54: Often times when an individual begins the counseling process it is revealed that there is more than one thing going on. When we think about how much is wrong, it can be overwhelming and we may not know where to even start. Counseling can provide guidance to help you to begin working toward healing in a way that is most helpful for you to reach your goals.

Question 55: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 55: It is very common for people to have multiple issues that they want to (and need to) address in counseling. I have had clients ask that same question and through more exploration, there is often an underlying fear that they "can't be helped" or that they will "be too much for their therapist." I don't know if any of this rings true for you. But, most people have more than one problem in their lives and more often than not, people have numerous significant stressors in their lives. Let's face it, life can be complicated! Therapists are completely ready and equipped to handle all of the issues small or large that a client

presents in session. Most therapists over the first couple of sessions will help you prioritize the issues you are facing so that you start addressing the issues that are causing you the most distress. You can never have too many issues to address in counseling. All of the issues you mention above can be successfully worked through in counseling.

Question 56: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 56: Absolutely not! When we have the courage to accept the challenge to address whatever is causing us pain, the solutions often generalize to many, if not all of our symptoms. I would suggest that unresolved trauma from sexual abuse is likely a primary contributing factor. However, it is important that you first build a trusting relationship with a therapist experienced in trauma treatment as this is an area of specialty that not all therapists are skilled in treating. Choosing one issue to work on, such as anxiety or depressive symptoms, and starting there will allow you the opportunity to get to know your therapist, learn coping skills for managing distressing symptoms, and establish emotional safety before jumping into trauma work.

Question 57: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 57: Hello there, No one has too many issues to address in counseling. Once you start counseling, your therapist will help you identify which issues to start working on first and which are causing you the most distress. Once you and your therapist prioritize your concerns, you can start to address each concern, starting with the one causing the most distress for you.

Question 58: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 58: It sounds like you are feeling pretty overwhelmed. But you are also a survivor and have the benefit of a long, stable marriage. You do not have too many issues to address in counseling. A good therapist will help you to prioritize your goals into smaller objectives and focus in on what's most pressing for you to address first in treatment.

Question 59: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 59: Hello! You may have heard the saying that counseling is like peeling the layers of an onion. Whether a person comes to therapy with many issues on their heart and mind or whether he/she comes with something specific, one issue leads to another. Please don't feel as though you have too many issues. You are important and worthy. On the plus side, you are a breast cancer survivor and have a wonderful marriage! Seek the help that you deserve.

Question 60: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 60: You do not have too many issues to address in counseling. And your perseverance will serve you well if you choose to engage in therapy. The trauma and medical event you experienced topped off with chronic sleepless nights would lead to feelings of depression for many. The emotional reaction you've had to these experiences sounds normal albeit troublesome and I would imagine intensely painful at times as well. Therapy can help prioritize what is the most impactful issue you are grappling with. I find in therapy that when the central issue is revealed, understood, processed, and understood again in its current context, many other areas of the person's internal experience improve. It sounds as though something has prevented you from seeking help from a counselor in the past, and it sounds as though you are more seriously considering it now. Therapy helps and it can help you when you're ready.

Question 61: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer

survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 61: Thank you for sharing your history. You do not have too many issues to address in counseling. It will help to prioritize what you would like to work on first in therapy. Your therapist will create a treatment plan with you, which can always be changed while working together. Therapy is a process in working towards your best life, and you deserve it.

Question 62: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 62: Not at all! Whatever issues you might have you can bring to the therapy room. Remember therapy is about YOU, not your therapist. You bring whatever you need to bring to the table. Keep in mind these issues are likely related. Remember you are a holistic being, more than just the sum of the parts. Just like any system, when you move something in one area, things start changing in other areas as well. Talk to your therapist to decide goals for counseling and establish priorities, and ENJOY THE RIDE! Growing, flourishing, and finally letting go of what hurts can be a beautiful and exciting process.

Question 63: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 63: You absolutely do not have "too many issues" for counseling. Your reaching out to ask this question shows you have a resilient spirit. Also, your happy marriage can be a support and strength to you as you embark on a counseling journey. I would recommend that you find a counselor who specializes in trauma, sexual trauma and/or EMDR (a type of therapy that is proven to have a strong impact on healing from trauma). Good luck!

Question 64: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 64: I don't think you have too many issues for counseling. If a client came to me for help with the same issues that you have listed here I would first want them to meet with their doctor to get a physical to rule out any biological causes to your depression, anxiety, and insomnia. I would work with you on deciding which of these issues to tackle first. I usually suggest starting with the issue that is easiest. Reading through your symptoms I might choose anxiety to start with since you are in the early stages of it. I like to give my client skills they can use right away, so I would focus on teaching you breathing exercises to manage the anxiety as well as cognitive restructuring so that when an anxious thought pops up you can talk yourself through it. Once you felt that you had some control over the anxiety I'd start to work on some of your other concerns, but I would seek your input on what you felt like might be good to work on next. My gut is that some of these issues would be resolved as you worked on others. For example as you worked on your anxiety and began to process your trauma and as you began to work on self care and getting more sleep - your self esteem would probably improve. I encourage you to meet with a therapist and ask them how they might be able to help you. These are just some thoughts that came up for me on how I might help someone with the same or similar symptoms.

Question 65: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 65: The way it goes is that all your issues are connected. Once you work on one issue it will have a positive effect on all areas. Slowly each issue is addressed and actually less issues will need to be addressed directly since resolving one helps your overall wellness. So no, you do not have too many issues. Don't give up. Get help now and see how your life can change for the better.

Question 66: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 66: I think this is a very common question that people who have never been to counseling before have. There is a lot of anxiety in going to counseling for the first time. This is normal. In answer to your question, the answer is an absolute NO! An important thing to remember about getting counseling is that it is a courageous first step towards hope and healing. Getting help is like training to run a marathon, it is not a sprint. You have shared a lot of issues that you are dealing with from your past, that are now negatively impacting your present, but I believe that in getting the right kind of help and support, none of them are impossible to overcome. Part of the therapeutic process is defining and prioritizing therapy goals. In collaboration with you, as a client, a therapist is there to help you with this process in determining what you would like to work on first. Not getting counseling, based on the history you have shared, has the potential to put you more at risk for mental and physical health issues. You are already seeing this happen as you begin to experience new symptoms, namely your anxiety. In therapy, you will gain understanding and insight, as well as learn skills and strategies to manage the symptoms you are experiencing. In conclusion, I would encourage you to reach out to a licensed counselor who has experience in treating trauma, grief/loss and will address shame. These are three areas that I have found that gets to the core issues that are contributing to your depression and anxiety. I believe you can get the help you need to find hope and healing. Best of luck to you!

Question 67: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 67: Hello, I'm so glad you decided to take the first step in opening a conversation first. Deciding to go to therapy can sometimes be difficult for some, but with the right therapist, healing is possible and obtainable, even with what you've described. To answer your question, no you do not have too many issues to go to counseling. You've been through a lot and have been strong and at times it's helpful to have someone else to help you through it. What I would say is to be sure and find a therapist who is experienced in sexual abuse and trauma overall. But you absolutely do not have too many issues for counseling. Please feel free to ask any other questions you may have regarding your situation and I hope you find the therapist you're looking for, there are many great ones out there. Many of the issues you're experiencing may be tied together from the trauma. Best Wishes. Laura Cassity, LMSW, LMHC

Question 68: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 68: Not at all my dear. Human beings are complex creatures, and in my opinion, our issues interconnect in a very nuanced web between our levels of being (for example, mind, body, and spirit). Everything you bring up affects all three. The truly beautiful thing about the human body is that when you begin to work on one, the others improve as well! I would encourage you to seek out a counselor who's style and approach speaks to you and start with whichever issue feels most pressing to you. A skilled therapist will flow with you at your own pace and make recommendations to other professionals (e.g., physicians, holistic practitioners, EMDR specialists for trauma etc) as needed to complement the psychotherapy work you're doing with him or her to help you find the total healing you seek. I wish you well on your journey!

Question 69: I have so many issues to address. I have a history of sexual abuse, I'm a breast cancer survivor and I am a lifetime insomniac. I have a long history of depression and I'm beginning to have anxiety. I have low self esteem but I've been happily married for almost 35 years.

I've never had counseling about any of this. Do I have too many issues to address in counseling?

Answer 69: Everyone has topics to discuss when they start therapy. There is no correct number of topics. Sometimes people go to therapy for one specific area of their life. Not everyone has the time or interest to utilize therapy just when a significant topic arises in their life. Since you are one person, no matter how many or few topics you would like to address in therapy, all the topics relate to you. Possibly the result of your therapy will be more transformational than if you talked only on one topic. Lucky you, to be on the cusp of clearing and resolving many vulnerabilities at once. You will feel brand new by the time you finish your therapy work!

Question 70: I have been feeling more and more down for over a month. I have started having trouble

sleeping due to panic attacks, but they are almost never triggered by something that I know of.

Answer 70: Answers about our inner lives are most successfully reached from a sense of feeling grounded in oneself. First step is to accept your nervousness and restless sleep. As often as possible, sleep during daytimes in order for your body to catch up on its need for rest. Accept too about feeling down. It is normal to feel down once in a while. From this place of self-acceptance, trust any answers which come up to your mind. Often answers about complicated topics come in small pieces, not all at once as a whole unit. Also, your description about panic attacks is also completely normal. They often arise unrelated to particular conditions at a given moment. They are a healthy symptom your body is trying to expel bad feelings and does this by having the anxiety erupt at times. So, self-acceptance, tolerance of being on a process of clearing out worn out emotional clutter, and sleep at odd times if possible, are all ways to stabilize yourself, which will also feel calm and good!

Question 71: I have been feeling more and more down for over a month. I have started having trouble sleeping due to panic attacks, but they are almost never triggered by something that I know of.

Answer 71: It could be really helpful to see a counselor/therapist about your increasing depression/panic symptoms. Finding out the cause of depression/anxiety isn't always as straightforward as it seems, since both issues tend to become patterns we engage in rather than solely related to a specific trigger/reason. For example, if I am feeling down about a particular circumstance in my life, then I start seeing life through this lens of feeling down, and typically I'll start to see a lot more that I get down about, and it can really build very quickly on itself. Same with anxiety. Obviously, this is a very simplified example and it can be very difficult to see how the pattern is maintained, but that's where working with a counselor/therapist comes in. I would be curious about whether you can start to notice the initial sensations of panic, and if you can (through the panic attack) continue to maintain awareness of the actual physical sensations. Even better if you can talk yourself through the sensations you're feeling - such as saying to yourself "Okay, I'm breathing really rapidly, and my heart is racing, now my palms are sweaty and my chest is feeling really tight..." Reminding yourself that it's just your body's reaction to stress, and while it might be overreacting right now, you're okay and eventually it will go away. I highly recommend the SAM for Anxiety Management app for the anxiety piece, and I wouldn't be surprised if addressing the anxiety helped to address some of the depression too.

Question 72: I'm facing severe depression and anxiety and I just feel like I'm going through a lot. This really distracts me and I can't get my mind off the things that are bothering me. How do I overcome this anxiety and depression?

Answer 72: Have you used meditation or hypnosis? Relaxing the mind and connecting with your true self is a great way to calm your thoughts and get to peace and calm. Hypnosis and meditation have helped a lot of people with anxiety and depression. Google hypnotherapists near me or write for a while about what is going on.

Question 73: I'm facing severe depression and anxiety and I just feel like I'm going through a lot. This really distracts me and I can't get my mind off the things that are bothering me. How do I overcome this anxiety and depression?

Answer 73: Working with a great therapist who can help you learn ways to cope might be beneficial to you. Sometimes just the act of being able to talk about things with a nonjudgmental person helps take some of the burden off of you. A therapist can help you change your thought patterns and teach you coping skills to reduce your symptoms.

Question 74: I'm facing severe depression and anxiety and I just feel like I'm going through a lot. This really distracts me and I can't get my mind off the things that are bothering me. How do I overcome this anxiety and depression?

Answer 74: Anxiety and depression is caused by ineffective functioning of the adrenals, kidneys, and the other systems that affects. A basic protocol of natural health makes quick work of it (about 2-3 months-ish; maybe shorter with a good constitution, in your body) :)

Question 75: I'm facing severe depression and anxiety and I just feel like I'm going through a lot. This really distracts me and I can't get my mind off the things that are bothering me. How do I overcome this anxiety and depression?

Answer 75: Meditation may be able to assist you in lowering your anxiety and depressive symptoms. Meditation...Breaks Anxious Thought Patterns A common symptom of anxiety is having racing negative and obsessive thoughts that create a vicious cycle of worry within your mind. Meditation can reduce rumination and the break negative thought patterns by increasing your control over random

unwanted thoughts and decreasing your tendency to worry by altering the way your brain responds to stress. For example, instead of following your negative thought down the rabbit hole, you learn to view your thoughts differently and recognize it for what it is – a thought – and let it go. Thank goodness to neuroplasticity and your brain's endless capacity to change! Balances Brain Chemicals Anxiety is brought on by various factors (personality type, emotional trauma, genes, prolonged exposure to stress...) and sometimes causes an imbalance of chemicals within the brain (GABA and serotonin). A meditation practice can assist in restoring the balance of neurotransmitters within the brain by increasing GABA (neurotransmitter connected to feeling happy and relaxed) and serotonin (another neurotransmitter connected to being happy) and decreasing cortisol (stress hormone). Builds A Healthier Brain Based on research and scans, individuals who have a regular meditation practice show dramatically larger amounts of gray matter, the volume of the hippocampus, thickness of the cortex, increased blood flow to the brain, improved neural connections between various parts of the brain and decreased size of the amygdala (controls autonomic responses associated with fear, arousal, and emotional stimulation). View full article here: <https://www.therapybyshannon.com/blog-2/2019/4/16/meditate-to-lower-anxiety-levels>

Question 76: I'm facing severe depression and anxiety and I just feel like I'm going through a lot. This really distracts me and I can't get my mind off the things that are bothering me. How do I overcome this anxiety and depression?

Answer 76: Anxiety and depression are often linked. I don't consider them as diseases. Depression is a symptom of deep hurts to the sense of self that leaves a person feeling shamed. Anxiety is a symptom of not being given the proper emotional resources to handle the problems of life. It is also the result of being taught that life is a dangerous place that can't be managed.

Question 77: I'm facing severe depression and anxiety and I just feel like I'm going through a lot. This really distracts me and I can't get my mind off the things that are bothering me. How do I overcome this anxiety and depression?

Answer 77: Depression and anxiety can be disconcerting and disruptive to our lives in many ways. I am sorry that you are suffering so much. Depression and anxiety can arise due to experiences, genetics or a combination of both. I like for my clients look at their issues as whole persons so I would also recommend these tips: Physical: regular exercise, healthy balanced diet, rest and sleep Mental: how we think is how we feel. How are you interpreting the events that are happening to you? Try to interpret them in a less negative way. Unfortunately we cannot stop our thoughts as our brain is always working. If you can't see your issues in a different way then stop struggling and allow and accept whatever the unhelpful thoughts are. Choose to take actions based on your values and what will give you a fulfilling life no matter what your thoughts are. Remember, your thoughts have no power unless you act upon them. Emotional: do not let feelings dictate your actions, even if something feels anxious take action again based on your values and how you want to live. Social: connect with healthy friends and family that will be a positive support. Take up some hobbies and recreation activities as well. If things do not improve I would encourage you to make an appointment with a talk therapist and discuss these issues. I would encourage you to also be open to consider an evaluation for anti-depressants with these issues as well. If you ever feel like you might hurt yourself please call 911 or go to your nearest ER.

Question 78: I'm facing severe depression and anxiety and I just feel like I'm going through a lot. This really distracts me and I can't get my mind off the things that are bothering me. How do I overcome this anxiety and depression?

Answer 78: Life can bring us all kinds of struggles. Depression and Anxiety are very common reasons people come into counseling. Both can be debilitating. Sometimes when life struggles and stresses build up anxiety and depression become prominent. Learning tools to ride the waves of life is a core part of counseling. If you are ready to manage the symptoms and come up with a plan visit staceybs Shapiro.com for more information.

Question 79: I'm facing severe depression and anxiety and I just feel like I'm going through a lot. This really distracts me and I can't get my mind off the things that are bothering me. How do I overcome this anxiety and depression?

Answer 79: Wanting to make changes and asking for assistance is the first step. Overcoming anxiety and depression is not an easy feat to do on your own, especially if it's been something you have been battling for years. There are some different routes you may go down in order to start the healing process: Therapy - find a therapist who has a lot of experience with anxiety and depression. You can do this by googling "anxiety depression therapist" in your city. CounselChat also has a directory of amazing therapists, as

does Psychology Today Medication - Depending on what other symptoms you may be struggling with depends on what medication you will be prescribed. Be 100% honest with the doctor and ask about different side effects or potential risks associated with the medication. You more than likely will be prescribed an SSRI. Therapy & Medication - The outcomes are very good for those who decide to do both. Medication can help level out your mood and therapy can help you process through your emotions and keep you accountable for your goals, as you will be seeing your therapist more often than your psychiatrist. Therapy & Homeopathy - Homeopathy could potentially be a good tool to use alongside with therapy in case you are not interested in going down the medication route. Arsenicum album is most commonly given to those who struggle with anxiety and depression. The choice is yours. My recommendation is to start with therapy and explore your options more in depth with your therapist.

Question 80: I'm facing severe depression and anxiety and I just feel like I'm going through a lot. This really distracts me and I can't get my mind off the things that are bothering me. How do I overcome this anxiety and depression?

Answer 80: First, be patient because anxiety and depression are rooted in a person's outlook on who they are and how they handle situations and relationships. Changing these deep major structures in your life takes time to try new ways and see what develops, then fine tune accordingly. Most commonly, anxiety and depression relate to one's self definition. Reflect on your own opinion of yourself and whether you'd like making any adjustments to this. Then figure out what stops or inhibits you from doing this. Try new ways of thinking and interacting with other people. The changed impression you make on others will influence your own view of who you are. In America people take Pharma pills to not feel badly. If you prefer to make natural, long-lasting change then reflect, read, try therapy if it feels right to you. Eventually you will be better off this way than to take drugs to hide how you truly feel.

Question 81: How can I get to a place where I can be content from day to day?

Answer 81: Your question is a fascinating one! As humans we have the ability to reflect on situations in our lives. Even if nothing currently goes on in a particular moment, it's possible you're reflecting on a serious or upsetting matter. And, our emotions linger within us. Just because a particular moment feels calm, inside your feelings may be the sense of a strong unsettled emotion from the recent past. Good for you to be aware of your own sensitivity to living with awareness of your moods and thoughts.

Question 82: How can I get to a place where I can be content from day to day?

Answer 82: One thing that comes to mind is making a list of some things that happen each day. It could be that there are things that are affecting how upset you are, but because so many other things are going on, you may not notice. Another idea to try is to keep a list for a month of one good thing that happened each day. This way, when you're having a rough day, you have a list to think of and take a look at. Are you eating and sleeping in ways that are typical for you (typically at least two meals per day and roughly 8 hours of sleep that night (may be different depending on your age)? These two ideas are closely related to changes in your mood. From where do you have support? Friends or family? Can you take 5 or 10 minutes per day to do something that you enjoy? If you think back to the last time that you felt "content," what was contributing to that? Another possibility is to try to be mindful of things that you do every day. For example, rather than eating a turkey sandwich as fast as possible on your lunch break, consider actually tasting it and enjoying it. Also consider giving yourself praise for doing something well. For example, when you finish your paperwork, take a moment to notice that and maybe reward yourself by checking your e-mail, reading five pages of a book, or something else that can be done quickly before you get back to your next task.

Question 83: How can I get to a place where I can be content from day to day?

Answer 83: It's important to take a look inside and see what's going on with you to cause you to have these feelings. Please contact us in whatever way is most comfortable for you and we can get you set up with someone who will help you figure out this space in your life.

Question 84: I have a severe back problem. I've had 3 major and several minor operations, but I'm still in constant pain. How can I deal with the depression from this chronic pain?

Answer 84: Chronic pain at the back likely results from a few areas: L4-L5 kidney zone, most likely (lower back); Bone spurs, fused discs, and slipped discs, caused by connective tissue weakness, and calcium deposits used to neutralize highly acidic areas... The 'depression' will evaporate when the chronic pain is drained out, through natural means; Pharmaceutical means will simply extend the pain and cause it to deepen over time, not solving the problem; Remember, medical doctors suppress, natural doctors cure...

Question 85: I have a severe back problem. I've had 3 major and several minor operations, but I'm still in

constant pain. How can I deal with the depression from this chronic pain?

Answer 85: Maybe if you started to address questions of an inner nature of what changed in your life as a result of the back problem. To know your limitations and the areas of your life which they affect, will greatly contribute to stronger self-knowledge within you. Greater awareness and sense of direction very often decreases depression.

Question 86: I suffer from adult ADHD, anxiety disorder, and depression. It has been difficult to find a doctor in my area and my primary physician won't help. I am unemployed and overwhelmed. What would you suggest I do?

Answer 86: If it is simply counseling that you seek, any number of faith-based outfits are very willing to listen and help out with these sorts of matters, free of charge :) Online messaging and social media is a secondary option, however this one may come with privacy concerns and consequences; If it were I, I would attempt to sweet-talk one or two counselors I come across to do a bit of work for folks who can't afford it :)

Question 87: I suffer from adult ADHD, anxiety disorder, and depression. It has been difficult to find a doctor in my area and my primary physician won't help. I am unemployed and overwhelmed. What would you suggest I do?

Answer 87: Look up online what the local hospital offers to people. Also, google some of the key words you just wrote here, like depression and counseling, low-cost counseling. Did your primary physician tell you their reason to not help you? If not, then ask the person to tell you their reasoning. Even if the specific doctor won't help you, by understanding their reason, you may be able to work with the answer you hear.

Question 88: I suffer from adult ADHD, anxiety disorder, and depression. It has been difficult to find a doctor in my area and my primary physician won't help. I am unemployed and overwhelmed. What would you suggest I do?

Answer 88: I would check out agencies that offer affordable counseling based on your income or very low cost counseling sessions, i.e., Pacific Clinics, Hathaway Sycamore, Pasadena Mental Health Center, Burbank Family Center. If you google affordable or low cost therapy in your particular area you will find resources to help you.

Question 89: A few years ago I was making love to my wife when for no known reason I lost my erection, Now I'm In my early 30s and my problem has become more and more frequent. This is causing major problems for my ego and it's diminishing my self esteem. This has resulted in ongoing depression and tearing apart my marriage. I am devastated and cannot find a cause for these issues. I am very attracted to my wife and want to express it in the bedroom like I used to. What could be causing this, and what can I do about it?

Answer 89: First step always is to do a medical rule out so that you're sure the problem is psychological and emotion based, not a medical condition which requires care and attention. If you are medically clear in the reasons for losing your erection, then reflect on what may be creating a loss in confidence in either who you are and what you're doing with your life, or whether your wife has these sort of problems within herself. Often a problem transfers ownership of who shows it. If you are a sensitive person its possible your erection problem reflects your wife's insecurities and self-doubt. If she is someone who is reluctant to talk about feeling unsure then in a certain way by you showing a problem, she can avoid looking at herself. There may not be a direct cause such as usually exists in a medical problem. Medicine looks for symptoms to treat. Our emotional lives are much more indirect. If you feel stress at work or are unhappy in the place you live, for example, then your frustration may show up in your sex life. Basically, do a broad inward search of your life and what it holds and maybe ask your wife to do the same. You may clear the air within yourselves and between each other so the problem goes away.

Question 90: A few years ago I was making love to my wife when for no known reason I lost my erection, Now I'm In my early 30s and my problem has become more and more frequent. This is causing major problems for my ego and it's diminishing my self esteem. This has resulted in ongoing depression and tearing apart my marriage. I am devastated and cannot find a cause for these issues. I am very attracted to my wife and want to express it in the bedroom like I used to. What could be causing this, and what can I do about it?

Answer 90: When I'm working with men with this type of situation, I always suggest a medical examination to rule out any type of organic reason for a difficulty in maintaining interaction. In cases where there is no medical reason for the loss of erection, I find that many men have a similar situation in

experiencing negative intrusive thinking during lovemaking. My counseling approach for this situation is to incorporate the use of mindful sex.

Question 91: A few years ago I was making love to my wife when for no known reason I lost my erection, Now I'm In my early 30s and my problem has become more and more frequent. This is causing major problems for my ego and it's diminishing my self esteem. This has resulted in ongoing depression and tearing apart my marriage. I am devastated and cannot find a cause for these issues. I am very attracted to my wife and want to express it in the bedroom like I used to. What could be causing this, and what can I do about it?

Answer 91: For starters, know that this is a normal experience for many men at some point in their lives. While this can certainly cause some embarrassment, a diminished sexual esteem or relationship problems, it is important to know you are not alone. I am going to move forward assuming that you have already checked with a medical professional to rule out any medical problems that may be related to this. Assuming that is the case, for most this happens for two primary reasons. It is either a short term biological shortage of blood flow to the penis. This can be caused my diet, lack of exercise, even stress. Another primary reason for loss of erections are anxiety. Have their been recent relationship issues? Are you feeling as though you aren't satisfied in the bedroom? These are just a few aspects that can cause subconscious anxiety and loss of erection. My suggestion to you would be to seek out a counselor that specializes in sexuality that can assist you in moving forward with this. Best of Luck!

Question 92: A few years ago I was making love to my wife when for no known reason I lost my erection, Now I'm In my early 30s and my problem has become more and more frequent. This is causing major problems for my ego and it's diminishing my self esteem. This has resulted in ongoing depression and tearing apart my marriage. I am devastated and cannot find a cause for these issues. I am very attracted to my wife and want to express it in the bedroom like I used to. What could be causing this, and what can I do about it?

Answer 92: Erection maintenance is caused by connective tissue weakness as well as lymphatic stagnation of the area and accompanying channels. A proper detoxification is necessary to reverse the stagnation and get things flowing again.Lower circulation and pituitary might also be indicated.Medical will likely not recommend anything useful in the long term (pharmaceuticals do not solve a problem, only suppress it; and, it will return again later and worse than before);Certain herbal protocols and natural protocols would be very warranted in getting things going again :)

Question 93: A few years ago I was making love to my wife when for no known reason I lost my erection, Now I'm In my early 30s and my problem has become more and more frequent. This is causing major problems for my ego and it's diminishing my self esteem. This has resulted in ongoing depression and tearing apart my marriage. I am devastated and cannot find a cause for these issues. I am very attracted to my wife and want to express it in the bedroom like I used to. What could be causing this, and what can I do about it?

Answer 93: If you haven't already, please see a doctor. ED can be caused by any number of physical conditions and you need to get checked out. Once you have ruled out any physical issues that interfere with getting an erection, it's time to look for more subtle causes. Unfortunately, you may have gotten yourself into a mind set of "I hope I can, but what if I can't?" which is certain to interfere with performance.Again, rule out physical causes (can you tell I think that's important?), then talk with your wife about working together to find the right approach. It might be a good idea, for example, to take the pressure off by enjoying each other without intercourse. You can have great sex without penetration and you can have physical intimacy without sex, so slow down and experiment. You might find more pleasure than you expect when you can relax knowing there doesn't have to be a "finish line".Again, yes the third time, SEE A DOCTOR, just in case there's something going on. Once you get the all clear, find joy and spontaneity with your wife again by being creative and pressure free.

Question 94: A few years ago I was making love to my wife when for no known reason I lost my erection, Now I'm In my early 30s and my problem has become more and more frequent. This is causing major problems for my ego and it's diminishing my self esteem. This has resulted in ongoing depression and tearing apart my marriage. I am devastated and cannot find a cause for these issues. I am very attracted to my wife and want to express it in the bedroom like I used to. What could be causing this, and what can I do about it?

Answer 94: Assuming there are no medical explanations for this issue, many men I've worked with on this come to see it as essentially a form of Anxiety. There is a phenomenon called the Yerkes Dodson Law

(see below; source: Wikipedia), which basically states that if we feel either too much or too little stress, pressure, or nervousness about a task, it will adversely impact our ability to do carry it out successfully. The ideal amount of stress/arousal is right in the middle - not too little and not too much. This applies to more things than we might often realize - from giving a presentation, to ordering food, to making a free throw, to driving, to sexual intimacy as in this case. A common suggestion that many men find helpful is initiating open and honest conversations with their partners about this issue, and for a temporary period of time, agreeing to physical intimacy and sexual pleasure in other forms, and without the expectation of intercourse. There are many ways to go about that (which are outside the scope of this blog article), but this can be a path to connecting intimately and renewing physical bonding without unhelpful anxiety - and over time, can lead back to intimacy in all the ways that have become elusive. Best of luck.

Question 95: I struggle with depression as well as pretty intense mood swings throughout the month. I experience highs where I feel amazing and energetic and then lows where I lack focus, energy, and generally have a more dark outlook on my life. How can I live a more balanced life?

Answer 95: It's fun to ride the roller coaster from time to time, isn't it? :) But, it's also weary-making, and leads to drainage that no man or woman can hardly anticipate! Balance comes with proper understanding of the different bodies you possess and how they function. And, to begin, we focus upon your physical, and move right up the latter to the spiritual, and begin cleaning you out. Unbalance is an experience of blocked energies that should be naturally flowing (call them what thou mayest); when blockages are removed, what is naturally there flows, and flows beautifully...

Question 96: I struggle with depression as well as pretty intense mood swings throughout the month. I experience highs where I feel amazing and energetic and then lows where I lack focus, energy, and generally have a more dark outlook on my life. How can I live a more balanced life?

Answer 96: Are you certain your highs and lows are directly related to your cycle? It's possible that there are at least some contributing factors, even if they are as a result of hormonal fluctuations. For example, at the start of your period, do you have that "I feel great" feeling, or are you tired and down? Mid-cycle (assuming your periods are regular), do you find yourself napping or ready to run a race? Either way, how you feel may be leading you to behaviors that contribute to your changes in energy and optimism. Let's say that the few days before your period, you feel cranky, bloated and want salty food. Your natural inclination might be to isolate, stay inside and eat chips. The next day, you feel even more tired, cranky and bloated. It STARTS with a hormonal symptom, but what you do with that can change how you end up feeling. So if you notice feeling cranky, bloated and craving salt, what if you pull up a restorative yoga video online, spend an hour being restful and centered in your body and have a good meal with a healthy balance of fats, proteins and carbs, with fresh veggies and fruits before you turn in early to give your body the rest it is asking for? That sets you up to feel MUCH better! And those "on top of the world days" - who doesn't love them?? But even those days, be mindful of how you are treating yourself. Exercise for sure, but don't do twice the workout you normally would just because you can! You might feel super energy and skip meals which sets you up for poor sleep and feeling crummy after a day or two. All that aside, if you have a couple rough days before your period, pay attention to what is bugging you. Christiane Northrup, MD, likens our menstrual cycle to the tide. When the tide is out (just before your period), you see all the garbage cluttering up your ocean floor, but you don't have the energy to address it, so there it stays, bugging you. At the height of physical and emotional energy (usually mid-cycle/ovulation), the tide is back in and you don't see all that annoying stuff you saw before. Since you have good energy at this time, take advantage of it by doing some "clean up" on the things you saw there when you felt crummy. Maybe it's that conversation you have been putting off with your partner, or having the long-delayed closet clean out, or searching for a job that feels/pays/fits you better. Whatever it is, those "PMS blues" may hold important messages for you. If taking good care of yourself, staying tuned in to your needs and keeping an eye on the "tides" don't help, then see your doctor. Something else may be going on - our hormones all work together like a symphony - it only takes one to be out of tune to throw the whole thing off!

Question 97: I struggle with depression as well as pretty intense mood swings throughout the month. I experience highs where I feel amazing and energetic and then lows where I lack focus, energy, and generally have a more dark outlook on my life. How can I live a more balanced life?

Answer 97: Depression and PMS symptoms can be so hard to navigate! Looking at this from a holistic standpoint can help you understand why you get these mood swings and what to do to balance yourself

emotionally during this time. As a woman, we experience peaks and dips during our hormonal cycles and right before menstruation, we tend to feel not ourselves and down. The bloating and extreme cravings do not help either. Making sure your schedule is light and you have things to assist you can be so helpful. Different essential oils like lavender may calm you down, or orange which can uplift your mood. Homeopathy can be effective and gentle during this time as well. Birth control is known to help reduce the extreme spikes in hormones and can reduce your emotional and physical pain. Perhaps even psychiatric medication like an SSRI can help. If you are interested in going down the medication route, be sure to ask the doctor about potential side effects and risks. Reducing your processed sugar intake may help a lot as well. Exercising, spending time outside, practicing stress management and avoiding caffeine and alcohol can all be useful as well.

Question 98: I struggle with depression as well as pretty intense mood swings throughout the month. I experience highs where I feel amazing and energetic and then lows where I lack focus, energy, and generally have a more dark outlook on my life. How can I live a more balanced life?

Answer 98: You may already be living a balanced life because you are aware of your ups and downs due to hormonal changes of your menstrual cycle. As much as possible, schedule activities around your expected mood swings. This way you'll avoid feeling even more tired from a busy schedule during a low energy time in the month. The hormonal cycle is normal. Opinions vary as to taking natural, homeopathic supplements or Pharma drugs which will influence your cycle and make your mood more even. There are side effects to at least the Pharma drugs, which is a consideration as to the value of taking them. Reflect on which is your style of living and what will make you feel successful in handling this problem. Sticking to a system which mirrors the type of person you are, means more than any one particular answer anyone gives you.

Question 99: I self-harm, and I stop for awhile. Then when I see something sad or depressing, I automatically want to self-harm.

Answer 99: In a way, self-harm can present somewhat like an addiction. According to new research within the field of neuroscience there is a valid explanation for this. When a person cuts or uses other forms of self harm, the body produces endorphins to help make a person feel better. If a person was dealing with depression or high anxiety, that might be misinterpreted by the brain as a way to help oneself feel better and a new neural network or map might form (addiction) that would utilize this new behavior.

Another way to look at it would be thru a behavioral lens, a positive reward for a behavior, even though the behavior has other long term negative consequences. Consider working with someone who can both have you work on and address those items that trigger your behavior and the root causes, in this case sadness or depression, and second find someone who can help give you alternatives that take into account the neurological requirement by replacing the behavior with another behavior (such as snapping a rubber band on the wrist) and working to extinguish the unwanted behavior. Someone who is trained in Dialectic Behavior Therapy and/or Interpersonal Neurobiology would most likely have the skills and means available to address this with you.

Question 100: I self-harm, and I stop for awhile. Then when I see something sad or depressing, I automatically want to self-harm.

Answer 100: Self-harm has a way of becoming a go-to method of coping. When we get stuck using self-harm as a way to deal and manage emotions, when something serious happens it totally makes sense that that will be one of the first things to go through the mind. It is its own kind of addiction. There is a therapy, DBT or, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, which focusing on giving you new tools to get through hard times, understand and manage your emotions, to stay present and to deal with relationships. This one of the most effective interventions there is for self-harm. If you are interested in DBT, reach a local therapist in your area and ask if they do DBT or can recommend you to a DBT program. This can help immensely. Self-harm recovery is totally possible, but it is definitely hard work!

Question 101: I have been diagnosed with general anxiety and depression by my family doctor. They wrote a prescription for me to have an emotional support dog, I have the paper work, and I gave it to my apartment manager. They said I can't keep the ESD because I'm not disabled. What do you suggest I do?

Answer 101: This can be a difficult situation. Typically, only animals that are specifically trained to accomplish a specific task are legally protected as Service Animals. Even though that can be very helpful, emotional support animals are not generally protected in the same way. You might not be able to make your landlord accommodate you. If possible, you may want to consider a different apartment that is more

animal friendly.

Question 102: I have been diagnosed with general anxiety and depression by my family doctor. They wrote a prescription for me to have an emotional support dog, I have the paper work, and I gave it to my apartment manager. They said I can't keep the ESD because I'm not disabled. What do you suggest I do?

Answer 102: At present, the American Disability Association (ADA) only allows protection and guiltiness for Service Animals, which is fall under a separate distinction from Emotional Support Animals. Emotional support animals are untrained animals (typically pets or other domestic animals) that provide wonderful services to their owners, and there are many benefits to having one. Service animals who are trained to provide specific services for an individual with limitations that make them fall under what the ADA defines as "disabled" are protected under specific laws, and must be accommodated in public places where the human they serve is present. While it may be beneficial to request that the therapist who "prescribed" the dog to you write a letter to the apartment manager, it sounds like the manager is aware of ADA guidelines, and the simplest course of action may be to find an alternative residence, if that is a plausible option.

Question 103: I have been diagnosed with general anxiety and depression by my family doctor. They wrote a prescription for me to have an emotional support dog, I have the paper work, and I gave it to my apartment manager. They said I can't keep the ESD because I'm not disabled. What do you suggest I do?

Answer 103: Agree with the apartment manager's viewpoint that your disability is not a physical limitation. Ask the manager if they'd accept an explanatory letter from a therapist who is licensed to diagnosis emotional disabilities. If the answer is yes, then find a therapist who's willing to cooperate with what you need from them and find out this particular therapist's terms of working with you to compose such a letter. If the manager tells you "no", then find out who is above this person or entity and find out how to formally introduce your request to the board or apartment owner, or whoever actually is the legal owner of the building.

Question 104: I have been diagnosed with general anxiety and depression by my family doctor. They wrote a prescription for me to have an emotional support dog, I have the paper work, and I gave it to my apartment manager. They said I can't keep the ESD because I'm not disabled. What do you suggest I do?

Answer 104: This is tricky because there are different types of emotional support dogs. The ones that are officially trained actually go through months of training and then are paired with someone for whom they perform specific tasks. You may benefit from looking at the blog written by Valerie Parrott, who has an emotional support dog due to severe anxiety and panic. I will warn you that her blog is very blunt, but she is honest and she has gone through this

process: <https://thedogintheroom.wordpress.com/2016/06/20/what-makes-a-service-dog/#more-508>

Question 105: I tried telling my husband I was depressed, and he ignored me. He said "you're always sad or depressed." And he picked up his phone and ignored me. I said, "Please don't exaggerate, that isn't true." And he said, "Whatever babe. You just want to be sad."

How can I get through to him so he will take me seriously?

Answer 105: Ouch. It's really hard to deal with a spouse that isn't taking you seriously. In this case, I would plan for and schedule a time to talk with him about this. I would tell him that you need about 30 minutes to talk to him with minimal interruptions about something that is important to you. Schedule a time, write notes if you need reminders about what you need to express, and tell him how you feel. Ideally, you would focus more on I-statements instead of telling him what he is doing wrong. For example, I feel ignored vs You always ignore me. By focusing on how you feel, he is less likely to feel attacked and get defensive. Some people go to couples or marriage counseling for help with communication. Chances are there are things that BOTH of you do that hurts your communication. Overall, try to talk to him directly and try not to get defensive. If he continues to say, you're always sad - then stay calm, say "okay, can you help me understand that more?" or "That's interesting. Tell me what you see." Reach out to a couples counselor for more help with communication strategies. Sometimes a 3rd party can help you both see things in a different perspective. Hope this helps!

Question 106: I tried telling my husband I was depressed, and he ignored me. He said "you're always sad or depressed." And he picked up his phone and ignored me. I said, "Please don't exaggerate, that isn't true." And he said, "Whatever babe. You just want to be sad."

How can I get through to him so he will take me seriously?

Answer 106: This is so hard. It is hard for someone to understand what depression is without having experienced it themselves. Unfortunately people without depression sometimes mistake it as feeling sorry for ourselves or just moping around, which is not what depression is at all. Sometimes I think that it is easier for family members to see it as a choice than to admit that someone they love is hurting and they don't know what to do. If he is willing, I wonder if there may be a depression support group in your area such as NAMI or DBSA where he could hear from others living with depression and their families. If not, I wonder if you all might watch a documentary together such as No Kidding Me Too or Call me Crazy. If not that, I've sometimes encouraged folk to just leave some information on depression and how family can help like a pamphlet or handout on a table or around the house. We tend to get curious and read things we find on the table. Wishing you the best!

Question 107: I tried telling my husband I was depressed, and he ignored me. He said "you're always sad or depressed." And he picked up his phone and ignored me. I said, "Please don't exaggerate, that isn't true." And he said, "Whatever babe. You just want to be sad."

How can I get through to him so he will take me seriously?

Answer 107: It can be hard for husbands to hear that their wife is unhappy. By nature men tend to be more of the fix it type. So if they are sad, they fix it. If their wife is sad, they fix it. He may feel helpless to help you and that may be why he is saying those things to you. It's not that he doesn't care or that he doesn't take them seriously, he might just have no idea how to help. I would start by making an appointment to talk with a therapist about your sadness. Meeting with a therapist may help you to learn some tools and strategies that can help you to manage some of the sadness you are feeling. A therapist can also help you to gain some understanding and insight into why you might be experiencing sadness. Depression is not something you have to sit with, therapy can help. Once your husband sees that you are being proactive in addressing your sadness/depression he will probably be more open to listening to you and supporting you. He might start to have ideas and input on how you two can work together to change some of the situations or things that might be holding you back.

Question 108: I tried telling my husband I was depressed, and he ignored me. He said "you're always sad or depressed." And he picked up his phone and ignored me. I said, "Please don't exaggerate, that isn't true." And he said, "Whatever babe. You just want to be sad."

How can I get through to him so he will take me seriously?

Answer 108: Oh dear. From what you write, your husband doesn't have any interest to know about you and your sad feelings. Stay clear in understanding that you already did your part by asking him to listen and care about the way you feel. In this example, he told you he doesn't care. It's up to him to open his mind and heart to you. Depending on how motivated to continue asking him to hear you, try until you feel satisfied that you've given him enough chances to know who you are. At a certain number of tries at this, you'll either have success or not. Just don't try forever because doing so will increase your depressed feelings.

Question 109: It's not entirely true to say I enjoy being sad, but I always find a way to feel that way. I listen to sad music, read tragic stories, and, in a twisted way, like how bad it makes me feel. I focus on negative aspects of my life even if they aren't legitimate or I just make it seem negative.

Answer 109: It sounds like you are noticing that you are drawn towards sad and negative content and it's hard to understand why. This may sound counter-intuitive, but sometimes we do things that on the surface may look problematic (or even cause us some real problems) because it serves us in some unseen way. A simple example would be somebody who is addicted to a substance; their addiction may be causing serious problems in their life, and they may even know it, but the addiction serves them by helping them to avoid painful feelings that they anticipate having if they quit using. Now I am not saying that what you describe is an addiction, it is just a really illustrative example of the unseen benefit. One thing I would be wondering about is what is the unseen benefit of seeking out sad and negative content? I'd also be wondering what your relationship is to other feelings. These are things you may benefit from exploring with a competent therapist.

Question 110: It's not entirely true to say I enjoy being sad, but I always find a way to feel that way. I listen to sad music, read tragic stories, and, in a twisted way, like how bad it makes me feel. I focus on negative aspects of my life even if they aren't legitimate or I just make it seem negative.

Answer 110: I applaud your courage in asking this question to gain some deeper insight into what is happening in your life. This is one of the most common things that I personally have seen in the

population of individuals who suffer from depression. It is often that I notice clients focusing on the negative to the complete dismissal of the positive when they are dealing with depression. It is inspiring that you have noticed this in yourself because many clients are not aware that this is a pattern for them, or are not yet willing to face that depression has become a pattern they cling to. Depression, if dealt with for extended periods of time, can become a way of life, an identity of sorts, that is very difficult to part from. While you desperately desire happiness, who would you be without the depression? Sometimes it is scarier to journey into the unknown (in this case, happiness), than it is to stay in the known, and the often times comfortable space of your depression. Human beings, for the most part, fear and stray away from change in general, especially a change that is so impactful. Allowing yourself to confront the possibility of change as positive with the support of a professional counselor is often extremely helpful.

Question 111: Every winter I find myself getting sad because of the weather. How can I fight this?

Answer 111: Seasonal Affective Disorder (S.A.D.) is a term that reflects how many people are affected by the changing seasons, especially fall to winter. Everyone suffers with some form of this (lessened activity levels, increased isolation, etc.) while some find that this time of year can put them into a deeper depression. If you have noticed that this happens frequently, there are some ways you can definitely help yourself going forward:1. Attend therapy to learn strategies and tools to help you to manage your mood.

It's important to stay within the therapy until you feel you have mastered these tools. 2. Push yourself to interact more with your social groups and other positive activities. It's easy to go out and spend the day outside in the summer months, when the temperature is warm and the sun shines for long periods of the day, but it seems harder to find fun ways to spend your time when the temperature drops and darkness comes on so quickly. Perhaps winter time could become the time of year where you and your friends have weekly board game nights, complete with hot chocolate and a fire?3. You may want to consider the purchase of a S.A.D. Light. These are lights that expose you to additional ultra violet light to increase the vitamin D in our bodies, as well as the release of growth hormone (which releases when we wake up). There are mixed reviews of these products, however, and they can be expensive.

Question 112: Every winter I find myself getting sad because of the weather. How can I fight this?

Answer 112: I would suggest some holistic approaches, such as getting your Vitamin D and iron levels checked. Make sure you are eating well, exercising, and getting outside when you can. Take a trip to someplace warm if possible. Use a sun lamp in the morning for 30 minutes to simulate sunlight. Seek professional health to gain coping skills and other ways to manage symptoms.

Question 113: Every winter I find myself getting sad because of the weather. How can I fight this?

Answer 113: Thank you for sharing. It seems like since the "winter blues" happens to you every year it may also be impacting your quality of life and possibly relationships. What you report sounds like you may be experiencing Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) and is quite common to many from about fall thru winter seasons; but, also can impact folks during the Spring and summer months. The best care and treatment for SAD includes discussing it with your PCP (primary care physician), integrating light therapy (full-spectrum lighting) throughout home and workplace (where possible), psychotherapy, and possibly medications (e.g. Wellbutrin XL, Aplenzin). Be sure to exercise good self-care and checkout the Mayo Clinic's website for SAD here:

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/seasonal-affective-disorder/basics/definition/con-20021047>

Question 114: Every winter I find myself getting sad because of the weather. How can I fight this?

Answer 114: Light therapy is very helpful. You are not alone. The name for the condition is Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). You might want to see a therapist to assist you putting in place a behavioral program to help change the way you feel.

Question 115: Every winter I find myself getting sad because of the weather. How can I fight this?

Answer 115: I am glad that you are getting ahead of this by noticing this seasonal pattern to your depression. Winter depression (seasonal affective) is something that affects a lot of people both people who also deal with other kinds of depression that happens to get worse in the winter as well as people who just deal with depression in the winter. Light affects how our bodies release and absorb neurotransmitters such as serotonin and most believe that a major contributing factor for winter depression is that we get less light when it is colder outside and darker outside. Exposure to light can make a big difference. If you are someone who is awake during the day (not someone who works the night shift :))---one simple change you can make is keeping your curtains in your bedroom light enough as to let some light in in the morning. This will give you light right off the start of the day and can make it

easier to get going in the morning. Beyond this, keeping windows cleared from blinds so that you get that natural light or even taking a short 10 or 15 minute walk each day can get you both light and exercise to help fight off the depression. Outside this, as others have suggested a light box is a popular method of warding off the depression however some of these may expose you to UV light and so this is something to check in with both with the light box manufacturer and with your doctor to make sure you have a good understanding of the risks and benefits for that. Lastly, just making sure you continue to do things that lift your mood, that you have time with other people, and that you reach out if you do find yourself in a space of needing help are all things you can do to ward off the depression. Wishing you well!

Question 116: Every winter I find myself getting sad because of the weather. How can I fight this?

Answer 116: This is actually pretty common. When winter hits, we tend to find ourselves huddled inside from the cold. Not to mention the sun is out for a much shorter time. It will be helpful to get as much sunlight as possible. Get outside when you can. Open up the blinds and drapes. Use a sunlight if you want to (amazon has some for reasonable prices). Stay connected to friends and family. Try to engage in activities that make you feel positive, productive, and connected.

Question 117: Every winter I find myself getting sad because of the weather. How can I fight this?

Answer 117: Cold climate is often accompanied by grey skies, snow and ice. The elements along with wind, windchill and severely cold temperatures may lead to feelings of sadness, anxiety, and low energy. For some people these symptoms occur each year from late fall to early spring and may be suffering from a condition known as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Whether you have been diagnosed with SAD or are finding yourself struggling with the “winter blues” for the first time here are some suggestions for feeling better and staying healthy. 1. Nutrition Most likely you have

heard the term “comfort food.” These foods and snacks are high in carbohydrates, sugar and fat. Avoid overeating cookies, cakes and candy. Chose vegetables, fruit and protein for snacks and plan balanced meals. If you find yourself wanting to eat or snack throughout the day, ask yourself why you are eating. Are you hungry? Or Are you eating because you are bored? 2. Alcohol Keep in mind that alcohol is a depressant so consuming wine,

beer or liquor when already feeling sad, anxious or depressed will only add to your symptoms. Do not consume alcohol while engaging in outdoor activities such as snow removal, skiing, or ice fishing. If you find yourself reaching for an additional glass of wine or beer be mindful and ask whether you are doing it due to boredom. Instead of mindlessly taking another glass of alcohol, drink a glass of water. 3. Sunlight Get

out in the sunlight or brightly lit spaces, especially early in the day. 4. Be active If you are unable to go to your favorite gym, exercise class

or go for a run, find a way to stay active in your home. There are a lot of short, instructional programs available on YouTube that you can follow to do some gently yoga, dance, or do strengthening exercises using only your body weight. 5. Reach out for help

Confide in someone you trust about how you are feeling. Do not hesitate to contact a counselor if you feel that you are becoming more depressed and anxious. If you experience thoughts of suicide call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.

Question 118: Every winter I find myself getting sad because of the weather. How can I fight this?

Answer 118: First of all, it is excellent that you are self aware and able to identify the pattern to your moods. Many people suffer from the winter blues, which is called Seasonal Affective Disorder. Some people notice that during the Fall and Winter months, they tend to struggle with signs and symptoms of depression such as sadness or hopelessness, lethargy, sleeping too much or too little, changes in appetite, loss of interest in usual interests, and possibly suicidal thoughts. It would be best to consult with a therapist experienced in this disorder, as they will be able to guide you towards possible solutions such as changing negative thought patterns, light therapy, exercise, nutritional support, and possibly medication.

Question 119: Every winter I find myself getting sad because of the weather. How can I fight this?

Answer 119: Many people suffer from changes in mood when the winter time comes. The amount of

daylight hours decreases significantly. Most times it is dark when you go to work and dark when you return home. There are special lights that can be used during the winter season to counteract the "winter time blues." Also, paying attention to self care. Are you sleeping enough, attending to physical illness? Exercising and eating a balanced diet? Make sure to schedule fun activities and spend time with loved ones.

Question 120: Every winter I find myself getting sad because of the weather. How can I fight this?

Answer 120: About 3 million people in the United States suffer from seasonal affective disorder. Seasonal affective disorder or seasonal depression occurs during the same season every year. You might have felt feeling depressed the past two winters, but cheered up during the warmer months. Or you may have felt down during the summer. Everyone could get seasonal depression, but it tends to be much more common in :People who have families who have SADWomenIndividuals between 15 and 55 years oldIndividuals who live in an areas where winter daylight time is very shortNo mental health experts are exactly sure of what specifically causes SAD, but many think lack of sunlight is a big trigger. This lack of light could mess up your circadian rhythms or cause problems with serotonin which is the chemical that affects your mood.You might be wondering if you have seasonal depression or SAD. Here are the symptoms:Feeling grumpy, sad , nervous of having mood swingsAnhedonia or lack of pleasure in things you normally loveEating much more or less than usualGaining weightSleeping a lot more than you normally do, but still feeling sluggishDifficulty concentratingIt is so important to look at SAD in a holistic manner before getting diagnosed. In addition to therapy, it's crucial to see your doctor so she or he can run blood tests to rule out any other conditions that may be making you feel blue. One of these common ones is hypothyroidism or low thyroid. At Makin Wellness, we could do the mental health assessment .TreatmentThere are multiple ways to help treat seasonal depression. Light therapy can be used, but counseling is one of the most effective ways of treating SAD. Cognitive behavioral therapy with a skilled therapist can help you learn more about seasonal depression , how to manage your symptoms and ways to prevent future episodes. Medication can also be prescribed and taken to help alleviate some or your symptoms. Antidepressants such as Zoloft, Effexor and Wellbutrin are most commonly prescribed for SAD. Be sure to talk with your doctor and therapist about any side effects from your medication.

Question 121: Every winter I find myself getting sad because of the weather. How can I fight this?

Answer 121: One theory is that instead of "fighting" your feelings, accept your sad feelings and work with them. Feeling sad may open many doors to reflect and make peace with the source of your sadness.Also, I believe fighting against the natural cycle of rest and hibernation may not even be possible to succeed. Winter for most creatures is a time of withdrawal and slowdown. Our bodies and moods are part of nature as well. Fighting what is part of nature seems like a tiring fight which the person will lose.Last point, there are the winter holidays to break up the dark and cold of winter. Maybe you can invent some of your own winter celebrations so you'll have a few gatherings to look forward to hosting.

Question 122: Every winter I find myself getting sad because of the weather. How can I fight this?

Answer 122: Sometimes its quite literally the lack of sunshine that can affect our mood - in these cases it can be worth experimenting with a sun lamp, to boost your dose of vitamin D, when the sun isn't naturally out. Also consider, what is it that the change in weather, changes in your life? If for example, when its sunny you are an outdoorsy, active person and when the weather changes, you're whole activity level changes along with it, you could explore how to get some of that activity replicated indoors in the winter months.

Question 123: Every winter I find myself getting sad because of the weather. How can I fight this?

Answer 123: Change your total daily routine, different route, different lunch, different afternoon. Sit outside for 10 minutes three times every day, use a therapy light during the day, aroma-therapy oils for stimulation, but....keep your routine bedtimes and wake up times.....and exercise at least 3 times per week, if after several weeks you are not feeling better....talk with your doctor.

Question 124: Every winter I find myself getting sad because of the weather. How can I fight this?

Answer 124: Seasonal depression can be difficult due to the weather being a primary trigger. Understanding that we have very little control over the weather, therefore we can focus on the things we can change. Exercising, meditation, guided imagery, and deep breathing can be beneficial to combat seasonal depression. It may help to join a support group and seek out therapy to assist you on this healing journey.

Question 125: Every winter I find myself getting sad because of the weather. How can I fight this?

Answer 125: There can be lots of different factors contributing to this. Here are some possible

tips: Consider if you know anything about what specifically is making you feel sad? If you're looking for activities because you cannot participate in what you like to do in the warmer months, consider finding some indoor winter activities. Connect with others. One idea is to join a group (such as a book club) that meets regularly. This could give you something to look forward to regardless of the colder weather. Enjoy the sunshine from indoors. You may notice that sometimes looks are deceiving: women is bright and sunny outside, but is also quite cold when you open the door. If you are staying inside for the day, consider allowing yourself to enjoy the sunlight without specifically considering that it is also cold. Consider using a light box. Certain types of light boxes are designed to help with the "winter blues." You can find more information

here: <http://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/light-therapy/home/ovc-20197416> Recently, one of the nurse practitioners that I work with has been checking a lot of vitamin D and vitamin B12 levels and she says the lower levels of these vitamins can contribute to feelings of less motivation or energy than is desired. Each of us has days when we are not thrilled about the weather and may be feeling sort of "bummed" or "down." If you find yourself having these days frequently or for several consecutive days in the above strategies are not helping, consider talking with a therapist about more specific strategies that may be of help to you. Also, because if everything you would see is likely to live in your area, they would be familiar with the weather patterns where you are and may have some tips that they use for themselves or With other clients.

Question 126: I am going through a divorce. He is extremely angry. He refuses to physically assist me with our teenager daughter. I have no extended family support. Often times, I feel overwhelmed, tired, and joyless. I feel out of control, sad and depressed on a daily basis. I am just going through the motions of life every day. I am in my mid-50s. I have almost 29 years on my job. How can I handle this?

Answer 126: Going through a divorce is often a very low point for the people involved. Are you surprised that your soon to be ex doesn't help with your teenage daughter? Usually patterns and dynamics in parenting are not sudden developments. Is it possible that what you're feeling now is more intensity to the stress of parenting by yourself, not that this is a sudden problem? This is relevant because you may be more familiar and more capable than you're giving yourself credit. The lack of emotional support is definitely stressful. Your parenting skills may still be at the level at which they were prior to the divorce. Take your emotional weariness seriously and reflect on the various ways of stress relief which are available and interest you. Give yourself extra time to rest, nurture yourself and be flexible in finding what feels right for stabilizing yourself. Since you talk about your daughter and help in physical ways, if it is a matter of strength that you need, talk with your attorney so that the child custody agreement includes whatever is physically necessary in the way of strength, in taking care of your daughter. The Courts are very good at making effort that the custody agreement offers proper care to the kids.

Question 127: I am going through a divorce. He is extremely angry. He refuses to physically assist me with our teenager daughter. I have no extended family support. Often times, I feel overwhelmed, tired, and joyless. I feel out of control, sad and depressed on a daily basis. I am just going through the motions of life every day. I am in my mid-50s. I have almost 29 years on my job. How can I handle this?

Answer 127: You are in the midst of a really hard time and it sounds like you have no help at all. Search out a local support group through community counseling type centers. If you can't find a group, at least get in to see a therapist who can help you manage stress and upset better. Your sadness, depression and out-of-control feelings don't mean there is something wrong with you - they just mean that your circumstances are too big for your current resources to handle, so get some help. Take care of YOU and you'll be able to get through this.

Question 128: I just don't know what I want in life anymore. I'm can't figure out what it is that is keeping me distracted and unfocused. I can't put things into perspective at all. I'm just stuck, and I'm disappointed with my lack of accomplishments.

Answer 128: If you are a people-pleaser type or a natural caretaker, you can slowly "lose yourself" over time if you are always tending to the needs of others and neglecting yourself. If this sounds like a familiar pattern for you, this may have happened without you even realizing it if you were raised in a family where you had to pick up the slack a lot. Maybe your parents were addicts or they might have even just worked all the time and you learned to "take care of everything" because that is what you had to do to help the family run smoothly. Over time, a person who grows up in this type of environment learns that you put the needs of others before your own. You might also be stuck in these types of patterns in intimate relationships as well; if you completely give yourself over to your significant other and you don't create a

life for yourself with your own interests and supportive friends, you are at risk of losing what is unique and amazing about you. If you grew up in a family where you learned this role out of survival or because it was needed to take care of your family, it's easy to re-create this in adult relationships. In both scenarios, if there is no awareness that this "self sacrifice at the expense of others" is going on, your identity is shaped around being a caretaker/enabler/people-pleaser and down the road it can lead to depression, low self esteem, and a confused sense of self. Basically, you spend so much time helping other people that you don't make time for yourself or create a life of fulfillment. Before you realize it, you have been living a life for others instead of yourself and you have no idea who YOU are. Supporting loved ones and friends is important and certainly admirable, but if you are always that person that rescues, those that rely on you begin to take advantage of you and they will suck you dry if you let them. In conclusion, learning to set boundaries with those in your life that are too needy becomes a really important part of the process when you begin to recognize that you are unhappy and unfulfilled in life. It sounds like you may be at that crossroads right now. Take one small step at a time. Identify the worst offenders in your life that suck time and energy, and limit your contact and/or set some strong boundaries with those people so you can refocus and do some soul-searching. Meanwhile, engage in pleasurable activities with people you enjoy being with, get yourself outside in the fresh air, get some good sleep, and eat some nourishing food!

Question 129: I just don't know what I want in life anymore. I'm can't figure out what it is that is keeping me distracted and unfocused. I can't put things into perspective at all. I'm just stuck, and I'm disappointed with my lack of accomplishments.

Answer 129: Give yourself credit for what you already know. For instance, you do know that you're unsure about your life direction. Take off any pressure on yourself to decide an answer in a certain amount of time. Inner reflection work takes time and has its own course. Trust that answers will show once you've done the work to understand yourself and circumstance, and the relationships in your life. From what you describe, your interest is in a broad scope life change. One direction is to start with only one specific part of your life you would like to change. By examining one area in detail you will gain self-trust and confidence in handling your life. And, you will have clarity as to which area to change first.

Question 130: I just don't know what I want in life anymore. I'm can't figure out what it is that is keeping me distracted and unfocused. I can't put things into perspective at all. I'm just stuck, and I'm disappointed with my lack of accomplishments.

Answer 130: Thank you for sharing! It can be very disorienting not to know what you want and where you are headed. Sometimes we are so focused on something we haven't achieved yet or on comparing ourselves to others that we lose touch with what we actually want and need. At times like this, it's important to go back to basics. Try out this simple exercise, take a few minutes to write down all your present responsibilities. For example: make meals, complete homework...etc. Then in the column next to it, write down the things that you do for yourself to recharge yourself and to enjoy your time. Is your list of responsibilities way longer than your list of stuff you do for yourself? It is easy to get lost in the sea of responsibilities and disconnect from what you want and need. To fix that, write another list of things that you enjoyed doing in the past for yourself and start incorporating them into your schedule on a regular basis. This will help you re-connect with yourself, and bring focus and clarity to your life.

Question 131: I just don't know what I want in life anymore. I'm can't figure out what it is that is keeping me distracted and unfocused. I can't put things into perspective at all. I'm just stuck, and I'm disappointed with my lack of accomplishments.

Answer 131: Check this blog out: [Four-ways-add-self-esteem-friends-list](#) Hope you find a few nuggets of helpfulness in this.

Question 132: I just don't know what I want in life anymore. I'm can't figure out what it is that is keeping me distracted and unfocused. I can't put things into perspective at all. I'm just stuck, and I'm disappointed with my lack of accomplishments.

Answer 132: It sounds as if you would benefit from talking with a local mental health professionals so you can discuss some details. Having said that, I wonder if you could consider how you would define yourself to someone who doesn't know you. For example, honest, adaptable, fun-loving, dependable, compassionate, open-minded, dedicated, etc. If you're looking for a list of adjectives, try these: <https://www.englishclub.com/vocabulary/adjectives-personality-positive.htm> . There is a list of negative ones here too. If you're going to use those, try to use three positive ones for each of the negative ones. You could also try asking yourself what you love about yourself and/or what others love about you. Sometimes it's easier to consider what others see as our positive points and if this is difficult for you, try

asking someone who you trust to help you with the list. The idea here is to look at your relationship with yourself. I don't mean this in a way that you would be talking to yourself and receiving answers, but rather looking at yourself in a way that you deserve the same kind of loving and compassion that you give to others or want others to have. I'm also curious as to whether you are eating and sleeping okay, as these things can really affect your focus and many other changes, such as differences in your emotions. Also, you saying that you are struggling to put things into perspective leads me to believe that you are going through some things right now that are not typical for you, if so, consider from whom you have support and the ability to talk about what you are going through. Consider Metta meditation here to help give yourself loving kindness: <http://www.mettainstitute.org/mettameditation.html>

Question 133: I'm not suicidal and wouldn't take my own life, but sometimes, I've wished for an accident to occur and take it. I feel like I just shouldn't be here and wish I wouldn't have been born so I didn't have to go through life. For me, it's a chore, but I don't know if that's normal or a sign of something.

Answer 133: Sounds like a sign of great unhappiness, or sadness, or insecurity. The real way you'll find out what this feeling is about is to ask yourself your own question. Inside you are the only one who will feel when you discover the true answer to your question. Everyone feels some amount of discontent in their lives once in a while. It's normal to not feel entirely happy all the time. Try to accept your unhappiness as motivation to learn more about who you are, what you like, whom you like. Study yourself bc this way you increase the chance to find a road which feels right and happy.

Question 134: I can't even smile or fake one. I can't feel happiness about anything and I can't show love towards another person not even my girlfriend. I hate myself sometimes. All I see is ugly.

I can't get over the loss of a loved one and I'm not close to my family. What can I do?

Answer 134: Trust and believe your own feelings. Emotions are real and reflect how someone feels about a situation. Since you're sad about losing a loved one, be patient w your feelings about this. Basically, be guided by how you feel and eventually you will feel different emotions which I hope will be happier ones.

Question 135: My girlfriend just quit drinking and she became really depressed. She told me that she wants to move. What can I do to help her? I want her to stay.

Answer 135: You're probably not going to like my answer. Your question says a lot about what YOU want rather than what she wants or what may be best for her. Sometimes, what's best for a person is the hardest thing to do, and may be completely opposite of what YOU want. Addictions don't happen in a vacuum. If you've had any experience with addicts at all, then I'm sure you've heard the term "enabler". A lot of the times, when people think they're "helping", they're actually enabling the addict to continue their self-destructive behavior. Tough love and clear boundaries are needed in a lot of situations, but especially with addictions. Family and friends are often the biggest contributing factor to someone choosing to use/drink, continuing to do so, or relapsing back into it. You said she recently quit. You said she is depressed. She wants to move. When a person receives counseling for addictions, they are encouraged to make changes like this. They need to break the habit, and this means removing people from their lives at times. It means moving to new locations. Anything that may trigger a relapse needs to be identified and removed. Not only that, but the addict needs to do a lot of personal reflection to figure out WHY they use/drink in the first place, and not only break the physical addiction to it, but deal with whatever is the root cause that led them to use in the first place. She may need some time alone to figure out who she is as a person, time to make some decisions for herself and do what she needs to do to be healthy. Don't pressure her to stay. Let her have the freedom to do what she needs to do. If she stays, the decision needs to be hers and hers alone. It doesn't need to be made under pressure. That will only lead to resentment. Support her, but don't try to change her or make her do anything, especially for selfish reasons. Let her go. It sounds like she needs some time to focus on herself right now. It wouldn't be a bad idea for you to do the same.

Question 136: My girlfriend just quit drinking and she became really depressed. She told me that she wants to move. What can I do to help her? I want her to stay.

Answer 136: I would say talk to her about her depression. The best thing you can do is let her know that you are there for her as a support system. I would encourage her to talk more if it helps and encourage her to get more involved in doing activities she likes to do. Also, getting connected in a community of people is important to help with feeling depressed. Encourage her to speak with a therapist or counselor to address her depression as she has made a major change in her life by deciding to stop drinking. She may believe moving is the best to help with this. You can share with her that you want her to stay and express to her how you feel. Ultimately, you will have to respect her boundaries and the decision she

chooses to make. She may want to move and this may be what she feels is best for her life. If she does choose to move that will be her decision. It sounds like she is trying to do what is going to make her happy. Maybe staying in the city she is currently in is causing her more feelings of sadness.

Question 137: My girlfriend just quit drinking and she became really depressed. She told me that she wants to move. What can I do to help her? I want her to stay.

Answer 137: People often have very different values and opinions when they are drinking excessively and when they stop drinking so much. Did the two of you share drinking as an activity? If yes, then did you stop drinking too? Often when partners meet each other as drinking buddies when one gets sober, the relationship ends. Once the terms of any relationship changes, one possibility is that it dissolves. The best way to go is to start the conversation of what you genuinely want. This is the only way she'll really know your thoughts. Ask her to give serious consideration and discussion over at least a few weeks or months, to moving away from you. This is a fair request since you are in a relationship. If she's changed so much by giving up drinking, which is possible, that she no longer wants to be in relationship to you, then you are better off being without a drinking gf, even if the truth she delivers is a hurtful one.

Question 138: My girlfriend just quit drinking and she became really depressed. She told me that she wants to move. What can I do to help her? I want her to stay.

Answer 138: After stopping the abuse of alcohol, depressive symptoms are common. She may benefit from exploring why she wants to move and see if she would still want to move if she did not feel depressed. 12 step meetings can also be helpful.

Question 139: My girlfriend just quit drinking and she became really depressed. She told me that she wants to move. What can I do to help her? I want her to stay.

Answer 139: You should start by speaking with her about what has her so down. Have there been some significant events in her life that have affected her? Have there been significant events in your relationship that can be affecting you both? If she just stopped drinking, she may be struggling to finding an alternative and healthier behavior. This is something the two of you can explore together. Also, if need be perhaps she can speak to a therapist to discuss her feelings about quitting alcohol. It sounds like you really care and right now she could use all the support she can get despite her pushing you away.

Question 140: I'm a teenager. My dad has been jail for the last five years. It's tough, but my mom really tries to give a normal life to my two sisters, my brother, and I. I feel like I took upon a parent role when I'm the second youngest, and I'm not stable. My mother and sisters say I'm overdramatic. I'm just so hurt, and I keep breaking down.

Answer 140: Each person handles themselves differently in any situation. Since you are willing to speak about how you feel, keep looking for blogs and forums on whatever topics you feel most describe your current circumstance. Your mother and sister, even though they are family seem to prefer the opposite method to yours. Find your own path of supportive other people and possibly a therapist. This way you'll have understanding and validation which your mom and sister don't want to give you right now.

Question 141: I'm a teenager. My dad has been jail for the last five years. It's tough, but my mom really tries to give a normal life to my two sisters, my brother, and I. I feel like I took upon a parent role when I'm the second youngest, and I'm not stable. My mother and sisters say I'm overdramatic. I'm just so hurt, and I keep breaking down.

Answer 141: It sounds like you have a lot of weight on your shoulders. I'm not sure what you mean when you say you're not stable and you are breaking down. If you are crying because you're sad, that is okay. If you are crying a lot or having trouble eating or sleeping, that's different than just crying sometimes because you are sad. It may be helpful to talk with a local mental health professional in your area. They can help you to figure out what you could do differently to have the role in your family that you would like while also supporting yourself and what you want.

Question 142: I'm in my mid 20s with a husband and children. I love my family, but I feel like I've lost my identity, and I don't know who I am other than a mom and wife. At times, all I can think is what I gave up and how I feel unhappy and trapped, but I know I'd feel like worse without them. I loathe myself at times. I have an amazing life, so why can't I just enjoy it?

Answer 142: Good for you on being sensitive to your human need for personal evolution. Wife and mother are meaningful positions. And in your case, in order to feel your own growth, other areas of who you are would like your attention. Give yourself time to allow your interest to wander in order to find the area of growth which will satisfy you. Just like you know now that you'd like more than your current situation, trust yourself to know you will also know when you've arrived at another road you'd like to take for your own

happiness.

Question 143: I'm in my mid 20s with a husband and children. I love my family, but I feel like I've lost my identity, and I don't know who I am other than a mom and wife. At times, all I can think is what I gave up and how I feel unhappy and trapped, but I know I'd feel like worse without them. I loathe myself at times. I have an amazing life, so why can't I just enjoy it?

Answer 143: Being a parent can be all-consuming. And there are more societal pressures on mothers to be everything to their children and families. In that effort to be everything (cook, housekeeper, planner, social organizer, teacher, etc) it can be easy to forget about being you. We can certainly acknowledge that becoming a mother likely means giving up or sacrificing parts of yourself for motherhood. There are parts of becoming a mother that can be wonderful and magical, and parts of it that can be just flat out hard. I think it is very important however, for all parents to ask for what they need and to carve out the time to nurture their individuality. This may not only be supportive to you, but it sets a great example for your kids about how to advocate for their needs, and teach them about the depth and interests of their mother.

Question 144: I'm in my mid 20s with a husband and children. I love my family, but I feel like I've lost my identity, and I don't know who I am other than a mom and wife. At times, all I can think is what I gave up and how I feel unhappy and trapped, but I know I'd feel like worse without them. I loathe myself at times. I have an amazing life, so why can't I just enjoy it?

Answer 144: It is not easy being a wife and mother. You have shifted roles in your life. You went from having a career to focusing on your family. Transitioning can be hard, especially when we feel we gave something up that we really wanted. I want to acknowledge you for wanting to be the best wife and mother you can. I think it is great that you are self-aware and want to work on this. Feeling "unhappy and trapped" may also mean that you are believing these negative thoughts are absolutely true. We have lots and lots of thoughts throughout the day. Sometimes we pay a lot of attention to some and some we ignore. Right now these thoughts are getting a lot of your attention and perhaps you are thinking because you are thinking them they are true. Is it really true that you are trapped? You also said that you have an amazing life. It doesn't sound like you are only having negative thoughts. You have some positive ones, too. However, you are giving a lot of weight to the negative thoughts, more weight than the positive ones. I also wonder if you are struggling with the fact that you are even having this thought. One thing that can be helpful is to recognize that you are having a thought, that it is a negative thought, that thinking it does not make it true, and to let it go. This is the basis for mindfulness work that can be really helpful. It is a great place for you to start so you can balance out your thoughts and emotions. Best of luck to you!

Question 145: I'm in my mid 20s with a husband and children. I love my family, but I feel like I've lost my identity, and I don't know who I am other than a mom and wife. At times, all I can think is what I gave up and how I feel unhappy and trapped, but I know I'd feel like worse without them. I loathe myself at times. I have an amazing life, so why can't I just enjoy it?

Answer 145: It sounds like there are some parts of your life that you really enjoy it and also some things that you wish were different. You say you feel like nothing more than a wife and mom, so I wonder if you could make a list of what else you are (friend, daughter, etc.). I also wonder if you could list your positive attributes or skills. I don't know what you gave up, but I wonder if there is some way that you could spend an hour or so a week working on things that you like and/or spending some time with what you did before you had children. For example, if you're missing a certain part of your career, maybe you could work with your husband to come up with a plan where you could do whenever that is for one day a week. There are often a lot of small changes that can lead you in that direction. Of course, that is assuming that you want to continue being involved with what you were doing before. If not, what else do you want to do? What is it that makes you feel happy? What do you look forward to? Remember that looking forward to having an hour or two where you can do something for yourself does not mean that you are not a good mother or wife. These ideas can coexist. Can you talk with your husband about how you are feeling? Do you have trust for one another with feelings such as these?

Question 146: I have been dealing with depression and anxiety for a number of years. I have been on medication, but lately my depression has felt worse. Can counseling help?

Answer 146: Thank you for asking this important question. I find that there are three steps to getting ready for treatment. Step one is expressing interest in wanting to receive treatment for the outcome of positive behavioral change. Congratulations you did the first step! You are showing your readiness to start counseling by asking this question. Now the second step is to find a counselor who specializes in treating

clients with Anxiety and Depression. The therapeutic orientations I have found to be helpful in treating clients with Anxiety and Depression are a combination of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy with Mindfulness, and Solution Focused Brief Therapy. Receiving meditation for your symptoms is part of the treatment, and the other part is receiving counseling to increase your resilience for future events. Research has found that medication and psychotherapy treatments together shows the most effective outcome for Depression. The third step is to increase your positive self-talk to motivate yourself to attend treatment. As counselors, we are aware of the anxieties and fears that are associated with talking to a new professional for the first time. However, remind yourself that you are doing this to improve your well being. I hope this was helpful, and good luck with your treatment journey.

Question 147: I have been dealing with depression and anxiety for a number of years. I have been on medication, but lately my depression has felt worse. Can counseling help?

Answer 147: Certainly counselling can help. however, there is a caveat, namely, you will need the right counsellor with the right approach. This leads to two questions: 1) What are the identifiers for the right counsellor, and 2) What is the right approach? 1) What are the identifiers for the right counsellor? The right counsellor will almost certainly have a lot of experience. He or she will have done a lot personal work and have an ongoing practice of inner work both on their own and with the support of an experienced therapist. This person will be viewing you as a human being with challenges, not as a diagnostic category. He or she will be willing to work with you over an extended period of time and have experience doing such work. Further they will be well versed in approaches that are responsive to you in the moment and overall. The in-depth work will be collaboratively designed in an ongoing way that is responsive to you, the moment, your overall life experience, and their in-the-moment experience. It goes without saying that you will subjectively evaluate the felt sense of connection with this person and the feeling that they are invested in their work with you, value you as a human being, and value the connection. As well, it is crucial that you feel this connection and that your therapist 'gets you.' 2) What is the right approach? As Carl Jung stated, "When the doctor sits down with the patient he (or she) must drop all theories and learn the theory of this person." The approach must include a bond between you and your therapist that is in a continuous process of development, attention to pre-verbal imprinting, development of awareness ability, ongoing development of the ability to attend to and stay with inner experience, development of a process orientation, attention to egoic structures that were seeded from the earliest days in the service of perceptions of threats to needs being met, identification of current egoic states and work with these inner selves and their relationship with each other to facilitate movement from developmental points of arrest, increased ability to access and contain non-ordinary states of consciousness, attending to what is, and working with this in the service of moving towards optimal human development. depression is generally experienced as the system shutting down. anxiety is a signal that something is wrong. anxiety is not the problem. it is a sign that there is a problem. the core of these issues is a lack of inner security that is the outcome of insufficient bonding. the work of psychotherapy is to establish an environment and relationship that will facilitate work with the bonding ruptures and re-initiation of the developmental process that stopped at an early stage.

Question 148: I have been dealing with depression and anxiety for a number of years. I have been on medication, but lately my depression has felt worse. Can counseling help?

Answer 148: My initial response: consider a more comprehensive MH assessment to determine other factors. A medical evaluation is warranted to rule out poor health issues. Blood work is helpful. Review what hadn't helped.

Question 149: I have been dealing with depression and anxiety for a number of years. I have been on medication, but lately my depression has felt worse. Can counseling help?

Answer 149: From whom do you get anti-depressants? This person should be talking with you to know whether the pills are helping or not. Trust your own instinct that the pills aren't helping you. Pills work differently for everyone and not all people feel better from them. It is also possible the particular pills have lost their effectiveness because after around six to eight months, this usually happens. Try to understand what is depressing you. This is slow work since you may have many theories. Just by addressing your own emotional needs and life structure in a caring and respectful way, may improve your mood so that you'll feel less depressed.

Question 150: There are many people willing to lovingly provide me with a home. I have food, clothes, and a university education, but I never feel like I belong. Even when I have a good time with people who are supposed to be close, I feel like I'm just out with friends and I never go home.

Answer 150: From the little bit you wrote, my guess is you haven't figured out where and how to lay down your own set of roots. Usually people who have a university level education are old enough to work in order to support themselves. Unless you have a medical condition which limits or prevents you from working a full-time job, would you guess that the effort and thought involved in deciding in what professional area and geographic location to look for work, would offer you a way to establish your identity? My suggestion is to pay more attention to your own likes, dislikes, and interests. To know these areas more deeply would define the type of people with whom you identify, have a common interest and with whom you'd like to socialize. The more you realize who you are, the easier time you'll have to find like-minded others and feel securely at home with them and yourself. Again, if you have a medical disability or condition which prevents employment or easily socializing with other people, then this advice would need to be modified for your specific strengths.

Question 151: There are many people willing to lovingly provide me with a home. I have food, clothes, and a university education, but I never feel like I belong. Even when I have a good time with people who are supposed to be close, I feel like I'm just out with friends and I never go home.

Answer 151: For some people, having a sense of belonging takes some time. You mentioned that you have an education and some basic daily needs. I wonder if you may be able to look at your relationship with yourself and what makes you feel happy, safe, and having a sense of accomplishment. If you have those feelings, I wonder how you define trust and who you trust. You say you have a good time with people who are "supposed to be close," so I wonder what keeps them from feeling close. I have also been wondering if you have been emotionally hurt in the past, and if so, you may have some protective defenses that you use (maybe on purpose, maybe not) to protect yourself from being hurt again. Remember that this idea comes in degrees where you can be more perfect in certain situations and a little less in others. Being emotionally protected is on a spectrum or continuum, where you can make an infinite amount of adjustments or changes with different people and situations. I also wonder what it is that you want in your "home," and how you define it. Consider giving yourself permission to think about how you would define your perfect home in a world where there were no realistic restrictions (such as money or location). After you have that, consider what parts of that you can have. Perhaps there is a small part that you could make a reality within a week or so. Thank you for reaching out. If this continues to be difficult for you, consider seeing a local mental health professional so you can discuss some more specific details.

Question 152: I am really worried about one of my friends because I think he has major depression. He disagrees with me on that. He is shut off when it comes to talking to people and telling them how he really feels. He told me he feels empty inside and the only emotions he feels are anger and sadness. I suggested to him to get help and talk to his mom about it but he refuses.

Answer 152: First of all, I can tell that you really care about your friend and I think it's great that you are reaching out with your concern. It's hard to determine whether your friend would meet the criteria for an official diagnosis of depression without working with him, however, whether he does or not, therapy may be beneficial for him in working through these difficult feelings and relational challenges. Unfortunately, you can't make your friend get help. He will ultimately need to make that decision for himself, however, you can talk to him about your concerns and your hopes that he will reach out for help.

Question 153: I've become so jaded that I can't control my thoughts. I cannot focus on anything and been having anxiety attacks.

Answer 153: Maybe your thoughts require your attention and the best course would be to pay attention and follow them! If you're in an especially stressful or uncertain time in your life, then the best way through is to understand the tension you feel. It keeps trying to get you to know what's going on deep within you. Anxiety is a sign of stress and weariness. Your thoughts are a chance to simply rest and know what they would like you to know. Then, when that process is finished your anxiety will no longer be necessary and will most likely leave you alone.

Question 154: I've become so jaded that I can't control my thoughts. I cannot focus on anything and been having anxiety attacks.

Answer 154: I imagine that it's pretty disconcerting to feel as though you lost yourself. When you said that you are jaded, I'm not sure whether you mean that you are jaded toward someone, something, life in general, or some combination thereof. One of the difficult things about anxiety is that anxiety can lead to more anxiety because of being concerned about having another panic attack. Consider remembering that panic attacks usually only last a few minutes and the reason they don't go away right away is because of the way your brain releases chemicals because some part of your brain is reacting as if you are in danger.

in some way. As far as finding yourself, you may consider looking at what parts of each day you can control as a way to stay centered. You could also focus on something that makes you feel happy and/or comfortable. You may also consider the list of values here to give yourself an idea of what is most important to you, what it is that you are living by now, and what values you would prefer to live by. <http://www.therapistaid.com/therapy-worksheet/values-clarification> If this proves to be difficult, consider seeing a local therapist.

Question 155: When I get around a particular person or when I go home, I'm just sad or irritated. The feeling comes and goes all day every day. I don't know what wrong. I'm not sure if I'm just making up symptoms and problems in my head or if there is something actually wrong.

Answer 155: Feelings are real, is very unlikely that you are making them up since they are a response to the thoughts in your mind and your daily experiences and interactions. Often we assume that feeling sadness is bad and that we should only feel happiness and joy; but all feelings have a purpose: joy, sadness, anger, frustration, excitement, anxiety, among others. Is not healthy to experience the same feeling for a long time, so we should learn to identify what causes them and how to process them so you can navigate through life experiences with more ease. I am a Licensed Professional Counselor in Texas, currently providing services in West Houston. You may reach me at 787-466-5478 to schedule an appointment.

Me he estado sintiendo triste Cuando salgo con una persona en particular o cuando llego a casa, estoy triste o irritado. El sentimiento viene y va todo el día. No sé qué está mal. No estoy seguro si estoy inventando los síntomas y problemas en mi cabeza o si algo realmente está mal. Los sentimientos son muy reales, y es muy poco probable que los estés inventando, por que los sentimientos son una respuesta tanto a los pensamientos que hay en nuestra cabeza, y, a las situaciones que nos ocurren día a día. Muchas veces pensamos que sentirnos triste está mal, y que solo debemos sentirnos alegres, pero todas las emociones tienen un propósito y razón de ser, tanto la alegría, como la tristeza, el coraje, la frustración, la excitación o el desespero, entre otros. No es bueno quedarnos estancados una emoción. Así que es importante aprender a identificar que causa nuestros sentimientos, como procesarlos para poder superar nuestras emociones y movernos de una experiencia a otra con más tranquilidad.

Soy Consejera Profesional Licenciada en Texas y Puerto Rico, veo clientes en el este de Houston y proveo servicios de tele terapia. Para una cita puedes llamar al 787-466-5478.

Question 156: I am a teenager. I have been experiencing major episodes of depression (if that's even what it is) for several years. It's always getting worse. I have been having panic attacks, feeling like I can't control my fears, and I can't even bring myself to care if I live or die anymore. The problem is that I don't know who to ask for help. When I try to talk to my parents, I freeze completely and can't do anything but make a joke because never once in my life have we talked about our feelings.

Answer 156: I understand that talking about our feelings can be awkward and using jokes is a way to relieve that awkwardness, but there is a right or wrong way to talk about your feelings. The important part is to recognize that you need help addressing those feelings and reaching out, which you are doing already. Having small conversations with your family is helpful, you can explain to them that you have been experiencing emotional discomfort and would like to talk to them about it. Since you been experiencing anxiety, panic attacks, and have thought about dying, It is VERY important that you ask them to help you make an appointment with a mental health professional. Those symptoms indicate that your body is having a hard time managing intense feelings and it will be helpful if you understand why they occur and how to cope with them. You may contact your school counselor or you may schedule an appointment with a local therapist. You may contact the Texas Crisis Hotline 800-989-6884 where you can talk or chat with mental health professionals or schedule a teletherapy session. The National Crisis Hotline is also available for calling and texting 1-800-273-8255. I am a Licensed Professional Counselor in Texas, currently providing services in West Houston. You may reach me at 787-466-5478 to schedule an appointment.

¿Cómo hablo de mis sentimientos de depresión y con quién hablo? Soy un adolescente. He estado experimentando episodios de depresión severa (si es lo que creo) por muchos años. Siempre se pone peor. He estado teniendo ataques de pánico, sintiendo que no puedo controlar mis miedos y sintiendo que ya no importa si quiero vivir o morir. El problema es que ya no sé a quién pedirle ayuda. Cuando

intento hablar con mis padres, Me congelo y solo puedo hacer bromas porque nunca en mi vida hemos hablado de nuestros sentimientos. Entiendo que hablar de tus emociones puede hacernos sentir inadecuados, y bromear es una manera de manejar ese sentimiento incómodo, pero no hay forma correcta o incorrecta de hablar sobre tus sentimientos. Lo importante es reconocer que necesitas ayuda para manejarlos, y ya tu estas en ese proceso. Tener pequeñas conversaciones con tu familia te ayudara a explicarles los sentimientos que estas experimentando. Es importante que les pidas hacer una cita con un profesional de la salud mental, ya que has estado experimentando síntomas que indican que tu cuerpo ya no puede manejar tus sentimientos y necesita nuevas herramientas. Puedes contactar a tu consejero escolar, o a un proveedor de salud mental cerca de ti o por teléfono. Mientras tanto, puedes llamar a la línea de crisis de Texas 800-989-6884 para hablar con un profesional de salud mental. La línea nacional de crisis también esta disponible en todos los Estados Unidos y proveen servicios en español 1-800-273-8255

Yo soy una Consejera Profesional Licenciada en Texas y Puerto Rico, veo clientes en el este de Houston y proveo servicios de tele terapia. Para una cita puedes llamar al 787-466-5478.

Question 157: I feel lazy and numb. I have no interest in things.

Answer 157: Maybe right now it is time for you to rest before the next wave of new activity comes along. To have "no interest" may mean you are already so saturated with recent situations and their meaning that you are naturally withdrawing in order to regain your energy.

Question 158: I'm currently struggling with diagnosed depression, anxiety, and Misophonia. Also, I am 99% sure I have Borderline Personality Disorder and Avoidant Personality Disorder. I read the DSM-IV, taken college psychology, etc. I know it in my heart I have them. Is self-diagnosing okay with the right research?

Answer 158: Any diagnosis is limited in its usefulness. Knowing the name of some typical ways you may feel, think and behave, doesn't help you or anyone to understand why the person is the way they are and how to change any of these characteristics. Both self-diagnosing and being diagnosed are equally unhelpful to know why you are the way you are and what to do about it. Consider yourself a person who wants to find a better way to be who you are, and this will get you further with better results than to read a list of descriptions which all are very indicting and negative sounding.

Question 159: I'm currently struggling with diagnosed depression, anxiety, and Misophonia. Also, I am 99% sure I have Borderline Personality Disorder and Avoidant Personality Disorder. I read the DSM-IV, taken college psychology, etc. I know it in my heart I have them. Is self-diagnosing okay with the right research?

Answer 159: Hello, and thank you for your question. Self-diagnosing is something that we all do about one health issue or another. Taking a guess about what may or may not be happening to us is completely normal, however the actual clinical diagnoses of a mental health disorder requires a licensed mental health professional. Here are a few reasons for this: 1. Making a clinical diagnosis often requires other things besides matching up the symptoms of a disorder. To come to a diagnoses for any of the things you mentioned, a counselor would consult the DSM, but they may also use some type of screening tool, assessment or scale. Many disorders have similarities and it requires someone with training to tease out the differences in the symptoms. 2. Our judgement is sometimes off when it comes to assessing ourselves. We really can't be objective. Something as serious as determining a diagnosis really needs to be done by someone who has that objectivity. In addition, once you know your diagnosis, treating it usually requires help from a professional. 3. Sometimes the symptoms of a mental health disorder makes self-diagnoses impossible, in and of itself. For example, someone could be having hallucinations or delusions and not realize it. That would clearly make it impossible for them to diagnose themselves. There are many examples where something like this could happen with different mental health disorders. There are other reasons, but these are three important ones. Now, does this mean that you are wrong about your diagnosis? Maybe not. You may be correct. But, it is important to get this confirmed by a professional mental health clinician. If a disorder is then found, you can begin to talk about treatment. Hope this was helpful. Be well. Robin J. Landwehr, DBH, LPCC, NCC

Question 160: In the past year, two of my best and only close friends moved to different states. Now I have nobody to hang out with. I'm always alone, and I honestly haven't hung out with anyone since they left. I'm super lonely. What should I do to make new friends? Because they moved and I have no friends now, I think I'm falling into a depression or something. I just need help.

Answer 160: Definitely it is sad to lose friends who are a regular part of daily life. How did you meet the

two friends who just moved away? Its possible that you could look for similar situations and see if anyone catches your interest to know as a friend.Keeping in mind that friendship is based on trust and common interests, and that these qualities require time to observe and develop, think of what you can do to keep happy while these paths unfold.In addition to being open to meeting new friends, involve yourself in projects from which you'll feel satisfied by your own results.

Question 161: I am the problem. I make my family argue because of me. My mom has even said it. It's constantly like this. I cause problems. I am worthless. I can't stop crying. Sometimes I have to cry myself to sleep. I can't even leave my room because my family can't stand me.

Answer 161: I am so very sorry for how pressured and sad you feel right now.Definitely all family members have an effect on the other ones.From what you write, your family members are not considering the effect their negative comments have on you.Also, keep in mind that each person is responsible for deciding to argue or find a different way to discuss a problem. You are not in control of the other people in your family.More likely they take the easy way out and blame you for what they don't want to know about themselves.Stay aware that the family's decision to target you doesn't mean that you are doing something wrong. Certainly your existence is not wrong, which is the degree to which the unfairness seems to have spread.What to do about it is read about family systems to see more explanations on how you are being unfairly treated.Also stay in touch with friends bc these are the people who value and respect you.

Question 162: I'm depressed often, and my mind goes a million miles a minute. Every once in a while, things are okay for a few days. After a bit, I start noticing that I am picking at my skin profusely. After roughly a week, the anxiety is back and still picking. Sometimes I find myself causing fights to have change.

Answer 162: One way to know yourself a little better and why the dynamics you describe take place, is to understand the particular dynamics of your life context.Look at your major areas of where you spend your time, whether you are happy with the people with whom you socialize, how you feel toward family members and how they seem to feel toward you.If you examine your relationships and life this way then you may start to notice areas where you have some control or at least a say in how your life is going.If you are socializing among people whom you don't like, have a job you don't like and your family mistreats you and you mistreats them, for example, then anxiety and depression are an understandable natural result.If you make improvements in your life and relationships, even tiny improvements and even the effort and intention to improve, you may find your anxiety and depression dissipating.People usually feel their worst when they feel lack of control in their life.Look for ways you can regain and/or strengthen yours.

Question 163: I'm depressed often, and my mind goes a million miles a minute. Every once in a while, things are okay for a few days. After a bit, I start noticing that I am picking at my skin profusely. After roughly a week, the anxiety is back and still picking. Sometimes I find myself causing fights to have change.

Answer 163: Hello, and thank you for your question. I am very sorry that you are struggling. I have a few thoughts and perhaps some of my colleagues will add something else. Depression and anxiety can both be chronic conditions, as you have experienced. This means that they may always require treatment in order to have some kind of relief from them. Treatment could mean medication or some kind of counseling. Some people may take medication for the rest of their lives. Some people may go to counseling at times when the depression and anxiety worsens. As you mentioned, sometimes the symptoms improve for a little while, but they can also come back. When they do, it is important to talk to your medical provider if you are getting medication, and/or to go back to your counselor and talk to them about the symptoms that have returned. Skin picking and some other behaviors are not uncommon for people who are experiencing something like anxiety. Many people report that they do this when they feel anxious, and some say it calms them down. It is not really a surprise that you are constantly trying to change things and even starting fights to do so. These are ways to try to avoid, escape and distract yourself from the feelings of anxiety and depression. That is a very normal thing to do. Nobody likes these feelings, and so distraction is something we naturally try in order to get rid of them. The problem is that things like distraction and escape do not work as a long-term solution. In fact, they usually make things worse for many different reasons. Depression and anxiety can be treated, but it is likely something you will need some help with. I would recommend finding a counselor who has experience with anxiety and depression. Medication can be helpful, but I still recommend counseling. The reason for this is that the medication can help with symptoms, while the counseling can address the symptoms and provide you with very helpful skills. Be well,Robin J. Landwehr, DBH, LPCC, NCC

Question 164: I'm very depressed. How do I find someone to talk to?

Answer 164: You have already taken the brave first step of making the decision to heal from it and find a professional that will help you do so. There are lots of different options nowadays for therapists, as you can see them online or in an office. My biggest tip for you is to use Psychology Today or Counsel Chat to find a therapist. Enter in your zip code and you will find many different therapists you can talk to. Be sure to find someone that you most resonate with and ask them any questions you may have. Many times, therapists will provide free consultations and this can be a great opportunity to see if you are a good fit.

Question 165: I'm very depressed. How do I find someone to talk to?

Answer 165: The first step, which you've taken, is actually wanting to talk to someone. It's a great sign that you are seeking to reach out for help. And there are therapists everywhere (there are even therapists online, so you don't have to be that close to them or their office.) There are several sites that I refer people to to begin the process of looking for a therapist. I usually have them start with psychologytoday.com. Once there (there is a therapist directory), you can narrow choices down by ages that they work with, insurance they accept, depression as an issue they focus in, etc. You can also narrow down by therapist's modality, but that can get complicated if you aren't too familiar with the various theoretical approaches. It's important that you find someone that you feel understands your situation. That might mean that they identify an issue you are having in their profile, or on their professional website. But, you should try to meet a couple of different therapists if you aren't quite sure. It can be challenging that first session, but your best (note, not "THE best") therapist will help you feel comfortable (or as comfortable as possible, given therapy can be uncomfortable especially at first) and understood from the get-go. I have found that asking friends or family for names and recommendations is also a common way to find a therapist, because it can come from a trusted referral source. But remember that we are all different, so what works for one might not always be a good fit. And again, it could take a couple of first sessions with different therapists to know if someone is a good fit (sometimes, it can take a few sessions.) And if there is no one around that can give a name or two, then searching online is quite common and can yield positive results. And try not to give up! Finding a therapist is not easy, but finding a good one for you is extremely rewarding.

Question 166: I'm very depressed. How do I find someone to talk to?

Answer 166: Hi, Reaching out here is a great start! I recommend looking for somebody in your area that works with people experiencing depression. After you've chosen somebody to try, feel free to call them for a consultation! A lot of counselors and therapists offer free consultations, and remember that your counselor is working for you, so make sure they are a good fit! I hope this has been of some help.

Question 167: I'm very depressed. How do I find someone to talk to?

Answer 167: Hang in there! Feeling depressed sucks but talking with someone can really help - so it's awesome that you're already trying to figure out how to find that person. Tons of good suggestions already but to add my two cents - you can find therapists in your area and read a little bit about them to find someone you like the sound of via this website, and also via www.psychologytoday.com; if you have health insurance your insurer might be able to make recommendations as to therapists covered by your plan, or if you happen to be in school, the school itself should be able to connect you with either their own counselor or a center that they recommend nearby. Finding someone can take a few calls or a bit of research so if you need some immediate support, or find yourself having thoughts of hurting yourself, you can also call the great folks who run the Suicide crisis line <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org> - they are great in moments of crisis.

Question 168: I'm very depressed. How do I find someone to talk to?

Answer 168: Great that you realize talking with a professional counselor about how you feel, would be helpful! If you'd like a very fast response by phone, then google "depression hotline" for where you live.

And, if you have a specific topic which upsets you then google around with this topic to see if there are services specific to your interest. If you've got time to invest in looking for the best fit therapist for yourself, then google "therapy" or "therapist". There will be many, many names which come up. I know I sound like I work for google only it is the easiest way to find lots of information. I send you good luck!

Question 169: I'm very depressed. How do I find someone to talk to?

Answer 169: Sorry to hear you are feeling that way. Is there a 24-hour helpline where you are that you can call? Here is a website with some numbers to call:

<https://psychcentral.com/lib/common-hotline-phone-numbers/> You could talk to your family doctor and they could help you find a therapist? You could also use this website to find a therapist.

<https://therapists.psychologytoday.com>. I sincerely hope you find someone to talk to.

Question 170: I'm very depressed. How do I find someone to talk to?

Answer 170: If there is no one in your life with whom you feel comfortable, I would recommend identifying someone on this site, psychology today or goodtherapy.org who is in your area, then give that therapist a call to see if you would be a good match.

Question 171: I'm constantly in a bad mood and I have no energy. Is that depression?

Answer 171: Depression has many different signs and symptoms and looks different for every person. Often times people think depression is more about feeling "sad," but depression can, in fact, express itself through irritability (or bad mood as you say) and lack of energy. According to the DSM-V (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders), depression includes the following symptoms:-Depressed mood-Irritable mood-Decreased interest or pleasure in activities you usually participate in or enjoy-Significant weight change or change in appetite-Change in sleep (insomnia or hypersomnia)-Psychomotor agitation or retardation-Fatigue or loss in energy -Feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt-Diminished ability to concentrate or indecisiveness-Thoughts of suicide or plan The great news is that there are many ways to improve depressive symptoms. If you are up for it, perhaps the best place to start is by seeing a physician or a therapist who can help determine how severe the depression is and can suggest methods of addressing the depression that fit your lifestyle, values, and capabilities. Good luck!

Question 172: I'm in my late teens and live with my dad. The only time I go out is for my college classes. Sometimes when I see my friends I want to talk with them, but sometimes I won't want to talk to them for days or even weeks. Sometimes I feel i'm not worth knowing or i'm never going to do anything right.

Are they right, am I depressed?

Answer 172: I wouldn't necessarily say you are clinically depressed based on that first paragraph in your question. Because that could describe more introverted behavior (people who feel more energy from a more internal approach as opposed to those who feel more energy from being among others.) It is more in the second paragraph that I would be inclined to say that further exploration is definitely needed. The diagnosis of Major Depressive Disorder is more than just those two symptoms, but there are more mild forms of depression that can be equally damaging to someone if left untreated. However, one of the trickiest parts of this is that someone who

feels they are not worth knowing may also believe they are not worth having a therapist know them, and even less worthy of being helped. Do you feel that might be you? If so, could we acknowledge that as a part of the big picture, and all wrapped up in these feelings about yourself, and realizing that thoughts and feelings aren't always rational (in that you are worth getting the help)? My recommendation just from the information would be that you seek out a supportive, listening ear in the form of a therapist, who can allow you the space to express some of these difficult experiences, and help you name FOR YOURSELF, what your struggle is. To empower you to name it for yourself, as opposed to everyone labeling and/or judging you for it, might be an extremely worthwhile start for you.

Question 173: I'm in my late teens and live with my dad. The only time I go out is for my college classes. Sometimes when I see my friends I want to talk with them, but sometimes I won't want to talk to them for days or even weeks. Sometimes I feel i'm not worth knowing or i'm never going to do anything right.

Are they right, am I depressed?

Answer 173: Hi, Depression can look different for everybody. It sounds to me like what your family is trying to tell you that they are worried about you, and think this behavior might be a result of depression. If what you are experiencing seems fine and normal to you, it may be nothing to worry about. It is very common to have thoughts of doubt about yourself and your abilities, and it may help to open up about those thoughts to people you trust. Developing relationships with friends and families can be a very rewarding experience, but it can take a brave person to reach out!

Question 174: I'm in my late teens and live with my dad. The only time I go out is for my college classes. Sometimes when I see my friends I want to talk with them, but sometimes I won't want to talk to them for days or even weeks. Sometimes I feel i'm not worth knowing or i'm never going to do anything right.

Are they right, am I depressed?

Answer 174: If we were in my office together, I would offer that most likely you are feeling somewhat depressed. It's most important for me to impress that you "don't have to live like this..." Other helpful information: Have you experienced similar symptoms before? Anyone in your family been depressed before? Based on other physiological signs, like quality of sleep, appetite, energy/motivation, I would present you with some treatment options, one of which would be to consult with a medication management provider to assess your symptoms and provide additional information for you to consider.

Question 175: I'm in my late teens and live with my dad. The only time I go out is for my college classes. Sometimes when I see my friends I want to talk with them, but sometimes I won't want to talk to them for days or even weeks. Sometimes I feel i'm not worth knowing or i'm never going to do anything right.

Are they right, am I depressed?

Answer 175: I would not focus on what other people say. Do you feel what you have described impacts your day to day functioning? Try to evaluate how is your self esteem, motivation and self confidence. How about negative thoughts or hopelessness? Any concerns about your grades sliding down? If you answered yes to any questions, may be its time to see a counsellor.

Question 176: I'm in my late teens and live with my dad. The only time I go out is for my college classes. Sometimes when I see my friends I want to talk with them, but sometimes I won't want to talk to them for days or even weeks. Sometimes I feel i'm not worth knowing or i'm never going to do anything right.

Are they right, am I depressed?

Answer 176: Although some people managing depression feel sad or "down", it is a possible to have depression without an obvious sad mood. Many people indicate that they feel numb or flat. People managing depression often have low motivation. They may stay in bed for long periods of time and only get up for absolutely necessary activities. People with depression may also feel inappropriate guilt or shame. If you have been experiencing the symptoms you described for more than two weeks, I recommend that you see a counselor to get a more in-depth evaluation. The symptoms you are experiencing are typical of depression, and with a bit of support, you could regain energy and improved self-esteem. The stigma surrounding mental health can make a diagnosis or a label of depression seem scary. The important thing to remember is that mental health disorders are as important as and as treatable physical health disorders. Hang in there. Healing is possible!

Question 177: I'm in my late teens and live with my dad. The only time I go out is for my college classes. Sometimes when I see my friends I want to talk with them, but sometimes I won't want to talk to them for days or even weeks. Sometimes I feel i'm not worth knowing or i'm never going to do anything right.

Are they right, am I depressed?

Answer 177: Hello. Being a teenager in our society today can cause depression quite easily. We look at the world in which we live, and the doubts we have about being able to make a contribution, or to have value and worth with the people around us, and we begin to internalize those messages of self-worth. If that alone were not enough, you are trying to figure out where you want to go in life, and who you are supposed to be in the world. Teens are faced with pressures of being judged by your peers for how you present yourself; following current fashions; possessing the trendy things; and hanging out with the "in crowd." Here's a "secret" that might help with most of those issues: Not much of those problems I've just described will really matter as they might seem to right now, in the real world. If you are feeling depression because you feel you lack some of those things that are seen as important by others (like your peers), I can assure you that being someone who is kind; compassionate; understanding of another person's suffering; and the effort you make to be the best person you can become in the world, will far outweigh anything you experienced in your teen years. When we are young, we judge everything based on what our peers have, what they say, the way they dress, who's popular, who's not popular, and for the most of it, all of that is external. So the question becomes, are you trying to fix the feelings on the inside (the internal stuff), with the trappings of all the stuff on the outside (the external)? That is to say, do you feel that if you had what your friends have, you would be happy and less depressed? Depression is usually a symptom of something much bigger, it is not typically a problem by itself (just as a person who experiences a high temperature may likely have a cold). So fixing the symptom requires looking at the possible causes. In your post, you mentioned that you live with your dad. Are your parents divorced or separated, or has your mom passed away? Either of these circumstances could certainly cause depression. Finding out when you started feeling depressed, might be able to pinpoint the trigger that caused it, which requires looking at when you last felt really happy. It is also important to keep in mind,

that as a teenager, your emotions are often being experienced very randomly, and sometimes without cause. It is part of your emotional development, but as you grow older can learn how to manage those emotions better and practice doing things that help you feel better (without causing harm to yourself). Have you tried talking to your dad about your feelings, or maybe another relative if you feel safer doing so? Do you have a friend who is your best friend...someone who is there for you no matter what? If not, there is a service you can use that is a national number for teens to talk with teen peer counselors. They are teens like yourself, but they have some insights that might be helpful. Its called Teen Line (<https://teenlineonline.org/>). It helped me when I was in my teens, and has helped lots of other teens as well. You might find a place to get some referrals to other local services in your area. If you want are in Washington state and would like to connect with me directly, you call link to me via my profile page. Or perhaps finding a counselor in your local area might be useful. Most towns and cities have some form of low cost counseling. You might also check with your school for assistance. Don't be afraid of not always knowing how you are supposed to feel. Adults don't always have a handle on it either. Being a teenager carries a lot stress, fear, and uncertainty. But you are not alone, and there is help if you reach out for it. I wish for you the very best, and bright future.

Question 178: I'm in my late teens and live with my dad. The only time I go out is for my college classes. Sometimes when I see my friends I want to talk with them, but sometimes I won't want to talk to them for days or even weeks. Sometimes I feel i'm not worth knowing or i'm never going to do anything right.

Are they right, am I depressed?

Answer 178: The answer to the question of whether or not you're depressed, is less meaningful than what you are doing to feel strong and secure in your life. Otherwise, people shortcut themselves to go deeper in understanding who they are and what they'd like to do with their lives, and accept "depression" as though it is their new name. What you write sounds like classic depression. What to do about this feeling is to get closer to yourself in an accepting way. Assume that what you do in daily living is somehow necessary.

Unless you are doing immoral or illegal actions to other people, to accept your own wishes as truth will open you to appreciate why you do what you do. Make believe you're interesting and find out more about who you are, if you have trouble to start with thinking of yourself as worth understanding. The more you appreciate who you are and your unique strengths, vulnerabilities and fears, the more these will dissolve by what seems on their own. In fact they will disappear bc you are believing in yourself and your ways. Good luck!

Question 179: I'm in my late teens and live with my dad. The only time I go out is for my college classes. Sometimes when I see my friends I want to talk with them, but sometimes I won't want to talk to them for days or even weeks. Sometimes I feel i'm not worth knowing or i'm never going to do anything right.

Are they right, am I depressed?

Answer 179: I'm always wary of assigning a term to a feeling, as often that term becomes more important than the feeling itself. From the very little that you have written, it is clear that you are going through something that has made you extremely low, affected your self-esteem and motivation, limits your enjoyment of formerly pleasurable activities and affects your feelings of self-worth. All of these are aspects of being depressed, though you can be depressed and still not have "depression". Counseling is definitely a place where you can go and sort out why you have had such a sudden a drastic change to your mood. Sometimes our mood can be effected by changes in our routine, losses or significant disappointments. Talking with someone will not only help you to better understand why you are feeling this way, but they will also help you to ground yourself and learn strategies and tools to help you to manage your mood and strategize for the future. I do hope that you will reach out. Feeling alone can be harmful over long periods of time, as it can stop us from seeking out the support we need.

Question 180: She has trouble falling and staying asleep and she's always either extremely hungry or not hungry at all. She also gets angry and feels like crying really easily for no reason. She says she is always "kind of down."

Is this depression? What can I do to help her?

Answer 180: Sounds like signs of someone who is depressed. Since the person in question is your friend, offer your friendship to listen to any situations or feelings she has about herself and the way her life is going. Depressed people are often lonely people and feel as though no one around them cares or notices them. Your willingness to be available to her may lift her spirits. Feeling loved goes a long way to dissolving depressed feelings. Also, if in the beginning when you offer to talk, there is a high chance she'll be defensive and turn down your offer. Try again on another day and then another day. When people feel

depressed they usually shut down. So you may need a few or several tries before your friend accepts your offer to show her you care about how she is doing. Also, watch for signs within yourself that your friends' depression is not sinking your emotions. Depressed people are draining to be around because they often see and talk about only the negatives and drawbacks of situations.

Question 181: I'm a teenager and I go through periods of moodiness. I have extreme feelings (but I bury them), and then I feel nothing - just empty and emotionless.

I have trust issues, low self esteem, an extreme fear of abandonment, and I constantly reevaluate my relationships. I also don't know who I am as a person. I'm not happy overall, but I'm not suicidal. Can I just feel happy?

Answer 181: Sometimes the way to feel happy is to address all the questions you just described. Teenage years are the first time any of us starts to feel and recognize our uniqueness. The fact that you recognize your great range of feelings, as uncomfortable as they may sometimes be, is healthy. Also healthy is that you are asking for opinions of therapists who would be familiar with when a range of feelings shows an out of the ordinary problem. One path to take is to reflect on the topics you wrote here and especially to ask yourself your reasons for how the problem started and what it would take for it to resolve. Do you have trust issues because someone broke your trust? You're entitled to a repair of your trust by the other person. Even if the person never offers this to you, to know you deserve to be restored to whole, may help you feel more secure. The same is true with the other topics, abandonment and relationships generally. The more you continue to value your unique understanding, expectations, and standards, the more likely you'll create relationships which do not have these qualities, and you will restore your sense of hope that other people may treat you in a fair and kind way.

Question 182: I had a very troubled up bringing and I'm currently dealing with a lot right now. I know some people may not think so, but to me it's a lot. I feel overwhelmed. Could this be depression?

I use to be in therapy as a child. All throughout elementary, middle, and high school I had counseling 2-3 times a week. I haven't been in counseling lately though.

Answer 182: What matters most is how you feel and what you're doing, with whom you're interacting, whether you feel you've got enough interaction to be happy. Whether or not a clinician would decide to identify you as "depressed" matters much less than how you actually are feeling, if you have some ideas as to what might improve your sense of being, and how to go about reaching your goals. If therapy during your childhood made you feel better and you feel you may be depressed, then trying therapy at this point in your life, makes sense. The worst that can happen is you find you feel better than you first understood. The best that can happen is you find a caring therapist who helps you find faith in yourself again.

Question 183: I think adult life is making him depressed and we often sleep in on weekends until 1 or 2 pm. We just eat, smoke weed, watch movies, and he'll go on his phone all day. He doesn't seem motivated to do much and he's often angry.

I have no clue how to help him take his mind off the negative, or to distract him into a different light. How do I help him?

Answer 183: How do you help yourself to believe you require more than what he offers to you? What do you get from this relationship which feels satisfying? To answer this question may in the long term be the best way to help your bf.

Question 184: My mother is combative with me when I say I don't want to talk with her about my depression. She hasn't been supportive of me in the past and she isn't someone that I feel comfortable opening up to. She constantly tries to instigate conversations where she asks me questions that I don't want to or can't answer. I tell her I don't want to talk and she starts arguments with me. How can I get her to understand?

Answer 184: Your situation sounds extremely frustrating. You're doing the right move to state you don't want to discuss your depression with her. I guess you could ask if she would like to know your reason to not speak w her about your depression. If you feel she can handle a reasonable conversation, and you would like to tell her your true reason, then schedule this or bring up the topic at a neutral time, not in the middle of an argument. Having an unsupportive mom is difficult enough to accept. You may feel greater success and peace of mind to meditate on accepting her lack of understanding than to engage in arguing when she starts this.

Question 185: I just feel sad all the time and I don't like anyone in my family. I feel like they're trying to control me and won't let me grow.

Answer 185: Hello, While one can be sad from time to time, feeling sad "all the time" could be a sign of depression. If you feel sad on most days, it is worthwhile speaking to a psychologist to determine whether you suffer clinical depression. Feeling sadness is a normal response to loss, whether you lose a family, friend, job, or something you deem important in your life. However, feeling sadness all the time is a signal that you are not happy about something in your life. If it is related to your family and often relationship with family members could affect our self-esteem and self-worth, then perhaps it is worthwhile exploring what you find unhappy about your relationship with your family. Is it that you do not feel heard, supported or loved? Is it that you feel disrespected, disregarded or feel unimportant? These are just a few examples of common issues that people report that contribute to their depression. To help you to uncover your reasons for your sadness or depression and to cope with them in a healthier and more constructive way, it may be helpful to contact a therapist who could support you with this process. You do not have to deal with it alone. Dr. Virginia Chow, Montreal Psychologist. For more information about depression, please consult my website at www.PsychologyResource.ca

Question 186: I just feel sad all the time and I don't like anyone in my family. I feel like they're trying to control me and won't let me grow.

Answer 186: Understandably the idea of someone who tries to control you, is good reason to feel sad. Your feelings sound like they are very strong and meaningful in your life. Keep in mind that your feelings about others has more to do with one's own self-view than with what the other person is actually doing. Unless the people in your family are actually interrupting and impeding your life in practical ways or by intimidation or other verbal ways to inhibit you, then there is a great chance your feelings of being controlled by other family members has more to do with your fears to be who you are than with any family members' actions.

Question 187: I can't seem to feel any emotion except anxiety, not even for myself.

Answer 187: Thank you for posting. I'm interested to hear some more information; such as, if you live by yourself or family, if you go to school/employed/unemployed, and what kind of things do you like to do with friends or by yourself. Often times, when we are experiencing a strong emotion that we interpret as negative, we put most of our focus on that negative emotion and struggle to see that we do not always feel that specific emotion. There are typically points in the day (even if it is for only in 1 minute intervals) when we do not feel that negative emotion. When we overgeneralize, we use words like "always" or "never" and when we use those words and it may not be totally true, we feel the negative emotion based on an inaccuracy which is not fair to you. Ask yourself some of these questions: Am I being realistic when I'm overgeneralizing things? Have I ever noticed a short period of time that I wasn't feeling anxious? What do I notice when I am feeling anxious? What am I thinking about? When was the last time I felt empathy? What was different when I was able to feel empathy? Hopefully this helps get you started.

Question 188: I can't seem to feel any emotion except anxiety, not even for myself.

Answer 188: Empathy usually falls on a spectrum, meaning that some people show more than others. Empathy is the ability to look at the world through someone else's eyes or "walk a mile in their shoes." There could be some people in your life for whom empathy is easier to feel and those for whom you have no idea what they are experiencing. Empathy is not usually categorized as an emotion, but as something related to emotions. For example, you could have empathy about someone's anxiety. I'm not sure whether you are also referring to the idea that you don't have sympathy for yourself or others. That's a different concept, but also involves different degrees. When you say you don't have emotion except anxiety, I wonder if you are saying that you have anxiety all the time and it may be covering up other emotions? If you are experiencing a lot of anxiety, try to look at what it connects to and find something that changes your focus for a few minutes. This could be any number of activities, such as watching TV, cooking, reading a book, or many other options. If you are feeling as if you are just going through the motions and not having a lot of emotions about anything, if it's just been a few days, it may just be related to a current stress that will lessen in a few days. If it has been quite a while, consider tracking your mood and looking at when you do notice changes in your emotions. There may be some variations that you are not aware of. If you continue to feel anxious and as if you don't have as many emotions as you would like, consider talking with your primary care physician or a local therapist.

Question 189: I can't seem to feel any emotion except anxiety, not even for myself.

Answer 189: Empathy is the ability to tap into our own experience to help us connect with others in order to be

aware of how they are experiencing life.

It is a skill that we learn with practice and refine as we become mature.

If you are feeling anxious, maybe you are able to understand better others who are going through anxiety. But I wonder

if instead of feeling empathy, you may just want to find ways to reduce your anxiety. A good idea is to be very aware

of your anxiety triggers, and once you identify them explore other ways you

could react. ¿Será normal que no sienta empatía? Parece que no puedo experimentar ninguna otra emoción que

no sea ansiedad, ni si quiera por mí misma. Empatía es la habilidad de usar tus propias experiencias para conectarte con otros y estar consciente de la manera que

ellos experimentan la vida. Es una

destreza interpersonal que aprendemos y refinamos con la práctica y según maduramos como personas. Si te estás sintiendo

ansioso, tal vez puedas comprender mejor como otra persona experimenta momentos de ansiedad. Pero me pregunto si en

lugar de estar buscando sentir empatía, realmente quisieras reducir tus niveles

de ansiedad. Una buena manera es estar consciente

que activa la ansiedad, y ya que lo identifiques, explora que otras reacciones pudieras tener.

Question 190: I know I need to deal with my depression. But I don't know how and I don't want to tell anyone. How can I deal with depression without telling anyone?

Answer 190: Love yourself more and treat yourself kindly, with empathy and compassion. Usually when people feel depressed they also feel lonely and isolated. Since at this time you wouldn't want to tell anyone about the way you feel, which includes the possibility that a few of the ones whom you tell would offer you emotional support, give this to yourself. Also consider to make a goal of eventually telling someone whom you are reasonably sure would understand and empathize, about your depression. This will help alleviate the sense of shame, unworthiness and pervasive guilt which often comes along with depression. Sending you good luck!

Question 191: I know I need to deal with my depression. But I don't know how and I don't want to tell anyone. How can I deal with depression without telling anyone?

Answer 191: It can be really tough to tell someone - anyone - that you're feeling depressed. But finding that supportive person that you can share with is a big part of the battle with depression. Depression thrives on being secret, it seems to grow the more we isolate ourselves and hide it away so I'm with Laura Cassidy, when she suggests finding that professional support person so you can start fighting back against your depression. If that feels like too big a step right now, maybe check out a book or two... I'm a big fan of a book called 'Feeling Good' by Dr. David Burns if you want some practical thoughts on tackling depression and on 'Radical Acceptance' by Tara Brach if you prefer something a little more spiritual.

Question 192: I know I need to deal with my depression. But I don't know how and I don't want to tell anyone. How can I deal with depression without telling anyone?

Answer 192: Hello, It is completely understandable that you would not want people to know about your depression. I would first like commend you for realizing that you need to help with your depression by reaching out here. That is a great start, and you've taken the very first courageous step. Depression can feel debilitating and overwhelming. Depression is also a very personal thing and no one has known but you and the therapist. The best way to begin learning and dealing is to pick up the phone and call a therapist or email a therapist and schedule a session. The great news is that with professional help you can feel better and you will learn how to deal with and manage the depression. There are many ways to help with depression that a therapist can teach you and help guide. You do not have to do this alone. Asking for help and going to therapy is a strength! This can be done in a private and confidential setting. Depression should be treated by a therapist, in a safe, confidential office setting. The therapist can then discuss your depression with you in more detail to figure out the underlying cause, how long you've been feeling this way and identify what brings on these feelings. There is hope and depression can be treated with great success, you CAN feel good again. Depression can be managed appropriately by seeing a licensed therapist. Often times therapy will offer relief because you would have someone there simply to listen to you, validate your feelings and listen to your story. The therapist will be able to offer professional insight

and perspective on the situation and help you think outside the box. The therapist can do many things with you, provide insight and offer many ideas to help you learn new coping skills and ideas of things you enjoy, encouraging you to re engage in hobbies you once enjoyed or even discover new things you may enjoy. There are creative ways to learn to cope too! Your therapist will also be there to support you, without judgement, at your pace, through the entire process. But the first step is finding a therapist and beginning to identify the cause your depression. Healing is possible and getting your happiness back is also possible. Feel free contact me for additional help or information Laura Cassity, LMSW, LMAC

Question 193: I'm dealing with an illness that will never go away and I feel like my life will never change for the better. I feel alone and that i have no one. How can I overcome this pain and learn to be happy alone?

Answer 193: Is it possible that even though your illness is chronic, that it goes through phases in which you are more comfortable and that it requires less focus from you than at other times? I think the idea of having a lifelong illness is frustrating and can be depressing to think about. Thoughts are not necessarily the truth of what will actually happen though. Illness makes negative situations look worse so be sure you are concentrating on specific areas of your life and not just assuming they will work out badly because you are ill. One way to be happy alone is to love and appreciate, nurture and be kind to yourself. This frame of mind may generate new answers to find ways of being among other people too.

Question 194: I'm dealing with an illness that will never go away and I feel like my life will never change for the better. I feel alone and that i have no one. How can I overcome this pain and learn to be happy alone?

Answer 194: I'm so sorry you're feeling like things will never get better. Try to remember that whatever illness you are dealing with, you are not the only person to have dealt with it and you are not alone! Out there, just waiting for you, is a group of people that will totally understand what you're going through and will be able to share how they coped. Try searching for a support group for your illness - google and www.psychologytoday.com are both good places to start for those groups.

Question 195: How do I make myself happy without the people who made me happy? Now that they're gone, I feel sad. It's been two months now but I seem to be unable to stay okay and independent.

Answer 195: Hello. So, someone made you happy but is no longer around? I am sure that feels devastating. As a counselor I usually have to ponder this kind of thought because it lends itself to suggesting that happiness comes from the external, rather than the internal side of a person's life. Happiness is formed within ourselves. All the external trappings of happiness are usually quite fleeting, and temporary. Even relationships do not last forever. If we get to a place where we are reliant and dependent on those around us to create happiness in our lives, then we lose the opportunities for us to do it ourselves. We are entirely capable of finding ways to be happy. Sometimes this entails working out issues that are holding us back from reaching a place of peace, or resolution to a specific problem. What I would offer to you, is to find ways in which you can develop happiness for yourself. What do you like about your life as it is right now? What can you do to create change in your life to increase your happiness? These kinds of questions can be valuable to you as you seek out ways to make happiness an internal rather than an external event. Mourning the loss of a social connection (in whatever way that occurred), is part of the grieving process, but it is not permanent. It is a path to healing and moving forward. From this, you can seek out new sources of happiness. I encourage you to remember that happiness is independent of the external experience you have in the world. Happiness is an expression of the internal feelings, so that will be the source or the font of positive emotion from which you really draw. If you are lacking in happiness, then it becomes important to examine why that is, and what you can do about it to promote self-care. Seeking out a professional counselor can also be a good option as you move through the grief/loss process and examine the reasons happiness is not in greater supply. I wish you happiness for every day of your life. Best wishes.

Question 196: How do I make myself happy without the people who made me happy? Now that they're gone, I feel sad. It's been two months now but I seem to be unable to stay okay and independent.

Answer 196: It sounds like you have been feeling pretty down, since the loss of a relationship, and you're wondering how to be happy by yourself. Intimacy is a very natural human desire and at the same time learning to enjoy ourselves, even when we are alone, can strengthen our ability to lead a satisfying life in and out of relationship. Working with a therapist, you may be able to gain insight into how you show up in your relationships with yourself and others and discover more fulfilling ways to do so.

Question 197: I feel like I am internally screaming all the time. Externally, I am calm, but I have this

intense, unidentifiable emotion constantly. I don't feel sad. I don't cry a lot. I feel rather emotionally distant other than the internal screaming. It kind of feels like I'm a caged animal.

Answer 197: It is hard to make a definite diagnosis however I would say that it could be and or a combination of depression, stress, PTSD, etc. More background information would have to be needed.

One thing I would say is that you really need to seek guidance from a professional to work through these symptoms. If what you described as a caged animal is released, all the crying, sadness, and controllable emotions will come out. That would not be good when they do. Get help before they do..

Question 198: I feel like I am internally screaming all the time. Externally, I am calm, but I have this intense, unidentifiable emotion constantly. I don't feel sad. I don't cry a lot. I feel rather emotionally distant other than the internal screaming. It kind of feels like I'm a caged animal.

Answer 198: As far as the formal diagnosis of depression goes, it would be hard to determine without more information. It sounds like you are noticing that there is a significant difference between how you are feeling on the inside and how you express yourself outwardly. Part of you is quite distressed and yet it remains invisible to the outside world, almost as if it is trapped inside of your body. Many people who are depressed experience such things as intrusive thoughts, emotional numbness, difficulty expressing themselves, and bodily tension (caged animal?). In working with a competent therapist, you may be able to get more insight into what you are going through, the nature of the disconnect between you inner feelings and outer expression, and eventually gain relief from the distress as well as a greater sense of connection with yourself and personal freedom.

Question 199: I feel like I am internally screaming all the time. Externally, I am calm, but I have this intense, unidentifiable emotion constantly. I don't feel sad. I don't cry a lot. I feel rather emotionally distant other than the internal screaming. It kind of feels like I'm a caged animal.

Answer 199: It sounds like you are trying to find a label to help you to understand why you are feeling the way you are feeling. Sometimes there are no labels for how we feel. Sometimes there is no name for the emotions that we are experiencing. Regardless, you do not have to continue to feel this way, no matter what you call it. If you are seeking to experience an internal calmness such as your external calmness, you may want to try some mindfulness practices or meditation. However, being able to get at the root cause of what you are feeling may be what you need to help you release this feeling for the long term. I recommend seeking support for this to allow this internal screaming to get some air and begin to breathe.

Question 200: I've never been able to talk with my parents. My parents are in their sixties while I am a teenager. I love both of them but not their personalities. I feel that they do not take me seriously whenever I talk about a serious event in my life. If my dad doesn't believe me, then my mom goes along with my dad and acts like she doesn't believe me either. I'm a pansexual, but I can't trust my own parents.

I've fought depression and won; however, stress and anxiety are killing me. I feel that my friends don't listen to me. I know they have their own problems, which I do my best to help with. But they don't always try to help me with mine, when I really need them. I feel as if my childhood has been taken from me. I feel as if I have no one whom I can trust.

Answer 200: First of all, I am sorry that you have been missing out on your childhood. It may help you to know that many of us feel that we have missed out on our childhoods, as well, and that despite such deprivations, for many of us, our adult lives have been extraordinarily fulfilling due to our opening up to trusted adults. I recommend that you find a trustworthy adult to talk to. This may be a teacher, a coach, a school counselor, a minister, a family member, or a friend's family member. If none of these are available, try out a professional counselor, social worker, psychiatric nurse practitioner, psychologist, or a psychiatrist. It is best to get a referral for such a professional from a peer who has had a positive and safe experience with a particular provider.

Question 201: I've never been able to talk with my parents. My parents are in their sixties while I am a teenager. I love both of them but not their personalities. I feel that they do not take me seriously whenever I talk about a serious event in my life. If my dad doesn't believe me, then my mom goes along with my dad and acts like she doesn't believe me either. I'm a pansexual, but I can't trust my own parents.

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Answer 201: Life sounds extremely frustrating for you right now. As long as you've reached your conclusion that your parents do not take you seriously when you would like to speak with them on a

serious topic, and that you feel unable to trust either of them, then work with your own information. Many people don't know how to listen and aren't trustworthy. As painful and aggravating as having parents who fit this description, you're better off to honor what you realize than to continue fighting what is not in your hands to change. Since you write about having a similar problem with friends, then maybe this comes about because you pick friends who are similarly unsatisfying to be with as are your parents. The first step out of this dilemma would be to accept how crummy you feel about the way your parents are toward you. If you're able to live with the sadness and resentment of having parents who don't want to know how to understand you, then you'll start to develop a new and more satisfying definition of what you expect from the behaviors of your friends. Trust yourself that what you feel and see is accurate, then it becomes easier to trust and welcome new people who are formatted differently than either your parents or your friends who sound very similar to your parents' ways.

Question 202: I've never been able to talk with my parents. My parents are in their sixties while I am a teenager. I love both of them but not their personalities. I feel that they do not take me seriously whenever I talk about a serious event in my life. If my dad doesn't believe me, then my mom goes along with my dad and acts like she doesn't believe me either. I'm a pansexual, but I can't trust my own parents.

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Answer 202: I'm sorry you feel so alone and isolated, those feelings in and of themselves can lead to depression, stress and anxiety. So job one is finding someone you can talk to. A good friend or an open parent can be as helpful as a professional counselor, but if you don't have those, then by all means call your local Mental Health Association, suicide prevention, or go see your school counseling department. There are many of us now who do on-line, FaceTime, phone counseling so that is an option to consider in your situation. On the other hand, If you want to script a conversation with your parents (I'm a great believer in scripting) not that you're going to read it to them, but if you write down exactly what you want to say, read it over a few times before you're ready to have the conversation. Why? You'll be much more likely to do it if you're prepared, and you'll have a better chance of saying everything you want to say in a calm but forceful way. The same with your friends--you are probably a great listener and therefore attract people who want to talk--so you need to let these friends know you need something in return. If you practice asking for equal talk time, then perhaps these friends will respond and surprise you, or if you make those demands you'll start attracting people who are looking for equality in friendships. Now back to that script--first decide do you want to talk to both parents at once, or one at a time. Then begin to write down the points you want to make such as: I love you, and I know you love me but I don't feel as though I can trust your love to be unconditional enough to tell you who I really am, and how I really feel. Find your own words to describe your own feelings. If I can help, get in touch. You are right to reach out starting here, there are no prizes for suffering in silence and, as you already know, little joy in going it alone.

Question 203: I've never been able to talk with my parents. My parents are in their sixties while I am a teenager. I love both of them but not their personalities. I feel that they do not take me seriously whenever I talk about a serious event in my life. If my dad doesn't believe me, then my mom goes along with my dad and acts like she doesn't believe me either. I'm a pansexual, but I can't trust my own parents.

I've fought depression and won; however, stress and anxiety are killing me. I feel that my friends don't listen to me. I know they have their own problems, which I do my best to help with. But they don't always try to help me with mine, when I really need them. I feel as if my childhood has been taken from me. I feel as if I have no one whom I can trust.

Answer 203: One of the most difficult challenges we face is not being heard! It is incredibly frustrating and hurtful when others, especially parents, do not listen. While your parents surely love you and want to understand you, it may be difficult for them to fully understand your feelings and experiences. They are quite a bit older and have likely not dealt with some of the struggles that you face. I would suggest communicating your feelings to them about not being heard. Talk to them during a non-emotional moment when the discussion is not already heated. In other words, do not wait until an argument ensues to have an open discussion with them about how you are feeling. Prepare them by asking them what time is good for them to talk. Let them know you have something important to get off your chest. Try and avoid using exaggerated or extreme language such as "you NEVER listen," "you ALWAYS say..." and stray away

from placing blame. Instead of beginning your statements with "you" try using "I" by letting them know how their behavior affects you. Finally, let them know that they are important to you and that having their trust and support would mean a lot to you. Perhaps giving them suggestions as to what you wish for and would like to see change would help them to better understand. I would also suggest that you seek guidance from a therapist, teacher, or school counselor if possible. Most schools have counseling resources on sight in which a trained professional is available to talk with students looking for help. Best of luck to you.

Question 204: I've never been able to talk with my parents. My parents are in their sixties while I am a teenager. I love both of them but not their personalities. I feel that they do not take me seriously whenever I talk about a serious event in my life. If my dad doesn't believe me, then my mom goes along with my dad and acts like she doesn't believe me either. I'm a pansexual, but I can't trust my own parents.

I've fought depression and won; however, stress and anxiety are killing me. I feel that my friends don't listen to me. I know they have their own problems, which I do my best to help with. But they don't always try to help me with mine, when I really need them. I feel as if my childhood has been taken from me. I feel as if I have no one whom I can trust.

Answer 204: First, thank you for sharing such deep personal information. It can be difficult to share such intimate information. To begin, it sounds like your primary concern is your desire to speak to someone who takes your mental health seriously. You've tried talking to your parents and your friends and neither have made that connection in the area you need. I'm sorry to hear that. It's unfortunate. However, I think a couple things can be done to try to address this. If you want support:

- 1) Parents- Sit down with one of them and tell them with all seriousness that you need to talk about something that is affecting you deeply. Perhaps speaking to both can be too much for one room. If you try to speak to mom or dad by themselves, it may create that intimate atmosphere needed to understand where you are coming from.
- 2) Friends: Like parents it can be difficult to speak to your friends about challenges with your mental health. When you're feeling down and anxious, friends can be great help or not there at all. With friends, it may be one of those things where you also need to create an intimate environment with one friend to speak to about your sadness and anxiety. If anything, speak to the fact you're hurt and help them understand that if they can't understand the depression.

If you don't want support, here are some coping strategies: Identify coping skills and strategy that help you when you're feeling down. Ideas: A.) Journaling B.) Painting C.) Exercise D.) Music E.) Reading Affirmation F.) Listening To Motivation Videos

Question 205: I've never been able to talk with my parents. My parents are in their sixties while I am a teenager. I love both of them but not their personalities. I feel that they do not take me seriously whenever I talk about a serious event in my life. If my dad doesn't believe me, then my mom goes along with my dad and acts like she doesn't believe me either. I'm a pansexual, but I can't trust my own parents.

I've fought depression and won; however, stress and anxiety are killing me. I feel that my friends don't listen to me. I know they have their own problems, which I do my best to help with. But they don't always try to help me with mine, when I really need them. I feel as if my childhood has been taken from me. I feel as if I have no one whom I can trust.

Answer 205: Teenage years are rough for anyone, and this is a time for self-discovery and experimentation. Having older parents can certainly pose challenges. Most kids feel like their parents don't understand them, but yours are older than the average parents of teenagers. They're from a completely different generation than you are. It sounds like they love you, but may not understand you. The problem here is the generation/age gap, and there's not a whole lot you can do about that. What you can do is accept the situation and perhaps look at it a little differently. It seems like you're looking for affirmation from them, looking for their approval and understanding. It's never a good idea to look to others to define who you are or to get a self-esteem boost. Who you are and how you feel about yourself needs to come from inside, not from outside. One way you can have a better relationship with your parents is to stop looking at all the things you aren't getting from them that you want, and rather look at all the things you are getting from them. Yes, this is a glass half full or half empty point of view, but it works. The negative will overshadow the positive if you let it. Start looking for the good things in your relationship with your parents and your feelings towards them will become more positive. I'm not sure how your friends/peers made you feel like your childhood has been taken from you. That's a curious statement, and requires a deeper conversation to understand where that came from. However, I do understand feeling different and out of place, especially in high school. Find the strength within yourself rather than looking to others in your life to make you feel better or feel like a complete person. It helps to have friends and loved

ones, but you can never rely on them to fulfill all of your needs. Set some goals for your future, work towards them. Focus on being the best YOU that you can be, and the right people will enter your life at the right time.

Question 206: I've never been able to talk with my parents. My parents are in their sixties while I am a teenager. I love both of them but not their personalities. I feel that they do not take me seriously whenever I talk about a serious event in my life. If my dad doesn't believe me, then my mom goes along with my dad and acts like she doesn't believe me either. I'm a pansexual, but I can't trust my own parents.

I've fought depression and won; however, stress and anxiety are killing me. I feel that my friends don't listen to me. I know they have their own problems, which I do my best to help with. But they don't always try to help me with mine, when I really need them. I feel as if my childhood has been taken from me. I feel as if I have no one whom I can trust.

Answer 206: Hi there. Being 15 years old can be a very difficult time in your teenage life. I remember when I was 15 and how I often felt my parents weren't listening to me. It's even more difficult when you feel that you do not have a friend that you can confide in. Having depression in the past and being able to get through it shows me that you can get through anything! Depression alone is a very difficult problem to work through. In addition to the communication problem with your parents, it appears that you are also struggling with stress and anxiety. We all have stress and anxiety in our lives. If we didn't, none of us would be living. Anxiety & stress keep us on our toes! Often, I have to remind myself of this as well. However, it is how we manage stress and anxiety, so it will not overcome our lives. Are you familiar with relaxation techniques, such as: deep breathing exercises, meditation or yoga? Relaxation Techniques can help you tremendously in reducing your stress and anxiety. Deep breathing exercises are helpful when you are on the go, such as school, shopping, out with friends or whatever extracurricular activities you engage in. Most people do not take full advantage of their lung capacity. I know, that sounds silly. But, it's true. You would be surprised how much air your lungs can hold. Imagine being in the Doctor's office and taking deep breaths. This is what you want to do when you are feeling overwhelmed and/or stressed. Take a moment to take in at least 10 deep breaths and let them out slowly. You will be surprised how well you feel afterwards. Meditation and Yoga are also healthy forms to working through stress and anxiety. You will need a quiet place for your meditation. You want to be "in the moment" and take in the peace and serenity. All it takes is a quiet place, closing your eyes and thinking of your "happy place." Some people use meditation music as well. If you have access to this type of music and or the internet for more ways to practice meditation, please go for it! Yoga on the other hand will take a little more work and practice. I would not suggest you learning this on your own, if you have never attempted yoga before. Find an experienced Yoga instructor to teach you the ropes and/or ask your school counselor about the possibility of getting someone to come to the school to teach the students. Lastly, in regards to your parents it is very important to be able to have a relationship where you feel comfortable communicating. I would recommend writing a letter to them, if you are unable to express how you feel in person. A letter is more intimate and requires a little more effort on their end. If they are open on working on this relationship, maybe suggest family counseling to fully work on this issue. I hope this was helpful for you and I wish you the best!

Question 207: I don't know how else to explain it. All I can say is that I feel empty, I feel nothing. How do I stop feeling this way?

Answer 207: A feeling of emptiness can be from a lack of awareness and acknowledgment for the things, the people, the places that you have in your life. The use of affirmation and gratitudes helps to remind ourselves of all of the aspects of our lives.

Question 208: I don't know how else to explain it. All I can say is that I feel empty, I feel nothing. How do I stop feeling this way?

Answer 208: Your question is very broad because feeling empty can develop for many different reasons. You're certainly not alone in feeling this way! Try to follow the logic of your feelings by asking yourself questions about the empty feeling. Doing this may open up a discovery about the reason for the emptiness feeling. When do you feel empty, are there certain situations it happens more often than another, what helps the feeling go away, what or who is helpful in relieving the empty feeling. Sometimes people need a little help to get started in understanding how to recognize their feelings. Consider a therapist, any disciplined practice which encourages self-knowledge, such as some yoga practices, and a creative discipline like photography or music. As long as you concentrate on increasing your self-understanding, eventually you'll find the answer to your question!

Question 209: People who are parental figures in my life have, in the past, hurt me, and some continue to do so. It makes me feel like I'm not good enough for my husband or the life he provides me. I have had jobs, but I am going through a lot of my past garbage and trying to figure out when it all went wrong. Any time I bring these things up, I am expected to be over the issue. These are people that you can't just cut out, but I have never received apologies for so much of my pain. I don't know what to do any more. I don't know who I am anymore.

Answer 209: It sounds like you have been thinking about how past hurts have influenced you, and when you try to talk about these hurts with people in your life, you are feeling invalidated. It also sounds like current conflicts are continuing to leave you feeling hurt and devalued. In working with a therapist, you may be able to get some clarity about your past, who you are, and what kinds of boundaries you want in your relationships, so that you can lead a life that is more satisfying to you.

Question 210: People who are parental figures in my life have, in the past, hurt me, and some continue to do so. It makes me feel like I'm not good enough for my husband or the life he provides me. I have had jobs, but I am going through a lot of my past garbage and trying to figure out when it all went wrong. Any time I bring these things up, I am expected to be over the issue. These are people that you can't just cut out, but I have never received apologies for so much of my pain. I don't know what to do any more. I don't know who I am anymore.

Answer 210: Hello. Adults who come from abusive home histories (physical, emotional, or even psychological), may take a long time to heal from that abuse. We carry our past with us everywhere we go, and it is up to us to find resolutions to past hurts. This is often easier said than done, but it is possible. From the perspective of those with whom you have shared your concerns, it might be assumed that based on where you are in life and who you are now, that you have already worked through any issues from your younger years. Some of our deepest scars in life are indeed invisible and suppressed. We have to get to the place where we can take care of the inner child that is still hurting, by recognizing that those who hurt us - however they did, might have had their own challenges which prevented them from functioning and behaving in ways we might have deeply needed. Those who have directly hurt you, may not be capable of acknowledging and understanding how you were affected by their actions - even in the worst of cases. They themselves may be doing what they can, either out of shame or heartbreak for their own actions, to work on forgetting how they behaved toward you all those years before. How are they behaving toward you now? Can you find it in your heart to forgive those who have hurt you? Forgiveness is the gift we give ourselves, and isn't dependent on an apology from an offender. By forgiving (even in the absence of any apology), we are releasing the weight of the burden we are carrying that reflects the offense we feel was committed against us. Sometimes therapy can be helpful in this process. Talking with someone who can be non-judgmental and reflects an empathetic position toward you might be what you need right now. Seeking out a therapist to help you work through these negatives feelings and thoughts is much easier, than trying to go it alone. I would encourage you to reach out and find someone who resonates with you on that journey, so that you can begin a path toward healing. Warm regards, Shawn Berthel, M.S., LMHC

Question 211: I am going through a very hard time and I'm so depressed. My parents are getting a divorce and a lot of bad things are happening. I want to lull myself.

Answer 211: It sounds like a tough time and it's normal to feel down when your family is going through a divorce or other hardship. There's a difference between feelings like sadness, discouragement, grief, loneliness and depression, though. Sadness is sadness and sometimes we have to go through a grieving or other process, that is a normal reaction to events in our lives. Depression, on the other hand, is more about being stuck. Lulling yourself with self-care sounds like a healthy response and a way to give yourself support. So as to the uncomfortable but healthy part of your feelings, do the best you can to put names to it and share with a trusted other person. You will find comfort. The part of your situation that's depression -- feeling stuck, not able to get out of bed, concentrate, changes in sleeping and eating, loss of enjoyment in living, poor hygiene, feelings of hopelessness, that's different. First step, identify your own symptoms of depression. If you have any thoughts of hurting yourself, tell someone. If you're not sure, you can try 800-lifenet or other support line to get feedback. First aid for depression includes: daily care and feeding, good sleeping and eating, lots of exercise--even when you don't feel like it-- healthy socializing, and focusing on talking to yourself in a positive way. If you aren't able to move yourself out of your depression, work with a professional to make short-term goals and get some support. You may also talk to your doctor or psychiatrist about trying an anti-depressant to give you a little lift while you go

through a rough patch. Best wishes, Karen

Question 212: I am going through a very hard time and I'm so depressed. My parents are getting a divorce and a lot of bad things are happening. I want to lull myself.

Answer 212: Consider yourself quite normal for feeling overwhelmed and depressed about your parents divorce. This is the most natural way to feel at this time. Depending on how old you are, and whether you live under their roof, are dependent on their support, and are either part of the decision or not, of with whom and where you will live, start considering these points. How did you find out about the upcoming divorce? Are either of your parents reluctant to answer your questions or is it clear that neither of them want to talk about anything with you? Whatever your fears and questions about your own future, these are all real. It is necessary for you to know about your basic future. If you are living on your own and the main problem is your inner adjustment that your family structure is completely changing, then probably a good therapist would be a great help to you now, to clarify these tensions. Sending lots of good wishes for an easy resolution to your new path!

Question 213: My depression has been reoccurring for a long time. It all started when I was being bullied in high school. In ninth grade, my principal told me I needed to stay home for a couple days to protect myself while she spoke to my classmates. I needed professional help for my stress because I was having crying spells from the stress of going to school and confronting my classmates. After that, I was fine for a couple of years. I entered my first year of college in a really tough program with high demands of expected work. I believe my depression re-booted from there with the stress. I began to cut myself because a friend of mine at the time told me how she used to do the same and it used to feel good for her. Obviously, that wasn't the right choice. I regret ever doing that, seeing as even though I'm not self-harming anymore, I always look back at that time whenever I feel very stressed. I have a big problem with handling problems in life. Whenever a problem arises, I get stressed and I feel hopeless, as if it's not going to get better. I get way too stressed from my problems, which leads to overreacting a lot (especially when talking to others), which then leads to depression. I have a hard time coping with stress because I know that if I could handle it easily then I wouldn't be sad all the time, and I would say and do the right thing instead of overreacting to my loved ones.

Answer 213: I couldn't help but notice that you did not specify your age, so I am unable to set the total chronological order and length that you have suffered in this way, but I want to start by commending you on seeking out additional coping techniques on your own. Unfortunately, it sounds like you were offered some that were more dangerous than helpful, but be proud that you were able to curb those before they caused too much harm. From what you have written, stress has always been a difficult thing for you to manage. Often, when I am working with those who offer the same concern, there is a degree of people pleasing that comes with that stress. When we are trying to make others happy, especially when we are unable to distinguish the proper "rules for success", it can make even the simplest of tasks overwhelming. Stress management is just that, management; of our own anxieties about the needs of others, about our skills and the ability to complete a task and having multiple requests at any given time. Each of these aspects requires a separate sets of "tools" to manage them accordingly. For example, assertiveness communication training could aid in communicating with your colleagues to manage their expectations of your deadlines and abilities, but it will not assist you with managing your own anxieties. Try to separate the different areas of the problem, in order to help yourself to find a solution and work on them in their own time. Perhaps keeping a journal will help you to better understand why you are so easily overwhelmed by stress and help you track some of your less-helpful responses to stress. For example, does a certain person's style of communication always make you feel undervalued and therefore push you to finish their requests first? Is there a certain time of the day where you start to fall off in productivity? Is that the time of the day where you also tend to pile up your requirements? Try to ask yourself some of these harder questions and see where they lead you.

Question 214: I've been depressed for quite a while. I've been trying to work through it, and my boyfriend has been my rock. He is honestly the only person I trust enough to talk to about anything, but he decided to break up with me because of my depression. I cannot afford to see a therapist or anything, so he saw no hope in staying with me. My insurance has a \$5000 deductible, so I'm screwed. I've had everything from suicidal thoughts to trying to quit my job. I have no one. My family doesn't care about me; they kicked me out when I turned 18 a few years ago. I had friends, but they have all moved on with their lives and have no time for me. My ex-boyfriend is trying to help but is making things worse because every time I see or hear him, I break down into tears. I found out that I will never be promoted now because of my

depression.

Answer 214: It sounds like you have been struggling with this for quite some time, using many of the same coping techniques that feel tried and true to no avail. Often, we fall back on coping techniques that would be helpful in other problems (stress, social anxieties, etc.) for our depression, but the truth is that depression requires its own little tool kit. Depression is all-encompassing, and, based on what you've written, the symptoms are already affecting work and your personal life in myriad ways. The best route forward would be to seek out counselling, admittedly, but if your insurance deductible is too high, that can be very expensive. I would recommend contacting your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) if offered by your employer. If not, you can look into community centres for counselling options, check if your doctor will give you a referral or your local religious organization. If, however, you are motivated to get your depression under control, there are some great workbooks out there that you can use on your own or with your therapist (as long as your therapist is trained in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, or CBT), such as "Mind Over Mood".

Question 215: After he got home from the hospital he was angry, then for a time wonderful. Now he is depressed and hopeless again.

Answer 215: Hello, and thank you for your question. This is a very serious time. I don't mean to frighten you, but you are right to be concerned. The time right after people leave the hospital after receiving psychiatric services is a time of high risk for suicide. It is very important, after hospitalization, to get follow-up care with a professional as soon as possible. If your husband has an established therapist, this is the time to call. It is also a good time to alert your support system of friends, family, clergy or others to let them know he is still struggling. This is good support for him AND you. It is important to think about means and opportunity to make another attempt. Means really do matter. So, if you have a firearm in the home, it is really important to remove it. You can't remove all things that a person may hurt themselves with, but some things are more lethal than others. Firearms are very lethal. I am not sure what means he used last time, but try to reduce the opportunity for him to access it again. This is where your support system can help out. People can take turns hanging out with him until you are sure the crisis is over. If you believe that an attempt is going to occur, talk to your husband about going back to the hospital. If he refuses, you will want to find out what your options are to have him go even if he doesn't want to. I know the thought of that really hurts, but it can save his life. Calling 9-1-1 is always a good option if you are not sure. Usually a suicide crisis, meaning they want to harm themselves right now, lasts a few minutes, hours or days. Sometimes when you get them through the crisis stage, they no longer want to commit suicide. But, as you are indicating, that feeling of wanting to commit suicide can come back again. So, it is always good to have a plan. If you want more information, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. They will always answer: 1-800-273-8255. They can help you create a specific safety plan. I do hope things work out alright. Be well. Robin J. Landwehr, DBH, LPCC, NCC

Question 216: After he got home from the hospital he was angry, then for a time wonderful. Now he is depressed and hopeless again.

Answer 216: This is actually more common than we often realize, and actually understandable, as he has gone through a trauma, an unresolved existential crisis. He was taken care of by others and now is again left alone with his own internal, and rather horrific inner struggle. In my work with CCT, or Contextual Conceptual Therapy, (see www.suicidetherapy.com) I have learned how trapped suicidal people are in their own isolation, also called a "mysterious isolation," a form of self protection which cuts the off from their Self, or spirit. And unless they address this message from their soul, accompany a guide on a journey to discover their own missing information, that is to recognize how their own uncomforted emotional pain has resulted in a coping strategy which has effectively cut themselves off from their own beauty, their Self, and their ability to receive love from themselves and others. Their attempt to kill themselves is a cry from their soul or spirit that they cannot live the life they are living any longer. They take this literally and try to end their life, when in fact what their soul or spirit is saying is they need to begin to live the life they came here to live.

Question 217: After he got home from the hospital he was angry, then for a time wonderful. Now he is depressed and hopeless again.

Answer 217: I'm thankful to read your husband found care and that his suicide attempt wasn't successful. While he was hospitalized, and prior to his release, your husband would've been provided in writing a self-care action plan. This typically includes things like committing to a contract 'not to harm' and what to do if he felt overwhelmed by his anger, depression, and hopelessness (e.g. call 911, call therapist,

go to nearest hospital emergency department). Additionally, his protocol would've provided instructions for his taking medication(s) as directed, having a follow-up appointment(s) with his psychiatrist/psychologist/clinical social worker, and participating in some form of small group support. If your husband's struggling as you describe, and you are feeling overwhelmed or frightened for his (your) safety, I'd encourage you to seek immediate assistance.

Question 218: After he got home from the hospital he was angry, then for a time wonderful. Now he is depressed and hopeless again.

Answer 218: This must be so difficult for both of you. Watching someone you love suffer so profoundly can bring up lots of difficult feelings. Without knowing what you are already doing, I have a few thoughts to share with you. First and foremost, know that you cannot fix this for him, and get support for yourself. As much as you are able, make space in your relationship for him to talk about what he is experiencing. He might not want to talk, and that is ok. If he wants to talk, try to listen without judgement and without trying to talk him out of his feelings. Focus on validating his feelings and just sitting with him in his pain. Let him know how you feel...that you love him, that you care, that you are concerned, that this is scary for you too, that you are here. I hope that this is helpful. On my website (www.sarahmcintyrelpc.com), I've written a series of blog posts about coping with distress. The techniques I've written about there may be supportive for you and your husband. Sending warm wishes your way. -Sarah

Question 219: After he got home from the hospital he was angry, then for a time wonderful. Now he is depressed and hopeless again.

Answer 219: I appreciate that you are concerned about your husband's emotions and want to support him as best you can right now. I imagine that you must be going through your own difficult time too. You've had a complicated shock and trauma in your life and in your marriage; it's normal for both of your emotions to move from hope to despair to fear, anger, gratitude... there is no wrong way to feel and there is no particular pattern your emotions or his will follow. Try not to assume what he is feeling but ask him instead. "How are you doing today?" is something that can be asked over and over again and your love and compassion for him will come through. If he has a hard time talking, you can share your observations. "I notice you're more withdrawn. This worries me." Certainly it will help you if you know what he's thinking and feeling because he hid his intentions to hurt himself. It's normal that you want to know. If there is depression and hopelessness, this likely was part of what led to his initial despair. There is help out there. Depression is treatable, and seeking that treatment is important right now at this vulnerable time. This is the kind of complex situation that can be assisted by a therapist who is qualified to help you both understand and manage your emotions. Whether your husband seeks help or not, I hope that you do.

Question 220: After he got home from the hospital he was angry, then for a time wonderful. Now he is depressed and hopeless again.

Answer 220: A failed suicide attempt is commonly thought of as a "cry for help," however it can also be a serious attempt to find a permanent solution to depression, hopelessness or other feelings a person feels are unbearable. It's wonderful that you want to support your husband, but If your husband is feeling depressed and hopeless, you can best help him by getting him to a mental health professional. Feelings of hopelessness and depression, and previous attempts at suicide are all risk factors for future suicide attempts. With a mental health professional, or in the emergency room of a hospital, your husband should be evaluated for suicidal thoughts, intent and plan, and if he is a danger to himself he should probably be hospitalized again until he is stable. Without knowing the particulars, your husband may suffer from Major Depressive Disorder or some other illness on the depressive spectrum. In that case medication could help him immensely, at which point you can offer your support and encouragement him to practice gentle self-care. And do not forget to practice it for yourself. Remember: a suicide attempt not only affects the person, but it is an immense stressor for his or her loved ones as well. As they say, "put your oxygen mask on first." Then you will be better able to provide your husband with calm and loving care and attention. Kayla Schwartz, LMSW[(#)]

Question 221: After he got home from the hospital he was angry, then for a time wonderful. Now he is depressed and hopeless again.

Answer 221: The fact that you're reaching out for help here is really helpful. The first thing I would suggest is that you consider seeing a local mental health professional yourself to be able to talk about the details, how this is affecting you, and how you can hold onto you are while also being supportive to you husband. From the way that you describe this, I wonder what has changed since coming home from the hospital. Perhaps you can have a conversation with your husband this and mention that you are asking

him questions to learn more about his experience and you can discuss how you notice that things were going much better when he came home from the hospital, and now things are not as good. Perhaps he can tell you about what is different so that you may know him would be most helpful to him. I also hope that your husband is still continuing with his own treatment. There may also be a local peer support telephone number for the county that you live in that they be able to help you determine whether your husband needs more immediate treatment if he is feeling hopeless again. There are national crisis telephone numbers listed below as well.

Question 222: After he got home from the hospital he was angry, then for a time wonderful. Now he is depressed and hopeless again.

Answer 222: Since as husband and wife your lives are closely joined, how your husband feels greatly influences the way you feel. Give yourself some time to concentrate on how you've been affected by your husband's suicide attempt. Even if you decide against immediately telling him how you're feeling, knowing this about yourself will guide how and the topics you bring up with him. Is your husband talking easily with you? Do you have some ideas as to what is creating his feeling of hopelessness? The ideal approach would be if the two of you are able to discuss what bothers him and what bothers you. Depending on how far away you each are from such a position, you may benefit from speaking with a licensed professional therapist who can guide you and or you and your husband on opening up for discussion what feels stressful enough to merit taking one's own life.

Question 223: After he got home from the hospital he was angry, then for a time wonderful. Now he is depressed and hopeless again.

Answer 223: It seems like you are very receptive of your husband's emotions and want to support him through this time. But it is also important of being aware of your emotions. How are you feeling after the suicide attempt? It is common to experience negative feelings while you try to make sense of the incident. Feelings like anger, shame, guilt and fear are frequent; while, wanting to avoid, minimize and become distant from the person are parts of the defense mechanism to attempt a quick resolution. Once you understand and overcome those feelings you may be in a better position to help your husband; who may be experiencing some negative feelings as well. First, it is important to have a safety plan in place, which includes removing harming objects from the home, knowing who to call if there's a new attempt (either 9-1-1, or nearby treatment center), have a professional expert who monitors you and your husband's progress, either a Counselor or mental health provider could help you manage negative feelings and identify ways to handle triggering situations. Once the safety plan is in place, make him feel supported and not judged, saying open ended statements, like: "I am glad that you are here, please let me know what I can do to help you through this process". Making small changes toward a healthier living may help as well. Exercising, eating healthier and practicing new leisure activities may be good ways to start. Also, explore your spirituality and your husbands, looking for ways to encourage each other by joining a support group or finding people who share your spiritual beliefs. If you have more questions or concerns I offer teletherapy in the State of Texas, and traditional Counseling in Puerto Rico, call 787-466-5478.

¿Cómo puedo ayudar a mi esposo después de un intento de suicidio? Después de que el llego a casa del hospital estaba enojado, luego por un tiempo maravilloso. Ahora está deprimido y sin ánimos. Parece que estas muy atenta a los sentimientos de tu esposo, y que lo deseas ayudar durante este momento de su vida. Pero también es importante estar consciente de tus propias emociones.

¿Cómo te has sentido luego de este intento de suicidio? Es común que experimentes emociones negativas mientras los recientes sucesos hacen sentido. Sentimientos como coraje, vergüenza, culpa y miedo son comunes, y el querer evitar, minimizar o distanciarte son mecanismos de defensa igualmente comunes. Ya que comprendas y superes estos sentimientos, estarás en una mejor posición para ofrecerle ayuda, recuerda que tu esposo también debe de estar experimentando sentimientos negativos. Es muy importante tener un plan de seguridad, esto incluye remover todos los objetos que pueden ser dañinos o facilitar un futuro atentado, saber a quién llamar en caso de una emergencia (9-1-1 o una clínica de emergencias cercana), tener un experto que monitoree tu progreso y el de tu esposo, puede ser un Consejero u otro experto de salud mental que te ayude a manejar los sentimientos negativos y situaciones retantes. Ya que el plan de seguridad sea activado, crea un ambiente donde tu esposo se sienta apoyado y no juzgado. Utiliza frases abiertas para comunicarte, dile que estas feliz de que este contigo, y quieres saber cómo puedes ayudarlo durante esta etapa. También haz cambios pequeños para mejorar su calidad de vida como pareja. Hacer ejercicios, comer más saludable y compartir actividades puede ser un buen comienzo. Explorar tu espiritualidad y la de tu esposo también

puede ser de ayuda, y encontrar personas o grupos que compartan esos mismos intereses puede ser una manera de mantenerse motivados. Si tienes más preguntas o preocupaciones sobre el tema, ofrezco teleterapia en Texas y Consejería Tradicional en Puerto Rico, llama al 787-466-5478 para más información.

Question 224: I always feel like I'm doing something wrong. Everything I do is crappy. I want to cry all the time. I can't eat or sleep.

Answer 224: You are describing some of the most common symptoms of depression: low self esteem, difficulty sleeping, changes in appetite, sad mood, feelings of hopeless and feelings of worthlessness. A full assessment/evaluation with a mental health professional is warranted to understand if indeed you meet criteria for a Major Depressive Disorder i.e., are depressed. One thing I often tell patients is that "Do you think you are depressed?" People often answer yes or no, but many individuals respond with a question: How would I know? To that I often explain that if I stopped watching movies or better, stopped enjoying watching movies that would be a clear indication for me that I am depressed. It would be a sign that I have lost pleasure or interest in the activity that I typically enjoy most. I'll ask you to think of one activity which you really really enjoy. It could be anything from reading, to being with friends, to skiing to watching tv. I would like to now ask you if you have stopped enjoying that activity or can't find the motivation to engage in it? This is another symptom of depression: loss in pleasurable activities. The good news is that there are many effective, available treatment if you are indeed in a depression or simply, you want to modify/decrease your depressive symptoms i.e., you want to stop feeling so tired and so worthless. Treatment includes one or more of the following: psychotherapy, medication, exercise. Any one or combination of both of these can help to improve your mood. The even better news is that feeling that you are doing something wrong can diminish with appropriate treatment over time. I hope you find this information helpful. The most important next step is to get evaluated by a mental health professional typically a psychologist or psychiatrist, and for both you and the professional to better understand your symptoms and your mood in the context of what is going on in your life.

Question 225: I no longer carry expressions on my face, and my emotions are decreasing the more I have fights with my fiancée.

Answer 225: Sometimes repressing anger can lead to depression and block all kinds of other emotions too. I would wonder about your experience with anger and if you've ever been discouraged from expressing anger. I would also wonder if you feel like you have space to express yourself in your relationship or if you feel like you really aren't being heard. It's hard to feel cared for and connected to someone else when you don't feel accepted by them.

Question 226: I no longer carry expressions on my face, and my emotions are decreasing the more I have fights with my fiancée.

Answer 226: Sometimes when we fight a lot with our partner, it becomes more uncomfortable to share emotions because it feels like it will lead to another fight or disagreement. You could try having a conversation when you're not fighting and starting it out by saying that you would like to discuss something important to you and see if your fiancée is open to that. Something else is that you could have an agreement that if one of you is having a really strong emotions in a difficult conversation and would like to break from the conversation, you could agree (ahead of time) that you'll say that you would like a "timeout" and will come back to discuss the issue in a certain amount of time (usually about an hour) and then try to resume the discussion. The reason this can work is it can give you a chance to calm down and then still go back to the discussion rather than not talking about it again. This only works if both of you agree to that before something starts, though.

Question 227: I'm depressed. I have been for years. I hide it from everyone because I'm scared of the reactions I'll get. Last time I tried telling my parents, it was a huge argument about me being too young to be depressed (I'm a legal adult), calling me ungrateful, and telling me that if I can't handle things now, it's only going to get worse in the future (which is turning out to be true). It's exhausting pretending to be okay, and I don't know how much longer I can try. I'm just really tired, and sadly, I can't afford the help I need on my own.

Answer 227: Hi Georgia, There's a really good lesson here. People tell us things, and we tend to think that's the truth...but it's not! I'll do some translating for you..."You're so ungrateful" means "I need you to be successful and happy in order for me to feel I'm a good parent"."You're too young to be depressed" means "I don't want to deal with your mental health issues right now. I'll pretend it's not happening so I don't have to face my fear and shame"."It's only going to get worse" just means "I don't know how to

support you beyond scaring you into wanting to at least fake happiness for my sake". Your parents are being unsupportive, not because you're not suffering, but because this is all they're capable of right now. They are not where you will find the support you need, so keep looking for it in other places. It's out there. It might be an aunt or a friend, or a friend's aunt. It might be a therapist or a bus driver or your family doctor. Keep looking for someone who will hear you. I hope you don't ever give up. :)

Question 228: I'm depressed. I have been for years. I hide it from everyone because I'm scared of the reactions I'll get. Last time I tried telling my parents, it was a huge argument about me being too young to be depressed (I'm a legal adult), calling me ungrateful, and telling me that if I can't handle things now, it's only going to get worse in the future (which is turning out to be true). It's exhausting pretending to be okay, and I don't know how much longer I can try. I'm just really tired, and sadly, I can't afford the help I need on my own.

Answer 228: Don't think that you can't afford the help you need on your own. There are several counselors that see people on a sliding scale that can be as low as \$5 (based on your income). Find a center that is non-profit, they have great counselors as well. It sounds like you know what you are experiencing and know that you need someone to talk to, someone that is willing to listen. Your parents may not understand what you are feeling right now and that is not totally abnormal. I would encourage you to seek help immediately so you can live the best life you can...which is not being depressed.

Question 229: I have terrible anxiety and depression. I've tried various therapists and pills, but nothing's helped.

Answer 229: Is it possible you simply didn't mix well with the particular therapists with whom you've worked? If this is possible, interview a therapist before starting therapy. Then you will be choosing a therapist who feels compatible with your way of seeing yourself and your life. Also, therapy isn't for everyone. Read about the different healing modalities and see if one of these speaks to your interest in feeling better. What matters most is finding among all the legitimate healing methods, what you believe will be effective.

Question 230: I have terrible anxiety and depression. I've tried various therapists and pills, but nothing's helped.

Answer 230: I'm sorry that you have tried several different things and not had much relief. I will say that there are several different types of medications that may help and each therapist is different, so it is quite possible that a different combination of things you've already tried may be helpful. I would encourage you to continue trying different therapists. I would say to give each one at least six sessions before you decide that the approach that they are using is not working for you. Also, most places have a certain sort of structured initial session that must be done, but after that, the decisions are largely up to what you and the clinician feel is helping. If something is or is not working, communicate this with your therapist. This is a big deal. Most therapists I know actually welcome this feedback. There is a fair amount of research into the idea that the therapeutic alliance (the relationship that you have in the context of working through the reasons that brought you into therapy) is very important. Also, sometimes anxiety and depression can make it difficult to go to therapy on a regular basis. If that is something with which you are struggling, I would encourage you to talk about that as well. In addition to a solid relationship with a therapist who you connect with, you may consider trying something like yoga or meditation. Mindfulness is sometimes helpful as well. Here's a link to questions for finding suitable

therapists: <http://www.pharmatherapist.com/12-tips-for-finding-a-suitable-therapist>

Question 231: I'm in my early 20s. I've worked since two months after I turned 18. I have "plans." I could become an electrician, or I could operate heavy machinery. I have goals, but I do nothing to try to meet them because I don't feel I can. I just want a better life for my fiancée and the kids than I did.

Answer 231: For starters, commend yourself for being committed to working. You have no idea what is going to happen in the next second, so focusing on thinking you will never have a good career or amount to anything financially is creating a fictitious story. Remind yourself of that every time the thought pops up. The false belief that nothing good will happen is sucking out energy you can use on pursuing your career dreams. Next, do you know what you need to do to become an electrician or heavy machinery operator? If not, find out. Then, set up a realistic schedule for yourself to accomplish the steps. As you accomplish each step, see your progress. Notice that you are moving closer to your goal. Every day remind yourself why you are pursuing this career. In fact, write it down and tape it on your bathroom mirror. When you start to feel discouraged, remember your goal and remind yourself that you have no

idea if you'll make it or not but you are going to give it everything you have to find out. Anything worth pursuing is going to take a lot of persistence and hard work. Stay with it! You and your family are worth it! Question 232: He said he would try and he never did. It's been nine months, and this is making me worse. Today, he said I have to respect whatever decision he makes. Is that true? Am I supposed to respect the decision to leave because he can't handle what I'm going through and leaves me here crying and worried every night? He's constantly changing his mind on if he wants to work it out.

Answer 232: Wow that is tough. There is nothing worse than fearing abandonment when you are already struggling with depression. It sounds like you are still wanting to work through whatever challenges you and your husband are having but your husband may not be on the same page. I would encourage you and your husband to seek professional support if you haven't already. While depression can put real strains on a relationship, relationship problems can lead to or contribute to depression and there may be some real benefits to both of you in doing some couple therapy. With that being said - if your husband is not willing to do therapy or is clear that he wants the relationship to end, then I can't see what choice you have but to "respect his decision" as you mentioned. This doesn't mean that you have to feel okay with the decision - as I'm sure you wouldn't - but ultimately loving one another and staying in committed relationships is a choice that we each have to make. If he is wanting to leave - this could make things a lot tougher for you. I would encourage you to seek professional support for yourself and reach out to lots of friends and family. You do not need to face depression alone - nor should you have to. We all need support at tough times like these.

Question 233: He said he would try and he never did. It's been nine months, and this is making me worse. Today, he said I have to respect whatever decision he makes. Is that true? Am I supposed to respect the decision to leave because he can't handle what I'm going through and leaves me here crying and worried every night? He's constantly changing his mind on if he wants to work it out.

Answer 233: I'm sorry for the hurt you're feeling from your husband's decision. Keep in mind that if one partner does not want to be in a relationship and remains in it, then both people will be unhappy, dissatisfied and feel stressed. Imagine being in a relationship that you'd rather leave. All the negative feelings and resentment of being with someone whom you'd rather be without, would not leave very much energy to satisfy your partner. I'm glad you realize that you feel depressed. Depression is a mood that can change once you understand what is causing it. Depression is an area that very often therapists help their patients understand, and emotionally support and encourage them during the course this takes. For now, concentrate on decreasing the tension in your life. Your husband's indecision may very well be adding to your stress. Only he can make up his own mind. As hard as this may be, all you really can do is take care of how you feel so that you will feel better. From what you write, your husband is too unsure to offer you the love and care you'd like from him. Learning to love oneself is always worthwhile. At this stage in your marriage, now sounds like an ideal opportunity for you to teach yourself self-love.

Question 234: He said he would try and he never did. It's been nine months, and this is making me worse. Today, he said I have to respect whatever decision he makes. Is that true? Am I supposed to respect the decision to leave because he can't handle what I'm going through and leaves me here crying and worried every night? He's constantly changing his mind on if he wants to work it out.

Answer 234: The fact that you mention that he is "constantly changing his mind on if he wants to work it out," suggests that Discernment Counseling might be a really good fit for you both. Discernment counseling is a protocol for partners where one or both aren't certain they want to remain in the relationship. It's a brief (1-5 sessions) and intentionally focused on helping partners talk through (primarily individually) their reasons for and against staying in the relationship - as well as confront their own contributions that lead to the relationship crisis. It's aimed at helping the couple reach a clear understanding of which path they are going to take, not asking anyone to change just yet, so it can be a lot less intimidating and more to the point than couples therapy. You can look to find a local therapist providing this service here. That said, I agree with other respondents that if he is deciding to leave, seeking out support for yourself would be incredibly helpful. You may need to accept his decision, but you can certainly feel whatever emotions you have. You are allowed to feel exactly how you feel, and it's likely you'll be sad, or angry or hurt or disappointed or scared, or any combination of any/all of those. Having someone there who can validate those emotions and help you to process the grief that naturally comes with the end of a relationship can be a huge help in finding a place of healing and regaining a sense of self, a sense of hope.

Question 235: He said he would try and he never did. It's been nine months, and this is making me worse.

Today, he said I have to respect whatever decision he makes. Is that true? Am I supposed to respect the decision to leave because he can't handle what I'm going through and leaves me here crying and worried every night? He's constantly changing his mind on if he wants to work it out.

Answer 235: Although the marriage vows say in sickness and health, each person has the right to choose to stay or to leave, depending on their ability to cope and handle marriage challenges. I know it's hard not to focus on him and his choice, but the more you put the focus of attention on him the less support you will receive. Focus on increasing self-care activities and building a support system around you. A therapist can help you to work with depression symptoms, build up your self-esteem, and develop coping skills. Also, invite him to a therapy session so he can clarify any questions and concerns regarding your diagnosis. If you would like to engage in therapy, I am licensed in Texas and Puerto Rico, you can contact me at 787-466-5478. Mi esposo quiere divorciarse después que fui diagnosticada con depresión severa. El dijo que intentaría y nunca lo hizo. Has pasado nueve meses, y esto me está haciendo sentir peor. Hoy, el dijo que yo debo respetar la decisión que el tome. ¿Es eso cierto? ¿SE supone que respete la decisión de irse porque él no puede manejar lo que yo estoy pasando y me deja llorando y preocupada cada noche? El cambia de opinión todo el tiempo. A pesar de que los votos matrimoniales dicen en la salud y la enfermedad, cada persona tiene el derecho de decidir si se queda o se va, dependiendo de su habilidad de lidiar con los retos del matrimonio. Entiendo que es difícil evitar enfocarte en él y sus decisiones, pero mientras más enfocas tu atención en él, más vas a resentir la falta de apoyo. Enfócate en aumentar el cuidado personal y en desarrollar tu sistema de apoyo. Un terapeuta te puede ayudar a trabajar con los síntomas de depresión, mejorar tu autoestima y desarrollar mecanismos de defensa. También puedes invitar a tu esposo a terapia para hablar sobre tu diagnóstico y que aclare dudas sobre los síntomas y expectativas. Si te gustaría recibir terapia, soy Consejera Profesional Licenciada en Texas y en Puerto Rico, llama al 787-466-5478.

Question 236: He said he would try and he never did. It's been nine months, and this is making me worse. Today, he said I have to respect whatever decision he makes. Is that true? Am I supposed to respect the decision to leave because he can't handle what I'm going through and leaves me here crying and worried every night? He's constantly changing his mind on if he wants to work it out.

Answer 236: When you are at your lowest, you have an opportunity to learn not just about the people around you and who you can depend on, but also, so much about yourself and why you have come to the place that you have. Take this time to do some introspection and learn yourself. It will give you the power to recover from whatever it is that has broken you. We'd love to talk with you. Please contact us sometime.

Question 237: He said he would try and he never did. It's been nine months, and this is making me worse. Today, he said I have to respect whatever decision he makes. Is that true? Am I supposed to respect the decision to leave because he can't handle what I'm going through and leaves me here crying and worried every night? He's constantly changing his mind on if he wants to work it out.

Answer 237: If your husband is changing his mind about whether or not he wants to stay in the relationship, I wonder if you both might benefit from seeing a therapist who specializes in couples. In my training working with couples, partners come into counseling with one of three goals in mind: strengthening the relationship, getting a divorce, or making a decision. The decision could be whether or not to stay together or it could be any number of other things, such as what state to live in. When you ask whether you have to respect whatever decision he makes, respecting his decision does not mean that you have to agree with what he decides. While you do not have the power to change his decision, he also does not have the power to change yours or how you feel about it. Having said that, if he is changing his mind a lot, chances are that the only decision he has made is that he needs to make a decision. Weighing the options of an important decision (any type of important decision) can be anxiety-producing in its own right. The fact that you said you were diagnosed with severe depression leads me to believe that you are already seeing a therapist. Perhaps he or she can assist you in navigating through this. I'm wondering how you feel when you are around your husband. I'm not sure whether you are saying that having him there is a source of comfort for you or that it leads you to feel more sad. Maybe it is a little bit of both.

Question 238: I'm in my late 50s. I never loved or have been loved. I need deeper help than is offered in my small town, but I cannot leave this town because of agoraphobia. I find myself losing hope more and more. My brain barely works anymore, and my memory is so small, I forget in a moment. I serve no purpose. I'm incapable of work or anything of value, and I never have been. I'm a complete waste of time and resources, and yet I keep trying. Why? Why does God insist that I continue to exist? I'm not suicidal,

just tired.

Answer 238: The fact that you're reaching out says that there is something in you that wants this to be different, and that drive might be something worth tapping into. "Why do I keep trying?" is a question that might give you some insight into what it is in you that keeps you going. A lot of therapists/counselors are now offering video therapy. As long as you're in the same state as a therapist offering this service, you could connect with someone helpful from the comfort of your home, even being in your small town. I'd recommend looking into this option, because you're asking a lot of really deep questions and might benefit from having those conversations with someone who can help you find your own answers.

Question 239: I'm in my late 50s. I never loved or have been loved. I need deeper help than is offered in my small town, but I cannot leave this town because of agoraphobia. I find myself losing hope more and more. My brain barely works anymore, and my memory so small, I forget in a moment. I serve no purpose. I'm incapable of work or anything of value, and I never have been. I'm a complete waste of time and resources, and yet I keep trying. Why? Why does God insist that I continue to exist? I'm not suicidal, just tired.

Answer 239: Hi Oak Harbor, My heart goes out to you. Sometimes when I'm working with a client who experiences depression or anxiety, I ask them for a glimpse into their worst moments in their minds. "What are the worst thoughts that run through your head?". Often they struggle, perhaps out of shame; maybe they don't want me to know their worst thoughts. But I can help them better if I do know, because then we have a place to work from. You are feeling hopeless and worthless, and your thoughts support these intense emotions. I don't know you, but I strongly believe that you have someone in your life who, if they heard your thoughts, would say "That's not true. I know where her value is." I believe that there are people who would see your value clearly, even if in small things. Can you imagine those voices? You mentioned God, so let's invite God into the conversation. What might God say to you? What evidence might God...who sees all...have of your worth? What hint might God give you about your purpose? You suffer from severe anxiety, and the agoraphobia works together with fear; they're a tag team. Fear tells you perhaps that people will reject you (or something equally bad), and then agoraphobia steps in and traps you and uses as evidence the fact that no one seems to be reaching out to you to convince you that you have no worth. Do you see their plan? Make her scared... keep her here alone...convince her it's hopeless. They both try to convince you that they are your only friends, except they're lying to you. They only want power over you. You forget your worth. You forget that we all have worth. No one is a waste. I believe all God's creatures have worth, and that we're here to use our gifts to improve the world, and to remind each other of our value. There are people out there needing your support as much as you need theirs. Can you find them? My guess is you've been alone and isolated for a very long time and it's impossible for you to see your worth in this situation. We need mirrors to see our worth and other people are our mirrors. We see our value in their eyes. Do you remember the first time you questioned your worth? What was happening that you blamed yourself for? Can you speak to that child and tell her (or him) that whatever's happening isn't her fault? It's that child who cannot see her own worth, probably because someone treated her as though she had none. That's only a story though; not the truth. Can you find another thread of a story? Who might tell a story of your worth? Oak Harbor, I believe that there is help closer than you think. Fear wants you to believe it's hopeless. You reached out here...can you reach out again? Start with just one person, and that will lead you to somewhere. We don't know where that somewhere is but could it be better than sitting alone? You've stopped living. You can choose any moment to start. I wish you peace and hope. :)

Question 240: Both of my parents committed suicide together, and I was the one who found them. I suffer from overwhelming depression, which is having an extreme effect on me and my husband's sex lives. He does not understand at all and is always making me feel so uncomfortable about sex.

Answer 240: Hello, and thank you for your question. First, I want to tell you how sorry I am for the experience you had with your parents. That is a grief and trauma that is certainly hard to imagine. Trauma and grief can affect us in many ways, and certainly deeply personal things like our sex lives. It may be difficult for others to make the connection, but it is there. So, for example, if stress and trauma make you feel like you are not interested in sex, a partner may take it as a personal rejection rather than response to stress, trauma or grief. If your husband will agree to it, couple's counseling may be your best bet. A counselor can help you with your communication and may be able to provide some education to your husband about trauma and how it can have an impact on intimacy. If he doesn't agree to go, it may be worth it to go on your own. You still have a lot you are dealing with yourself. And sometimes our

personally therapy can influence others, so it may be a good idea. It is important to remember that even though you are married you have the right to make decisions about your body, and that includes when you want to have sex with it. I hope this is helpful, and some of my colleagues may have ideas, also. Be well. Robin J. Landwehr, DBH, LPC, NCC

Question 241: I have bipolar disorder, paranoid personality disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder. I last self-harmed a week ago. When I am stressed, overwhelmed, hurt, or angry, the urge to self-harm is all I can think of. I am trying to seek help.

Answer 241: Seeking professional help does not mean that you will necessarily be admitted into an inpatient setting - though to be honest, that can become an option if you feel unsafe or if you are unable to plan for safety. However, many clients who struggle with self-harm can find help in outpatient settings - particularly those which offer a treatment called Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT). Looking for a DBT professional or group therapy setting may be particularly helpful, but a skilled professional can help you to figure out how to identify other options even when you are experiencing overwhelming emotions. Without knowing your location, I also recommend searching to find your local helpline or suicide prevention hotline. The volunteers on the other end of the line can be very helpful even if your intention is not suicide and they are likely also to be able to connect you with resources in your area. Calling into the helpline may also be a first step alternative to self-harming when you're feeling overwhelmed.

Question 242: I stress over everything. If I don't have enough "quality time" with my boyfriend, I start to feel resentment towards him. He has three children, and they are great kids, but I find we don't have much time together. I break down easily and find myself depressed.

Answer 242: Everyone has some level of anxiety - it's what helps us respond to stressors in our lives and clues us into the fact that we need to respond to something going on. However, if you're feeling overwhelmed by racing thoughts, feeling like you spend a lot of energy worrying about something specific or even pretty much anything at all, and you're starting to find that it's getting in your way when it comes to living your life the way you want, then I'd suggest seeing a counselor or therapist for an assessment for anxiety. Your other concerns, though, seem pretty "normal" for someone who is in a relationship with a partner who has children. As a married stepmother, I've been there, and as a therapist, I can tell you that the boundaries and communication skills you have in your relationships need to be healthy for you to feel healthy. Finding some support from a group of others whose partners have children might be really helpful - being able to hear from others that you aren't alone in feeling like this can really lighten the load, and they might have some good ideas for handling certain situations. Another option is to find a counselor or therapist who has experience working with step/blended family dynamics - because even if you're not officially married, those dynamics come into play whenever there are kids from another relationship involved. You may even consider couples counseling so that both of you can learn to talk about your relationship needs and concerns in a way that will encourage connection and strengthen your sense of partnership.

Question 243: I have been falling into a deep depression where I can no function during the day and night. The only time I am at peace is when I'm asleep. If I am with friends, family, at work, and mainly alone, I cannot think straight. I no longer feel like myself.

Answer 243: I don't know how long ago your breakup was, but I would suggest that you reach out to friends or family that you trust and perhaps a local mental health clinician. I'm not sure what you mean when you say that you are not able to function during the day and night. If you are having trouble sleeping for more than a few nights, consider talking with your primary care physician. Not sleeping can really make changes in your emotions seem much larger. Can you find anything in your life that is the same as it was before the breakup? This may be a starting point for you. I wonder if you could think of a moment or two each day when you feel emotionally at peace while you are awake. Also consider looking at things that you can control, such as when you choose to wear, eat, and who you talk to about your deepest feelings. You mentioned that you have friends and family. I wonder if any of them are supportive to you. Please reach out and talk to someone about the details. I get the sense that you feel that you are alone in this, and having someone there to help you sort out what you're feeling sounds like it would be a gift to yourself.

Question 244: I have been falling into a deep depression where I can no function during the day and night. The only time I am at peace is when I'm asleep. If I am with friends, family, at work, and mainly alone, I cannot think straight. I no longer feel like myself.

Answer 244: It is common to go through a stage of adjustment after a breakup, which may include

depression symptoms. I recommend practicing self-care: stressing on balancing your life with healthy eating, exercise, resting and looking at your spiritual life. These steps should assist you in giving your body and mind some balance. Practice cognitive reframing, this is training your brain to refocus, and stay on task. Meditation is a great tool to clear your mind during the day as well; there are multiple apps that help. If the problem persists a therapist could assist you in learning to focus and process those thoughts and feelings that cloud you mind. ¿Cómo puedo manejar la depresión después de una separación? He estado cayendo en una depresión profunda que no me permite funcionar durante el día. El único momento en el que estoy en calma es cuando duermo. Si estoy con mis amigos, familia, en el trabajo o a solas, no puedo pensar claramente. Ya no me siento como yo. Es común pasar por un estado de ajuste después de una separación, y este ajuste puede incluir síntomas de depresión. Recomiendo que practiques auto compasión: esforzarte en balancear tu vida comiendo saludable, ejercitándote, descansando y analizando tu vida espiritual. Estos pasos te ayudarán a balancear tu mente y cuerpo. También puedes practicar reenfocar tus pensamientos para mantener tu mente clara. La meditación es una buena manera de practicar el enfoque mental, y existen muchas aplicaciones que te pueden ayudar. Si el problema persiste tu consejero te puede ayudar a aprender técnicas de enfoque a procesar pensamientos o sentimientos que te estén afectando.

Question 245: I am pretty sure I have depression and anxiety. I also have voices in my head. I have problems sleeping too. I've already been diagnosed with attention-deficit disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder. I have self-harmed in the last and used to be suicidal. How do I tell them this and ask for therapy?

Answer 245: If you have already been diagnosed with attention-deficit disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder, can you go back to the people who diagnosed you with those things? It may be that your parents would be open to you talking with someone because it sounds like you have done this in the past. I don't know whether you have a specific reason that you are thinking they may have some hesitation, but if you are comfortable saying that you would really like to talk to someone because you are feeling sad or anxious (or whichever of your concerns you feel comfortable revealing to them), that may be a way to start the process. As for how you tell them about the fact that you have harmed yourself in the past and used to be suicidal, a therapist may be able to work together with you to discuss the best way to tell them about that. I'm not sure if you have told anyone about what you have been experiencing, but if you have some support there, perhaps they would be able to give you feedback about ways to talk with your parents as well. You mentioned that sometimes you hear voices. This can happen for a variety of reasons, but if the voices that you hear are giving you directions and you feel as though you might follow them, that would be a time to ask for immediate help, before you follow through with what they are telling you, perhaps by calling 800-273-8255. They may be able to connect you with local resources and they can definitely talk with you in the moment that you call.

Question 246: I am pretty sure I have depression and anxiety. I also have voices in my head. I have problems sleeping too. I've already been diagnosed with attention-deficit disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder. I have self-harmed in the last and used to be suicidal. How do I tell them this and ask for therapy?

Answer 246: Family support is very helpful when having these symptoms. I suggest looking for therapist within reach (school, through your insurance or the community, calling 2-1-1). Once you schedule a session, you can inform them and invite them to come in. I have found through sceptic parents, that once they give it a chance they open up to the process of learning and healing. I also understand that parents may become overly concerned and overprotective when hearing about your symptoms, and that's why is important to discuss them with a therapist, normalize them, understand why you experience them, and learn how they could help you. ¿Cómo les digo a mis padres que yo pienso que tengo problemas mentales? Estoy seguro que tengo depresión ansiedad. También escucho voces en mi cabeza. Tengo problemas para dormir también. Y he sido diagnosticado con déficit de atención y desorden obsesivo compulsivo. Me he auto flagelado y solía tener ideas suicidas. Como les dejo saber y les pido ayuda. El apoyo de la familia es muy útil cuando se experimentan los síntomas que mencionas. Te sugiero que busques un consejero (en la escuela, a través de tu plan médico, o en la comunidad, llamando al 2-1-1).

Ya que tengas tu cita, invita a tus padres. He observado que aunque algunos padres son escépticos al principio, pero una vez le dan una oportunidad se abren al proceso de terapia y sus beneficios. También he observado que algunos padres se vuelven sobreprotectores cuando aprenden de los síntomas que sufren sus hijos, así que sería otro beneficio que aprendieran que pueden hacer para ayudarte y

apoyarte.

Question 247: I am pretty sure I have depression and anxiety. I also have voices in my head. I have problems sleeping too. I've already been diagnosed with attention-deficit disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder. I have self-harmed in the past and used to be suicidal. How do I tell them this and ask for therapy?

Answer 247: What stops you now from telling your parents the way you are feeling? Do you imagine asking them for therapy would be a surprise for them? If they're paying attention to you at all, then I imagine they'd feel relief to know you're aware of having some feelings within yourself of a problem. If you believe they'd have a negative reaction to you asking for help, this may very well be part of why you are having problems in the first place. What reaction did your parents have when you were diagnosed with the other conditions? I'd separate their willingness to help you from your sense of needing help. If they do not want to help with finding a therapist for you, then start by looking for services available for people in your age group whose parents also do not wish to be involved in their child's emotional and psychological health.

Question 248: I'm depressed and recently went through a break up. It's like every guy I like only wants me for sex. I think I'm ugly, and sometimes I just want to die. I have a son, and I got really big when I was pregnant. I have stretch marks on my stomach.

Answer 248: If you are currently feeling as if you want to die, please call 800-273-8255 and talk to someone. One way to work on not always thinking so negatively about yourself is to surround yourself with people who are more positive toward you. Do you have friends or family who are supportive? Can you find one part of you that you do not think is ugly? If your stretch marks are still bothering you, talk with a pharmacist or your primary care physician. Sometimes there are creams or lotions you can use to decrease stretch marks and they should be able to guide you in the right direction. You mentioned mostly physical things here. I wonder if you can find one small thing each day that is going right and build from there. Perhaps your son makes you smile?

Question 249: I'm not the same anymore, I don't know how to get back to who I am. I'm sad and confused and angry and tired. I don't sleep well.

Answer 249: Being tired can really affect almost everyone's ability to work through things that make them sad, confused, or angry, among other emotions. If you're having difficulty sleeping, try to get into a habit of going to bed and waking up close to the same time every day. Also consider only using the bed for sleeping so your brain knows that it's time to sleep when you are in bed. If you are not sleeping while you are in bed, consider getting up and reading a book or doing something to make you tired before going back to bed. Hopefully you'll be able to establish a pattern. Sometimes sadness and other emotions make sleeping very difficult as well. Try keeping track of your moods to see what is leading up to the changes. If you're still struggling, consider talking with a therapist about the specifics and/or maybe talking with your primary care physician. There are natural sleep remedies that he or she may recommend for you.

Question 250: Over the years, I have slowly lost everything: my jobs, my cars, my freedom, and my money. I am a stay-at-home mom who doesn't make any money, doesn't have a car, never goes out, and cleans all day long everyday.

Answer 250: There are an infinite number of possibilities here. You included a lot of things that you don't have. Is there anyway that you can have some freedom for a few hours a week, at least? A lot of times stay at home moms have groups when they meet at different public places where their children can play together and they can talk together. I don't know how old your child or children is/are, but perhaps going back to work is something that can happen in the future. I wonder if you may consider who you have in your life who can support you. I don't know whether you have a spouse or parents or siblings who could help out with some different things. I wonder if you could consider where you would like to go if you had two or three hours that you could do whatever you wanted? If you can sort out some possible answers to that, maybe you can work together with friends or family to make it happen. Also, again depending on the age of your children, some parents can do things while the children are sleeping, even if you are in the same room. For example, if your children are sleeping for about two hours, maybe 30 minutes of that could be reserved for you and the rest could be for cleaning or other things you need to do.

Question 251: I don't have time to live or take care of myself at times. It's causing depression, stress, and anxiety. I don't know what to do.

Answer 251: I'm not sure whether you are referring to having a lot of activities after school or that homework is overwhelming. Can you set aside a couple hours a week for yourself as a place to start?

Question 252: Two years ago, I was separated from the military into my contract for medical issues. It has emotionally destroyed me. I now basically hate myself. It's embarrassing to be separated from the one place who takes anyone. My family has been in the armed forces, and it has always been my dream. I can't do this alone anymore, and now my family is even worried.

Answer 252: It sounds like being separated from the armed forces is a major loss for you. It takes some time to work through the emotions related to this and it often takes longer if you are trying to work through it without a lot of support. Is there a task that you were doing during your military service that can in some way transfer into civilian life? I don't know what else your life involves, whether you have close friends or a romantic partner, a career, activities that you like to do, and many other things. You may be able to use some of the things that you still have today as a way to start moving forward in a different direction. Your military service will always be a part of you. Thank you for your service.

Question 253: I feel depressed even though I act like a happy with my family. I act like I'm happy so my son doesn't see me sad. I act like my life is a happy life, but I feel sad and depressed. I sometimes think of killing myself and that my family deserve someone better than me. I just cry and write in my book all these feelings.

Answer 253: It sounds like you have several different things happening at the same time. I would encourage you to call and speak to a local therapist. If you are having thoughts of killing yourself in this moment, please call 800-273-8255 and talk to someone. While I follow that you would like your son to be unaware of what you are going through, that doesn't mean that you can't discuss your feelings with someone else. Who is it that you trust or could speak with about this? A therapist could be one person, but perhaps there is someone else in your life as well. One thing that may help is to find a bead or rock that is smooth and you can hold onto it while thinking of a specific memory where you were happy. This could be from as long ago as necessary as long as it is specific and you can place yourself back in that time when you are thinking about it. If you think about this time while holding onto the bead, the bead may remind you of a time when you felt happy. You could do the same thing for a time when you felt comfortable and safe. Have you recognized any patterns for what is leading you to be sad? Can you think of anything that makes you feel good, even if it only works for a few minutes?

Question 254: I think I may suffer from depression, and it is affecting my life and sleep. I am on my parent's insurance, and they won't let me see a therapist because they don't believe in it.

Answer 254: The answer here really depends upon your age and something called the "age of consent" in the state where you live. In Pennsylvania, anyone over the age of 14 can provide consent for their own treatment. As for billing purposes, try talking to some local agencies. If you are under 18, you may be able to have Medicaid out of medical necessity so that you can have treatment. If you are over 18, there may be some discounted rates at some agencies because of the situation you're in. Maybe your primary care physician will be able to refer you to some local agencies. If you are in school, you may be able to talk with a guidance counselor or someone at the school. This would not require using your insurance.

Question 255: When I'm sad and alone, I want to cut myself.

Answer 255: Try doing something physical. If you haven't exercised before, it is a good idea to get your doctor's approval first, but this can be helpful. The more you can find out about when you want to cut, the easier it will be to figure out what else you can do. If you are feeling sad or angry or nervous, look at what is leading up to those feelings and talk to someone about that. You said you are alone. I would see if you can find someone that you can trust to talk with about what you are going through. This could be a parent, a friend, someone at school, a coworker, or any number of other people.

Question 256: I stopped for a while, but I've started doing it again. It's like an addiction. The more I try to stop, the more I want to do it. I've tried doing some of the stuff they say to do like draw, but it doesn't work.

Answer 256: I've heard people say that they cut themselves as a way to feel relief from different emotions. You're also right that when you try to focus on just not cutting, it becomes more difficult because it's what you are focused on. While that is still something to work on, it may also be helpful to find something else you can do instead. You said drawing doesn't work for you. Sometimes more physical activities, such as doing a few jumping jacks, can be helpful. If you don't exercise, it might be something to talk with your doctor about first. The more you can learn about what makes you want to cut, the easier it will be to find out what you could do to change that. Try talking to somebody about what you are feeling in addition to the urge to cut.

Question 257: I have friends, family, I live in a good home, I go to a nice high school, and I get pretty good

grades, but I don't know why I'm so unhappy. These friends are my best friends and they're all amazing people, and yet I'm sad all the time and feel alone.

Answer 257: I wonder if you have moments where you feel happy? You say you have amazing friends. I wonder if you get along with them and feel as though you can be yourself around them. Sometimes we put a lot of pressure on ourselves to do really well at everything all the time and this can be overwhelming sometimes. Where do you have support? I hope you can tell someone that you are feeling sad so that you can talk about your feelings. Sleeping can make a big difference as far as feeling sad as well. If you're not sleeping well at night, that could be a big part of feeling sad a lot. Perhaps you could try to find a person or two who makes you feel totally safe and comfortable and try to talk with them.

Question 258: I used to be the funny guy of the group—the class clown, if you will. I used to laugh uncontrollably all the time and be able to be social without it feeling awkward. Now I can't laugh at all, and I'm dead inside.

Answer 258: If you look back to when you feel as though you were the "funny guy," I wonder what is different now? It may be that responsibilities have changed or any number of other things. I don't know whether you're also saying that you feel sad or if you're saying that you feel as though you don't have any big changes in your feelings. A lot of us tend to be really busy, and sometimes we over schedule ourselves to the point that we don't have time to have positive time for ourselves. Sometimes even if we are spending time with friends, we're thinking about work and all of the other things we need to do. I wonder if it feels awkward when you're with friends that you trust in an environment that you are used to. Maybe if that is more comfortable for you, it can be a stepping stone to focusing on how you feel better in those moments. It sounds as if you may have had an experience (or more than one) where you felt misunderstood or criticized and now reacting to people feels awkward. If so, try going back to people you trust. Who do you have support from?

Question 259: I'm starting to think that I might have depression. The thing is though, I'm not exactly sad. I can joke with my friends and stuff, but I've stopped caring about my work, and I've been starting to think that life is pointless. I really have no clue if I need help, or if I'm just tired or something.

Answer 259: It is possible that you have depression, but you could also be experiencing some other changes that mean that you have feelings of being sad without actually being depressed. Your statement makes it sound like you've stopped caring about your work, but you're still going to work and doing your work. It almost sounds like you are dissatisfied with your work. Do you like what you do? When you said that life is pointless, what makes it that way? What is keeping you going? Is there something you can do each day that you can find meaning in? You mentioned that you are not sure if you need help or are just tired. It sounds like you could certainly benefit from talking with someone about more specifics. I'm curious about how long you have felt this way and if you are aware of anything that is contributing to it.

Question 260: In the last ten months, I've been kicked out, moved around three times, worked many jobs, stopped school to make money, had dad and mom get sick, was cheated on while pregnant, lost my baby, had relationship issues, and was betrayed. I can't get a job. I have no friends. I feel lonely and isolated. I've been dealing with all this by myself.

Answer 260: One thing that may help is to focus on small things that you do have control over. If you can hold onto that sense of having control over what you wear or what you choose to eat or where you go during the day, this may help you be able to look at what is currently most important for you and consider different choices. For example, you say you can't get a job, but I wonder if you could work with local agencies to help you find a job, like Career Link. You say you have no friends currently. Are there any previous friends that you can get back in contact with? You mentioned that you have no friends. Is there anyone in your life that you can talk with, even if it's not someone that you consider a closest friend?

Question 261: I've been feeling worthless, unaccomplished, and so frustrated. I want to break things, hit myself, run away, kick, scream, and cry. I just want to be happy and outgoing again. I want to be able to take care of my daughter and live comfortably.

Answer 261: Philadelphia, there is help out there. For your daughter's sake, start somewhere. Feelings are only that; your worst fears about who you are are only based on a few moments that haven't gone well. Depression is so treatable, but you have to seek treatment from a professional. Here's a quick exercise for you to do that can show you how therapy might work... fear is telling you the worst possible story of your life, right? So... if there was an opposite story... the very best story that someone could tell about you and your life... what would that be? Who would be telling it? Someone who loves you? Someone who was around you when you were that outgoing person? Someone who's been watching

your life from the start? God? Write that best story. I dare you to give it as much credibility as the worst one. Therapy is often about helping people reject their "worst stories". I invite you to start exploring with a qualified therapist whatever barriers stand between you and your best life. I hope you reach out soon. :)

Question 262: I keep feeling paralyzed and unsure during interviews. Previous jobs have fired me for lack of performance, and five employers have rejected me after extensive personality tests and interviews. I'm afraid of continuing because my depression is getting worse. I'm already humiliated working for temp agencies and doubt my self-worth as a provider for my family.

Answer 262: It sounds like you are feeling pretty overwhelmed and stuck between wanting to improve your work situation and worrying that you won't be able to. It is possible that the paralysis, uncertainty, and self-doubt that you describe are contributing to your difficulty in getting and maintaining a satisfying job as employers generally like to see that a potential employee is confident and can think on his or her feet. With a competent therapist, you may be able to get more understanding of the roots of these feelings and learn how to move forward in your search for a better work life in a way that leaves you feeling confident and capable.

Question 263: I feel like I am not at a good state of mind. I'm very unsettled in my soul. I'm not happy with myself or the decisions I make, which makes me not happy with anyone else. I feel like a failure most of my days. I don't feel like I'm good at anything anymore. I feel like less of a person.

Answer 263: It seems like you may be experiencing depression symptoms, they could be triggered by unexpected life changes, or building up throughout time. The important part is that you have identified them and wanting to change them. The first step is to establish a self-care routine that will help you to feel centered and motivated: go for walks, or make any physical activity that you enjoy (be kind to yourself, anything helps at this point), eat balanced, add whole grains and fibers to your diet, make a point to rest at night and avoid naps, practice a hobby that you love, or look for a new one that you are curious about. You mentioned that you feel unsettled in your soul: explore your spirituality, meditate about what makes your soul at peace, and find ways to practice that or surround yourself by those activities. If you find it difficult to begin, talk to your therapist to identify roadblocks and ways to find motivation. Suicidal and homicidal thoughts are common but serious depression symptoms, discuss them with your therapist, contact your doctor or psychiatrist, and call 9-1-1 if it's an emergency. Once you feel stable, you can focus on exploring the source of the problem and see if you need to make changes or learn coping skills that will help you manage it. It will also be a good time to explore your spirituality and your purpose in life, that may help you to feel better with yourself and then happier around others.

¿Cómo puedo volver a ser la persona que realmente soy? Siento que mi mente no está bien. My espíritu está intranquilo. No me siento feliz con las decisiones que tomo, lo cual me hace infeliz con los demás. Me siento como un fracaso la mayoría del tiempo. Siento que ya no soy bueno para nada. Siento que soy menos que los demás. Al parecer estas experimentando síntomas de depresión, la cual puede ser causada por cambios recientes en tu vida o estarse acumulando a través del tiempo. Lo importante en este momento es que tú reconoces los síntomas y estas buscando cambiar la situación. El primer paso sería trabajar en restablecer una rutina de cuidado personal que te ayude a sentirte emocionalmente estable y motivado: Sal a caminar o hacer alguna actividad física (ten compasión contigo mismo, cualquier cosa funciona para comenzar), comienza a comer balanceado, especialmente granos y fibras integrales, procura descansar en las noches y evita las siestas, y practica algún tipo de actividad que hayas disfrutado en el pasado o que te de curiosidad. Mencionaste que tu espíritu está intranquilo, explora tu espiritualidad, y que te ayudaría a encontrar la paz, busca la manera de hacer esa práctica una rutina. Si te cuesta mucho trabajo iniciar estas actividades, será bueno buscar a un consejero para que te ayude a identificar formas de estar motivado o obstáculos que te estén deteniendo. Es común tener pensamientos que atentan en contra de tu vida o la de otros, discútelos con tu terapeuta, con tu médico primario o psiquiatra, y llama al 9-1-1 si es una emergencia. Ya que consigas estabilidad, puedes comenzar a trabajar o explorar la causa del problema y ver si hay cambios mayores que debes hacer o destrezas que debes aprender para manejar el mismo. También es un buen momento para explorar tu espiritualidad más profundamente y tu propósito en la vida, cuando encontramos un propósito y como ejercerlo, tendemos a ser más felices con nosotros mismos y con los demás.

Question 264: I am not sure if I am depressed. I don't know how to bring it up to my parents, and that makes me miserable.

Answer 264: You are not alone, many people fear opening up to family members about the topic of depression or mental illness. There are many different reasons why some may fear telling their parents.

The most common thoughts I hear in my office are: "My parents won't understand me", "I may cause more problems to the family", "I am worried that something bad may happen if I tell them". If possible express your current concerns and worries to your parents. You can start the conversation with your parents by saying "I have not been feeling like myself lately, and I may want to see a counselor". I think you are doing the right thing by going on this website and asking for help. Just a helpful tip: positive self-talk can be beneficial before having difficult conversations with others. For example, tell yourself something positive before talking to your parents such as "I feel confident in myself, and I am doing this to overcome my fear of talking to my parents" can help to decrease the anxiety you are feeling leading up to the conversation. I would recommend if you are feeling depressed or down it would be beneficial to seek counseling to understand your current thoughts and behaviors. Best of luck and hope you decide to start counseling.

Question 265: I am not sure if I am depressed. I don't know how to bring it up to my parents, and that makes me miserable.

Answer 265: Depending on your relationship with your parents, inviting them to have a conversation might be a good first step. If they consent then you can have the opportunity to discuss your concerns with them. Inviting someone to a conversation and getting their agreement is a great first step. I would then make sure your location of the discussion is conducive to the conversation and once all that is considered it might be beneficial that you make a list of your concerns prior to the meeting. This can help keep you on point.

Question 266: I am not sure if I am depressed. I don't know how to bring it up to my parents, and that makes me miserable.

Answer 266: I am so sorry you are struggling! I do think it's a good idea to share your feelings with your parents and perhaps get some help connecting with a counselor or therapist if you feel that might help.

There are lots of ways to tell them, depending on your relationship. Maybe saying "I wanted to tell you guys something.. sometimes I worry that I might be depressed." Or, some folks will write a letter, or even send a text. The most important thing is that you tell someone you trust so you don't feel so miserable. I hope this helps. Best of luck.

Question 267: I have absolutely nothing to do with my life but lay in bed on my phone or hangout with my one friend. I don't have a job, my family doesn't include me in anything, and I don't have many friends. I have nothing to do besides go on my phone. I miss talking to people in person instead of online. I don't even talk to my family in person even from the other room.

Answer 267: It sounds like you are feeling pretty stuck, lonely, and hopeless; like you have a desire to be more connected to people and to find purpose in life, but are not sure what to do. I am glad to hear that you have at least one friend and I think it is great that you are reaching out for more connection. If you can, working with a therapist who is competent in treating depression may be a huge benefit to you and help you to regain a sense of meaning, motivation, and connection. Additionally, anything you can do to give yourself a little break from the feeling of pointlessness and any ruminating thoughts you may be having may be of help. I know it may sound pointless in the moment, and you may feel a great deal of inertia in doing so, but you may find that if you force yourself to do something small that is pleasurable, like taking a walk for example, there's a good chance you will be glad that you did so after the fact. Thank you for reaching out.

Question 268: My motivation has gone away. It's hard to get out of bed. I really don't know what to do anymore. I'm miserable. My anxiety and depression have taken over my life.

Answer 268: Anxiety and Depression are challenging experiences to live with and to manage on a daily basis. I would say that both are challenges to overcome but solutions to living healthy and well exist. Step 1: Talk about it. With friends, family, partners, counselors, and other trusted people in your life. Step 2: Create a plan with a counselor to learn new skills that help you recognize and manage your symptoms. Step 3: Don't give up. Working on yourself can be difficult and hard at the beginning. Stick with it and you will be able to find exercises, tools, and resources that help you live well.

Question 269: My motivation has gone away. It's hard to get out of bed. I really don't know what to do anymore. I'm miserable. My anxiety and depression have taken over my life.

Answer 269: It is challenging to maintain motivation at all times, anxiety and depression can set in which can make interacting with others a struggle, it can lead us to do things that make us not feel good and we become isolated. This ends up feeding into a cycle that maintains the anxiety/depression loop and can be really challenging to step out of it. You are in a place of awareness and this is the first step in making

changes that can help you feel better. It is really one step at a time, a concrete plan, with self-compassion to build the solid ground you need to come out of this. <http://www.empoweryou2.com>
Question 270: My motivation has gone away. It's hard to get out of bed. I really don't know what to do anymore. I'm miserable. My anxiety and depression have taken over my life.

Answer 270: One of the first steps is to manage anxiety and depression symptoms are to establish a good self-care routine. Start with the most basic things: Eating balanced meals, sleeping at from 6-8 hours and exercise at least 30 minutes a day. These will help you to regulate the chemical imbalance that affects your mood, plus exercising gives you time to vent and be distracted from your thoughts. Once basic self-care is established, I suggest that is a good time to start exploring the source of these feelings, and address them through therapy. If you have difficulty initiating self-care routine talk to your therapist about what motivates you and pushes you to do things, you might find the key during the process. You could also contact your physician or a psychiatrist to discuss medication options if it's too challenging to begin basic self-care. ¿Cómo puedo manejar mi ansiedad y depresión para sentirme normal otra vez? Mi motivación se ha ido. Es difícil salir de la cama. No sé qué hacer. Soy Miserable. Mi ansiedad y depresión han tomado el control de mi vida. Uno de los primeros pasos para manejar la ansiedad y la depresión es establecer una buena rutina de cuidado personal. Comienza con las cosas más básicas: Comer comidas balanceadas, dormir de 6-8 horas en la noche, y ejercitarte por lo menos 30 minutos al día. Esto te ayudara a regular el desbalance químico que afecta tu estado de ánimo, además de que te da tiempo para desahogarte y distraerte. Ya que la rutina de cuidado esta establecida, es un buen momento para comenzar a explorar la fuente de tus sentimientos negativos, y explóralos a través de terapia. Si se dificulta comenzar a crear una rutina puedes consultar con tu terapeuta para identificar motivaciones que te impulsen a comenzar. También puedes contactar a tu medico primario o psiquiatra para discutir medicamentos que te pueden ayudar a manejar estos síntomas e iniciar cuidado básico.
Question 271: I sleep a lot. Music changes my mood. I cry every Wednesday. My mind is like a maze that even I get lost in. I don't usually feel my true emotions, but instead, I get fake mirrored ones.

Answer 271: What happens in your life on Wednesdays that you feel like crying? Crying is natural. Crying on Wednesdays may also be natural if some type of regular event or situation comes up for you then that you don't like, feel oppressed by and have no way of avoiding. Maybe you would qualify for a diagnosis for depression. This matters less than what you will do with a diagnosis. Very often people feel some type of relief from hearing a professional tell them what they "have". Don't let yourself get talked into taking pills because now you "have something". Pills change your mood. Only you can change your life. The diagnosis matters so the therapist gets paid from insurance. It is a good sign that you know whether you feel true emotions or fake ones. This is a clear sign of knowing about yourself. Your mind feeling like a "maze" is a little too vague to know if you mean there are too many thoughts at once so that you have difficulty knowing which ones to examine first, or if "maze" means you don't know what your thoughts are and feel lost for this reason. Depression which is addressed by a person can become quite liberating because you will remove what bothers you so much in your life that it weighs you down and depresses you.

Question 272: I have twin toddlers. I experienced a death of loved one prior to giving birth. I had a horrible break up with the father. People told him he was using me for money. My ex-boyfriend had extreme meltdowns every day for three years. I'm always alone with no friends.

Answer 272: First, let me say that you are a survivor and a warrior. Managing 1 child by yourself is difficult, but twins is a whole different ballgame. Anxiety can affect us at any time anywhere. This is the challenge, especially when we have so many things to manage each day. There are several methods and practices that help manage and even reduce symptoms of anxiety. It will depend on what works best for you. Talk with friends, a counselor, or a loved one who can offer you support and feedback as you navigate this process of learning what works for you. When all else fails; make sure you are in a safe place, pause for a deep, cleansing breath in, a long exhale out, and ask yourself, "What do I want in this moment?" Now you can begin again.

Question 273: I live a normal life. I have tons of friends and family, but I feel lonely.

Answer 273: This may be happening because you and the others are not connected to each other on a level which reaches your emotions. Loneliness may show the absence of feeling a variety of emotions when you are among others. How many friends you have doesn't affect whether you and someone else feel emotionally engaged with one another. Consider if you feel like concentrating your friendship on more intensively sharing your feelings with a few of your friends. This may lead to fewer friends who are also

more meaningful to you and your feeling a decrease of loneliness.

Question 274: I started having anxiety three months ago. I'm new to having anxiety, and it's making me depressed.

Answer 274: One of the first steps is to manage anxiety and depression symptoms are to establish a good self-care routine. Start with the most basic things: Eating balanced meals, sleeping at from 6-8 hours and exercise at least 30 minutes a day. These will help you to regulate the chemical imbalance that affects your mood, plus exercising gives you time to vent and be distracted from your thoughts. Once basic self-care is established, I suggest that is a good time to start exploring the source of these feelings, and address them through therapy. If you have difficulty initiating self-care routine talk to your therapist about what motivates you and pushes you to do things, you might find the key during the process. You could also contact your physician or a psychiatrist to discuss medication options if it's too challenging to begin basic self-care. ¿Cómo puedo controlar mi ansiedad? Uno de los primeros pasos para manejar la ansiedad y la depresión es establecer una buena rutina de cuidado personal. Comienza con las cosas más básicas: Comer comidas balanceadas, dormir de 6-8 horas en la noche, y ejercitarte por lo menos 30 minutos al día. Esto te ayudara a regular el desbalance químico que afecta tu estado de ánimo, además de que te da tiempo para desahogarte y distraerte. Ya que la rutina de cuidado esta establecida, es un buen momento para comenzar a explorar la fuente de tus sentimientos negativos, y explóralos a través de terapia. Si se dificulta comenzar a crear una rutina puedes consultar con tu terapeuta para identificar motivaciones que te impulsen a comenzar. También puedes contactar a tu medico primario o psiquiatra para discutir medicamentos que te pueden ayudar a manejar estos síntomas e iniciar cuidado básico.

Question 275: I started having anxiety three months ago. I'm new to having anxiety, and it's making me depressed.

Answer 275: I agree with Cory. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) does seem to help a lot of people who struggle with anxiety. It's not the only type of therapy that can help, but it seems to help people in a way that is more natural and realistic. As Cory mentioned, anxiety is something that is part of life, so therapies that indicate we can get rid of it are questionable. Our natural inclination when we have anxiety is to STOP any and all things that may cause it or provoke it. We do this because we think it will help, but it actually doesn't. Anxiety usually has us rehashing the past or rehearsing the future while ignoring the present. ACT helps folks who have those kinds of tendencies. Be well..Robin J. Landwehr, DBH, LPC, NCC

Question 276: I started having anxiety three months ago. I'm new to having anxiety, and it's making me depressed.

Answer 276: As a past sufferer of anxiety myself, I have learned that it is a natural part of life, it is a natural part of us, the longer we try to run from it the more it entangles us in its clutches, if we deny certain parts of ourselves we will become depressed or even oppressed, the only way to deal with anxiety is to embrace it and accept it, and in fighting the fight without fighting we will eventually win, I would encourage you to look into Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, your answer I think lies in that area of research. Hope this helps,C

Question 277: I have no friends, no hobbies, and no interest in anything. I get annoyed with everything and everyone. I am always tired, i can sleep 8 hrs or 12 hrs and im still tired. I don't know what to do. Is this normal?

Answer 277: Hello, and thank you for your question. It certainly sounds like you don't like how things are going. Here are a few thoughts and ideas:1. If you haven't seen a primary care provider in a while, you may want to. There are health conditions that can affect your mood and energy levels, even at your age. It doesn't hurt to get checked out. If they find the cause, they may be able to treat it and improve the symptoms. In addition, most primary care providers are trained to be able to manage medication for patients who have mild, moderate, and sometimes severe depression. So, don't be surprised if your primary care doctor offers to put you on an anti-depressant if they diagnose you with depression. Medication is not the only way to treat depression, but sometimes it is necessary depending on different factors.2. You may want to consider counseling, since it is another effective way to treat depression. A counselor will help you explore the factors that may be leading to depressive symptoms in the first place. This could include thoughts, behaviors, beliefs, life experiences, and other things. 3. Finally, to answer your question about whether these feelings are "normal." These symptoms could be the sign of an underlying general health or mental health condition. It is important to remember that even if these

symptoms are "abnormal" it doesn't mean that YOU are. Millions of people struggle with depression. So remember, the symptoms are the problem, not YOU. Hope this helps. Be well. Robin J. Landwehr, DBH, LPC, NCC

Question 278: I have a lot on my mind, but all I want to do is stay locked in my room and not socialize with anyone. Why do I feel so alone?

Answer 278: It has been said that depression is often the result of a blocked goal. Often people struggle with both anxiety and depression but have difficulty determining which is the most important issue. For some, depression is the result of frequently blocked goals and when their predominant issues are evaluated, they discover that they are anxious (worried) about a lot of areas in their life but seem to find no relief. When there is no relief and there have been numerous attempts (either in their mind or in practical application) to resolve the anxiety, depression is often the result. In this type of case, depression is not the main or underlying issue. The anxiety is the underlying issue. Having "a lot on my mind" sounds like anxiety. Unresolved anxiety can lead to feelings of depression which are often associated with "emptiness." In the question above, I would want to evaluate all of the issues surrounding having "a lot on my mind" and determine where these might be coming from. Has there been ongoing rejection from peers? From family? If so, why does this seem to be happening? Isolation is often a protective measure that one implements to avoid further pain. Where does that need to protect originate? Are there unmet needs from childhood? Are there traumatic life events that have created a need to self-protect as a defense mechanism? We can feel "alone" even when in a crowd of people or at a party. This has nothing, in this case, to do with being around people. It has more to do with how we view ourselves. If there is a prevailing message or script that has been internalized that says, "You are worth nothing" or "You don't deserve the company of others" then being around people will not alleviate the problem but only exacerbate it. I would want to evaluate how one feels about themselves and what negative messages one has received and has repeated to oneself over time. The Developmental Needs Meeting Strategy is a therapy aimed at addressing unmet childhood needs. If there is specific trauma that is associated with socializing with people, then EMDR can be very helpful in desensitizing and reprocessing the trauma.

Looking at whether this individual's issue with emptiness is straight depression or whether it is depression as a result of unresolved anxiety is key to determining a treatment strategy.

Question 279: I have a lot on my mind, but all I want to do is stay locked in my room and not socialize with anyone. Why do I feel so alone?

Answer 279: There are many possible issues to consider as depression social anxieties, even medical illness. For some, even grief creates a sense of isolation, pains from relationship break up. Also, obsessive thinking can be debilitating. Seeking at least one trusted friend or family member can be a start towards increased personal support. Some persons may simply feel connected by spending time with someone as this, even if not talking directly on issues, just being around another is positive. Obviously there is more to explore on this question, given minimal information from two sentences.

Question 280: I have a lot on my mind, but all I want to do is stay locked in my room and not socialize with anyone. Why do I feel so alone?

Answer 280: There is a difference in someone agreeing to try something and agreeing to continue to do it. Have you ever been willing to try something and then decided you did not like it? A type of food? A sport? A new restaurant? A type of dance? So this does not mean that things have changed between you. It does mean that the two of you may need to spend some time to find out what you both like. Instead of looking at it as a rejection, look at it as a challenge, an adventure that the two of you can go on as explorers together. Some couples have even found it helpful to each write down ten things they would like the other person to try and then each person can pick three things from the other person's list to add into their life together when they chose to over the next few weeks.

Question 281: I feel angry, anxious, and depressed. The PTSD I suffer is from a past relationship.

Answer 281: If the symptoms are to the extent that they are affecting your ability to function, you may want to consider seeking treatment. PTSD, anxiety, and depression all typically respond well to treatment if provided by a trained clinician. Common types of treatment for PTSD that you may want to look into include Cognitive Processing Therapy or EMDR. The nice things about Cognitive Processing Therapy is that it is time limited and only lasts 17 sessions typically.

Question 282: I've had posttraumatic stress disorder for years without my parents ever finding out. I want to overcome it, but it's so vivid, it's like it's happening again. I'm scared and paranoid. I have depression, which I have been struggling with since a young age.

Answer 282: I understand that at times it's difficult to share with our parents what we have been through, due to fear of judgment or punishment; but I have noticed that keeping our experiences secret, intensifies them. And Post Traumatic Stress Disorder can haunt us for a long time if we do not learn to process the memories that cause those symptoms. If you have been victim of a traumatic event that you are not prepared to share with your parents, it's important that you seek help with a counselor, therapist or psychologist. Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is a great technique to cope with physical symptoms, you could also use Narrative therapy, Creative Therapy or Journaling as a way to express memories and process them with your therapist. A psychiatrist can also prescribe medication to manage the symptoms, but is very important that you address the trauma so you can heal and go back to live your life. Many organizations like the United Way (2-1-1 in many states) offer resources and referrals to put you in touch with mental health providers, you could also talk to your school counselor, doctor or church to find referral that could help. Tip: You don't have to tell your story to each person you ask for help, you can just start by asking for a counselor referral. ¿Cómo puedo superar el Desorden de Estrés Post Traumático sin que mis padres se enteren? Comprendo que muchas veces puede ser difícil compartir nuestras experiencias con nuestros padres, muchas veces por miedo a que nos juzguen o castiguen; pero he observado cómo mantener un secreto, lo vuelve más fuerte y difícil de manejar. El Desorden de Estrés Post Traumático puede ser una condición que nos persigue por mucho tiempo si no aprendemos a procesar las memorias que causan esos síntomas. Si has sido víctima de un trauma que tal vez no estás listo(a) para compartir con tus padres, es importante que busques la ayuda de algún consejero profesional, terapeuta o psicólogo. La Terapia Cognitiva Conductual enfocada en el Trauma, es una técnica que te ayudara a manejar muchos de los síntomas, también puedes utilizar diarios o Terapia Narrativa o creativa, para expresar memorias y procesarlas luego en terapia. Un Psiquiatra también te puede proveer medicamentos que ayudan a manejar los síntomas del Estrés Post Traumático, pero es importante que atiendas el problema inicial para poder sanar por completo y volver a tomar las riendas de tu vida. Muchas organizaciones como los Fondos Unidos (2-1-1 en muchos estados) tiene recursos que proveen referidos a consejeros o profesionales de la salud mental. También puedes preguntarle a tu consejero escolar, doctor o en la iglesia.

Sugerencia: No tienes que contarle a todos tu problema, solo pide que te recomienden a un consejero o terapeuta.

Question 283: I've had posttraumatic stress disorder for years without my parents ever finding out. I want to overcome it, but it's so vivid, it's like it's happening again. I'm scared and paranoid. I have depression, which I have been struggling with since a young age.

Answer 283: What is the reason you wouldn't want your parents to know you are trying to find your way through PTSD? Would they believe that you've been traumatized? And, do you feel that your parents had a hand in creating your trauma? There is no need to tell your parents you have PTSD unless you feel that doing so will help you. Maybe you intuitively realize that they don't want to understand or know about this. How did you come to the conclusion that you have PTSD? If you are working with a therapist, and a minor, then the laws of your State dictate what information your parents can ask your therapist about you. If you are a grown person and working with a therapist, you have complete legally protected privacy of what you talk about with your therapist. In any case, a good starting point is to know exactly your own reason for wishing to keep your psychological situation hidden from your parents.

Question 284: I've had posttraumatic stress disorder for years without my parents ever finding out. I want to overcome it, but it's so vivid, it's like it's happening again. I'm scared and paranoid. I have depression, which I have been struggling with since a young age.

Answer 284: Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a very complex issue. It is the root cause of many other issues including depression, anxiety and anger to name a few. Re-experiencing the event is a telltale symptom of PTSD. One of the best things you can do for yourself is to find someone who specializes in this area to help you work through the symptoms associated with this disorder as well as directly addressing the event/events that initially caused the symptoms. There are various treatment methods available to helping professionals that are successful in treating this disorder. In the meantime there is a book called "The Body Keeps the Score", it is informative and may be helpful for you on your journey. It is my hope that you are not dealing with this alone. Best wishes!

Question 285: I've had posttraumatic stress disorder for years without my parents ever finding out. I want to overcome it, but it's so vivid, it's like it's happening again. I'm scared and paranoid. I have depression, which I have been struggling with since a young age.

Answer 285: Unfortunately, PTSD is not something that can be cured. PTSD can be managed through therapy. Mindfulness can assist in redirecting thoughts and gaining further control over paranoia. Therapy is confidential and there are different ways you can obtain treatment. Mental health professionals have availability to provide therapy online, on the phone or in person.

Question 286: My dad passed away when I was a teenager. I never got any help, and five years later, I feel like I can't handle it anymore.

Answer 286: It's never too late to get help with grief. Get help as soon as possible before you are feeling the same way 5 years from now. You will always miss your Dad but getting help with coping with his loss will make life easier to live.

Question 287: I am a single mother. As a child, I was molested by my mother's boyfriend. I never knew my father. I started having children at 18 right after high school. After having children, I completely lost myself and gave all of my focus on my children. Now my children are getting older, but I still don't know myself. I've had several attempts at relationships, and they all fail. I stopped caring about a lot after my children's father left me. I fell into a spiral and got depressed.

Answer 287: What your experience is normal for most women. We usually forget about self and totally focus on our children putting our personal wants and needs aside. So to answer your question of how do you get to know yourself I usually do a 6 session course with my client by having them answer questions such as the following in the first session: What do I love? (other than your children) What are my own needs and desires? What 3 things have I accomplished in my life that I'm most proud of? What are 5 strengths or qualities I have? What is one event that had a major impact on my life? How have that event affected my life today? For their homework assignment after the 1st session, they are asked to write a letter to self tell self what they love, cherish, appreciate and even admire about themselves. Most women feel awkward at first, but I remind them that the truth is that only to the extent that you are able to love and value yourself, you are able to love and support others.

Question 288: I always see the worst end of things. My boyfriend and I aren't talking, and I swear he's leaving me. I keep failing my road test, and I see my future crumble. I have no desire for friends. I pushed my best friend away after Christmas, and I have no desire to fix it or make new friends. My aunt died, and I cry all the time, even if I burn my lunch.

Answer 288: I really love that you're taking responsibility for your pessimism here. There's a modern parable about two young brothers. One child is in a room full of every toy you could imagine, and he's miserable; the other is in a room full of horse manure, and he's flinging it around with joy. So then someone comes and asks the first boy why he's so miserable, because he has so much. He says that he's missing the one toy that he really wants. Then the brother is asked why he's so happy in a room full of manure, and he says "With all this sh-t, there's gotta be a pony in here somewhere!" Happiness is a state of mind, and I hear you saying that you used to be happy, so maybe this means you believe it's possible. That's a wonderful start. Research on depression shows us that it is very linked to pessimism. You say "I always see the worst end of things". That's pessimism. Life is like an elephant. If all you see is roughness, backup and walk around; the view will change. The key to optimism is to build your ability to see the bad things in life as 1. temporary (this will pass. I know how to fix friendships), 2. Specific (not involving the whole of your life), and 3. not your fault (tons of people fail road tests). On the flip side, it helps if we can see good things as 1. more permanent, 2. bleeding into other areas of our lives, and 3. something YOU created. Not taking credit for good things and blaming yourself for the bad ones is typical especially of women. The feelings you are having are temporary; you're in a slump and it's a good time to sit down and look at how you can make the picture look different. I think you know how; but you lack energy right now. If tackling this on your own isn't enough, a therapist can help you take that step back to look at the big picture and help you rebuild your natural resilience and capacity for joy. I wish you the best.

Question 289: I was anxious to go to middle school. I was afraid of what people might say about me, so when school started, I wasn't acting like myself. I was quiet, which I'm usually not. I didn't talk to anybody and didn't have any friends. Then a few years later, my grandma died. I really became depressed and stop going to school for a little. I hated myself and still do. I just need help. I need someone to care for me. I need someone to show that they care.

Answer 289: I agree; you need more care and support. No one deserves to feel alone, or like they hate themselves. We're all wonderful, imperfect, complicated people and we're at our best when we're all helping each other. I'm glad you wrote this question, because a lot of people have this feeling

sometimes. I can tell that you're smart, because you seem to sense that the two things you wrote about are connected...you "not being yourself", and then how you felt when your grandma died. When Grandma died, you needed and deserved extra love and support, but the people around you didn't seem to give it to you, maybe. My hunch is that they wanted to, but that they didn't know how much you needed it, or what you needed exactly. The older you get, the more you will have to take charge of letting people know what you need. Maybe this is one of the suckier parts of being mature, but that's how it works. When you started middle school, it sounds like you changed; you got more quiet, right? That must have felt weird, to not be acting like yourself. It sounds like fear tricked you into thinking people wouldn't like you. Fear can be silly. So then, fear got you to not show yourself, and when we don't show ourselves, people can't see who we are; they don't know us as well and then they don't know what we need and they can't care for us as well either. Fear of not being liked isolated you from the people who love you. It does that to a lot of us. So, where you're at right now is because of what fear did to you, and also because when Grandma died you were already isolated so people couldn't see your pain and know that you needed support. There's a simple solution, but you'd have to be brave enough to look fear in the face and say "Get off my back!". "You're not helping me by telling me lies." Can you be brave enough to go back to your old, louder, self? If you talk to the people closest to you...tell them what you think and how you feel, then they'll be able to give you the care that you want and deserve. I wish you well as you try this!

Question 290: I was in a situation with a guy. He's my brother's friend and kind of like a brother to me. He invited me over to hang out, and then came on to me. I was instantly terrified to say no, and I gave in. I don't know what's wrong with me. I can't figure out why I'm afraid to say no. This is giving me a lot of guilt and depression.

Answer 290: Hi Tennessee, There is nothing wrong with you. There are many good reasons why you didn't say no. You didn't say no because you were caught off guard and unprepared; there is no place in life that teaches girls or boys how to manage it when someone crashes a sexual boundary. You also live in a culture where girls are encouraged to be cooperative and not upset people, and to put the needs of other people first. You instinctively want people to like you, and people can be very coercive sexually. You said it yourself; you "gave in". He wore you down. There's nothing wrong with you. It wasn't your job to say no. Women aren't the gatekeepers of male sexual urges. It was his job to get your consent first. He pressured you into it. A good therapist would help you to dig deep and uncover all these barriers to saying no and more. If you said no, what might happen then? What might that mean about you? What are you avoiding feeling? Unloved, unwanted, cold? What would you have to believe in order to be confident enough to say no? That you didn't have to do anything you don't want to do? That you're special, or that sexuality is special? Would you need a better understanding of what sexual assault is? I love that you want to do some work here to strengthen your sexual boundaries, and I urge a widespread conversation about what consent is. Men and women of all ages could use more of this training.

Question 291: People have been calling me names, and I have had enough of it. I cannot stand it anymore I'm done. I have told someone this, and that is why I am writing this. The thoughts are awful.

Answer 291: It sounds like you are feeling pretty overwhelmed with intrusive thoughts and are feeling very criticized by others as well. I think it is great that you are reaching out and I can tell that you want this to change. Working with a competent therapist may be a good option for getting some more clarity about what is going on, developing ways to cope, and eventually getting relief from these overwhelming experiences.

Question 292: My life is completely normal, yet I feel empty inside. I feel as if I already know why I'm alive: to reproduce and die.

Answer 292: Are there any times or moments in which you feel other than "empty"? Start with knowing the context of when you feel something other than empty. If there is no recent example, then in your mind, go back in time to think of when you felt something other than empty. Recall what you liked about this time, whether you were by yourself or with others, what type of activity you were involved at the time of non-emptiness. How did you come to your conclusion that your life purpose is to reproduce and die? If this is what your parents, siblings and extended family believe, it is possible that you have a broader view of yourself and haven't yet uncovered a way of defining your own philosophy of living. Give yourself the time to browse around online, or in person social meet ups, on your interests. It is possible you will discover entire new areas of life and ways of considering life, that are brand new to you and which connect to your true self. This is one way of respecting your individuality, which of itself, may decrease your sense of emptiness.

Question 293: I'm almost never happy. Half of the time, I don't feel anything. I find it easy to make myself feel nothing. I know I push people away because it's easier. I just want answers. I'm sick of feeling this way. It's ruining my relationships with people.

Answer 293: Maybe you have depression. The name of your condition matters much less than the descriptions you wrote of how you feel. Since you've observed how you sometimes interact with people and realize you aren't happy with the result, you've a very solid starting point for reflecting on your deeper wishes in relating to others. Start with asking reasons of yourself about the puzzling aspects of how you're engaging with others. Theorizing as to "why" you feel that pushing people away is "easier", and easier than what? Googling the keywords of how you feel, may open a starting point for ideas on knowing yourself and what you wish for.

Question 294: I'm almost never happy. Half of the time, I don't feel anything. I find it easy to make myself feel nothing. I know I push people away because it's easier. I just want answers. I'm sick of feeling this way. It's ruining my relationships with people.

Answer 294: Hi Loyal, This is a common question. I suggest that you not diagnose yourself (only a physician can do that), but the symptoms you mention are certainly common signs of depression; rarely happy, emotional numbness, hopelessness, isolation. Depression is very common. Research suggests that one in three people may experience it in their lifetime and at any one point, ten percent of adults may be experiencing it. Most therapists are very good at spotting the signs and treating accordingly, although only a physician can prescribe medication. The great news is that depression is treatable. Some people experiencing depression may benefit from medication (often to lift the heaviness of the illness enough so that one can focus on psychotherapy), and therapies such as cognitive behavioural therapy and behavioural activation therapy have demonstrated a clear ability to reduce symptoms of depression. Even if medication helps, seeing a therapist to look at the roots of your depression and to build coping skills is very important. A qualified therapist will help you look at the barriers to happiness in your specific case and suggest a course of treatment. You are not alone, and you don't have to suffer. Keep asking questions and you will find your answers!

Question 295: My husband and I are in a terrible place. Part of me wants to fix it, but then I'm caught up with not knowing how and not being able to communicate my feelings to him because he always feels I'm blaming him. Sometimes I am because the feelings of distrust are so strong. I feel they must be coming from something he's doing, but sometimes I know I'm being irrational. Still, that doesn't stop the anxiety. The other half of the time, I just want to walk away, but I feel like that will only be a temporary fix.

Answer 295: You may be pressuring yourself to be the one person who fixes the relationship. This is impossible because the relationship belongs to both of you. Has he told you whether he feels about himself that how he interacts with you, is contributing to problems in the couple? Is he willing to understand what you're asking of him, without shutting down with whatever he is feeling when he feels blamed? Your feelings of distrust are the natural outcome of not being properly heard and understood. He's not willing to listen to you, so of course you're frustrated and this frustration comes out in all sorts of uneasy feelings. Willingness to hear each other in a non-defensive way, sometimes requires a couples therapist's assistance. Ask your husband if he's willing to understand, not judge you. Be willing yourself to do the same. If after trying and getting nowhere, you'll know when to stop trying on your own as a couple and to find a specifically trained couples therapists. Warning, not all therapists are trained to do couples therapy. Ask the therapist if they've had specialized training in couples therapy. Otherwise, having a referee type therapy session of, "what do you think", "what do you think?", isn't going to do anything except frustrate both of you further. Good luck!

Question 296: They don't go away, and I feel like I'm going crazy. Does that ever stop? Can it be a symptom of medication?

Answer 296: Since you realize that hearing voices in your head is not usual for you, then definitely there is a problematic situation happening within your awareness of who you are. If you recently started taking a new drug or increased dosage of one you already were taking, and the voices started shortly after, then yes, it is possible medication created your problem. Start by telling whoever gave you the prescription, about the problem you're having. "Crazy" has some flexibility as to whether someone is this way or not. Certainly a very positive sign that you're not crazy, is that you're self-aware of a problem within yourself. And, you're responsible toward yourself and making effort to address this problem. Crazy people usually don't do responsible behaviors.

Question 297: They don't go away, and I feel like I'm going crazy. Does that ever stop? Can it be a

symptom of medication?

Answer 297: This can certainly be a side effect of some medications. If the voices are so powerful that you can not sleep or they are constantly present, you shouldn't wait any time, but go and see your doctor straight away.

Question 298: A girl and I were madly in love. We dated for over a year and were even talking about marriage and future plans together. She moved away for school, and we attempted a long distance relationship. We eventually broke up. It's been a year now, and I still haven't lost my feelings for her. I still love her the same way I did. I've suffered from depression ever since the breakup and have been unable to connect with anyone else. It's damaging me and my life.

Answer 298: Hi Boise, I'm sorry that you've lost this love. The fact that you were planning marriage and a future tells me that you meant something very special to each other at that time. It's different now...you're not together anymore, but you can't accept this, right? Good for you for identifying that this situation is damaging your life. You've been grieving for longer than you were together. Oh, but really you've not been grieving...you're stuck still loving her instead of moving forward. Unrequited love is a recipe for eternal heartache. Let's look at some possible blocks to moving forward. It could be that there's something unfinished for you. Maybe you felt hurt and you didn't have the chance to say so, or you felt you hurt her and you didn't have the chance to make it right. Maybe there's a burning question you need to ask or something else you need to say. Maybe you want to tell her you've never stopped loving her, and see if she feels the same way. If this is the case, you have two choices, right? You can reach out and say what you need to say, or you can stop ruminating on that question and let it go. If you reach out, there's no guarantee it will go well or that she'll even respond. Maybe write her a letter and don't send it (or send it...it might be worth the risk). Use the next paragraph to help you decide. Do you know how she feels? How did it end? Did she end it? Was it ended just because of the distance, or are there more differences between you that didn't work? Sometimes people are so in love that they can't clearly see that the other person isn't in love with them anymore. Use the information you have about what she wants for her life...can you honour what she says she needs? If she's asked for distance, you would do well to honour that. A key to moving forward: look at your thoughts and where they're getting stuck. Write it down. What bad thing can happen if you let it go? Or "If I move forward, that will mean..." Keep going...what would be the worst part of that? This kind of exploring can help you identify your stuck place. It is possible that you've turned this ending into some kind of negative meaning about you or your future. As in "If this person doesn't love me, then I'm unlovable", or "No one will ever love me as much as she did". So your need to cling to her in your heart is your way of rejecting that negative message about yourself or the future. Can you find another way to reject that message? Try saying these things to yourself: I know she loved me. There is evidence of that. I was a good partner. There is evidence of that. It's part of life to fall in love and then have to move forward...I can do this and learn from it. Many people like me...that's how I know I'm lovable. It's normal to feel sad. I'm grieving a lost love. I want to move forward and not stare in the rearview mirror. I know more love awaits me if I can get fear out of the way. If this person loved me, others can too, (but not if I'm clinging to some old memory) These are the kinds of things a therapist would explore with you. I wish you well!

Question 299: I've got so much anger. I don't know how to control myself. My girlfriend screams at me all the time, and sometime I don't know how to deal with life. I'm very depressed and angry. I feel lost.

Answer 299: Hi Campbell River, You say you have anger but you don't mention how it shows. Or maybe it doesn't. Are you aggressive with your girlfriend? Since you mention depression, I wonder if you're bottling it all up somewhere instead of letting it show at all. If this is the case, I admire your ability to not lash out at someone who's hurting you. However, if they are totally unexpressed, anger turn inward and shift into depression. When she yells at you, what do you do? Is this the moment that you feel the most angry? I wouldn't be surprised; anger is a normal response to someone yelling at you. Something about anger...it's often there to cover up our more vulnerable emotions. Under the anger I wonder if you feel worthless, powerless, scared, unloved. Part of the trick to reducing anger is identifying those other emotions and expressing them. You say you don't know how to deal with life, and I think maybe you mean you don't know how to deal with emotions. Lots of people don't! This is confusing for most of us. What am I feeling? Why is it so strong? I'm afraid to express it for fear of hurting someone (or falling apart, or feeling alone...). How do I know what to express and what to be quiet about? These are all great questions to ask yourself, and a qualified therapist can help you sort it all out and support you in your growth. I wish you well!

Question 300: I've been having this ongoing problem for most of my life now. I am a young adult, and right

now, driving and even being a passenger gives me terrible panic attacks and anxiety. I can't ride in the backseat or the front seat with the safety belt on. I have to lean the seat back a bit because the pressure on my back terrifies me. I miss so many opportunities to go places with friends and family because of my fears of having a panic attack. My family offers little to no support. They think it's fake or "all in my head." It makes me feel guilty and at times depressed to the point where I'd rather never wake up anymore. I am not self-harming, I just feel meaningless. This constant fear has taken over my thoughts and my life. I was such a happy person. I want my life back. I want to travel with my friends and family again, but I don't know how. I've almost given up hope on getting better and just accepting the fact that I'll live with this anxiety forever.

Answer 300: Not having support from your family for such a significant problem, is a problem itself. How about your friends, are any of them nurturing or treat you kindly when you bring up that you've got this problem? Are any of your friends willing to accommodate the fact that right now you've got panic attacks from driving and being a passenger? Maybe being and feeling accepted while you're in this current phase of your life, would help diminish the panic attacks. If no support is coming to you, then a next step would be to evaluate the relationships in your life and to develop standards and expectations of others, especially that they are considerate of your great need at this time. It's possible you are bearing the emotional burden of a lot more people in your life than yourself. If no one wants to show they care about this situation, then release yourself from trying to please and satisfy everyone's wish that you be better, while they ignore your need for their support. Be realistic in what you're able to give back to people who want to be blind to your emotional need. Thinking this way will at first raise your anxiety level from fear of losing everyone. Eventually, you'll stabilize within yourself and know that all you're asking for is some support for having a tough time. Hopefully, the others will be more responsive to you. If they don't you still know that you're being reasonable for what you'd like.

Question 301: I am broke, but I am sure I have been depressed for the past couple of years. I have always had anxiety. I just need someone to talk to right now. I don't have any friends or family I can talk to. I'm on the verge of just giving up.

Answer 301: Good question. There are resources out there - people to talk to. I'd try going to this link and calling the free 24/7 hotline: <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

Question 302: I don't know how to have emotions. I never had any from my birth. Being human, I think of myself as a monster. I enjoy pain. I cut myself for my climax during sex. I think most of the time, I lie, even when sometimes it would have been easy just to tell the truth. I was in rehabilitation for four years. I have made love with both men and women, but it made no impact in my emotions. The books that I enjoy reading H.P. Lovecraft and Edgar Allan Poe. I go hunting every Saturday. I feel powerful. I don't enjoy the killing of the creature, but the hunt of it and to eat and drink the flesh and blood of the creature.

Answer 302: I'm not sure that you don't feel emotion or that you are frightened of the depth of your emotions. From what you write, the context of your growing up years had people telling you to not feel.

Little kids and babies don't remember whether or not they had emotions since birth. This is information someone told you or was part of your family system. Possibly your family was afraid of their emotions or of you knowing yours. Similarly, your comparison of being human means being monster like, is not an obvious connection. Besides, monsters are an idea, they aren't real. They embody what someone considers the worst qualities of themselves or the human species. Again, I wonder whether you've taken on stories you heard growing up about how unacceptable and bad you are. A way to start learning your emotions is to start in simple, basic ways to ask yourself what you are feeling in the situations that you believe emotions would belong. If on the first bright sunny and warm day of the year, you remind yourself to notice what you're feeling in response to this, you'll be taking one step toward awareness of your emotions. If someone buys you a birthday present, be aware of how you feel. Keep adding awareness to situations and see if this builds an ease with feeling emotions.

Question 303: I am on my own with my daughter. I am so worried and stressed about her.

Answer 303: Your instinct to help your daughter, is natural. How you proceed depends a lot on whether she recognizes she has a psychological and emotional problem, or if only you see this from observing her. Also, her age matters a lot in what way would be most likely to succeed in addressing the problems you describe. If you and your daughter have different opinions as to whether or not she has problems, and she is above the legal age of when you have authority over her life, then you can only suggest to her that therapy may benefit her. If your daughter is in your legal control, then you can locate a counselor nearby, discuss your situation with that person, and depending on the outcome, you'd be within your parenting

right to take your daughter to a counselor. Starting therapy without willingness to do so, is risky. The person may feel resentful enough to not participate. And, sometimes the counselor is skillful enough to find a path to your daughter, or any patient's self-interest and engage them in therapy. Family counseling, regardless of your daughter's age, is another way to bring your concerns to your daughter's attention, in a therapy environment in which a counselor would be able to help distinguish the seriousness of your daughter's psychological problem, from simply a difference in viewpoints between you and your daughter, in how to handle certain situations. Also, if you believe your daughter is a threat to herself, then instead of this slower route, get in touch with the emergency psychological assessment service in your town, for a more immediate response.

Question 304: I just had a newborn. When I brought him home, my mom told me to leave. Now I'm in a women's home. I don't see my boyfriend that often because he works. The women's place is helping me find an apartment so I can go back to work and get child care.

Answer 304: Congrats on the birth of your son! Was your mom's request for you to leave her house, one which she asked awhile ago or was this her greeting when you walked in the door? My question is whether your mom had some changed circumstance in her life, whether she and you discussed living arrangements prior to your son's birth, or whether nothing was talked about, you assumed you'd be living with her, she assumed you wouldn't, and the two of you didn't speak to one another about any of this. Depending on the answers, there may be clues as to handling future expectations of others, especially your mom. From what you write, the women's home is supportive of your basic daily living needs. It is good news that the people who run this home know and offer community resources. In your interactions with the staff of the women's home, ask all the questions necessary so you'll have a clear understanding of the apartment lease, anything at all that is on your mind about becoming employed and finding childcare. The point is to have all the major steps you're about to start, addressed. This way, you'll be minimizing the possibility of any sudden bad news by the women's home, told to you. Sending lots of good luck!

Question 305: I have experienced cycles of depression for the past four years, and it hits me harder every time it comes back. This past time, it was extremely debilitating, so I went on Wellbutrin. I could feel the effects of the medicine after the first week. A month and a half later, I decided that my depression was being caused by my own unwillingness to move forward and address my behaviors and thoughts that were keeping me in a place of despair. I became worried that the medicine was making me complacent and prohibiting me from working out what I needed to in my life to bring back true fulfillment. I stopped taking it a month ago and feel okay; a lot of the anxiety it was paired with has gone away. However, I still don't feel my sense of self has been completely regained, and I have days where I feel a zombie-like haze of having no interests or the ability to fully concentrate on anything. Is it better to continue letting time and good habits work out the remaining depression or should I go back on the medicine?

Answer 305: Deciding whether or not psychiatric medicine is a good option can be complicated, as you have noticed, and only a person who is licensed to prescribe can give you medical advice regarding medications. While there is sometimes relief from symptoms from medication, as you have pointed out, there are often negative side effects as well. While I can't give you advice on whether or not to continue medication, I would urge you to take an inventory of the positive and negative effects that you have noticed and educate yourself as much as possible about the short and long-term costs and benefits of psychiatric medication. If you can find a doctor, psychiatrist, or ARNP who is competent in mental health, it may also benefit you to consult with them. One thing that I am wondering about is, what is your support system like, in regards to your fight against depression? Are you seeing a therapist or attending any therapeutic or supportive group? While there are many things that one can do on their own to work through challenges such as depression, psychotherapy has been shown time and again in research to be highly effective and sometimes having a relationship with a caring, competent professional who understands depression and ways of helping can make a huge difference.

Question 306: At school, it feels like I've lost all my friends, and I've been really weird with my sleeping patterns. I used to cut myself, and I really want to again, but I change in the locker rooms because I don't want anybody to see. I get ticked off easy and overreact. At night, I'm very depressed and listen to sad music and all that sort of stuff. Please help me. I just want to be happy again, and I feel like I'm starting to fake a smile at school.

Answer 306: As silly as it may sound, making sure that we are getting the right amount of *restful* sleep is very important when we are feeling low. The reason for this is the lack of proper sleep significantly affects

our ability to problem solve and critically evaluate our situation and can lead to a domino effect in our thinking. I know you feel that you may be losing your friendships, but what are the facts that have led to this belief? Really ask yourself, "are they facts?" or are they your perspective on events. In regards to your coping behaviours at night, it sounds very isolating and also very silenced. As opposed to the sad music, why not try all music, allowing yourself to experience the wide breadth of emotions that are circling within you. One of the other recommendations I would make would be to try and journal about some of those thoughts and fears in order to release them in a positively cathartic way. Some of the behaviours that you have mentioned are a bit more significant, though and I would recommend speaking with someone directly in the near future.

Question 307: I think about death all the time because I feel so alone. I want someone to love and someone to love me.

Answer 307: Feeling alone and/or isolated is almost always associated with being depressed. As humans, we need connection and interaction with others in order to feel satisfied. Given that you are frequently thinking about death, I highly recommend that you see a mental health professional as soon as possible to help assess your immediate needs and address any underlying issues that may be contributing to your feelings of loneliness and depression. The good news is that with proper, consistent treatment and commitment to change, things can really turn around for you. A therapist can work with you on building enjoyable activities into your daily routine, change maladaptive thought patterns that contribute to your sadness, and help with exploring what has gotten you to where you are. By learning about where your sadness originates, engaging in preferred activities, and changing your thought patterns, you should begin feeling relief from the burden of depression. What will likely result, is further opportunity to find social outlets and an increased ability to connect with others. Don't give up. Create some short terms goals that you can likely achieve and make your treatment a priority and a focus. You have already taken the first step in getting better by writing to this site. Keep on this path and believe in yourself. Best of luck to you!

Question 308: I think about death all the time because I feel so alone. I want someone to love and someone to love me.

Answer 308: Hi Ohio, I'm so glad you reached out. I urge you to talk to someone close to you, today, about your feelings, and to also seek professional help for your serious thoughts and feelings. We want you to be safe, and your depression is treatable. Loneliness is so painful, and when we feel lonely, this can lead to fears that we are not worthy of love or that the world is just a cold and lonely place. Neither are truths; only thoughts. Once we have fears like this though, we start to pull away from people, the fears keep us isolated, which makes the thoughts worse, and the cycle continues. We all have a place in this world. We all have value, we all deserve love, and there are safe, wonderful people out there waiting to meet you and care for you. Can you take a moment right now to become more in touch with three things? First, who in your life, if they were sitting beside you right now, would say "wait a minute...I love you!" What is the evidence that you are already cared about? Then ask yourself "what is the evidence that I am lovable?" What qualities do you have that make you a good friend or person? The third question is "what tells you the world is a good place?" What evidence do you see that there are people out there who care about others? Please reach out to someone today as you ask yourself those questions. I wish you the best.

Question 309: My fiancée suffers from severe anxiety and depression. She has had it most of her life. Her anxiety in public places is the worst. It gets to points where she can't breathe or move. Sometimes, she won't even go to the restroom, so she will hold in her pee until her stomach hurts or she pees herself. She curls up in corners at the mall and has panic attacks. She won't eat or drink in public. If she isn't having a panic attack or crying, she's clinging to me and avoiding everything and everyone. Her depression flares up out of nowhere and causes her to become very suicidal and self-harming. She get really sick from anxiety and scared to the point that I can't even get her to eat, drink, leave the bed, or go outside. She always tells me how she grew up around so much fighting and fear that it makes her scared of loud sounds, yelling, conflict, and even talking to strangers in public. She will refuse to go to a store unless I am with her to talk to the cashier for her. She is so scared that I can't even get her to drive. She doesn't want to get her license because she's scared of trying to drive.

Some people have recommended medication, but I believe it's just going to cover up her illness and not solve it. I don't want my fiancée pumped with drugs. I believe a psychiatric service dog would be the best bet for her. When we first met my poodle, it would calm her down a lot. She took the dog out every time we went out, and she seemed much calmer and happier. She slowly would eat, and the dog seemed to

make her feel a lot better. I am worried and want to help her without medication.

Answer 309: It sounds like you have been a positive support for your fiancée. There is no doubt that this situation is a great challenge for the both of you. While it may feel like you are responsible for her health and happiness, it is important that you understand that you, on your own, won't be able to resolve her mental health issues. Based on what you have explained, it sounds like she needs to get a medical and/or psychiatric evaluation. Whether or not she decides to take medication is her (and your) decision, but keeping an open mind about treatment options is important. I suggest that she see a therapist on her own in order to better understand and cope with her anxiety and depression, especially given her suicidal thoughts. You would also likely benefit from therapy, individual or couple's therapy, in order to address how you are feeling and best learn how to support her and your relationship. I wish the very best for both of you and hope that things will improve sooner than later.

Question 310: I'm unemployed just relocated. I can't get approved for a place to live because of past mistakes which follow me to this day. I'm depressed and on the verge of losing my partner because I'm overwhelmed and have trouble functioning on a daily basis. I see no light at the end of this tunnel and need some help. I see no point in this chaos infested joke some call life.

Answer 310: It sounds like you are feeling like things are hopeless and out of control and you're not sure what to do about it. If you can find a competent therapist to work with, together you may be able to come up with some strategies for alleviating the overwhelming distress that you are experiencing and gain some insight into what may be contributing to these challenges. Additionally, a therapist may be able to support you in getting back on your feet in regards to work, a place to live, and showing up with your partner in a way that will be more satisfying to you.

Question 311: I'm supposed to stay here the rest of my academic life, but I've never liked it here, not even before I came. I've never felt like I belong, I've missed my country every second in the past four months, and I'm just miserable. I'm gaining weight, doing nothing, and crying for hours straight. Is it time to go back home or is it just culture shock?

Answer 311: It sounds like you are feeling very unsure and out of place and the prospect of continuing to feel as you do now for the remainder of schooling seems daunting. Without getting to know more about you and your experiences here and at home, it is hard to say what you should do, however, I think exploring these things with a competent therapist may help you to discover the answer.

Question 312: I am in high school and have been facing anxiety issues lately. Whenever I get close to being in a relationship, some kind of anxiety takes over and keeps me from the relationship. This anxiety causes me depression at times and even makes me want to vomit. While a semi-relationship should be joyous, for me, it's an emotional nightmare I can't get to the bottom of. I've had this before and had to leave the semi-relationship to avoid throwing up every time I made contact with my crush. What could be the reason behind this? Is it massive nerve problems? Is it a fear of a bad relationship?

While I'm not quite ready to be in one anyway, I want to get to the bottom of this for a brighter future in which I can be in one. I don't take medications and have no desire to, I have read forums, and I've talked about the issue with my sister who has faced similar problems.

Answer 312: Hi Helena, I felt a bit sad when I read this. This is a new term for me... "semi-relationship". What does it mean? I know that today's culture for young people is more of a "hook-up" culture than a dating one. Maybe that means that you develop connections to people but you keep yourself from hoping for a full relationship because no one is doing that anymore. That makes me feel sad. I hear a lot of young women (I'm not sure you're female, but that's my guess) say that they struggle with hook-ups because they can't let themselves hope for a phone call after a hook-up. Research tells us that, after a hook-up, college age women tend to feel used and unworthy, and men tend to feel guilty. I think this scenario works better for men than women, but many of both genders are left unsatisfied in the end. This is only one possible explanation for your anxiety...that your gut knows that it wants to feel fully coupled with someone but you struggle with whether it's okay to want or expect that. Maybe take a moment and listen to anxiety. Anxiety tends to try to convince us that something's wrong with us or something bad's going to happen. Anxiety sometimes prefers to stay vague (it's more difficult to refute it then), but you can try to clarify it's whisperings by asking yourself these questions: What am I afraid of? What is the worst thing that might happen here? Then what might happen, and what would be the worst part of that? Keep going until you find the very worst thing that might happen? Might someone not want you...might you feel rejected...or feel not good enough...you might get hurt? Then when you find that core fear, you can look at your life and I bet you'd find a place where that idea or fear originated. A big moment (or many smaller ones) when you

actually DID feel or get rejected or abandoned or hurt. In the end, it's a feeling you're trying to avoid (not life or relationship), and anxiety is trying to help you avoid it by making you overcautious. But this doesn't work for you! Good! With the help of a qualified therapist, you can learn to talk back to anxiety and move forward in life and love with calm. confidence.

Question 313: I just got out of a two year relationship. I broke up with my boyfriend because he wasn't showing any affection at all. He was talking to other women and lying about it. It pushed me away and hurt me, but I'm still in love with him. A couple days after our breakup, he was talking to someone new. He told me he wasn't sure if he loved me. I cried for several days, lost my appetite, and couldn't sleep. Our whole relationship was only us. We didn't have friends. It was me and him against the world. We didn't talk to anyone else because we only wanted to talk to each other. We hung out constantly and Skyped to sleep every single night. Then, when I cut myself, we talked on Skype. He cried and told me "I'm still in love with you, I never stopped loving you," and I cried tears of joy. I asked multiple times if he loved me and asked to make sure he wasn't just saying that because of me being so depressed. He promised and assured me he loved me. He came over after that, and we had sex because he wanted to. He went the home that night and told me he didn't love me, and he lied because he was scared. He told me I wasn't attractive, I wasn't beautiful to him, and that I changed. He also told me he was 100% sure he'd never love me again. I'm still in love with him. Why do I love him? How do I stop? Just knowing that someone else is with him hurts me. That I wasn't good enough and that I'm no longer beautiful hurts me. I think I need a therapist, but don't know if I should.

Answer 313: I am very sorry for the pain you are suffering. Losing the most significant person in your life is extremely painful and breakups are often equated to a death. There will certainly be a grieving process that you go through and time passing will allow the hurt to subside. With that being said, seeing a therapist is highly recommended as it sounds like continuous support may be necessary for healing to take place. Anytime sadness causes thoughts of suicide or self harm, it is important to get help immediately. A therapist can help you by validating your feelings and what you are going through, while also working with you to move through the grieving process, adopt new hobbies, social outlets, and goals for your future. While starting over and trying out new ways of being may seem like a daunting task, it will only make things easier and give you a sense of hope and purpose for your future. With the new year right around the corner, this could be viewed as a good time and opportunity to get reacquainted with yourself and set goals related to living a more fulfilling life. Hang in there. With a support system in place and a healthy mindset, things can only get easier. Best of luck to you!

Question 314: A friend of mine taking psychology advised I go to my doctor to check if I have major depressive disorder. I'm afraid of the consequences of doing so. If I do become diagnosed with major depressive disorder, won't that go on my records? I will never be able to become a counselor along with a list of other things I may be prohibited from. I'm also afraid of taking any anti-depressants. This year, my doctor gave me some for a "dislocated hip." I had a severe reaction and passed out moments after taking them. Everyone I know who has taken anti-depressants says it's a bad idea all around and you're better getting treatment without them. I'm concerned they might take me to a clinic and force me to take medication because I am unable to make decisions on my own. I'm not really suicidal, but I am not really taking care of myself either. Someone also told me they still use electroshock therapy. I'm not keen on that. I'm wondering if I am better off just getting self-help and working things out on my own. It's just that I've been an emotional mess since I was in elementary school. I've graduated now and tried to stay positive and be happy, but I cannot deny I still am not good.

Answer 314: I admire your courage for stating your view about anti-depressants. Questioning mainstream thinking and being in touch with your own views, are signs of strength and clarity in a person. As a therapist, I always tell my patients to avoid anti-depressants. Their effectiveness is in suppressing a person's mood and feelings. If someone does not know how they are feeling, then they will have more difficulty in understanding themselves, their uncertainties and hesitations, and overall, how they relate to others and what they expect from others. Anti-depressants mask how someone feels. In a crisis, temporarily taking anti-depressants may be helpful. If someone is so overwhelmed that they are not functioning, then suppressing unhappy feelings so that the person can get through a day, may be of benefit for a short while. Basically, respect and follow your own opinion about anti-depressants. Your view is shared by many. It is a minority opinion, and very valid. If you would like to shop for a therapist, ask the person on the phone, what their opinions are about anti-depressants. Ideally, you will eventually find a therapist who thinks in a way which is similar to you, or at least similar enough that you will have a

sense that you are able to trust working with them on whatever you define as problematic. I hope you will have an easy and productive therapist search!

Question 315: I have no real friends. I have a girlfriend who irritates me but loves me to death. I push her away and pushes me away. We're going through a breakup, and I have nobody.

Answer 315: Having time all to yourself may be necessary so you have time to reflect on your own identity and values, become more clear on what matters most to you, and with this increased self-understanding, be able to attract people who will feel like satisfying friends. Having a relationship with someone whom you push away and are pushed away, with someone who is irritating, seems to have limited benefit for each of you. Maybe you are together from fear of being alone, and being alone is exactly what you may now need in your life in order to draw more favorable people to you.

Question 316: I've been hospitalized twice. Once was last month for psychiatric help. I'm on medicine, but I'm struggling with fighting the negative thoughts, irrational fears, and loneliness. The people around me aren't helping much.

Answer 316: If you are someone who usually has a job, pays or contributes to household bills, and generally manages your own daily life, then here are some suggestions. Start with small changes in your life so that you will feel successful in developing little areas of personal happiness. Since the people whom you currently are in your life "aren't helping much", consider branching out your life so that you are with those with whom you do feel help you. Follow your natural interests. If you like reading, look online for a local book club. If you like watching birds, look up a bird watching group. Social isolation increases the intensity of negative feelings. Also, the way healthcare is set up in the US, psychiatrists spend 15 minutes asking a person questions and then giving them a pill script. There is almost no human interest in the person. If you'd like feeling better as a person, then find people. Relying only on our mental health system will keep you feeling low and unsteady. If your life is a little more sheltered and you are in a group home setting or your basic needs are taken care of by someone or some organization, then similar advice is still valid. Find and participate in whatever human settings which appeal to you and are available on a somewhat regular basis.

Question 317: I'm going through a divorce with my wife of three years, who I've known since the 4th grade and been involved with for seven years! We just had a baby seven months ago and never got along with my mother, who I've lived with for years. I am now back with my mother because I have nowhere to go with this divorce looming. I'm heart broken because I fell into a depression, I haven't seen my child in a while, I'm having good and bad dreams, and I feel hated. Can you help? Can you intervene? Can I speak with someone?

Answer 317: It's hard to accept the end of a marriage when it's not your choice; you feel powerless, abandoned and unwanted. Your wife has the right to decide not to be in a marriage with you, and a therapist can help you accept and move through this change that has broken your heart and left you lost. You don't indicate why you haven't seen your child, and you may want to consult with a lawyer about the laws in your area and how to gain access to your baby. Therapists don't intervene in these ways. The marriage may be ending, but your role as a loving father is only beginning. You can focus on giving your child the gift of two parents who respect each other.

Question 318: I have been diagnosed with ADHD and experienced manic depression episodes. I have problems with anger management. Apparently, I also have an ODD, bipolar and split personality. How can I be truly happy?

Answer 318: The ADHD and manic depressive episodes are terms other people told you that you have. You don't have to accept these words to describe who you are. A lot of mental health in our country is about telling people what's wrong with them and giving pills for these so called conditions, instead of helping a person know more about themselves in order to make good decisions. You can be happy because nothing from the outside, such as the names people have used to tell you who you are, can interfere with your own wish to be happy. Others can slow you down because of the self-doubt and hurt feelings. No one can take happiness from you, only they can make it harder to find and hold onto. Anger management only works temporarily because it is a surface approach. Think of the reason you are angry.

This will be better to know so you will be able to address it. Then you will not have anger to manage.

Question 319: I was married to a narcissist sociopath for 10 years. During that time I was a general manager. I used to help him financially and in other ways when we were together. But things began to change. He emotionally and sexually drained me. I lost my spirit. I used to be a very happy person but now I am a loner. I left him and moved to another state. Currently, I'm working as a server which makes

me believe less in myself. I feel pity for myself a lot but don't know what to do. When I have money problems, he does not help me. He actually enjoys seeing me have a hard time in my life. I need help.

Answer 319: Congratulations on leaving your marriage! It is ok and natural to feel sadness, loss, uncertainty in direction, hurt, resulting from ending the marriage. Possibly what you consider "pity" is a combination of these feelings. Be kind and caring toward who you are since you just put yourself through a major separation and need time to clear out the old emotions that connected you to your ex. There is very, very little chance of him helping you since he lacks compassion and empathy. More likely any help he gave would be in order to manipulate you. Maybe for now your server job is ok do you have more time to concentrate on taking care of your emotions. You were a manager once, you can be a manager again when you feel ready for doing so. Good luck!

Question 320: I always feel like I'm not good enough and it literally is so hard living. I don't know how to talk to my parents about it.

Answer 320: Are you a teen? This is a really hard problem for more teens (and adults) than let on. When I was about 15, I remember asking my parent's friend, Herman, whether life gets any easier when you get older. He said the problems are actually harder, but you gain the ability to deal with them better. I've been an adult a long time now, and that is so true. If you need someone to talk to, consider a teacher or a school guidance counselor or someone you respect, maybe in church. If they're good and they don't know how to help you, they may know how to get you to someone who can. Also, the idea of not being "good enough" is a common psychological event. In CBT it's called a "core belief," but I call it a "core lie" in my book, *Living Yes, a Handbook for Being Human*. If you are serious about changing yourself, read about it at www.LivingYes.org and pick up a copy there or on Amazon. I hope this was helpful. The future is filled with possibility if we don't prejudge it! ~Mark (www.MarkMorrisLCSW.com and www.LivingYes.org)

Question 321: I have manic depression and last summer was very very bad. I have recurring nightmares and I avoid anything that will give me a similar feeling as I did that summer.

Answer 321: A PTSD diagnosis requires an event which occurred at least 6 months prior to the symptoms. Depression is a common symptom of PTSD, but depression can come from many other sources as well. In the end, diagnoses are systems of behavioral labels. If you believe that one label (PTSD) is worse than another (Depression), you are creating a false hierarchy. Consider consulting a CBT therapist, such as the fine clinicians listed in AcademyofCT.org. You may also want to look at my book, *Living Yes*, for many ideas about challenging your thinking and improving your mood. www.LivingYes.org. I hope you feel better soon. ~Mark (www.MarkMorrisLCSW.com and www.LivingYes.org)

Question 322: I have manic depression and last summer was very very bad. I have recurring nightmares and I avoid anything that will give me a similar feeling as I did that summer.

Answer 322: In general, the answer is no. Depression can not generally cause PTSD. Your question does make a lot of sense, though. Depression is a common symptom of PTSD. A counselor in your area should be able to help you what's going on - either feelings of depression, PTSD, or both.

Question 323: My doctor thinks that seeing a psychiatrist will help with my depression and anxiety. Now my anxiety is worse, what do I do? Writing on here has taken every bit of strength I have left.

Answer 323: Did you take the medication the way the psychiatrist prescribed it? Did you follow up with her/him to report how it was going? Different medications work differently with different people. It's not always the first one that helps. And some of the medications take some time to have an effect. Give the doctor the chance to help you. I suggest you find a certified CBT therapist to help you examine your thinking. www.AcademyofCT.org has listings of the finest CBT clinicians. In the meantime, do some "anxiety fasting" by taking a few minutes to do something nice for yourself right now. I hope you feel better soon. ~Mark (www.MarkMorrisLCSW.com and www.LivingYes.org)

Question 324: I am always down and out. Could this be postpartum depression?

Answer 324: Probably. I always tell the new parents I work with (and this is just as true for dads as it is for moms) that if you are feeling off, seek help. Postpartum Support International (www.postpartum.net) is a great place to start finding resources and locating support.

Question 325: My last relationships have ended horribly. They just up and abandoned me. One of them I have never gotten closure with over it, leaving me emotionally wrecked. I know something's wrong with me but I don't know how to even start trying to better myself.

I get into these depressed like states whenever anyone I care about is too busy to be with me. I know

that I shouldn't act like that because people are genuinely busy, but I feel like they're doing it just because they don't want to be around me.

Answer 325: Frequently when working with clients, I utilize the A-B-C model developed by Albert Ellis, the founder of Rational Emotive Behavior Theory. The theory basically states that you can not control an event but you can control your reaction to the emotions associated with said event. For instance here is an example: A (Action or Event): You need to talk to someone and that person is not calling you back. B (Behavior or Response): You begin to tell yourself that this person is too busy for me or I am not important to this person. C (Consequence): You feel depressed. If you look at the model, B has a direct effect on C. The thought is if you change your reaction to A, then C will have a better consequence, such as: A: stays the same. B (this is what you change): This person must be busy, they will call me back when they get a chance or I can call someone else to lean on for support until this person is available. C: Decreased feelings of depression & overall functioning improves. This is just an example but if you actively work to replace the negative thought patterns that effect your behavior, studies show that your overall outlook and mood will improve. If this model resonates with you, I recommend "Feeling better, getting better, staying better" by Alber Ellis. In addition, looking for support groups in your area are a great source of support when you are feeling abandoned or alone.

Question 326: I don't know what's wrong with me. At times I can be really happy, excited, I'll talk fast, and I want to do things. But lately I've been staying up way later and sleeping too much. I don't hang out with friends, I don't really have them. I feel nothing, worthless. I want to do nothing, I have no interest in anything. All I usually do is stay in my room. I want to be happy, I want to be nice. What's wrong with me?

Answer 326: I'm sorry to hear that you are feeling as if you're in a slump. First of all, nothing is wrong with you. Many people report similar symptoms. Have you ever talked with a physician regarding your symptoms? Two extreme emotions such as feeling extremely happy and then feeling extremely low for a length of time may indicate a mood disorder. I think it would be best to talk with your doctor or a therapist to help pinpoint the issue causing them. It's possible that it could just be certain stressors in your life that are causing the two extremities but you definitely want to rule out any mental health issues. If it is in fact mental health related there are many medications or therapy choices that can help. Thanks for reaching out! I hope that you will feel back on track soon!

Question 327: I've have lived for sometime with depression but things have gotten a lot better, but why is it so hard to get over anxiety and social isolation?

Answer 327: The best way to handle depression and anxiety is with a combination of appropriate medication given to you by a medical doctor, and therapy to help you understand the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are causing the depression and anxiety in the first place and then to replace these with more positive thoughts and behaviors. This is not something that anyone should just "white knuckle" and try to get through on their own with no help. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is a technique that has been proven helpful for depression and anxiety. This takes a therapist trained in CBT. There are some things in life that you cannot change and must learn to accept. A lot of people spend time trying to change things that they have no control over. This may be the behavior of someone else in your life or it could be a situation that you cannot change, such as the recent death of a loved one, a lost relationship, or an accident or illness which has left you handicapped. In cases like this, what can change is your attitude and thoughts about the situation that you now find yourself in. One thing that is inevitable about life is that stuff happens and it is not always pleasant. Some people take these unpleasant occurrences very hard and it throws them into a deep depression. Other people seem to be able to handle life's ups and downs and bounce back. They do this with having positive coping skills in their life. Learning new coping skills is something your therapist can help you with. A lot of people are so focused on trying to change the things in their life that they cannot change and are ignoring the things that they can change. There are things that you can do. Here is a quote for you to consider. "You are getting almost everything that you are getting based on the choices that you have made. You will continue to get the same thing out of life until you make some changes." Another quote I like is "You will find a way or you will find an excuse." Don't ever say that you have no choice. Everyone has a choice. You might not particularly like any of the choices that you are facing, but you do have choices. Not happy in a relationship? You can leave it. Hate your job? Get a new one. If it matters to you, you will find a way. Don't sit there complaining about everything but not doing anything different or better. Take care of yourself. Exercise is very important not only for your physical health, but for your mental health as well. Eating right and exercising will help you

feel better about yourself. Also, find a meditation that works for you. There are progressive muscle relaxation exercises, visual and mental meditations, and many many more. Start making some positive changes in your life today! You can do it!

Question 328: I'm in a state of depression right now. Who can I talk to? I've been sick in a lot of pain and crying. Don't know where to turn.

Answer 328: First of all, if you're sick and in pain, have you seen your doctor? If you have a chronic illness and pain, this can often lead to depression and is very common. You've taken the first step to dealing with it. You can talk to your doctor, even if your depression isn't related to your health. He or she can either look at prescribing you an antidepressant or can refer you to a psychologist or psychiatrist. If that's not really an option for you, there are also helplines (local or national) or support groups where people dealing with similar issues can talk to each other. If you can't find any in your area (newspapers usually publish this information), there are online support groups as well.

Question 329: I've been married for 3 years and I have two kids. During my 3-years married, my husband cheated on me twice. The second time really got to me and at my lowest I hurt him back. We aren't communicating as well as I would like. What do I do?

Answer 329: Hi there. Thank you reaching out for help. It takes a lot of courage for someone that is being abused to reach out for help. I want you to know that I am here to help you in any way that I can. First and foremost, you did not mention whether or not you had children yourself by this man. I'm going to assume there are. So, the most important thing right at this moment is asking yourself, if you and your children are safe? Is the boyfriend currently living in the home or is he coming and going? If he is coming and going or currently living in the home, my suggestion for you to is to pack a bag for you and your children and go somewhere safe (i.e. family members home, friend or a shelter temporarily). I cannot stress this enough. Although, some people tend to minimize their abusers behavior (i.e. they only do it when they are drinking, they only do it when they are mad), it's those individuals that find themselves or their children in a serious situation. So, you can never take abuse (physical or mental) lightly because you never know what is going through that persons mind at that particular time. It's always better to be safe than sorry. Secondly, it will not be safe, helpful or productive to attempt to talk to the abuser about your relationship. Abusers often times try and manipulate you into staying by apologizing or attempting to justify their behaviors. This is the time you would want to go see a magistrate in order to get a protective order for you and your children. It's unfortunate that your significant other was involved with another women causing pregnancy; however, that is no longer your concern. Your concern at this point is keeping yourself and your children safe. I would also suggest counseling for you and your children in order to work through these issues. I hope this was helpful and please stay safe and take care of yourself.

Question 330: When I'm in large crowds I get angry and I just can't deal with people. I don't really like other people (I prefer animals) they make me nervous and scared.

I lay awake at night thinking and having conversations in my head and i almost always end up making myself feel terrible and crying, I have more conversions in my head than I do with actual people. I don't know what's wrong with me and why I feel this way. What should I do?

Answer 330: What you are experiencing is totally normal and these emotions mean you are human! Humans are social creatures who were created to be in connection with others, but sometimes our life experiences or genetics can make that more difficult for some of us. It is possible that these reactions are based on negative reactions you have had with others in the past, maybe your family, or other traumatic interactions with others. It is also possible that they are caused by an underlying condition such as anxiety or depression, which may cause you to be more uncomfortable around others or annoyed by others. Some people are also more bothered by crowded spaces, loud interactions, and the actions of others. Of course you prefer animals (me too!), they provide unconditional love and support, do not judge you, and do not require you to have conversations with them. The fact that you have conversations in your head at night tells me that although you say you do not like people, you are craving some social connection. What is probably the case is that you were never really taught how to interact and have those conversations. The good news is that there is nothing wrong with you, you just need a little help learning how to have these conversations and taking some healthy risks to initiate conversations and that is something that I help many of my clients with in therapy.

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myself feel terrible and crying, I have more conversations in my head than I do with actual people. I don't know what's wrong with me and why I feel this way. What should I do?

Answer 331: I am very sorry to hear that you are going through this!

While animals can be a wonderful way to experience emotional support, you may want to consider opening up to a Life Coach or therapist to discuss some of your concerns. You are not alone, and many people are experiencing very similar anxieties. A Life Coach or professional therapist could help to guide you through these emotions and refer you to additional professional help if needed.

It sounds as though you want to address some of these issues by first asking the question. Finding additional support from a trained professional whom you feel comfortable with could be the best way to get the help that you need. I

wish you the best of luck on your journey!

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Answer 332: You are a unique individual exhibiting some of the traits of a specific type of temperament. Through temperament counseling you can come to know, accept, and manage your God-given temperament to become all that God intended. There is nothing wrong with you -- God loves you as you are and wants to help you balance your temperament needs.

Question 333: When I'm in large crowds I get angry and I just can't deal with people. I don't really like other people (I prefer animals) they make me nervous and scared.

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Answer 333: The thing I picked up immediately in what you're asking is how you don't like other people because "they make me nervous and scared." If someone said that to me in a therapy session, I'd want to understand this much more with them, and what this "nervous and scared" experience is all about: perhaps starting with the question, "what's the earliest memory you have of feeling uncomfortable around people." The idea would be to try to understand all of what it means for you to be around people, and the history of the experience, without labeling it wrong or passing judgment on it. From there what might come is that certain people, and their character traits, might be harder to be around for you because of experiences that you've had with similar situations in your life. Or, it could certainly be something completely different. It would be most important to understand it much more deeply considering the amount of distress it causes you, and in doing so we could begin to see it as "normal for me."

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Answer 334: What you're experiencing is anxiety, it's actually quite common. Good news - you're not alone in this experience! That being said, it can be so frustrating and upsetting to have to contend with the anxious thoughts that come up in our heads, sometimes without any warning. Additionally, nighttime is a particularly vulnerable time for a lot of people wherein anxiety rears its' ugly head even more so. We aren't as distracted at night and our resources are more depleted so we can't fight back against these thoughts as effectively as usual. It can be helpful to externalize our anxiety, give it a name, like "Judy" or "Bill" for example (or perhaps something more sinister like Lord Garmadon??). The naming is all up to you, what comes to mind for you when you think of your anxiety, now what is a name that's fitting? The act of externalizing separates us from the anxiety a bit and makes it a little more tolerable. If you can think of your anxiety as just something else to handle rather than it being a part of your personality, this is usually helpful. Additionally, I recommend not avoiding the situations that make you feel this way. Our brains have to learn what is an actual threat and what is not. Right now, your brain thinks that crowds are a threat, if you can practice some deep breathing and stay in the crowd, you will start to teach (or rewire) your brain, letting it know that the crowd is not dangerous to you. Think of your brain as an overprotective

parent. Your brain is overreacting in these situations to try and keep you safe. It just needs to learn that the situation is not a danger to begin with.

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Answer 335: I think you have a lot of insight into what's going on - being able to pinpoint the issue you're facing and describe the responses it evokes. It sounds like you may be dealing with social anxiety and it may be beneficial to talk to a professional counselor about this. A therapist can help you develop tools (or coping strategies) for dealing with these situations. From what you've shared, you might benefit from animal assisted therapy. Equine therapy is a great approach, or even just working with a therapist who uses animal assisted therapy integrated with a traditional approach to counseling.

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Answer 336: Reaching out to talk about these issues is an important first step. Finding professional services might be recommended if these issues are happening more and more. A few things to note...Anger is an important secondary feeling to be aware of- it keeps us safe, allows us to stand up for ourselves or others....but it also harbors a myriad of disadvantages. But its secondary. It's more necessary to understand the primary emotions behind the anger- worry, confusion, frustration, fear, loneliness, etc...Anxiety has a lot to do with worrying about the future, especially things that we might not be able to control. If we focus our worry on negative things- mistakes, failures, or messups then we will inherently tell ourselves negative things about ourselves. People tend to dwell on the negatives without embracing, or at least recognizing, the positives.

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Answer 337: It's totally normal to feel overwhelmed and uncomfortable in large crowds, or large family gatherings. You may worry about not fitting in, or having anything to say. It is important to have a friend or two. Try to find someone with similar interests. Maybe you can do things that don't involve a lot of face to face contact, like going to see a movie, play or sporting event. Many people are perfectly happy doing things in small groups. If you have ongoing conversations in your head, it is usually due to worry about being judged, and wanting to do or say the exact right thing, as mentioned above. Finding someone to talk to, either a supportive friend or therapist, would allow you to get some of those thoughts out of your head, and realize that you are more accepted than you think. Good luck!

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Answer 338: Since you're aware of your sensitivity to being among large groups of people, then continue to satisfy this and stay away from crowds as much as reasonably possible. It is also fine to prefer the companionship of animals, as long as it is not to the exclusion of relationships with people. Recognizing this feature about yourself is another example of self-understanding. The only point to consider is the reason you avoid talking with other people. If it's because of bad or stressful encounters, betrayals or some type of violation, then having this relationship pattern remain in your mind, may introduce new problems such as loneliness from lack of close friends. What you should do is honestly understand whether you avoid people from fear of being hurt or exploited in some way or because you genuinely prefer solitude. If you have the right combination of people/solitude/animals, then great! If not, then consider the confidential office of a therapist for new understanding of yourself and your social interests.

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Answer 339: Thanks for sharing your concern! I think you'd be surprised if you knew how many people feel the same way. Being in crowds can provoke anxiety (one of the symptoms of anxiety is irritability or anger, like you described). For some people, that's just because of their personality (if you tend to be more introverted, being around lot of people is really draining). For others, it can point to a diagnosis of social anxiety. I'd recommend starting by writing down your self-talk. It sounds like you are telling yourself a lot of negative messages (as you mentioned, having imaginary conversations and assuming people are judging you). Write down the thoughts that are leading to you feeling terrible and crying. Maybe that's: I'm stupid, Everyone else is having a good time so I should be too, There's something wrong with me. Just writing these down is an important starting point because it allows you to be objective to your thoughts. When you see them on paper, you can start to identify the lies and reframe them. Next to your negative thoughts, write some positives: I have something to offer, I'm okay the way I am, It's okay to prefer 1:1 relationships, etc. Hopefully even as you read some of those suggestions, you feel a little lighter and more okay with yourself. Take care!

Question 340: When I'm in large crowds I get angry and I just can't deal with people. I don't really like other people (I prefer animals) they make me nervous and scared.

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Answer 340: So amazing that you are aware of your social anxiety and distress with others you are in relationships with. You have taken the first step toward a journey of healing! Secondly, make an appointment with a therapist who specializes in neurofeedback and biofeedback treatment. A test is needed to determine which areas of your brain are 'on' and which areas of your brain are 'off'. Then it will be focused treatment which will speed your healing.

Question 341: Sometimes I can't stop thinking about life after death. I was raised in a religion that teaches that we will live on forever either in hell or in heaven. When I think of living forever (even if it is in heaven which should be good), I feel overwhelmed. I don't like the thought of living forever and ever and ever. Sometimes I just can't get the thought out of my mind and the thoughts lead to panic and anxiety. Am I crazy? I don't think these thoughts are normal.

Answer 341: You might be surprised how normal you are. Anxiety is incredibly common and while your particular type of existential anxiety might be unique to you - it is very difficult for most people to really comprehend what happens after we die - regardless of the religious or philosophical belief systems we hold. It is the ultimate unknown and some philosophers and psychologists believe that at the root of our day-to-day anxieties is the fear of death or fear of the unknown. Just as it can be really hard to comprehend the ending of life it can also be hard to comprehend an eternal existence. What these both have in common is that we are imaging a future that is ultimately unknowable and this unknown can provoke a lot of anxiety. Mindfulness based practices like meditation - maybe there is something like this in your religious tradition - can be very helpful in making peace with the unknown in the present moment. The more we can learn to live in the moment - the less we get hung up on anticipating outcomes for our lives that may never come true. Mindfulness practices can help you ground, be where you are, relax and regulate your nervous system so that you are able sleep and recuperate, and train your attention to focus on living the life you want to live now - rather than worrying about what happens after you die. Having said all that - it can be profoundly helpful to speak with someone about your anxiety - especially when you feel haunted by it, worry that you are crazy and can't get to sleep. There are lots of good therapists out there who can help you with your anxiety.

Question 342: Sometimes I can't stop thinking about life after death. I was raised in a religion that teaches that we will live on forever either in hell or in heaven. When I think of living forever (even if it is in heaven which should be good), I feel overwhelmed. I don't like the thought of living forever and ever and ever. Sometimes I just can't get the thought out of my mind and the thoughts lead to panic and anxiety. Am I crazy? I don't think these thoughts are normal.

Answer 342: Hi California, What you're experiencing is indeed anxiety; it's very common. Through

research we know a lot of things about how to reduce anxiety. I'll get you started and it's a great idea to connect with a therapist who can build on these ideas and get to know you well. It's natural to have random thoughts that unsettle us. Our brains are complex, wonderful things. Fearful and anxious thoughts are a part of this picture; their purpose is to prepare us for the future and to help us make sense of the past and learn from it. But what happens sometimes is that our alarm systems get out of whack and get set off too easily. We often spend TOO MUCH time worrying about things that happened or might happen. When these thoughts take away from our enjoyment of life, it becomes a problem. So, while fear and anxiety try to protect us, they also seek power and will take any power they can get. In general, fear and anxiety try to tell us one or both of two things: that something is wrong with us, or that something bad will happen (or that something bad will happen because there's something wrong with us). They will use anything they can as evidence to convince you. For example... "That person looked at you funny. You're strange looking". Well there are dozens of possible explanations for the look on that person's face, and it's unlikely it had anything to do with you. For you personally, your thoughts are about the afterlife...about living forever. What does fear tell you will be uncomfortable about living forever? What would the worst part be? A therapist would help you dig deep to find the core of what you fear. It might be that you have no control over who you are or where you go. It might be that you fear going to hell because you're "bad". Search for that deepest fear. I invite you then to picture that thought as a glass of water on a shelf. It's a heavy glass, and if you held it in your hands for a while and stared at it, it would get in the way; you'd be uncomfortable and unable to focus on your life. That's what's happening now. I suggest that the problem is not so much the thought you're having; we all have random silly thoughts that usually aren't true. The problem is how long you're holding it in your hand. You could have that thought (pick up that glass) a hundred times a day and, as long as you put it right back on the shelf, it's not a problem. The trick is to get it back on that shelf. Right now, you're using distraction to do this. You're trying to focus on other things around you, but I think the glass is still in your hand. It's not enough; you're looking for more tools to get that glass back on the shelf. And the key is in your thoughts. Once you find out what fear is trying to tell you, then you can "talk back to" fear. So, as an example, if fear is saying to you "you have no control over anything", then you can work to accept the pieces you don't have control over, learn to tolerate that feeling, and claim back the pieces you CAN control. You CAN control the extent to which you let fear take you over. With a therapist you can learn to "refute" fears' ideas. You can learn to look for concrete evidence of fear's lies and gain back control over your thoughts. I wish you the best!

Question 343: Sometimes I can't stop thinking about life after death. I was raised in a religion that teaches that we will live on forever either in hell or in heaven. When I think of living forever (even if it is in heaven which should be good), I feel overwhelmed. I don't like the thought of living forever and ever and ever. Sometimes I just can't get the thought out of my mind and the thoughts lead to panic and anxiety. Am I crazy? I don't think these thoughts are normal.

Answer 343: Good questions! The paradox of thinking about forever is that you can become more motivated to live only in the present. Thinking about forever can certainly be overwhelming, it's a lot to think about. What can you do about your future? Be present - learn and relax, knowing that you are doing everything you can right here, right now. There is a book by Eckhart Tolle - The Power of Now - that you might be interested in. Enjoy your journey!

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Answer 344: Your life here matters and being present in it so you feel joy in yourself and your surroundings is important in creating your sense of ease and balance. No one can predict, for sure, what happens after death because consciousness transcends boundaries and limits we tend to impose on it. That said, if reincarnation exists or if there is a heaven or hell your consciousness of it will most likely be free of discomfort or pain as you experience it now. Meditating or doing self-hypnosis for anxiety can help alleviate your thoughts and sense of fear and living the a life of kindness and balance will assure that your future will be happy for you regardless of the unknown.

Question 345: Sometimes I can't stop thinking about life after death. I was raised in a religion that teaches that we will live on forever either in hell or in heaven. When I think of living forever (even if it is in heaven which should be good), I feel overwhelmed. I don't like the thought of living forever and ever and ever.

Sometimes I just can't get the thought out of my mind and the thoughts lead to panic and anxiety. Am I crazy? I don't think these thoughts are normal.

Answer 345: Religious questioning is a complex and often philosophical topic, and these types of questions, especially around heaven, hell, and an afterlife can bring up a host of difficult & confusing feelings. What I want to focus on is the fear & anxiety you seem to be feeling that are deeply connected to your questions. Scary thoughts, negative thoughts, obsessive thoughts sometimes feel like they're out of control and there is nothing we can do to stop them, but I want to offer two techniques that might assist with your panic & anxiety. The first step in working with scary or negative thoughts is to acknowledge that they are just thoughts and we can choose to follow the scary thought streams or work with cutting them off or ignoring them. I also realize that might seem really hard to do, but here's a good way to think about the brain and how thought patterns work. Thoughts arise in the mind all the time, our brain is a thought machine. Many thoughts drift by like clouds and we don't pay any attention while other thoughts arise and they trigger us in a particulate way, i.e., scary, angry, happy, sad, and when those thoughts arise we can chose to pay more attention to the thought which can lead us down that particular thought stream that will lead to fear and anxiety. So, how do we work or stop those scary thought streams? One new skill to implement comes from the work of Rick Hansen, he wrote the book *Buddha's Brain*," he teaches that we need to give more energy and attention to the positive thoughts or positive memories we hold in our mind and pay less attention to the negative thoughts. Hansen asks us to imagine the brain this way, the brain is like Velcro with negative thoughts and like teflon when it comes to positive thoughts. There are reasons that our brain works this way, but I don't have time to go into all of that in this response. So, it's just important to remember we have to work at positive thinking, actually pausing throughout the day to focus on positive feelings and memories, this will help the mind reinforce positive thought streams and help reduce negative thought streams over time. If a scary thought arises try to replace it with a happy experience for at least a couple of moments, and see if that helps reduce the negative charge connected with that scary thought. I would also suggest when you're having the thoughts about death take a moment to notice how you're breathing. Often when we are feeling anxiety we are doing shallowing chest breathing rather than taking in a full, deep breath or what is called belly breathing. If you take a moment to focus on your breathing and allow a couple of full breaths, bringing in the breath so the belly rises and then the belly natural falls as you exhale, just noticing the breath and practicing breathing can slow down the anxiety cycle as it begins.

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Answer 346: You need to find an outlet. Someone to talk to. Your dad or someone who loves your mother as well is someone ideal. But anyone could help. Just look to someone for help. If you can't find anyone who you think will listen, talk to your mom. It can help greatly just to get the words out. Tell her how you feel about her passing, but then also about everything else. Talk to her about your day. Tell her about happy things. I don't know if you're a religious person, or where you believe she is now, but no matter what you can talk to her.

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Answer 347: Many people generate intense anxiety with obsessive thinking. While the nature of your obsession about the afterlife and eternity appear very powerful and unique to you, the pattern of obsessing about one thing/area is common. I suggest that you consider counseling to help you with your anxiety. If you are so inclined, there are also medications which may bring relief. Obviously, I can't diagnose you from one paragraph, so it would be wise to visit an experienced mental health professional (either a counselor or an MD in your area) to help you with disengaging from your self-destructive thoughts. CBT, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, is a very effective counseling approach for obsessive thinking. If you'd like a see a top notch CBT therapist, visit www.AcademyofCT.org. And of course I suggest you pick up my book, *LIVING YES, A HANDBOOK FOR BEING HUMAN*, which includes CBT

concepts and many more tools which will help with obsession and anxiety. As for believing yourself "insane" (or "crazy") this is not a mental health term but a legal one (or a slang). So as long as you don't commit a crime, no professional can legitimately call you insane or crazy! Take it slow! ~Mark (www.MarkMorrisLCSW.com and www.LivingYes.org)

Question 348: I get very nervous and anxious/scared before sex.

Answer 348: Tell your partner about this so that ideally the person has a chance to be supportive and reassuring, as well as listen to your specific worries and fears. Initiate this type of discussion at a time which is removed from the time you're about to have sex. This way you and your partner both have a chance to realize the two of you are having a discussion, not a prelude to sex. If you meant in your question that you feel anxious about having sex w a random partner, then maybe you are less interested in hookup sex than you imagined.

Question 349: I get very nervous and anxious/scared before sex.

Answer 349: I first wonder what your anxiety or fear connects to. I don't know whether it is about sex itself or about ideas of worthiness or feeling desirable. There is also a difference between having self-doubt about the actual physicality of having sex (performance-related) or having doubts about whether you want to have sex with a particular person. Having sex can lead to feelings of great vulnerability. If your partner is someone you trust, consider discussing what it is that comes up for you around the issue of sex. This is the certain things that your partner would be willing to do that and the ease your discomfort, like staying with you for some time before and after sexual interactions. Another idea to consider is spending time with your partner and using nonsexual touch for each other (perhaps first you to him and then him to you) and communicating very clearly about what you like and do not like. Some people like to be spoken to during physical touch and other people do not. All of this can be part of your discussions. When you feel comfortable with that, you could move into sexual touch in this manner and actually look at what you do and do not like. You may also consider discussing things that are totally off-limits for you all the time and things for which you would like warning or awareness before they happen. There are really a number of different ways to work on becoming more comfortable if you trust your partner and if your concern is about sex itself. If this feels pretty structured, it is initially. Generally, the idea is to learn more about each other and yourselves and then the process becomes much more natural. If the concern relates more to self-esteem related sex, consider asking your partner to list several things that he or she likes about you. Even if you don't necessarily see yourself in the same light, consider that this is how your partner sees you, so these are some of the things that make you attractive to them (perhaps both in sexual ways and in a wider discussion of the relationship). If this is difficult for you to sort out on your own, consider seeing a therapist with experience working with couples or relationships.

Question 350: I've been like this ever since I was in school; back then I transferred to another school. Now I'm thinking about changing my job.

Answer 350: There's a quote I love that says, "Wherever you go, there you are" and the book by the same name by Jon Kabat-Zinn may be very helpful for you. The thing about changing things up when they get tough is that they often aren't the things that need changing. The awesome (and challenging) thing about it is that when you work on the internal aspects that may need attention, you can learn to find a sense of centeredness that comes with practicing mindfulness and asking yourself who you really are and want to be. Through this deeper work, you can actually be in the midst of chaos and still feel that calm and peace within yourself. If you look for support in this journey from a counselor or therapist, I'd recommend looking for someone offering Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) or Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (MCBT). Also helpful may be the online program of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MSBR) found here. There are in-person programs across the country, but this online self-guided version is free and a great resource!

Question 351: I've been like this ever since I was in school; back then I transferred to another school. Now I'm thinking about changing my job.

Answer 351: Is there a certain problem you feel about living the way you describe? As long as you feel satisfied with how your life is unfolding then you're making wise decisions. If you feel tension or that somehow doing as you describe is wrong, then the first step is to identify the way you feel your methodology described above has a role in working against your best interest. Basically, define what is problematic in order to address it.

Question 352: I've been like this ever since I was in school; back then I transferred to another school. Now I'm thinking about changing my job.

Answer 352: Many times when things become difficult to manage, is because we are getting out of our comfort zone, so we seek growth and change. Coping with the difficulties does make you more resilient and helps you to build the confidence you need to solve problems in the future. Now I wonder: are things getting tough in a way that you are not able to resolve them? Do you need to move or change to save yourself or prevent any harm? If so, it is OK to know when to remove ourselves from situations that harm us more than helping us. On the other hand, are the things getting tough because you need to learn a new skill? If so, how can you learn them and is there someone who can help you overcome this challenge? I help my clients to identify their strengths and areas where they can achieve growth, things like polishing up your resume and evaluate new job opportunities could help you discover a new you. If you would like to engage in counseling, I am licensed in Texas and Puerto Rico, you can contact me at 787-466-5478. Cada vez que las cosas se ponen difíciles, hago cambios en mi vida. He sido así desde que estaba en la escuela; antes me transfería de escuela. Ahora pienso cambiar de trabajo. Muchas veces cuando las situaciones se tornan en difíciles de manejar, es porque nos sacan de nuestra zona de comodidad, con el propósito de buscar el cambio y el crecimiento. Manejar las dificultades si te vuelve más resistente, y desarrolla tu autoestima para que puedas resolver problemas en el futuro. Ahora, te pregunto: ¿se están poniendo las cosas difíciles al punto que no puedes manejarlas? ¿Necesitas removerte de la situación para evitar que te hagan daño? Si es así, entonces está bien reconocer cuando nos debemos remover de una situación dañina que nos daña más de lo que nos permite crecer. O por el otro lado, ¿Se están poniendo las cosas difíciles porque necesitas a prender una nueva destreza? Si es así, ¿cómo puedes aprender esa destreza y quien te puede ayudar? Ayudo a mis clientes a identificar sus fortalezas y áreas de crecimiento, el actualizar y pulir tu resume junto con explorar opciones de empleo, te puede llevar a descubrir nuevos talentos en ti. Si te gustaría hacer una cita, soy Consejera Profesional Licenciada en Texas y en Puerto Rico, llama al 787-466-5478.

Question 353: I've been like this ever since I was in school; back then I transferred to another school. Now I'm thinking about changing my job.

Answer 353: Sometimes changes make sense. It may be helpful to talk to someone who you trust to get a sense of whether the changes that you are making are those that are considered adaptable or important changes that allow us all to grow. Another possibility is that you are changing things in an effort to get away from something that is uncomfortable or difficult. There are many other possibilities along this continuum. I would ask you to consider the following: What is leading you to want to change your job? What feelings are associated with this change? (Happy, sad, scared, anxious/nervous, confused, motivated, etc.) How is the job that you are looking to transfer to going to be better or different? Are the concerns that you have now going to travel with you? If you are hesitating to get another perspective (from trusted friends or family or some sort of career advisor in your area), where is the hesitation coming from?

Question 354: I've been like this ever since I was in school; back then I transferred to another school. Now I'm thinking about changing my job.

Answer 354: I recommend that you make a list of all the reasons you should change your life and all of the reasons you shouldn't change your life. Can the problem you are in be fixed? Is there others you can lean on for support? Are there other people you know who have been through a similar experience and are willing to share their story with you? It is important to rely on your support network to help you get multiple points of view. If you believe you need additional help, I suggest seeing a professional.

Question 355: I know this fear doesn't make sense. How can I overcome it?

Answer 355: No, it makes sense :) Consider today how social media has impacted the mind and heart of man; Is it not so extraordinarily easy to make one appear stellar on social media today? Heh heh, I've long since joked that the definition of a party is: "A series of photos to lie with." When I peel back the awareness of others' "judgment", what I find is excitement of wanting to express themselves too... It's funny how America is one of the few lands on the planet where folks are able to mess up and try it again; on most other places, if you mess up, there is such deep shame in it, that it may lead to one taking one's life;

Question 356: I know this fear doesn't make sense. How can I overcome it?

Answer 356: Stop caring about what you imagine people are thinking about you! Really this is the simple and complicated answer to feel better about your situation. Maybe someone is judging you, maybe someone isn't judging you. Until the person tells you directly what they don't like about you, there's nothing you can do. It is okay that the fear doesn't make sense, most fears don't make sense.

Question 357: I have anxieties about everyday stressors, i.e. finances, work, relationships, kids, and

maintaining a household.

Answer 357: What are the best ways to reduce anxiety? I have anxieties about everyday stressors, i.e. finances, work, relationships, kids, and maintaining a household. Our everyday life is filled with pressures and deadlines that are common to cause anxiety. Here are some basic tips to handle those stressors.

- Learn thought stopping techniques: There are multiple ways to teach your brain to refocus. If you allow your brain to focus on the source of anxiety, the anxiety will be in charge. But you can learn to put those anxiety-provoking thoughts on a parking lot, and focus on pleasurable thoughts, or the activity that you need to complete on the time being.
- Plan, organize, delegate: Create a schedule to manage demands, organize priorities, and delegate or share responsibilities. Work as a team with your family, so you can share the load. Prioritize activities, chores, and expenses. Focus on the urgent, necessary, and spread apart the not so urgent.
- Identify triggers: Once you understand what causes your anxiety, you can learn to channel process and refocus your thoughts. You can also learn coping strategies to manage the problem or give up the desire to control it if needed.
- Learn coping skills: Having a balanced lifestyle helps tremendously to reduce and manage anxiety symptoms. Looking at your eating, sleeping, physical activities, spirituality and leisure time is key to find that balance. If you find yourself struggling with anxiety, you can contact a Counselor or mental health provider. I provide teletherapy for Texas residents and psychotherapy in Puerto Rico, you can reach me at 787-466-5478 for appointments.

¿Cuáles son las mejores maneras de reducir la ansiedad? Tengo ansiedad por preocupaciones diarias, como las finanzas, relaciones, niños y mantener mi casa. Nuestra vida está llena de retos y presiones que comúnmente nos causan ansiedad. Aquí unos consejos básicos para manejar esas preocupaciones.

- Aprende como detener tus pensamientos: Hay múltiples maneras de enseñarle a tu cerebro a reenfocarse. Si permites que tu cerebro se enfoque en la fuente de ansiedad, entonces la ansiedad se apoderará de ti. Pero puedes aprender a poner a un lado esos pensamientos que causan ansiedad, y enfocarte en pensamientos positivos, placenteros o simplemente enfocarte en la actividad que estás haciendo.
- Planifica, organiza, delega: Crea una agenda para manejar las demandas diarias, organizar prioridades y delegar o compartir responsabilidades. Trabaja en equipo con tu familia, de manera que puedas compartir la carga. Organiza las actividades, gastos y tareas por prioridad. Enfócate en lo urgente y necesario y distribuye lo que no es tan vital.
- Identifica la fuente: Ya que comprendes donde o qué inicia la ansiedad, puedes aprender a canalizarla, procesarla o reenfocar tus pensamientos. También puedes aprender a manejar la fuente de ansiedad, resolver el problema, o aceptar que no lo puedes controlar, si ese fuera el caso.
- Aprende mecanismos de defensa: Tener un estilo de vida balanceado ayuda tremendamente a manejar síntomas de ansiedad. Observar tus patrones de alimentación, descanso, ejercicio, espiritualidad y tiempo de ocio es clave para encontrar el balance. Si notas que continuas batallando con la ansiedad puedes contactar a un consejero profesional de salud mental. Proveo teleterapia a residentes de Texas y Consejería en Puerto Rico, me puedes contactar al 787-466-5478 para hacer una cita.

Question 358: I have anxieties about everyday stressors, i.e. finances, work, relationships, kids, and maintaining a household.

Answer 358: Something to remember about anxiety is that it's a useful and necessary response to stressors, and we all have a level of anxiety that falls somewhere on the spectrum from very slight to very overwhelming. Anxiety is our brain's way of prompting us to deal with the stress in our lives by getting us geared up for action. Some helpful ways of managing anxiety are actually very simple. The first I'd recommend is a calm breathing technique - breathe in for 4-5 seconds, and then out for 7-8 seconds. Try to repeat this for 3-5 minutes. Another suggestion is to pay closer attention in the moments you feel the physical symptoms of anxiety and see if you can describe - without judging - the sensations to yourself. Try to be very specific, such as "my palms are feeling very sweaty, and I can feel the slight tightness and fluttering in my belly of the butterflies." Then try to sit with these sensations without deciding if they are good or bad - just experiencing them as intentionally as possible. Combining the calm breathing with this technique can also be very helpful. If you feel that these techniques don't help and your anxiety about everyday stressors are inhibiting you from being able to engage in life the way you want to, then I'd highly recommend going for an assessment or even just consultation with a professional. This professional can help you determine if therapy/counseling would be helpful for you to develop additional skills for managing those interfering anxiety symptoms.

Question 359: I have anxieties about everyday stressors, i.e. finances, work, relationships, kids, and maintaining a household.

Answer 359: Anxieties are an adrenal problem; Clean them out with a proper detox, using the food built for mankind, and a herbal protocol; Maybe throw in some fasting here and there to kick the kidneys into high gear and get the adrenals pumping... Every loss is a gain, so losing a car means you no longer hold responsibility to keep and maintain it... If you're really up for it, some contemplation (that is keep one thought *lightly* on your mind alllllll day; that is just focus upon it from time to time, "Man, I notice that the sky is really blue today... and the air is really crisp today..."); after 3-5 days of contemplation, see what you notice...

Question 360: I have anxieties about everyday stressors, i.e. finances, work, relationships, kids, and maintaining a household.

Answer 360: Anxiety is overwhelming insecurity. Try to think of why you'd feel insecure or have very little confidence in your ability to complete or be in relationships. Is it possible you were very heavily criticized when you were young and growing up? Very often kids who are not encouraged to try new activities, have fun in relating to others, learn to not trust themselves to handle these fundamental parts of life. Also, if you grew up in an alcoholic or abusive family, whether the abuse was toward you or between your parents, it is possible these scenes made you a very insecure foundation on which to trust your yourself and other people. Examine the basics of your growing up years and what may explain why you feel insecure. To improve, be patient with yourself about making mistakes and simply try in simple, small, and direct ways to do the actions you fear and in which you also would like to participate.

Question 361: I have anxieties about everyday stressors, i.e. finances, work, relationships, kids, and maintaining a household.

Answer 361: Which one gives you the most anxiety? List from top to bottom which one gives you the greatest anxiety and ask the question how come? From there, we can figure out the underlying factors of your anxiety.

Question 362: I have anxieties about everyday stressors, i.e. finances, work, relationships, kids, and maintaining a household.

Answer 362: Since it is clear that people react differently to the same stressors, we know that the stressors are not causing the anxiety, our thoughts about the stressors are. Often, cognitive distortions are the problem. Some common cognitive distortions include catastrophizing (predicting the worst), future telling, black and white thinking (if it's not perfect, it's terrible), mind-reading (I just know he is angry at me) and can't-standitis (I can't stand this situation). There are more, but the list is long, and if some of these are resonating with you, I would advise looking up CBT (cognitive behavioral therapy) tips, worksheets, booklets etc. on line, or contact a local CBT therapist. Another helpful piece of info on anxiety, is that it is prone to something called "symptom stress" - being anxious about anxiety. If we could hear this symptom stress it might sound like, "Oh no I'm getting nervous about this, I'm getting uptight, I look nervous, what if I have a panic attack!" followed by more cognitive distortions such as "I can't stand being anxious!" and "this is horrible!" The antidote to this is acceptance. Kind of like not stopping the waves but learning to surf instead (Jon Kabat-Zinn). If you happen to feel anxious, say to yourself - this is just a reaction I'm having that is unpleasant, but not horrible. I can tolerate and survive some anxiety, I can breathe deeply, and I'll be OK because panic attacks never killed anyone. I can stand this and it is temporary. You get the idea. We can increase our awareness of anxiety-provoking self-talk, and counteract it with calming and reassuring self-talk. We have the ability to think about our thinking, decide which thoughts are healthy and which are unhealthy, and choose which to focus on. We brainwash ourselves with our thinking, and according to self-perception theory, "we learn what we believe when we hear ourselves speak," so we may as well be a calming, reassuring presence in our own minds. :)

Question 363: I'm dealing with imposter syndrome in graduate school. I know that by all accounts I am a phenomenal graduate student, and that I am well-published. I am well liked by students and faculty alike. And yet I cannot shake the feeling that I'm going to be found out as a fraud. How can I get over this feeling?

Answer 363: It sounds like you are on the right track. Recognizing these nagging thoughts of self-doubt as "imposter syndrome" is a huge step in the right direction. From what you have written here, it appears that you are able to challenge your own thoughts and provide yourself with evidence that counteracts the imposter syndrome. Continuing to remind yourself of what you have accomplished and looking at the facts at hand can help diminish doubt. Remember, many successful people battled imposter syndrome on the way to the top (and still manage it). It might be helpful to read some of their stories so that you don't feel alone. "The Cut" has a great article on "25 Famous Women on Imposter-Syndrome and

Self-Doubt". Business Insider has a great article about men and the imposter syndrome too.

Remember, if you jumped through all of the hoops to get into school and get published-- you belong.

Question 364: I'm dealing with imposter syndrome in graduate school. I know that by all accounts I am a phenomenal graduate student, and that I am well-published. I am well liked by students and faculty alike. And yet I cannot shake the feeling that I'm going to be found out as a fraud. How can I get over this feeling?

Answer 364: First step is to remove the label of your behavior as a syndrome and instead understand the reasons for it. "Imposter syndrome" sounds like a name someone made up to write a book and have lots of people buy it bc it gives the feeling they know themselves by calling themselves this name. Instead, consider your own unique qualities including your fears of being recognized as adding value to people's lives. If you were told growing up that you're worthless, or if your chosen career goes against family advice and expectations, or if you simply are a shy person, then these would be the starting points to understand your reluctance to believe in yourself. The more you understand yourself and trust the truths you find as to who you are, the less you will feel fraudulent. Good luck in your career work!

Question 365: I'm dealing with imposter syndrome in graduate school. I know that by all accounts I am a phenomenal graduate student, and that I am well-published. I am well liked by students and faculty alike. And yet I cannot shake the feeling that I'm going to be found out as a fraud. How can I get over this feeling?

Answer 365: It would be very helpful to identify with you eventual pattern where the imposter syndrome is more or less present. Are there specific situations where you've noticed the feelings of "I'm going to be found out as a fraud" becoming more strong? It seems that shaking this feeling is very important to you. In my opinion, before shaking that feeling, we need to get closer to it and understand its roots. If you would like to get closer to the feeling, you might consider asking yourself questions such: "What is the trigger for this feeling? How does it feel in the body? What is the thought process I engage with after noticing this feeling? All the best. Rossana Mag.

Question 366: I'm dealing with imposter syndrome in graduate school. I know that by all accounts I am a phenomenal graduate student, and that I am well-published. I am well liked by students and faculty alike. And yet I cannot shake the feeling that I'm going to be found out as a fraud. How can I get over this feeling?

Answer 366: "Imposter Syndrome" is a basic effect is a dishonest cause. Basically, there is a fundamental lack of honesty in some important parts of your life (my guess would be relationships) that has led to this sense of dread and guilt. I wonder where the dishonesty be...

Question 367: I'm dealing with imposter syndrome in graduate school. I know that by all accounts I am a phenomenal graduate student, and that I am well-published. I am well liked by students and faculty alike. And yet I cannot shake the feeling that I'm going to be found out as a fraud. How can I get over this feeling?

Answer 367: I'm sorry you're feeling this way. You've probably read articles already about impostor syndrome, but still didn't get the answers you were looking for; you probably know that lots of people feel this way, that it happens to lots of successful people in professional settings. Not helping, right? Think about people who succeed at big tasks: an Olympic athlete has a defined goal that they need to meet: cross the finish line, say, faster than anyone else. That success is remarked upon, and - until someone does the event better than they did - they are 'the best.' Grad school, however, is not so great at discrete goals and celebrations of success. You got a good grade on an assignment, but what about the next one? You and 6 other people in your class probably got the same grade, so does that make you a success or average? It falls to you, then, to identify ways you are sure you've succeeded. If your grades and peer admiration aren't hallmarks of success enough, perhaps pull your measuring tool inward: measure your achievements against your own progress- ie: I got a 93 on my last assignment, I got a 97 this time! You might find those feelings fading soon~

Question 368: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 368: Hello. First, I am so sorry you are experiencing these feelings. They can be intense, I will do my best to offer some suggestions or thoughts that I hope will be helpful to you. There could be a number of things occurring. Therapy is a delicate, private decision and I would first like to commend you for the fact that you are not giving up, that you are working to figure this out, and make this work, it sounds like you are engaged and motivated to receive support from a professional, your continued dedication and

motivation will take you far. I would first start by asking if you have discussed this with your therapist, if you feel comfortable enough telling your therapist what is going on, maybe inform the therapist that that you feel nervous and shaky. I am a firm believer in open communication between the client and therapist as this builds a healthy therapeutic relationship that yields positive outcomes, if this can be obtained and well received. This is YOUR time for healing and therapy should be a safe, supportive environment to not only process but to seek support and guidance from a professional who can help you move past the barriers. If you feel you are comfortable and able to speak to your therapist, that would be my first suggestion, is to tell he or she how you are feeling. If they know then they can help determine the potential cause and allow you to process and move forward. If this is left unresolved it will be hard for you to move forward. If you are not comfortable discussing this with your therapist, this may be something to take into consideration and worthy of thinking about: why you are not comfortable speaking to the therapist. I understand this is difficult. If I may offer one more suggestion, breathing exercises are very beneficial. Remind yourself what you are working to achieve, close your eyes in a safe moment and breathe in and out slowly, in slowly through your nose and out through your mouth with pursed lips. Breathe in for approximately 5-10 seconds, then let it out slowly. Be sure and do this when you are in private, and feel safe environment. When you begin, I suggest putting your hand on your stomach, over your belly button to feel yourself actually taking in those deep breaths. I know it may sound kind of silly but they really work and are incredibly helpful. We often forget to breathe, especially when we are feeling anxious. You are supported here and try taking yourself through the above thought process and breathing and practice the breathing several times a day. I hope this shaky and uneasy feeling eases. Wishing you the very best! Laura Cassity, LMSW, LMAC

Question 369: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 369: It can be uncomfortable talking to someone about your life in the great detail that is normally necessary for counseling to be beneficial. Since you're already going to counseling, congratulations on taking that big, first, stress-inducing step. Hopefully by now you are starting to feel a little more comfortable with your therapist. It can be helpful to address this big "elephant in the room" and talk to your therapist about this. I do my best to help people feel comfortable when they come to counseling, but regardless of how hard we try, sometimes it is just a little hard to get accustomed to. The good news is, the more you keep at it, the more "normal" it will become.

Question 370: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 370: If you have only been to a couple of sessions, it makes sense that you might still feel apprehensive at first. Therapy is hard work! You may be talking about some things that you never talked to anyone about before. Opening up to stranger can be scary. After you feel comfortable with your counselor, and trust has built up and you feel understood in session, you should feel more relaxed. I would encourage you to talk to your counselor about feeling a little shaky. Sharing what the process is like for you is important in your work. If you still feel unsure about sharing after several sessions, it is important to take a look at that and try to understand where that may be coming from. For example, are you and the therapist not a good fit? But, again if you are just starting out in working together, feeling a little bit nervous makes perfect sense, and I encourage you to give it a bit more time and to talk to your therapist about how you are feeling.

Question 371: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 371: Hi there, Thank you for your question. It's absolutely ok to feel nervous going to therapy. I have experienced anxiety going to see my own therapist. There can be a few reasons why you might feel this way. First, it is always unnerving to see a person who is a stranger and to share intimate things with that stranger. You mentioned it has only been a couple of sessions. Your anxiety might subside as you continue to see your therapist and grow more comfortable with him/her. Another reason why you might feel particularly nervous is perhaps you are not comfortable sharing things. As children, we might have bad experiences opening up to others. Someone might bully or ridicule us, and that experience can stay with us for a long time, making it extra scary to share our intimate feelings and thoughts with others. If this the case, as you continue with your sessions and have positive interactions with your therapists, this anxiety will subside with time and you will re-learn that it is safe to share. And the last thought why you might feel the shakes is perhaps you know that you need to talk about some past experiences or

memories that are uncomfortable and difficult. Regardless of the reason, it might help you to bring up your nervousness in your session and share how you feel with your therapist. Having an open dialogue about your anxiety with your therapist can help you resolve some of that anxiety and build greater trust with your therapist.

Question 372: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 372: Thank you for your question. It's completely normal and natural to feel nervous before a therapy session. Many people report having felt this way. I can't say enough regarding the amount of courage it takes to reach out and attend a therapy session. For many people, it can take weeks, months, or even years of contemplating whether to see a therapist or not before actually contacting one and attending the first session. It takes courage to want to work through any struggles you may be having or personal growth you aspire toward. In your question, you mentioned that you've "gone several times and are still feeling nervous and shaky." If you feel comfortable with your therapist and it's a good fit for you, I would suggest talking about this with your therapist. You don't have to struggle each time you have your appointment. Together, you and your therapist can work toward helping you have a different experience.

Question 373: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 373: Sure, why not! It's nerve-racking to go to a man or woman you've never met before and who is a total stranger, that you are paying to take an interest in your life. You're likely feeling an internal truth about the sessions, the man or woman with you, and the man or woman sitting across from you. I'd listen to those feelings. Wouldn't it not be best to go to those around you that do provide comfort and aid, first? Wouldn't it be better to attend to those of faith around you who have love to offer, first? Wouldn't it be better to go to your family and loved ones, first? :) Might try that; see if your nervousness evaporates...

Question 374: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 374: What you are experiencing is extremely normal. Opening up to someone you don't know from a can of paint can elicit some uncomfortable feelings and make you feel shaky. With time and building trust with your therapist, you will eventually start feeling less apprehensive before sessions. Consider bringing this up to your therapist as you both can process this experience together and figure out ways of coping with this anxiety before you come into the therapy room.

Question 375: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 375: It's very normal to be nervous going into therapy. You are being vulnerable and honest, which is always scary, no matter how many times you do it. The best part about therapy is that the more you go, the more confident you are in your ability to work through those difficult feelings, and while you still may sometimes get nervous, you will have confidence too!

Question 376: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 376: It depends on your definition of "normal"! :) I would say that the average client I see feels some level of nervous energy when they come into their sessions, and especially at the beginning. I think that with clients who I work with that have difficult times in relationships, maybe being able to trust people is tougher for them given their life experiences, the expectation would be that they have a harder time moving through those nerves and feeling more at peace in sessions. In my opinion, a competent therapist could help you explore where these nerves are actually coming from (talking about yourself, relating to another, something else?) I encourage all of my clients to bring up whatever emotions are coming up for them in the moment, as it's helpful to the client to recognize the "present moment" emotion and then being able to process, learn from, and move through to a more peaceful place, if that is what is being sought.

Question 377: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 377: Therapy can feel very weird to begin with - think about it, how often do we go and tell a relative stranger our deepest, darkest thoughts in the rest of our life? So I think it's reasonable to expect a certain level of nerves as you get used to your therapist and to the whole process of talking about yourself and vulnerable topics. That said, it's definitely worth bringing to the attention of your therapist (if you haven't already) to see if there is anything that they can do, or that the two of you can explore together, that might make the process feel less intimidating to you.

Question 378: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 378: It takes a lot of courage to go to therapy. I have gone myself as a Counselor and know what that feeling is like. This is normal but hopefully you have become more comfortable with your therapist. This might be something to bring up to your Therapist and openly discuss (scary to do but its ok) this may even relieve some of your anxiety. If it continues, you may want to consider trying another therapist as this one may not be the best fit for you.

Question 379: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 379: Therapy does not work overnight, oftentimes it is a lifelong struggle, the therapists job is not to "cure" you or to remove something but rather to make you strong enough to live your life with your own peculiarities and struggles, remember we are human and constantly fallible. Another important thing to note is that although you go to therapy, that is just a room, most of the magic and work takes place in your real life outside of that room.

Question 380: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 380: Yes, feeling nervous for the first few or several sessions of therapy, is completely normal. Therapy is an unusual way to have a conversation with someone. The person is an expert in recognizing and understanding dynamics of human interactions. For some people the fear is that the therapist knows more about you than you do yourself. In general terms hopefully your therapist has worked with many other people who've faced problems similar to yours. In this sense the therapist has a general idea of the basic dynamics you most likely are handling. No therapist could possibly know your particular details and your particular areas of upset or in what ways you feel unsure of yourself. Once you start to trust both your own right to tell your particular story and start to also feel that your therapist is listening attentively and cares what you tell the person, your nervousness will start to disappear all on its own. Good luck in getting the most from your therapy sessions!

Question 381: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 381: It is absolutely normal to be nervous about therapy. Many people take years to make the decision to start counseling and although it is a safe place to explore feelings, it may be the first time you are facing certain issues. It takes courage to face issues head on. Being nervous is part of the process. The fact that you are continuing to go to therapy sessions despite feeling nervous demonstrates your strength. Keep it up!

Question 382: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 382: Yes, it is completely normal to feel anxious about therapy. Therapy often explores topics and feelings that are uncomfortable. The ultimate goal of therapy is to feel better but the process itself can be uncomfortable.

Question 383: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 383: For some people it's absolutely normal to feel nervous about coming to therapy. It's sometimes hard to share our emotions and feelings with someone --- no matter how warm and caring the therapist is. Are you comfortable with your therapist? Is it a good relational fit? Maybe this is a good thing to discuss with your specific therapist at the beginning of your next session --- maybe they can help you find some strategies or tools to make it easier?

Question 384: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 384: Well, it's generally okay to feel anxious or nervous about going into therapy, particularly in the beginning because the process of being open about what you are going through, much less to someone who you don't know well, can be anxiety-producing. It's also common to feel anxious when you are discussing something that is important, difficult to discuss, or you are making changes that are very difficult for you. The most important thing I can tell you, though, is to discuss with your therapist this idea that you feel nervous and shaky. Some anxiety can actually help to motivate or lead you toward change. There are also level of anxiety that can be counterproductive, so it's a good thing to discuss. Personally, I can tell you that I would want my clients to tell me about anxiety they feel 100% of the time. That opens

the dialog to discuss whether it is the level of anxiety that they want to sit with and learn about in discovering more about themselves and their experiences and/or whether they would like to do something to lessen the feeling of anxiety. Thanks for writing here. If it caused anxiety for you to do so, I hope that feeling is diminishing for you, at least related to writing here.

Question 385: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 385: Certainly.

Question 386: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 386: of I would love to know a little bit more about what's going on in your life but I will attempt an answer. Yes, you could still be shaky and nervous going to therapy. This therapy thing your doing is sometimes scary. First, because your opening up things that you might have never wanted to. Second, your still building a relationship with this therapist person. You may never get over that. The therapist really can't be your "friend". They are there to push the buttons that you might not want pushed and help you heal. That in itself is scary and can make you anxious. Third, you really never know where this therapy thing will go. Yes, there are goals. But sometimes side roads need to be taken and sometimes that is scary. Know this you are in the right place. You are taking steps to change.

Question 387: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 387: It is absolutely a typical response. Many of my clients are nervous the first couple of times we meet. This is essentially a stranger with whom you are sharing your feelings.

Question 388: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 388: It's normal to feel a little anxiety--after all it's an important encounter for you. My suggestion is to discuss this with your therapist, let him/her know how you're feeling, especially if you feel as though your level of anxiety is impacting the quality and benefit of your sessions. You might try some relaxation techniques prior to starting the session, deep breathing, progressive relaxation, core muscle dis-engagement--If you're not familiar with these techniques ask your therapist or write back.

Question 389: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 389: Hello there. You ask about being nervous and shaky walking in to your therapy session and want to know if its normal? ... I realize there a few ways to look at this. I presume you weren't anticipating feeling this way; and probably hoped to feel the opposite.. Well, my initial response is yes, sure, it can be within reason to feel this way. Have you been in therapy before? Is this somewhat new? That could be part of the reason. But either way; new or not, I think when are entering into a meeting that holds potential evaluation of deep things about you and your heart and soul, it can cause anyone to tremble. The soul can be anticipating some things could be shaken up here, and it can feel scary to look at these things and then change. Looking deep at our life can feel daunting and scary; so your response just might be regards to potential growth trying to happen. OR, is there something about the therapist you don't feel confident about? This too might be in play as a reason for your feelings... Maybe you lack confidence in that therapist ? Have you let your therapist know how you feel? That would be good to explore...I would like to encourage you to look at these ideas. Hope it helps. Let me know Kindly, keithkeithcounseling.com

Question 390: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 390: "Normal" can be an insidious word to use because it can undermine your sense of worth. It implies there's one particular way you should be behaving and can leave you feeling crappy and "abnormal" if you're not behaving according to that prescribed standard. Instead, what I'd recommend is to pay attention to your emotional experiences when you're attending therapy. Explore your feelings and thoughts without judgement and try to reflect and understand what's going on that's causing you anxiety. Once you figure out the underlying meaning of the anxiety, you can figure out a way to handle it and action steps to take to diminish it.

Question 391: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 391: Everyone has different experiences going to therapy. Being nervous can be a typical

emotion one might feel. Emotions are our body's way of telling us important information about ourselves. I would suggest talking openly in your sessions about this. That way you can process your thoughts and feelings with the guidance of your counselor. There are probably underlining emotions (fears or insecurities) that are being stirred up during your therapy sessions. Your counselor might suggest individual counseling depending on what you learn about your anxiety. In individual therapy you would have time to deal with your own stressors. As you address your issues, then you will have tools and skills that will be useful in addressing the couple relationship.

Question 392: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 392: I would be more concerned with how is this being addressed in therapy. Therapy can be a rewarding process, however often times we do not pay much attention to the messages being sent to our bodies. I believe in somatic therapy which deals with our mind & body connection. I would think it may not be a question of normal or abnormal however if it is impacting you then you must pay attention to that. It would be helpful to explore the feelings you're having with your therapist. It may be something that needs addressing to help alleviate those feelings or have a better understanding of why they are showing up when it is time for therapy.

Question 393: I've gone to a couple therapy sessions so far and still everytime I walk in I get nervous and shaky. Is this normal? Should I still be feeling like this?

Answer 393: It is totally normal - you have a lot riding on this and you're invested! Think about why you feel so shaky - is it something about the therapist or their style? If so, it would be a good idea to talk with them about it so you feel more at ease. In any case bringing up your feelings about therapy in therapy is totally appropriate and even necessary. Good luck!

Question 394: I'm 17 and I'm sick and tired of going back and forth. I'd like to stay at my mother's house. This problem has really affected me. I've had anxiety attacks and suicidal thoughts and self-harm in the past. Currently I'm going through anxiety and my thearapist is not available. How do I handle this?

Answer 394: Sounds like a lot is going on right now at such a young age. I'd start with discussing with mom your concerns and ideal situation. I'm unsure what prevents you from staying there, but whoever you are staying with, it should be brought to their attention. In regards to your anxiety attacks, deep breathing is always a benefits. I have a link you can use to help to do this online if you are interested. In addition, finding ways you usually cope with anxiety and what's worked before can help and if it isn't, exploring new way to calm you down can be beneficial. This is something you can speak with your therapist about going forward when they are available. In regards to feeling suicidal: I would call suicide prevention hotline (You can google them) if you truly feel the ideation is getting worse. They are professional agents who can speak with you about your ideation and help you through the process. Hope this helps.

Question 395: I'm 17 and I'm sick and tired of going back and forth. I'd like to stay at my mother's house. This problem has really affected me. I've had anxiety attacks and suicidal thoughts and self-harm in the past. Currently I'm going through anxiety and my thearapist is not available. How do I handle this?

Answer 395: At age 17, I think you are old enough to decide which parent you want to stay with full-time. I would gently and lovingly tell your father that you've decided to stay with your mother. You can offer to visit him regularly, if you'd like. Parents often have a hard time letting go and, especially in divorce situations, your dad might feel as though he's "lost the battle" if you go live with your mom. He might also feel he's lost you. If your dad is unrelenting and the situation unbearable, you can ask a judge to modify the custody agreement.

Question 396: I'm 17 and I'm sick and tired of going back and forth. I'd like to stay at my mother's house. This problem has really affected me. I've had anxiety attacks and suicidal thoughts and self-harm in the past. Currently I'm going through anxiety and my thearapist is not available. How do I handle this?

Answer 396: OK first things first. We have to think of your safety and take care of those thoughts of hurting yourself. Yes, this is a major problem for you and can cause anxiety and depression. You have the right to be sick and tired. Kids often are pawns in this marital problems that their parents have. I'm sorry that this is happening to you. I am not sure of your rights in the state you live in but as far as I know you as a 17 year old you have the right to stay where you want. So your'e going through an anxiety episode and your therapist is not available. If I'm the therapist we would have already set up a plan so that if you are in this situation you would know what to do. In the worst case scenario you would be able to contact me. But I would have given you several exercises to help reduce your anxiety. Staying with your mom

should be your choice. I know you probably don't want to hurt anyone's feelings but there are ways to ease the tension. Maybe with your permission and their agreement, we all could meet together for a session or two to ease your tensions and get over and through this hassle.

Question 397: I'm 17 and I'm sick and tired of going back and forth. I'd like to stay at my mother's house. This problem has really affected me. I've had anxiety attacks and suicidal thoughts and self-harm in the past. Currently I'm going through anxiety and my thearapist is not available. How do I handle this?

Answer 397: Have you told either of your parents that the current house rotation of where you stay, bothers you? Since each parent has an interest to be together with you, I imagine that to some degree, each cares how you feel. If these conversations are not getting your problem solved, then maybe your therapist can have a family session with your parents together and depending on the outcome, with you and each parent.

Question 398: I'm 17 and I'm sick and tired of going back and forth. I'd like to stay at my mother's house. This problem has really affected me. I've had anxiety attacks and suicidal thoughts and self-harm in the past. Currently I'm going through anxiety and my thearapist is not available. How do I handle this?

Answer 398: I am so sorry to hear you are going through this. Divorce can be so disruptive in a child's life. I'd really need a lot more information about your situation before I'd feel comfortable offering any advice or suggestions. There are so many variables, and not knowing the whole story, any advice could possibly make your situation worse. I do see some positives, though. One, you say you have a therapist. That's great! I hope you're able to talk to them about this soon. Still, they can't give you legal advice, and a lot of this situation may be dictated by the law. What your therapist can help with, though, is dealing with whatever situation you have to follow by law. If you can't change the situation, you at least need to learn how to cope with it better. Two, you're 17. When you're 18, you're legally an adult and will not be bound by any custody rules or visitation plans in place. Honestly, teenagers usually have a lot of say with the courts in custody arrangements. Since you didn't specify more on the situation, I have no idea what your specific situation is. Were your parents ever married? Are they separated or divorced? Was there ever a court hearing for custody? Not all couples have an official court order arrangement. All families are different, too. Was there abuse between your parents? Towards you by one of them? Does either of them have addiction issues, major health or mental health issues, or anything like that? You mentioned that you want to live with your mom, but didn't say why. Are you afraid to tell your dad you want to stay with your mom? Is mom the lenient and fun parent while dad is the more strict one, or is there something else going on? This isn't a decision that should be placed entirely on you, and it also isn't a decision that anyone else needs to make on your behalf without your input. But advice on what to do needs to come from the people who know more about your situation so they can help recommend the best thing for you. Whatever you do, hang in there! 18 will be here before you know it. Focus on that. Freedom. College. Plan for your future that YOU control, and focus on making it the best it can be. Do not let the anxiety and depression cloud your thoughts and make you do something irreversible.

Question 399: When I'm around people, I sometimes think someone has made a comment to me or asked me to do something. I will be focusing on something else and then randomly think I hear something about me. I never know if it was actually said.

Answer 399: Anxiety can absolutely make you think you heard something about you. When we are on high alert, we tend to look for threats and often the greatest threats we experience on a daily basis are social in nature. To some extent this is normal, for example, when people experience late onset deafness, they often will worry people are talking about them (and usually not good things) because our brains tend to jump to that. Of course, I'm not saying you are going deaf or anything, just giving an example. Counseling can help you work through this anxiety. It may also be helpful to reach out to a counselor to rule out if there may be other things going on. Sometimes things like paranoia can blend in with anxiety, which is a very distressing experience. But both are absolutely treatable. Wishing you the best!

Question 400: When I'm around people, I sometimes think someone has made a comment to me or asked me to do something. I will be focusing on something else and then randomly think I hear something about me. I never know if it was actually said.

Answer 400: It sounds like you are having difficulty knowing if people are saying things to you, or if you only thought someone was talking to you, and this is anxiety producing. It's understandable that it could be confusing and/or a bit scary to be unsure if people are speaking to you or not. It's hard to say exactly what is going on from just this description, but if you can work with a competent therapist, you may be

able to get more insight into what is happening, get clarity about your social interactions, and develop some ways to deal with the anxiety.

Question 401: I have these dreams of men, and they always seem to try to hurt me. It's gotten so bad that I first wake at 4:30, then 4:45, and finally stay awake by 6:00. I'm always the last one to fall asleep and the first to wake. I hate falling asleep. The longest I've went without sleep is three days.

Answer 401: That is awful! I am sure you are ready to start getting some rest. It's normal for us to wake a few times in the night, however, when we are dealing with high anxiety or stress, those times can turn into being up most night. Given that you are having these repeated dreams, I am wondering what might be going on in your life either now or in the past that could be triggering stress or maybe memories. It can help to draw the dream out in the morning or even to look for metaphor. In the long run, seeking counseling can help you sort all that out. In the meantime, self-soothing strategies may help you in the night when you wake and can't get back to sleep. This can be anything with your senses---getting a snack like tea and focusing on that taste, smelling something pleasant, listening to some relaxing music, looking through a magazine, taking a shower. Anything you can think of that might help you relax. If it involves needing to get up, that's okay! Getting out of bed can actually help you get out of that mind space and helps you associate your bed with relaxation/sleep vs anxiety making it more likely you will fall asleep once you lay down.

Question 402: I have these dreams of men, and they always seem to try to hurt me. It's gotten so bad that I first wake at 4:30, then 4:45, and finally stay awake by 6:00. I'm always the last one to fall asleep and the first to wake. I hate falling asleep. The longest I've went without sleep is three days.

Answer 402: The good news about your dreams is that your fears are right at the surface of your mind so you can study them and release some of the harm from the terrifying experiences you had which created these bad memories in the first place. The bad news is the feelings themselves are sickening. Probably a therapist would be very helpful for guiding you to unfold these uneasy feelings and their source. This type of deep work is easier with emotional support from someone. A therapist can give you this plus is knowledgeable about dynamics of someone having been emotionally harmed by another. Or, read a lot online and find out which articles resonate with your emotions. Luckily people are willing to express personal stories of recuperating a sense of peace and safety after being violated by someone.

Question 403: I have been with my boyfriend for more than a year. He recently got a new job and travels a lot. I'm not used to him being gone all the time. I feel as though he has forgotten about me because he does not talk with me as much and doesn't keep me up to date on everything that he does throughout the day, which he used to.

I feel lost, sad and unwanted. This is really a tough new challenge. I just want to break up with him, but I love him so much. I don't know why he is acting this way lately. I believe I have separation anxiety. Is there anything that I can do to help me cope with this while he is out of town?

Answer 403: Relationships at any amount of distance can be so hard! It makes sense that you are encountering more anxiety than usual given that major change in your relationship. And you're right that being separated from our partners can heighten our insecurities and worries about not only our relationship security but about our partner's interest. Have you talked with your boyfriend about this struggle you're feeling? It can be hard to have this kind of conversation without triggering a sense of blame and subsequent defensiveness in our partners, but it really is possible. If you have any concerns about being able to do this, then a session or two with a local counselor or therapist might be really helpful - and it really can be just about finding the way to share what you're feeling. As far as coping with anxiety, there are a lot of options but I highly recommend an app called Self-Help for Anxiety Management. There's so much good information in this app to help you learn to pay attention to what kinds of thoughts are helpful or unhelpful, and there are also lots of activities for calming down and decreasing the intensity of that anxiety. The best part is, it's free!

Question 404: I have been with my boyfriend for more than a year. He recently got a new job and travels a lot. I'm not used to him being gone all the time. I feel as though he has forgotten about me because he does not talk with me as much and doesn't keep me up to date on everything that he does throughout the day, which he used to.

I feel lost, sad and unwanted. This is really a tough new challenge. I just want to break up with him, but I love him so much. I don't know why he is acting this way lately. I believe I have separation anxiety. Is there anything that I can do to help me cope with this while he is out of town?

Answer 404: In a way, yes, you have separation anxiety. It's normal in a relationship for us to slow down a

bit with the attachment behaviours that establish and deepen love and connection. So, just because your boyfriend isn't talking as much or keeping you up-to-date doesn't necessarily mean what you fear it means...that he's forgotten about you or loves you less. It could mean quite the opposite...that he's focused on being successful in his new job and impressing you. He may think he's loving you more, but you feel loved less. You have two jobs to do here. The first is to manage your anxiety by "talking back" to the thoughts it puts into your head. It sounds like "It's normal to be insecure, but I have tons of evidence that he loves me and that I mean the world to him..." Find that evidence that helps you refute what anxiety is trying to claim. The second part of your job is to let him know what you need. You need more affection and connection during this period when he's away (more texts, phone calls, information). It's okay to want that, and I am sure he will be relieved to know exactly what he can do to help you feel secure and calm when he's away.

Question 405: I have been with my boyfriend for more than a year. He recently got a new job and travels a lot. I'm not used to him being gone all the time. I feel as though he has forgotten about me because he does not talk with me as much and doesn't keep me up to date on everything that he does throughout the day, which he used to.

I feel lost, sad and unwanted. This is really a tough new challenge. I just want to break up with him, but I love him so much. I don't know why he is acting this way lately. I believe I have separation anxiety. Is there anything that I can do to help me cope with this while he is out of town?

Answer 405: First step is to tell your boyfriend the reasons you feel upset. This way he has a chance to answer your questions as to why he doesn't keep in touch. His responses will guide your next steps. There is a difference between his unavailability due to a heavy workload or because he has less interest in the relationship. In order to work with his current behavior you first need to find out why it is happening.

Question 406: I have been with my boyfriend for more than a year. He recently got a new job and travels a lot. I'm not used to him being gone all the time. I feel as though he has forgotten about me because he does not talk with me as much and doesn't keep me up to date on everything that he does throughout the day, which he used to.

I feel lost, sad and unwanted. This is really a tough new challenge. I just want to break up with him, but I love him so much. I don't know why he is acting this way lately. I believe I have separation anxiety. Is there anything that I can do to help me cope with this while he is out of town?

Answer 406: Consider talking with your boyfriend about times that you may be able to talk together while he is away. This way, you have an idea when you'll be able to contact him. Does he recognize the feelings that you have while he is away? How do you feel when you are together with him and he is home? I'm also curious as to how the level of your anxiety (on a scale of 1 to 10, perhaps) changes during the parts of his trips. Maybe there are certain parts that are more or less related to anxiety for you. Perhaps you have less anxiety while working or involved in a specific activity, for example, spending time with friends. When you are both in the same area (when your boyfriend is not traveling), do you do some things independently with friends? Do you know what leads to your anxiety when he is away? I don't know whether it is a general feeling of wanting him to come back or anxiety that something specific will happen to you or him. Do you ever recall feeling this way in your past? If so, what was happening then? What do you have that makes you feel very safe and comfortable? Consider working with a mental health professional in the area. Perhaps it would be helpful for the two of you to meet with a therapist who specializes in couples to see what kind of relationship you want to have and what you can each do to contribute to that relationship. There could be things that you could both start or stop doing to help your relationship move in the direction where you would like it to go. As an example, perhaps you would like a text before your boyfriend goes to bed, no matter what time zone or time of day it is. Perhaps he would prefer a good morning text or call/voicemail from you.

Question 407: I panicked over a minor parking lot mistake. It was totally my fault, but due to another insurance issue, I left a note with an illegible phone number. Guilty over this, I got an envelope containing several hundred dollars. Unfortunately, by the time I returned, the other driver had seen my ersatz note and drove away. Since I cannot make this up to that individual, how do I atone for my cowardly act? I have been trying to do random acts of kindness in hopes that karma will somehow even out.

Answer 407: From your writing, you have already atoned for what you describe as "cowardly". Recognizing your action and trying to directly correct it, realizing your action was improper and demonstrating the willingness to take right action, are all examples of making things right. Since the actual driver is unavailable to consult as to their wishes on what they expect and feel would correct the matter,

you did the next best thing and considered the situation from the driver point of view.

Question 408: I panicked over a minor parking lot mistake. It was totally my fault, but due to another insurance issue, I left a note with an illegible phone number. Guilty over this, I got an envelope containing several hundred dollars. Unfortunately, by the time I returned, the other driver had seen my ersatz note and drove away. Since I cannot make this up to that individual, how do I atone for my cowardly act? I have been trying to do random acts of kindness in hopes that karma will somehow even out.

Answer 408: Thanks for sharing as it shows your humanity and that you have a sensitive conscience. In your example here I'd encourage you to always think, "safety first"; and never offer a stranger at the accident scene "...several hundred dollars". Why? Because it could go badly against you (i.e. extortion, robbed, or would this be considered a bribe). To the point, I'm reminded of Steps Eight and Nine in many 12-step programs regarding making amends. In your specific example since the injured unidentified party departed, and by your own admission you've been doing random acts of kindness, it seems to me you've acted in reasonable good faith fashion to make amends. Well done. I'm not a karma expert but as a therapist I would invite you to explore the deeper story behind your use of the words "cowardly", "guilty", and what it does for you to engage in "random acts of kindness". What a fascinating journey this could be for you. Best wishes.

Question 409: I've been having horrible anxiety for the last week. I can't sleep. I get a sense of doom, and it's hard to breathe. I feel like nothing I do makes it better.

Answer 409: Anxiety is usually a sign of a current problem to which familiar emotional patterns of feeling similarly upset, attach themselves. Try to understand more about who you are, what you like, feel uneasy about, especially your deeper emotions of being emotionally harmed or injured by meaningful people. Anxiety is best addressed indirectly by understanding and kindly accepting previous hurt and fears from long ago. Once you feel at ease with dynamics of past situations then the current anxiety will decrease. This is because you will have adjusted and found new ways of handling otherwise frightening and overwhelming interactions and involvements with others.

Question 410: When I get talked to by my dad or stepmom, or if I'm in trouble, I will begin to cry and not say what's wrong with me. When my dad or stepmom ask what is wrong, I never know the answers or the words to put together what is actually wrong with me.

Answer 410: Maybe you need more time to reflect and organize your thoughts. Try to figure out what would make you feel more relaxed about talking to your dad or stepmom. Also its possible you simply don't feel safe around either of them and so intuitively realize you're better off not talking with them about a delicate matter. Depending on whether you trust talking to dad and stepmom, you may simply wish to excuse yourself from speaking about yourself. There's no good reason to be heartfelt with people whom you don't feel are willing to accept or understand who you are.

Question 411: I just took a job that requires me to travel far away from home. My family and I really need this job.

People keep telling me I have "anxiety" and I'm terrified of having an anxiety attack on the road. This is all new to me. What can I do?

Answer 411: Anxiety can cause such a feeling of discomfort in our bodies that it can seem unbearable. The concern that I can hear in what you have written is that the thought of having some anxiety has now left you uncomfortable with any anxiety at all - and that can become a problem, indeed. As opposed to thinking about your anxiety as something much bigger than you, it could be helpful to start breaking it down. What are the things specifically that cause you anxiety about this new job? Is it being away from your family? If so, why? Once you start breaking down what causes you to feel anxiety into smaller "mouthfuls", then we are far better able to understand what has led to discomfort and start to problem solve the issue.

Question 412: I just took a job that requires me to travel far away from home. My family and I really need this job.

People keep telling me I have "anxiety" and I'm terrified of having an anxiety attack on the road. This is all new to me. What can I do?

Answer 412: First, congratulations on your new job. Apparently your employers think highly of you, since they hired you! You say that "people keep telling" you that you have "anxiety" - how do they know? Have you told others you are sometimes upset or nervous? Have you been treated for anxiety? Or is that a perception that others have that you haven't been able to counter? It's a new job, and it requires you to do new things, in new places, with new people. Being nervous is not just normal, it may actually help you be

on your toes and do a good job. Unless YOU think you have anxiety, do not let others predict your future. If you believe you are anxious, get in to see a therapist and address it. Anxiety is very treatable, and you don't have to suffer with it - but you do have to acknowledge it and work towards health. However.... If, in your experience, this is more a nervous energy than an anxiety issue, there are things you can do to address it: Make sure you take good care of yourself, especially in the first month or two of the new job. That means eating well, getting adequate rest, moving your body (walking, swimming, dancing, etc) every day, and staying in touch with friends and family who are positive and supportive. Below is an article I wrote that might give you more tips too. A quick way to combat stress Do you ever feel like your brain is "bouncy" and won't settle down? Your brain, that magnificent machine, is not much different than the brain that kept your ancestors alive in dangerous situations. Today, though you may not need to worry about a mountain lion having you for dinner, other stresses are perceived and processed just as the physical dangers your ancestors faced. That means a looming deadline or a fight with your partner creates the same "fight/flight/freeze" response that saved your ancestor way back in the day. If you "burned off" that adrenaline and cortisol cocktail by running or fighting off a predator, you would feel the relief and exhaustion but you would have also metabolized the stress chemicals that are meant to keep you alive. However, when there is no physical response to the stressor your body is "all wound up with no place to go". Over time this creates not only the "bouncy brain" feeling of distractibility and distress, but can manifest itself in physical ailments. It's impossible to avoid stress forever, but sometimes you just need a way to relieve the pressures of life for a moment. Here's a quick way to settle your brain into a feeling of rest instead of distress: Put one hand on your chest at collarbone level and one on your belly just under your naval. Now, take a slow deep breath filling your abdomen with air, just like you would fill a glass with water... from the bottom up. When you are full of air, pause for just a moment and really feel the fullness. Then slowly exhale, just like you would pour water out, from the top down. Pause again at "empty" and feel the relief of space. Repeat for 5-10 cycles. If you find yourself feeling stressed and distressed too often, and you are a California resident, let's talk! Book a complimentary 15 minute video consult here: abalancedapproach.com

Question 413: I just took a job that requires me to travel far away from home. My family and I really need this job.

People keep telling me I have "anxiety" and I'm terrified of having an anxiety attack on the road. This is all new to me. What can I do?

Answer 413: It's understandable to have anxiety when transitioning to a new job/career or any other major life change. Doing some mindfulness activities such as deep breathing exercises, grounding, or mindfulness meditation can help center and calm yourself in moments of anxiety when being away from your family. It may also be helpful to make a list of your concerns or fears about being away from your family. What are you afraid will happen while you are away? Once you've identified those fears you can challenge them and determine whether they are based on fact or your emotions.

Question 414: I just took a job that requires me to travel far away from home. My family and I really need this job.

People keep telling me I have "anxiety" and I'm terrified of having an anxiety attack on the road. This is all new to me. What can I do?

Answer 414: Hi, It is really good that you are working so hard to take care of your family. Anxiety can be so challenging, especially when new challenges have come up. It would be good to work through some of these issues you are experiencing, and examine your self care and support processes.

Question 415: I just took a job that requires me to travel far away from home. My family and I really need this job.

People keep telling me I have "anxiety" and I'm terrified of having an anxiety attack on the road. This is all new to me. What can I do?

Answer 415: Congratulations on your new job. Chances are, you accepted this opportunity knowing that sometimes, you feel heightened levels of anxiety while traveling (or at least, people are telling you this is true) Rather than working towards how to stop it from happening, it might make more sense to prepare for if it does: often, when we know how we might deal with a situation, the situation doesn't manifest. On a more broad scope, though, tools to minimize anxious feelings abound: there are apps (headspace or happify for example) therapy helps, and tools like yoga and meditation can help reduce anxious feelings too. Safe travels~

Question 416: I just took a job that requires me to travel far away from home. My family and I really need

this job.

People keep telling me I have "anxiety" and I'm terrified of having an anxiety attack on the road. This is all new to me. What can I do?

Answer 416: Anxiety or panic attacks can be very frightening. Here are a few "tools" you can use that will help in the short term: Keeping your mind occupied by listening to books on tape may help; Counting backwards from 100 in 7's; Naming cities that begin with each letter of the alphabet; Keeping some ice or an ice pack in a cooler beside you, which you may take out and hold in your hand or to your face; Soothing self-talk such as "This is uncomfortable, but I can handle it" or "I've been through this before and can make it through again". I recommend that you seek out a Therapist to help you with some long-term solutions to the anxiety. Additionally, learning to breathe into the abdomen and practicing this daily is another long-term solution. Yoga and meditation would be great!

Question 417: I just took a job that requires me to travel far away from home. My family and I really need this job.

People keep telling me I have "anxiety" and I'm terrified of having an anxiety attack on the road. This is all new to me. What can I do?

Answer 417: Bravo, on your success in securing a job and also for being proactive with your need. Starting a new job can be scary and having to travel away from your home and family can make it even more anxiety provoking. Do allow yourself to be anxious about this new journey, we can be hard on ourselves, think if it was a friend that was turning to you for help, what solutions would you have offered them, but also continue to seek to secure right support as well. Talking to your physician is always a good place to start; your physician can tell you if there are organic influences causing your anxiety that may be out of your control. Additionally, talking to close or compassionate family and friends is always good. It is important that you turn to supportive people at the time of emotional need, talking about our challenges can help break the cycle of anxiety at least momentarily. Remember, to further your success, it requires a healthy self, if you have supportive relationships relying on and turning to people who can be there without judgment is great. Healthy lifestyle like eating right, sleeping enough, and regular exercise also never fails to help improve overall emotional health. Additional self-care measures such as repeated relaxation practices can help you become more familiar with your nervous systems reactivity and you can implement strategies to ease anxiety in various situations as it demands. The more resources the better you will be equipped to manage challenges and concerns at the time notice. You can find a lot from the internet too, use your best judgment as what may not be appropriate for you there are some wonderful apps on most smartphones that can help you learn and practice grounding strategies to ease anxiety. If you have access to a therapy you find more specific strategies that would best fit your needs. Good luck, wish you a happy journey and much success.

Question 418: I just took a job that requires me to travel far away from home. My family and I really need this job.

People keep telling me I have "anxiety" and I'm terrified of having an anxiety attack on the road. This is all new to me. What can I do?

Answer 418: First of all, congratulations on your new role! Transitions can be challenging, and it sounds like you are experiencing a lot of change. This would be difficult for many people, and it seems that you have an added layer of challenge. I recommend visiting a therapist to determine the root cause of your anxiety and working to unravel those causes piece by piece. I know seeing a therapist can be challenging when traveling, and online counseling could be a good solution. In the meantime, here are a few of my favorite anxiety stopping strategies. 1. Grounding Exercises: When you feel your anxiety increasing, take a deep breath and begin things in your room (or where ever you are) that have things in common. For example, name all of the blue things that you can see. You can also do non-visual grounding exercises like naming all of the hte sports teams you can think of or all of the state capitals. This will get your mind off of your anxiety and connect you to space. 2. The pretzel: This is a seated pose that will stop any anxiety attack in its tracks. Start in a seated position and cross your dominate leg over your nondominant leg. Then, stretch your arms out in front of you with the back of your hands facing one another. Cross your arms in front of each other so that your palms are touching. Flip your arms into your body. You will end with your elbows by your side and your hands crossed under your chin. Close your eyes and take long breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth. This calming pose will help you get through even the toughest of panic episodes. 3. Bilateral stimulation and visualization: Start in a seated position with your hands placed on your knees. Tap each knee in an alternating pattern. Close your eyes

and begin visualizing a peaceful setting. The combination of bilateral stimulation and visualization will help calm your body and mind. I could go on and on, but these techniques should get you started. These techniques should help you manage anxiety in a pinch. Best of luck!

Question 419: I just took a job that requires me to travel far away from home. My family and I really need this job.

People keep telling me I have "anxiety" and I'm terrified of having an anxiety attack on the road. This is all new to me. What can I do?

Answer 419: It is ok to have anxiety. Please don't be anxious about being anxious. If you feel anxiety coming over you, then pull off the road to a safe place. Concentrate on centering yourself and to breathe slowly. Take some sips of water. Sit still. The anxiety should pass in about twenty minutes. If it does not pass, then continue calming yourself until you feel safe enough to drive to your hotel. You can always explain to your supervisor that you were taking care of a medical problem, because anxiety is a medical problem.

Question 420: I just took a job that requires me to travel far away from home. My family and I really need this job.

People keep telling me I have "anxiety" and I'm terrified of having an anxiety attack on the road. This is all new to me. What can I do?

Answer 420: Anxiety often occurs when big or unexpected changes come to our lives, like having new jobs, relocating, or assuming new roles. Notice if your anxiety feels like excitement, concerns, or fear. It seems like you are excited about your new job, but worried because OTHERS are telling you that you have anxiety. Let's notice how other's input is affecting your thoughts and maybe causing more anxiety that you may really have. If you are indeed experiencing anxiety, that does not mean that you will have panic attacks. But if you are experiencing panic attacks, or suffer them at some point, you could learn how to reduce them either with therapy or medication. You can learn how to process it depending what triggers it and channel it, in a useful way. For example, you could plan a schedule around your new job and be meticulous about it because you are worried about how your new job may affect your routine, or, you could feel overwhelmed with your schedule, focus on the feeling, but not do anything about it. Notice the difference? The key is in recognizing if you are anxious about something that you can change or have control over it, and take action if you do, and recognizing when you cannot control things and be OK with not being in control. I teach clients how to use meditation and cognitive reframing techniques to help calm anxiety symptoms. If you are interested in engaging in counseling or teletherapy you may contact me at 787-466-5478. I wish you success on your new journey!

Estoy preocupada por mi nuevo trabajo. La gente me dice que tengo ansiedad y estoy aterrorizada de tener un ataque de pánico en la carretera. Esto es nuevo para mí. ¿Que puedo hacer? La ansiedad ocurre comúnmente cuando llegan cambios grandes e inesperados en nuestras vidas, como tener un nuevo empleo, mudarse o asumir nuevos roles. Al parecer estás emocionada por tu nuevo trabajo, pero preocupada por que OTROS te dicen que tienes ansiedad. Notemos como la opinión de otros esta influenciando tus pensamientos y tal vez te puede estar causando más ansiedad de lo que realmente tienes. Si realmente estas pasando por un periodo de ansiedad, no es necesario que vayas a experimentar ataques de pánico. Pero si ya los haz experimentado puedes utilizar terapia o medicamentos para controlarlos. Nota si tu ansiedad se siente emocionante, preocupada o temerosa. Puedes aprender a procesar estos sentimientos dependiendo que pensamiento los causen y canalizar la ansiedad de manera productiva. Por ejemplo: te puedes enfocar en organizar una agenda porque te preocupa como tu nuevo empleo afectara tu rutina diaria. O te puedes sentir agobio respecto a cómo tu trabajo afecta tu rutina, y no hace nada más que preocuparte constantemente. ¿Notas la diferencia? La clave está en saber cuándo te preocupas por algo que puedes cambiar, y tomar acción; vs. cuando te preocupas por algo que no puedes cambiar y aceptar que no lo puedes cambiar. Le enseñé a mis pacientes a usar técnicas de meditación y re enfoque cognitivo para manejar síntomas de ansiedad y desorden de pánico. Si te interesa una cita de consejería o tele-terapia me puedes contactar al 787-466-5478. ¡Mucho éxito en tu nueva jornada!

Question 421: I just took a job that requires me to travel far away from home. My family and I really need this job.

People keep telling me I have "anxiety" and I'm terrified of having an anxiety attack on the road. This is all new to me. What can I do?

Answer 421: There are lots of things you can do, but first: Congratulations on your new job! Commuting long distances can be stressful, but there are some things you can do. First, make sure that your seating

arrangement in your car is comfortable. If you are driving long distances on a regular basis, you want to make sure that your body is in a comfortable position. Second, select some music or podcasts that work for you, rather than against you. Soothing music is good, as well as inspirational podcasts. Alternatively, listening to books can be a great way to spend the time, improve your mood, and find inspiration. Third, make sure that you have plenty of time for your commute. If the drive normally takes you 30 minutes, plan on 45 (or if it's 45 minutes, plan on an hour). This way you won't be rushed, can take your time, can focus on your driving, and if traffic is a bit backed up, you've got plenty of time to reach your destination. Finally, if you do find yourself being anxious in a way that impedes your driving, pull over to the side of the road, take some deep breaths, and sit with your feelings. Take a deep drink of water. Consider jotting your feelings down in a journal. If it's safe, get out of the car and walk around a bit, stretching your muscles and breathing in the air. But most of all, be kind to yourself. I wish you much success in your new job.

Question 422: I recently broke up with my boyfriend After being together for over 4 years. I truly believe I did the right thing, but somehow being single now has made me very needy and unsure of myself.

I am seeing someone casually and I am losing my mind with anxiety about how he feels about me and this need for validation.

How can I learn to be content and at peace with myself regardless of my career, relationship status, etc?

Answer 422: Hello. What you are experiencing is entirely reasonable for someone that is still trying to adjust to a new life and also leave behind a long term relationship. It sounds like you lost touch with who you were as a person and need to start exploring that side of you again. Spend time doing things that you have been putting off, or did not do because you were involved. Take the time to become one with yourself before you get into another serious relationship. Regaining self-confidence on yourself will help you with all other areas of life. It is time to make you a priority and to start focusing on your mental and physical well being. Get connected with your community and find things you would want to do that give you purpose and lift you. Before too long you will be in your way to being content and in total control of your mind and at peace. Best of luck. Mirella~

Question 423: I recently broke up with my boyfriend After being together for over 4 years. I truly believe I did the right thing, but somehow being single now has made me very needy and unsure of myself.

I am seeing someone casually and I am losing my mind with anxiety about how he feels about me and this need for validation.

How can I learn to be content and at peace with myself regardless of my career, relationship status, etc?

Answer 423: Moving on from a long term relationship can be difficult. Sometimes we can lose a sense of who we are because in a way we have become defined by the relationship itself. So, when we begin to move on and see other people, our sense of identity may be obscured. The tendency is to seek out validation to give us a feeling of worthiness. That it's ok to move on and be happy. This is a relatively normal reaction. It's important to treat yourself with kindness and compassion through this time in your life. Mindful self-compassion can be a great way to begin the process of getting that sense of who you are back and what you want in a relationship. I think it's important to look back, learn what you can from the previous relationship, and become a better person for it in the future. At the same time, taking the necessary time to nurture yourself on a mind, body, and spirit level. Self-compassion allows you to turn inward and accept all facets of who you are. It improves your capacity for love, vulnerability, emotional openness, social interconnectedness, and self-respect. My philosophy is holistic, collaborative, and accepting. The cornerstone of my treatment philosophy is mindfulness and other evidenced based integrative modalities. I work as your ally to help you cultivate abundant self-compassion in your life, so that you can have the types of relationships you want.

Question 424: I recently broke up with my boyfriend After being together for over 4 years. I truly believe I did the right thing, but somehow being single now has made me very needy and unsure of myself.

I am seeing someone casually and I am losing my mind with anxiety about how he feels about me and this need for validation.

How can I learn to be content and at peace with myself regardless of my career, relationship status, etc?

Answer 424: A break up, even one that you initiated, may deserve some time and space to allow it to be complete. There's a few ideas I'll throw out there and you can choose if they stick. One is to re-invest in the friendships you have by setting up regular coffee get-togethers for example. Two, get out in nature.

It's hard to ignore how grand and patient nature is, and it sometimes takes the pressure off what we should be and instead allows us to be. And the last one I'll throw out there is to invest your time and energy in a project or achievement you've wanted to do for a while, but that perhaps you didn't have the time to. Something related to a hobby such as sports or music, or related to your career. Something that is 'for' you. Life knocks us off balance at times, and that's ok. Self-questioning during these times can be a healthy endeavor. Should you follow any of the advice on this website, continue to be kind to yourself about what you're feeling, and curious about why you're feeling that way.

Question 425: I recently broke up with my boyfriend After being together for over 4 years. I truly believe I did the right thing, but somehow being single now has made me very needy and unsure of myself.

I am seeing someone casually and I am losing my mind with anxiety about how he feels about me and this need for validation.

How can I learn to be content and at peace with myself regardless of my career, relationship status, etc?

Answer 425: Possibly you haven't completed your phase of mourning the recently passed relationship and lifestyle which surrounded it. Relationship breakups mean a person's entire life goes through an adjustment since the relationship impacted all areas of your life. Give yourself some patience to restore yourself from the old relationship. When you feel whole again then more than likely you will lose some of the anxiety wondering what your new casual partner feels about you. And instead of wondering, you may simply decide to ask the person your question!

Question 426: I'm a teenager, and while I've never been to any kind of therapist, I noticed I experience several anxiety symptoms. I frequently find myself not going out and following my parent around the house. I can't go into stores (grocery stores specifically) on my own, and when I do, I have to be on the phone with my dad the whole time. I also forget things a lot.

Answer 426: Despite your anxiety you are highly attuned to your sense of well being and skillful in articulating the details of when anxiety takes over. Sometimes people who are anxious in specific real time situations are helped by talking themselves through the anxiety. Maybe you'd be able to distract yourself from the grocery store anxiety by telling yourself you're anxious and that you'll be ok, it's only a grocery store. The longer term way to dissolve anxiety is through self-acceptance, self-love, self-belief, basically all the areas of trusting yourself to handle situations. Anxiety is a fear of being overwhelmed by a circumstance or condition which ends badly for you. Often the person can very well handle the situation about which they're anxious. The problem is not trusting themselves enough to rely on their self knowledge.

Question 427: I'm a teenager, and while I've never been to any kind of therapist, I noticed I experience several anxiety symptoms. I frequently find myself not going out and following my parent around the house. I can't go into stores (grocery stores specifically) on my own, and when I do, I have to be on the phone with my dad the whole time. I also forget things a lot.

Answer 427: With the way you described your anxiety, it sounds like you have different types of anxiety. I'm not sure whether you have anxiety of public places, large crowds, being alone (sometimes called separation anxiety), or some combination thereof. One thing that would be helpful would be to track your anxiety and see how anxious you are (on a scale of 1 to 10) in different situations. Also, if you know what leads up to your anxiety, it would be good to know this as well so you can look for patterns. As for forgetting things, you could be anxious because you are forgetting things or you could be forgetting things because you are anxious. When you are having anxiety, certain parts of your brain are overactive because you are in a kind of protective mode. It's also possible that forgetting things and anxiety are not related. Something else to try would be to notice where you feel your anxiety in your body and put your hand there is a way of giving yourself comfort. Another thing about anxiety is that having anxiety can lead to more worry about having more anxiety. One thing that helps for some people is to go to the regular primary care doctor to make sure that there are no physical problems (just for the regular physical) so they know that there are no physical problems and that the anxiety will lessen in a few minutes. Also, if you are able to notice your feet on the floor or your hips in the chair, this is helping you to be mindful of your body and connecting you to your surroundings. During this in combination with naming your emotions can be soothing as well. For example, in the grocery store, if you are feeling anxious, you could say to yourself "I'm anxious right now and I'm okay" while gently shifting your weight from one foot to the other. No one around you would notice what you were doing and the motion may be soothing to you. Anxiety can have a lot of different causes and things that trigger it. If it is difficult for you to work it out

on your own (which is very common), consider talking with a local therapist so you can have more specific ideas. Also consider making a list of people who you trust and what it is about them that makes you feel comfortable.

Question 428: I am a really shy person. I'm currently in a graduate program which requires lots of presentations, but they always make me feel stressed out and less confident. How can I get more confident?

Answer 428: Wow, congratulations on being in a masters program. You are in a unique place. So few have reached that level. You should give yourself a pat on the back. Confidence is not something that comes naturally. But can and does come with practice. Having gone through two masters programs I can sympathize with your dilemma. So how is the stress affecting you? Is it serious enough to stop you from presenting or is it just "butterflies"? There are many ways of dealing with the anxiety and stress. Much depends on how serious the stress is. So here are a few ideas: 1. Practice in front of a mirror. Sounds strange but the practice helps. 2. Ask some friends to listen to your presentations. Not so much for their input as to just get used to presenting. 3. Focus on the material you are presenting. The subject matter is what you want to get across. Step away from your nerves and get into the facts you want to present. Let the material you present be the focus. 4. Remember everyone else is just as nervous as you. Share your fears with some of your classmates and gain support from them. Focus on a friendly face during the presentation. Be a support to them in return. 5. "Fake it, till you make it". Yes it sounds blunt. But sometimes that's what it takes. Even if you feel like it, you won't die. So much more can be discussed with a competent counselor. Take the time to let a professional help you work through this. Again you have come a long way to be in a graduate program. Congratulations you have done great work so far. It's just one step at a time, take the steps.

Question 429: I am a really shy person. I'm currently in a graduate program which requires lots of presentations, but they always make me feel stressed out and less confident. How can I get more confident?

Answer 429: A good way to start is the language or "self talk" that is happening inside your mind. Looking at your question, when it is said that the presentations "make me feel stress" you are giving the responsibility of the stress to the presentations and taking that away from your self. The presentations cannot give or take away your stress, that's something only you can do and you can do it! What language can you change in your self talk? For example, are you saying "I can't speak in front of an audience! I'll fail?" That sounds a lot different than "I studied my butt off and if I practice speaking out loud, I can ace this presentation!" Although this is a short answer, I do believe that counseling will help you overcome these stressful feelings and bring out your inner confidence.

Question 430: I am a really shy person. I'm currently in a graduate program which requires lots of presentations, but they always make me feel stressed out and less confident. How can I get more confident?

Answer 430: First of all, way to go in stretching yourself out of your comfort zone! You are sure to grow through all of this practice presenting to your peers, and that in itself will help to grow your confidence over time. In the meantime, do whatever you can to help yourself feel prepared for each presentation. Do your work ahead of time so that you feel well-informed on your topic, and then spend the days leading up to your presentation practicing. Do your presentation in the mirror, while you are driving (if it won't distract you from the road), and practice in front of a friend. On the day of the presentation, eat a balanced meal, get a pep talk from a supportive friend, use deep breathing to keep your body calm, and remind yourself that you are prepared. You got this!

Question 431: I am a really shy person. I'm currently in a graduate program which requires lots of presentations, but they always make me feel stressed out and less confident. How can I get more confident?

Answer 431: Have you tried rehearsing to yourself or a trusted friend what you will present to the class?

The more confident you feel in a safe space, the more chance there will be of making the same presentation to a larger group. Giving presentations is not necessarily a difficulty with communication. It has more to do with performance than expressing yourself clearly. Practice, practice, and practice, until you see yourself improve in how you present. Also, keep in mind that whatever anxiety you may feel about making a mistake, the audience is almost always much more forgiving than the person who feels anxious. Anxiety heightens fear, so whatever concerns you have, check if they are growing from anxiety instead of a realistic assessment of your abilities or audience receptivity. Good luck!

Question 432: I am a really shy person. I'm currently in a graduate program which requires lots of presentations, but they always make me feel stressed out and less confident. How can I get more confident?

Answer 432: I can offer you hypnosis for confidence in presentations, via Skype, if you're in Cali.

Question 433: I start counseling/therapy in a few days (I'm freaking out) but my main fear is that I'll cry and embarrass myself, is it something to worry about?

Answer 433: Oh, crying in therapy is very normal! I have a stack of kleenex boxes in my office. Cry away, therapist are very used to it:) First time being in therapy is scary, but you'll soon know if you are a good match.

Question 434: I start counseling/therapy in a few days (I'm freaking out) but my main fear is that I'll cry and embarrass myself, is it something to worry about?

Answer 434: People do cry in therapy sometimes, but it's not at all necessary to cry in order for most kinds of therapy to be helpful. When you start counseling you don't yet know your counselor very well, so it's normal to keep your feelings in check until you feel comfortable and a bit more relaxed with your counselor and with the situation. Sometimes, though, there are emotions that have been waiting and waiting to finally find someone who will listen with a kind ear. If you feel safe right away in the situation with your counselor, you might just cry in spite of your fears about it. Your therapist is used to people expressing how they feel and will keep strict confidentiality, so even though it's embarrassing, finally experiencing someone truly listening with empathy and kindness may just be worth it. It's okay too to let your counselor know right at the beginning that you're kind of freaked out about getting too emotional in front of another person.

Question 435: I start counseling/therapy in a few days (I'm freaking out) but my main fear is that I'll cry and embarrass myself, is it something to worry about?

Answer 435: Crying is a natural process when you talk about upsetting things especially in therapy when you are opening up and being so vulnerable. I suggest that you consider how you would feel/respond to someone that was confiding to you and they began to cry. If you felt concerned, supportive and empathetic then you know exactly how us therapists feel when our clients are emotional in sessions. I suggest that you think of times where you have cried and how you felt at that time in public and what would have helped to make you feel less uncomfortable during your tears. I think of crying like any other natural reaction of our body such as sneezing, laughing, coughing. You can't help but do those things and most people won't really judge negatively if you do it in public. Similarly, crying is our body's reaction when we are emotional whether it is tears of joy, from a hilarious joke or from being upset. If you are very uncomfortable about crying but willing to start therapy perhaps you can ask the therapist if you can turn your chair around if you begin crying. This way you are not facing them and can self soothe without worrying about how you physically look at that time. I wish you luck and you should be proud of yourself for starting therapy and I wish you a wonderful journey on this important path that you are embarking on.

Question 436: I start counseling/therapy in a few days (I'm freaking out) but my main fear is that I'll cry and embarrass myself, is it something to worry about?

Answer 436: It is not uncommon to be a bit nervous meeting your therapist (or another person) for the first time. Your therapist understands that calling and getting an appointment was a big step for you and will do their best to put you at ease. Providing a safe environment for our clients includes not judging them and being comfortable with the information and emotions that they share with us. It is ok to cry and to trust that the therapist will honor this as part of your process.

Question 437: I start counseling/therapy in a few days (I'm freaking out) but my main fear is that I'll cry and embarrass myself, is it something to worry about?

Answer 437: Yes, if crying is how you are expressing an emotion, then not only would it be normal, but hopefully encouraged, because it's an important part of therapy to have a safe space to express your emotions. We might encourage you to put words to the tears as well, to help you expand on your experience and begin to make more sense of it. As a therapist, our job is help you open up and feel comfortable enough doing so. I sincerely hope no therapist would ever shame you for whatever experience you are having in the room.

Question 438: I start counseling/therapy in a few days (I'm freaking out) but my main fear is that I'll cry and embarrass myself, is it something to worry about?

Answer 438: It is absolutely normal to cry in therapy. I can understand wanting to keep everything together and put your best foot forward with everyone you come into contact with, but it can be such a

powerful experience to cry with somebody that can hear you and accept you. It's so brave of you to go and share yourself with your counselor! I hope you will keep being brave as you begin healing.

Question 439: I start counseling/therapy in a few days (I'm freaking out) but my main fear is that I'll cry and embarrass myself, is it something to worry about?

Answer 439: When talking about difficult issues, it is very normal to cry. Crying is a natural way for us to cope with the sadness that we experience in life. When confronting some of these things in a counseling session, tears just seem to come naturally. Every Counselor should be well equipped to handle that level of emotion, and you would be far from the first to cry when talking with a Counselor.

Question 440: I start counseling/therapy in a few days (I'm freaking out) but my main fear is that I'll cry and embarrass myself, is it something to worry about?

Answer 440: Hi there ! As someone who has practiced as a clinical psychologist for 25 years , I would say that crying is NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT AT ALL ! Almost every single person I have worked with has cried at one point or another. Starting therapy takes a lot of courage; when you work with a therapist ,once you feel safe , you talk about a lot of very private and potentially emotional things that you may have never discussed with anyone before. I have seen people cry with sadness , cry with relief at releasing painful things they have held onto for a long time, cry because they feel so relieved that they finally feel heard. I myself have sometimes cried with clients because some things they talk about are so profoundly moving. I can assure you that most , if not all , therapists expect clients to cry and there is nothing to be embarrassed about. Crying can be very cathartic and can allow us to release a lot of painful feelings we have been stuffing down. Crying is often a sign that you are really working things through and getting in touch with feelings that you need to get in touch with in order to heal .So , to summarize , don't worry at all about crying! It will probably feel uncomfortable at first , but I promise you , you will not be judged for crying in therapy. And it will be less embarrassing once it happens a time or two and you are assured that your therapist will be there for you and won't judge you !Good luck !!

Question 441: I start counseling/therapy in a few days (I'm freaking out) but my main fear is that I'll cry and embarrass myself, is it something to worry about?

Answer 441: Lots of people do cry in session, but your therapist won't be uneasy with this. Crying is a natural response and it also releases toxins, so some might say it's necessary! Remember that you can be in charge of what you talk about in your session and if there's something that feels too uncomfortable, just say, "I'm not ready to talk about that." Your counselor wants you to feel at ease and will probably not push you right away to a very uncomfortable place. As you get to know your therapist, you will feel more relaxed and even not worry so much about how you appear to them. It's normal to be anxious going into a new situation especially when you might not feel in control of uncomfortable emotions. Don't give up, go and put your best effort in! Hope that helps, Allison

Question 442: I start counseling/therapy in a few days (I'm freaking out) but my main fear is that I'll cry and embarrass myself, is it something to worry about?

Answer 442: Many people cry during their therapy sessions. Actually most people cry in their therapist's office. I tell my clients that it's safe to cry in my office and crying isn't a sign of weakness. It's a normal human response to pain. People actually do more harm to themselves by trying not to cry than by crying. Crying is very cleansing and an important part of the healing process for many people.

Question 443: I start counseling/therapy in a few days (I'm freaking out) but my main fear is that I'll cry and embarrass myself, is it something to worry about?

Answer 443: Please feel free to cry during therapy if you suddenly feel painful emotions arising when you describe some of your unsatisfying and unfulfilling relationships and situations. Crying when realizing the emotional hurt and unfairness between you and someone, clears you for new ways of handling interactions. As a therapist, I always have a box of tissues on the table next to the couch where people who utilize my therapy, sit. I hope you will soon discover that once your tears unlock your awareness of harmful relationships in your life, you will quickly see the freedom to establish new and happier patterns of relating. Have a good therapy!

Question 444: I start counseling/therapy in a few days (I'm freaking out) but my main fear is that I'll cry and embarrass myself, is it something to worry about?

Answer 444: Please do not worry about crying. People cry, laugh, rage, rant, and talk during counseling sessions. Part of the therapy process is to look at your feelings, and to feel what you are actually feeling (instead of what you think you should feel). So if you need to cry, that's ok. If you feel embarrassed because you cried, or if you feel anxious that you might cry, well those feelings are ok as well. Your

counselor can help you manage your feelings so that you can attain your goals, and your counseling session is the perfect place for that.

Question 445: I feel too scared to meet people I don't know - even relatives. I don't ever raise my hand or talk in school. I feel like no one understands. How can I handle this?

Answer 445: Social Anxiety is scary. You don't feel safe in relationships and prefer to isolate yourself from the outside world. Is it something you can talk to your parents about? A school counselor could help you. The counselor could possibly order an evaluation to determine how to help. Build your self confidence - Start slow with your family and identify a subject you are familiar with and add to a general conversation. It's important to start finding things in common with others. You don't need to carry the conversations, just add a phrase or two. Have an exit strategy if you get too uncomfortable. Keep notes of what worked and what didn't work so you'll be prepared for your next opportunity. Carpe Diem!

Question 446: I feel too scared to meet people I don't know - even relatives. I don't ever raise my hand or talk in school. I feel like no one understands. How can I handle this?

Answer 446: It certainly sounds like you have some anxiety. Before deciding whether it was social anxiety or a more general type of anxiety, I would wonder what it is that you think will result from you raising your hand or talking to someone you don't know. Here is some information on social anxiety: <https://socialanxietyinstitute.org/what-is-social-anxiety/> I would recommend talking to a local mental health professional. It sounds like your anxiety is affecting your daily life and there are lots of strategies that may help to lessen that. Thanks for being brave to post here.

Question 447: I feel too scared to meet people I don't know - even relatives. I don't ever raise my hand or talk in school. I feel like no one understands. How can I handle this?

Answer 447: Congratulations on your courage to ask this question! This shows you are willing to engage with other people, just not in all situations, especially the in person ones. Start by "meeting" yourself. Reflect as thoroughly as possible as to what you imagine will be the outcome of meeting others or of speaking up during a class. Some people are afraid of being criticized or judged by other people, or do this to themselves inwardly. If you are judging or criticizing yourself to be less worthy of having opinions or views or of being who you are, than others, then the thought of actually placing yourself in this situation, would feel intolerable. One way to move out from this position of feeling less than others, is to recognize that these feelings are inside of you. Then it is possible to know at least on an intellectual level that it is not true that any one person is superior to another. All the people whom you are afraid to meet, also have their own insecurities. We are all equal in worth and in having blindspots about ourselves. Also, it is possible that you are naturally shy and may be expecting more from yourself than is reasonable, in terms of a standard about meeting others. You may have a few fears of being judged unfairly, you may also simply not enjoy being around people very much. Be aware to not push yourself beyond your natural limits. Overcoming fears of being judged is different than forcing yourself to do what is against your basic nature.

Question 448: I'm a male in my early 20s. Lately, my paranoia about being around kids is causing me too breathe heavy and sweat a lot. I then start to act weird because I'm trying to fight my paranoia. This leads to people starring at me because they don't know that I'm suffering from panic attacks and paranoia. They just notice me acting scared around kids and they think I'm a threat because of it. I'm not a pervert or predator. I would never hurt a kid. I like kids and don't know why I'm so scared to be around them. I don't understand why I feel like this. Am I a bad person? How do I make this stop?

Answer 448: In our practice, many people we see have unwanted thoughts of doing harm to children - physically or sexually. As you said, these are intrusive and unwanted thoughts - not genuine desires to harm them. This is a form of OCD we often call Harm or Pedophilic OCD. What you are describing here as "paranoia" sounds similar to this, and is so demoralizing because you are dealing both with the distress of these unwanted thoughts and feelings, as well as the fear and uncertainty about your own character as a good person. If this is really what is going on (further assessment by the right professional would determine this), the current gold standard approach to addressing OCD is Exposure with Response Prevention - in this case, confronting the feared situations, thoughts or images on purpose, rather than avoiding them, until they lose the fear and shame associated with them.

Question 449: I'm a male in my early 20s. Lately, my paranoia about being around kids is causing me too breathe heavy and sweat a lot. I then start to act weird because I'm trying to fight my paranoia. This leads to people starring at me because they don't know that I'm suffering from panic attacks and paranoia. They just notice me acting scared around kids and they think I'm a threat because of it. I'm not a pervert or

predator. I would never hurt a kid. I like kids and don't know why I'm so scared to be around them. I don't understand why I feel like this. Am I a bad person? How do I make this stop?

Answer 449: Your question is written in a very sincere tone. This, together with the fact of searching for self-understanding, sound more like someone who is unsure and puzzled, not someone who is "bad". What was your own childhood like? The sensations you describe feeling sometimes occur in people who are reminded of very deep hurts from during their own childhood. Is it possible what you're feeling is from being reminded of great distress you lived through when you were at a similar age as the kids around whom you feel this sudden and great paranoia and fear?

Question 450: I've known him for about six years. We've dated off and on. I hadn't seen him in close to three years but recently started seeing him again. I really want this to last this time. I stayed the night. Do I text, call, or make contact first, the same day of the morning I left his house?

Answer 450: It is possible your question reflects some insecurity about whether or not either or you would like this relationship to continue. Otherwise, the answer to your question would appear naturally. If you genuinely feel close enough to this person to sleep with him, then who texts whom first, wouldn't really matter too much. Try to understand within yourself whether you feel truly interested in this person as much as you would like to feel toward someone.

Question 451: I've known him for about six years. We've dated off and on. I hadn't seen him in close to three years but recently started seeing him again. I really want this to last this time. I stayed the night. Do I text, call, or make contact first, the same day of the morning I left his house?

Answer 451: I don't see why you can't call, text, or make contact first. It would be up to him to reply when he can and wants to, but I don't know why you couldn't initiate contact. One thing to consider as you get to know each other better is having conversations about conversations. For example, you could say "I'd like to call or text you more often, but I'm concerned about _____ (listing what you are most worried about)." Then he can discuss his reaction and you can have a dialogue about it.

Question 452: Example would be homecoming? I was at my high school's home football game on Friday, and I left because I felt uncomfortable with all the people there and I just wanted to be by myself. Why is that?

Answer 452: Hi! I'm Amelia. Oh, that is so frustrating! Have you ever heard of social anxiety? Sounds like you may be suffering from it. Here is a link to a quiz... <https://www.psychom.net/social-anxiety-test/>. Besides being a therapist, I am a Mom to 10 kids. A couple of my kids are very uncomfortable with crowds and become very anxious. Find yourself a therapist who can assess you and spend time with you to address these issues and to help you learn tools to help you navigate these emotions. I am wishing you the best!

Question 453: I am a female and in my early teens. I don't want to feel afraid of people. When I meet someone, I know that they are okay, but I still feel afraid.

Answer 453: Maybe the problem is learning to trust yourself to not be afraid other people! Reflect on what you believe would increase your trust of believing your own judgement on whom to trust. If you've had any type of violation during your growing up years or witnessed someone in your family be violated, emotionally, physically or through some terrible accident or incident, then you may hesitate to believe other people are safe and not to be feared. Give yourself plenty of time and reassurance that as long as you are making sincere effort to increase your comfort around other people, eventually you will succeed.

Question 454: My son was diagnosed with autism a few years ago and I stopped working so that I could take care of him. I also was dealing with an abusive relationship (mentally, physically, and emotionally). Now I live like a recluse and I always feel nervous around people.

How can I feel more comfortable around other people?

Answer 454: There's a lot of layers there to your situation, and I'm focusing on two layers that may be contributing to your feelings of discomfort around others. One layer is the daunting news that your son has autism. Many parents can feel overwhelmed and distraught with this diagnosis. The vast array of treatments available is daunting in and of itself at times to wrap one's head around. Taking time to reflect or seek out therapy regarding how this diagnosis has impacted you may be helpful. Some parents feel their individual identity gets lost in the diagnosis because they have dropped everything to help their child, and others may experience guilt. If either of these or other feelings come to the forefront for you, it may be worth working through them with a therapist. A support group list is available through www.autismspeaks.org and may help connect you with others raising children with autism. A second layer is the abusive relationship you were involved in. The trauma you experienced in this relationship may have a very meaningful impact on your ability to trust and to be intimate with others. Engaging with a

therapist can help facilitate the healing process, as well as paving the way for more comfortable and trusting relationships.

Question 455: My son was diagnosed with autism a few years ago and I stopped working so that I could take care of him. I also was dealing with an abusive relationship (mentally, physically, and emotionally). Now I live like a recluse and I always feel nervous around people.

How can I feel more comfortable around other people?

Answer 455: It might be helpful to have a good understanding of the "why" in terms of feeling nervous around people, or the difficulty in developing more comfort. If your discomfort is somehow related to your son's diagnosis or your lack of employment, or an abusive relationship you were in and maybe embarrassed about, that is important to understand, and get clarity around. When we can understand on a deep level what is happening for us (i.e., where does fear come into this, and what's it about) we can give ourselves empathy. Everyone struggles in some aspect, so to not necessarily think of yourself as pathological is a first step. Sometimes being around people can trigger an anxiety related to being "good enough" that goes back a ways in our history. If any of the above is true, it would need acknowledgement and care from you, as opposed to shaming that experience (in the hopes it would just go away), because this experience is very real for you.

Question 456: My son was diagnosed with autism a few years ago and I stopped working so that I could take care of him. I also was dealing with an abusive relationship (mentally, physically, and emotionally). Now I live like a recluse and I always feel nervous around people.

How can I feel more comfortable around other people?

Answer 456: I'd wonder first if you were still in the same home and neighborhood where you raised your son and experienced the abuse? In many ways, we react to our environments - and if you're still surrounded by neighbors who didn't reach out when they heard your ex yelling or offer assistance and resources when your son acted differently than his peers, it might make sense that you're more timid around folks. It might also be worth thinking about where your bar is set: do you want to be as comfortable around people as you were before your recent circumstances? Or find your new normal, and connect only with people who raise you up and bolster your self-esteem? You have the right to be both cautious (if you're still surrounded by the same folks and environment) and discerning - only connecting with people who will be supportive. All the best~

Question 457: My son was diagnosed with autism a few years ago and I stopped working so that I could take care of him. I also was dealing with an abusive relationship (mentally, physically, and emotionally). Now I live like a recluse and I always feel nervous around people.

How can I feel more comfortable around other people?

Answer 457: It sounds like you have taken on a caretaker role for a while as well as experienced some pretty severe interpersonal trauma. It makes sense that you would feel nervous around people. Working through the trauma of an abusive relationship in itself can be a difficult process. And then to add on the caretaker part can make things even more difficult. First off, you may want to seek support to work through what you have experienced. Many cities offer support with survivors of domestic violence and there is a hotline to help with this 888-724-7240 as well as online resources. Processing the isolation of this relationship as well as working with your son can help to overcome the anxiety related to others.

Accessing autism support networks may be of support as well. Other parents that will understand your experiences are a good and tend to be safer place to start in attempting to connect to others. Very importantly, go slow and be kind to yourself as you begin to adapt to a new life of allowing others to care for you as you so clearly have for others.

Question 458: My son was diagnosed with autism a few years ago and I stopped working so that I could take care of him. I also was dealing with an abusive relationship (mentally, physically, and emotionally). Now I live like a recluse and I always feel nervous around people.

How can I feel more comfortable around other people?

Answer 458: I would look at getting engaged with a support network of individuals who may also have autistic children. They will understand some of the things that you are experiencing at home and you may also find someone who feels that same way as you. If you have not sought professional counseling for the abusive relationship I would seek out a therapist who can help you process through it so you do not repeat similar choices in your next relationship.

Question 459: My son was diagnosed with autism a few years ago and I stopped working so that I could take care of him. I also was dealing with an abusive relationship (mentally, physically, and emotionally).

Now I live like a recluse and I always feel nervous around people.

How can I feel more comfortable around other people?

Answer 459: Probably a good portion of living like a recluse was necessary so you had time to rest and recuperate from so much major adjustment in your life. Have you told some of the people in your life about the many changes you've been through? It is possible people sense something different about you and aren't sure whether to ask or not ask questions. Also, understand what type of qualities you'd like to offer and receive in a friendship. Given that raising a kid who has autism takes a lot of energy and time, the way you socialize will change. Start with one person whom you're pretty sure would welcome you and whom you would gain by bringing them into your life. As a result of how this interaction goes, how you decide to spend your time together, what you'll discuss, you will know more about yourself and what you require to feel good around other people. Then, you can consider if you're ready to add others into your world.

Question 460: Sometimes, I'm fine and can go out or meet people, but other days, my heart races and words physically cannot come out of my mouth. I've always thought it was normal and I was just nervous, but the other day, it took me almost 30 minutes of sitting in my car to find the courage to enter Target by myself.

Answer 460: It is possible that you could have or be developing an anxiety disorder. There isn't really enough information provided here to suggest a particular disorder, but it might be worth meeting with a counselor or therapist to do a formal assessment. Some of the questions they might ask could be what other kinds of physical symptoms you experience, how frequently these physical symptoms happen, what's going on for you when they tend to happen, and how frequently/intensely you find yourself worrying in general. Anxiety itself is a really natural thing - it's just when it starts interfering with your ability to "do life" the way you want that we start to consider potential disorders. It might be that for the most part, the anxiety you feel is normal and you simply have some triggers that intensify it more than usual.

Working on your own or with the support of a counselor/therapist to both address those triggers at the root and also to develop ways of managing the actual anxiety symptoms. This two-fold approach can be really helpful for not letting anxiety keep you from engaging in life the way you'd like.

Question 461: Sometimes, I'm fine and can go out or meet people, but other days, my heart races and words physically cannot come out of my mouth. I've always thought it was normal and I was just nervous, but the other day, it took me almost 30 minutes of sitting in my car to find the courage to enter Target by myself.

Answer 461: These types of symptoms can be very disruptive to life! Anxiety often presents in two key ways: 1) physical symptoms such as: racing heart rate, sweaty palms, dry mouth, shaking or trembling or nausea - often these physical symptoms are categorized as a Panic Attack. 2) mentally anxiety presents itself as worry. Worry that spirals out of control, worry that disrupts your life and concentration. Worry that keeps from being present in your life. Anxiety when it begins to spiral out of control either with disruptive mental or physical symptoms, needs to be addressed formally. I urge you to see a counselor and/or a psychiatrist soon to begin to address these issues. Good Luck, Sitka Stueve, LCSW

Question 462: Sometimes, I'm fine and can go out or meet people, but other days, my heart races and words physically cannot come out of my mouth. I've always thought it was normal and I was just nervous, but the other day, it took me almost 30 minutes of sitting in my car to find the courage to enter Target by myself.

Answer 462: Feelings of anxiety can be scary and sometimes we're not aware of the triggers that lead up to moments of anxiety, i. e., heart racing, sweaty palms, sweating, shortness of breath. It's important to realize that in moments of anxiety our body & mind are experiencing a reaction from our primal or reptilian brain that is signaling the flight or fight response within us, which kicks the hypothalamus into action flooding our body with chemicals, like adrenaline or cortisol. So, one way to work with anxiety is to find out what the triggers are that lead to anxiety, such as fear, stress, negative thought patterns, not enough food or sleep. Keeping a daily journal can help you track the patterns and triggers and once you identify the triggers you can ameliorate them by learning new skills & techniques and by reducing stress and getting enough sleep. One quick way to reduce anxiety is by taking deeper breathes, sometimes this is called belly breathing. When you breath in make sure your belly rises and expands and as you breath out the belly deflates. Many of us do shallow breathing up in our chest which does not allow for a full breath, and getting a full breath is so important as a tool to help relax us in times of stress & anxiety .

Question 463: Sometimes, I'm fine and can go out or meet people, but other days, my heart races and

words physically cannot come out of my mouth. I've always thought it was normal and I was just nervous, but the other day, it took me almost 30 minutes of sitting in my car to find the courage to enter Target by myself.

Answer 463: I would suggest keeping a log of those days when you are having a hard time. Items to write would be what were you doing before you felt this way, did you eat and what, what time of day is it, how much sleep did you get that night, etc... This can help you identify any triggers. Further assessment can be made by a health care professional. It does sound like you are experiencing some symptoms of anxiety.

Question 464: Sometimes, I'm fine and can go out or meet people, but other days, my heart races and words physically cannot come out of my mouth. I've always thought it was normal and I was just nervous, but the other day, it took me almost 30 minutes of sitting in my car to find the courage to enter Target by myself.

Answer 464: Yes, it seems like you may have a type of anxiety: but considering that it is intermittent, it may be a good idea to talk to a therapist and explore what triggers the anxiety. Different types of anxiety are caused by different scenarios, memories, or stressors. Once you identify what triggers the anxiety, you may be able to identify the coping mechanism that will help you handle your symptoms. ¿Tengo algún tipo de ansiedad? A veces estoy bien, puedo salir a reunirme con personas, pero otros días, mi corazón se acelera y las palabras no salen de mi boca. Siempre pensé que era normal y que solo estaba nervioso, pero el otro día, me tomo casi 30 minutos encontrar el valor para salir del carro y entrar a Target. Si parece que tienes un tipo de ansiedad, y considerando que es intermitente, puede ser útil hablar con un consejero para explorar su causa. Hay diferentes tipos de ansiedad que son causados por diferentes estímulos, memorias y escenarios. Ya que logres identificar que causa tu ansiedad, entonces podrás aprender mecanismos de defensa que te ayuden a controlar la ansiedad.

Question 465: Sometimes, I'm fine and can go out or meet people, but other days, my heart races and words physically cannot come out of my mouth. I've always thought it was normal and I was just nervous, but the other day, it took me almost 30 minutes of sitting in my car to find the courage to enter Target by myself.

Answer 465: Though I don't know for sure, it sounds like anxiety to me. I think it would be helpful if you work with a therapist who specializes in anxiety disorders.

Question 466: Sometimes, I'm fine and can go out or meet people, but other days, my heart races and words physically cannot come out of my mouth. I've always thought it was normal and I was just nervous, but the other day, it took me almost 30 minutes of sitting in my car to find the courage to enter Target by myself.

Answer 466: Your, sitting in your car for 30 minutes, story sounds so sad and frustrating. Yes, you're describing classic symptoms of anxiety. Anxiety itself is the indirect result of repeatedly being in positions of feeling helpless or frightened. Are you able to recall from your growing up years of feeling insecure? You may not have felt loved and nurtured as much as you needed. Some people develop anxiety from missing enough love. They feel lacking in ability to take care of themselves, similar to the lack of being sufficiently taken care of when younger. Try understanding if you felt neglected emotionally. If "yes", then start the slow process of emotionally rewarding and acknowledging yourself. Progress will be slow. Eventually you'll stabilize the way you feel toward yourself. This will gradually result in decreased anxiety.

Question 467: Sometimes, I'm fine and can go out or meet people, but other days, my heart races and words physically cannot come out of my mouth. I've always thought it was normal and I was just nervous, but the other day, it took me almost 30 minutes of sitting in my car to find the courage to enter Target by myself.

Answer 467: First, be aware that each and every one of us has anxiety at some point. That certainly seems to fit what you're describing here, but that doesn't mean you have an anxiety disorder, necessarily. That's where there is a difference. Anyone who has a hard time with public speaking or feels uncomfortable in large crowds, for example, is experiencing anxiety. It sounds like it would be helpful to look at the differences between the days when you are more comfortable on the days that you are not. If you notice your anxiety is keeping you from doing things that you need or want to do, it may be helpful to talk with a mental health professional. I wonder also whether your appetite and sleeping patterns are the same or similar to how they were before you experienced this anxiety, when your anxiety started, and whether you feel more comfortable when someone you trust is there with you. If you have an idea of times or situations in which you feel anxious, consider carrying a small smooth rock or another object that

makes you feel calm and centered. Perhaps you can keep it in your pocket and remember specific comfortable times while you have it in your hand.

Question 468: A lot of times, I avoid situations where I am to meet new people because I have a fear of embarrassing myself. I often avoid large groups of people, like parties, because I think they all constantly judge me.

Answer 468: Hello, and thank you for your question. First, I want you to know that you are certainly not alone on this issue. Everyone, at some point in time, has a fear of public embarrassment. But for many people, this fear can become so awful that it begins to have a real negative impact on their quality of life. They will try to avoid any situation that they even THINK will cause them embarrassment or anxiety. Escaping a possible embarrassing moment by avoiding or isolating may cause some relief at first, but then many times the avoidance will eventually lead to loneliness, isolation, and even despair. By avoiding, we can also miss out on things that make us feel alive and bring enjoyment. There are many self-help books that offer advice on this issue. You can do an internet search, and I recommend reading the reviews of the book. That is a great way to find out if others have found the book helpful. Another option is to seek a counselor to help you with this fear. I would recommend a counselor who specializes in helping people who have anxiety or social anxiety. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy is a good choice for helping with anxiety, but there are many others. The truth is that anxiety and fear of embarrassing ourselves is not something that any of us will ever "get over", but we can learn to respond to those feelings differently. A colleague may offer some other advice, as well.. Be well Robin Landwehr, DBH, LPC, NCC

Question 469: A lot of times, I avoid situations where I am to meet new people because I have a fear of embarrassing myself. I often avoid large groups of people, like parties, because I think they all constantly judge me.

Answer 469: Why not accept and tolerate that you naturally are a shy person who doesn't like large groups? This is not necessarily something to get over if it is part of who you are. People have the capacity to judge others regardless of whether the group is large or small. If you aren't afraid of being judged in small groups then study the factors which allow you to feel safe in small groups. Possibly you can generalize your findings to large group venues. If you try the and aren't successful, then likely you simply aren't naturally someone who cares for large group settings. Not everything a person doesn't like is a symptom of something is wrong w the person!

Question 470: My partner lives in Canada while I live in the US. We visit each other, but we go months in between visits. I have anxiety, and I'm always anxious about him cheating or still having feelings for an ex that he dated for three years. He doesn't understand my anxiety. How do I stop myself from worrying so much?

Answer 470: Would you worry less if you and your partner had a plan as to when you will be together as a couple? Long distance relationships are not for everybody. Some people need the daily or frequent interaction to feel secure. The question is not so much how to deal with anxiety that your partner is cheating on you than whether your own emotional and relationship requirements are satisfied with a long distance relationship. Anyway, cheating has nothing to do with distance since married people cheat while living together for years under the same roof!

Question 471: I just about fall asleep then I can't help but sit up and walk around.

Answer 471: Maybe you are afraid to let go of your problems for a few hours. Although you didn't write this, usually what keeps people awake or prevents them from falling asleep are worries about certain situations in their lives. If this describes you then, maybe talk with yourself to convince you that you are entitled to a good night's sleep. Really we all are and feeling rested from the day and life's tensions will better you to handle whatever the particular matters are. Also, maybe you will be more enthusiastic to go to bed if you have a comfy mattress and nice pillows! Make your bed an inviting place because this will tempt you to enjoy relaxing enough to go to sleep!

Question 472: I have severe anxiety and have tried everything. Everything makes it worst. The only thing that helps is my emotional support animal.

Answer 472: Sorry to read of your suffering. Is it actually permitted that people are able to take support animals to school? I see your point of the animal helping you. I just also see the point that some people have allergies to animal hair or dander, or may feel distracted by an animal in the classroom. You may end up feeling worse, if when you bring your support animal to school, that it disturbs people or interferes with the routines of the class. For your anxiety, I suggest some loving kindness toward yourself. Be patient

with yourself and that you have anxiety. If you're able to accept that some situations create great discomfort for you, maybe you'll tolerate these difficult situation. Embrace your anxiety as part of you, basically, rather than trying to banish it, which because it actually is part of you, is impossible to achieve. In a way, I'm suggesting you become your own "support animal". Love yourself, be kind to yourself, and see if you feel a little less stressed in school.

Question 473: I'm just an extremely paranoid person. I constantly feel as though I am in some sort of danger, like as though I live in a horror movie with no resolution. It worsens at night. It gets to the point I'm scared in my own home more so than anything. I have no access to the help I need so I'm desperate.

Answer 473: One approach is to be more accepting of yourself as someone who has fears. It is much easier to manage a problem when you're not fighting yourself for having a problem. Once you are willing to accept this quality within yourself you may start to feel a little more relaxed about handling the fears when they arise. One answer is to examine the facts about the fears. Ask yourself fact based questions as to how you would handle the worse case scenario of your fears. Feeling prepared, whether or not the circumstance is highly unlikely to happen, may increase your peace of mind with living the great fears within your mind.

Question 474: I don't know if I'm normal. I'm really scared to touch a girl. I'm a young adult and a virgin. My fiancée and I want to have sex soon, and this might mess everything up because she wants a baby soon as well.

Answer 474: Your question is a good one! The best way to decrease the fear would be to talk with your fiancée about it. Eventually she'll find out, and better to talk about it when there is less pressure than to be in the midst of a situation which frightens you. Also, she may feel similar to you, who knows? Discussing a topic which relates directly to your relationship is a good way to increase emotional intimacy. And emotional intimacy has a lot to do with feeling at ease with physical intimacy.

Question 475: I don't understand why this is happening. Why do I feel this way?

Answer 475: The short answer I could give is that we don't know why it's happening. The longer answer could come from deeper exploration as to your fears, or anxieties, that you experience maybe just thinking of going outside. But any sort of exploration about this almost HAS to begin with an agreement within you (and all of your feelings), that's it's not something to be ashamed of. If we are ashamed of any of our behaviors, then we lose the ability to sit with them and see where they are coming from. This could be something that can be worked through in therapy, and specifically with a therapist who specializes in anxiety and more specifically, agoraphobia.

Question 476: I don't understand why this is happening. Why do I feel this way?

Answer 476: The first step to answer your question is to reflect on what is going on in your life overall. If you're in the midst of severe stress, whether within your relationship or effort to establish a relationship, upheaval in family dynamics, some type of significant loss like a job or someone with whom you feel closely attached, then you may simply be creating the solitude which is necessary to better understand and absorb the meaning of these changes. I assume you mean you are by yourself when you are indoors. What you write sounds like you're not happy with this recent urge rather than that you and someone or others are having great and fun times together. One way to encourage yourself to go back outdoors is to connect w a friend or search for an interest within you to develop. This way with either of these, you'd feel a little bit of motivation to join and get more involved with either of these.

Question 477: I am a peaceful person, but I often find myself having thoughts about killing people. Eventhough I like the thoughts at the time, they make me cry. Why do I feel like this?

Answer 477: Maybe because you have great emotional pain stored inside you of which you are not aware exists. Sometimes people who feel greatly hurt by others or who feel unloved by others, imagine if they do the opposite of love, which is to kill, that they will get the recognition and acknowledgement from others which they wish would come to them in a loving way. This is my theory, it is not necessarily a definitive description of your inner dynamic. Most important is to keep an open mind to self-discovery on your feelings, including the ones which are uneasy, such as killing, to consider.

Question 478: I am a peaceful person, but I often find myself having thoughts about killing people. Eventhough I like the thoughts at the time, they make me cry. Why do I feel like this?

Answer 478: Hello, and thank you for your question. Clearly this is something that has you very concerned. Sometimes thoughts are just thoughts, and they are pretty harmless. Many people have thoughts of killing someone, but they would never actually do it. They really don't even want to do it, they are just having a thought. Other times, thoughts are a sign of something more serious, and we should

receive help when they start to worry us. I would recommend meeting with a counselor to discuss these thoughts. It is usually a safe environment where you can get advice with little judgement. Now, If you begin to start thinking about killing someone specific and making a plan to do it in reality- you should call for help immediately. By help, I mean 9-11, or a family member or friend. You would want to get help before doing something to harm yourself and others. Again, none of this is to judge, but rather to encourage you to get the help you're seeking. Either way, when we become concerned about some aspect of our behavior, seeking counseling is usually a good choice. Be well, Robin J. Landwehr, DBH, LPCC, NCC

Question 479: I shake and have panic attacks.

Answer 479: One way to understand panic attacks is as a sign of feeling insecure or lacking confidence in a certain area or characteristic of yourself. The insecurity can sometimes feel overwhelming and this starts the sense of panic. One way to build your sense of security within yourself is to have a simple life and a slow paced life. When there are many activities or involvements to pay attention, then it is easy to not give full attention to all of them. This may trigger a sense of insecurity since in fact you may not have had sufficient time to study and know your own opinion about all of what your life is immersed in. A simpler life of fewer activities allows more time to know and understand your own inner feelings and reactions. To know more about yourself may help build your confidence and security in your ability to know and live what goes on in your life!

Question 480: I shake and have panic attacks.

Answer 480: One of the first things I would suggest is to see if you can keep track of what is leading you to feel anxious. If you shake all the time, consider talking with your primary care physician. Sometimes that can be a hormonal imbalance or another chemical imbalance (such as thyroid). One of the most difficult things about anxiety is that having anxiety (particularly panic attacks) can lead to anxiety about having more panic attacks. Also remember that panic attacks are typically part of your brain's protective response to what it considers to be some sort of threat. You may have heard of the fight or flight response. When you have an anxiety attack, your body is preparing you to react to something that isn't actually a threat, so it's almost as if you're fight or flight response is overactive. Here is an image that may be helpful: <http://psychology.tools/fight-or-flight-response.html> There are many different things you can do. You can practice breathing, mindfulness, meditation, or yoga techniques. If you decide to try some breathing techniques, try breathing in for a count of five, holding for a count of five, breathing out for a count of five, and repeating five times. Also remember that it is easier to learn these techniques when you're not having a panic attack. At that point, it can be really difficult to use methods to not panic. Also remember that panic attacks typically last 5 to 10 minutes. Using techniques to slow your breathing or become focused on the room around you is probably most helpful when you first start to feel anxious. Here are some other techniques that may help to decrease

anxiety: <http://psychcentral.com/lib/9-ways-to-reduce-anxiety-right-here-right-now/> As you figure out what is leading up to your anxiety, also consider asking yourself what is making that certain issue a big concern for you. Another important question could be when you have felt that way before.

Question 481: I haven't been feeling like myself lately. I've been upset for no reason and feeling anxious. I'm feeling burnt out. What can help me feel better?

Answer 481: Does it help to put a name to the experience you are having? When you first said, "I've been upset for no reason and feeling anxious," you then say that you are "feeling burnt out," which gives a little more context to what may have once felt like "no reason." Perhaps you are feeling burnt out! That is a big deal, and please try not to take it lightly! When we get burnt out, I have found that it's from one of two things: either we are not doing what we want, or we are doing too much (either of something we want or something we don't, doesn't really matter once we get into doing too much.) If either of those rings true for your experience, try as much as possible to sit with the experience and get a better sense of where the burn out is coming from. I wrote about burnout for a newsletter and it is on my website. I don't want to do shameless promotion, but I thought it could also add to helping

you: <https://davidkleintherapy.com/my-experiences-with-burnout/> I hope that you can also see that it's not an abnormal experience.

Question 482: I haven't been feeling like myself lately. I've been upset for no reason and feeling anxious. I'm feeling burnt out. What can help me feel better?

Answer 482: There's no such possibility that you're upset for "no reason"! The reason is not obvious, not that you are feeling upset in response to nothing at all. What can help you feel better is to be kind and

gentle with yourself because this sort of approach will more likely relax your mood and mindset enough for the tension and anxiety you feel, to dissipate somewhat. Try to understand whether certain situations or interactions remind you or feel similar to ones which distressed you before. This may be the reason for your anxiety. It is good news that you know the difference between your usual sense of yourself and that you've been away from this feeling. Give yourself a little credit for understanding yourself. Giving credit adds confidence and confidence will help you find the reasons and new ways to handle your anxiety.

Question 483: I have a fear of something and I want to face that fear to overcome it, but I don't know how. What can I do?

Answer 483: Fears are not that difficult to deal with, first you need to train yourself to relax using some relaxation strategy, once you are able to employ that in your daily life, you then need to start facing your fear, for instance I'll use an example of a man who has a fear of driving over a bridge. We would build a hierarchy of fears, that is a list of fears ranging from least to most, for example the man may want to start by looking at a picture of a bridge while employing his relaxation technique, then he may want to see a real bridge from a distance while employing that same relaxation technique, then moving closer to the bridge, then maybe standing on a bridge, all the while moving closer to his fear while relaxing, until you come to most fearful proposition which is crossing that bridge, or you can also engage in flooding which is for example, if you were scared of an elevator, go into an elevator until you are not panicking anymore, in the movie Batman Begins, Bruce Wayne who has a great fear of bats, goes into this cave and allows himself to be surrounded by bats until he is no longer fearful of them. Secondly, look at your fears, do they even need to be worked on, some fears are healthy, for example if I was a therapist in New York City and someone came to me and said "I'm scared of snakes", I would probably say that is OK because there are very little snakes left in Manhattan. Hope that helps C

Question 484: I have a fear of something and I want to face that fear to overcome it, but I don't know how. What can I do?

Answer 484: Your fear may have deeper roots within your sense of who you are, than you realize. Fears are sometimes irrational so that logic doesn't get rid of them. Think about whether you felt secure and confident as a child. Also, did any major bad events happen to you with other people or situations when you were growing up? Often these overwhelming situations of childhood stay with us as fears of situations in our adult lives. If the root of the problem with the fear is from long ago, then probably a therapist who can ask you questions which help you remember upsetting childhood circumstances, may help you to dissolve the current fear. Another possibility is CBT, cognitive behavior therapy which teaches people short term mantras to do something which is safe, say being a passenger in a commercial airplane, which feels frightening to a person. CBT is short term and results are limited to specific fears. It is a much quicker approach than self-understanding.

Question 485: I have a fear of something and I want to face that fear to overcome it, but I don't know how. What can I do?

Answer 485: Fear is a part of life. In fact, our five main emotions are joy, fear, sadness, shame, and anger. We tend to spend a lot of time and energy running away from or trying to get rid of most of those emotions and the more we do that, the more we set ourselves up for failure and disappointment. As a result of viewing our human emotions as "bad" or "wrong," we often get caught up in a trap of thinking we have to overcome them or get rid of them before we can do what matters to us. In reality, you can do what is important to you while having your fears! My question for you is, what would you do if this fear was completely gone? What behaviors would you have if you were the ideal you? What skills, knowledge, or personal qualities would you develop? What kind of relationships would you have? I imagine your fear has kept you from achieving those goals because your mind tells you you can't do it until the fear is gone. I challenge you to do the following exercise: What is a goal you would like to achieve? Example: I would like to change careers. What actions are necessary to complete this goal? Example: see a career counselor to determine my ideal career, go back to school/get a certification, network with others in my desired industry. What thoughts, feelings, or urges might get in my way? Example: thoughts of "What if I fail? I'm not smart enough. I can't do it. I'm too busy to put energy into this." Feelings of fear, shame, excitement. Urges to distract myself through drinking or watch tv instead of taking action. It would be helpful to remind myself that: example: It is natural to have these thoughts, feelings, and urges but I can take action anyway. I deserve to have a fulfilling life. The smallest and easiest step I can take now: example: research career counselors in my area and write down their phone numbers. The time, day and date that I will take that first step, is: example: Tonight at 7pm. At least think through these answers but it is most beneficial to

write them down. I hope this helps!

Question 486: I have a fear of something and I want to face that fear to overcome it, but I don't know how. What can I do?

Answer 486: This answer could be very different depending on the fear, the degree of it, and what it connects to. I wonder the following: On a scale of 1 to 10, how upset, anxious, or scared do you get when you think about overcoming this? If it's more than a 5/10, I would definitely recommend talking with a therapist in your area. A lot of fears that we have come from something that at one time was self-protective and important. Do you know where your fear started? If you think it is still protecting you or helping you in some way, talk with someone (like a therapist) about it. If it is something that you know is irrational (for example, fear of being hurt by static cling from winter clothing), is there some part of that that you are not afraid of? I really encourage you to consider whether your fear has a lot of emotions connected to it or if it ties from something in your past that was very emotional for you at the time. If it does, consider working with a therapist to establish emotional safety before taking away the fear or anxiety that may actually be helpful to you. Also, the fact that you notice that you are afraid of something and you don't want to be afraid of it anymore is a big step in the forward direction.

Question 487: I have a fear of something and I want to face that fear to overcome it, but I don't know how. What can I do?

Answer 487: Biologically, fear is designed to protect us from harm. Fear is not always a bad thing, and in fact can be quite healthy and appropriate depending on the situation. A phobia, however, is different. You used the term "fear" rather than "phobia". A phobia is an irrational fear - meaning it is not rational for you to fear that thing. If your situation is a phobia, exposure therapy can help. This consists of gradually exposing yourself a little at a time to the thing you are afraid of. Some people with phobias find that the irrational fear interferes with their life and they do need to overcome it. Someone who is afraid to drive over bridges may go to great lengths to avoid routes that have bridges. People who are afraid of elevators may always use the stairs instead, which may not always be feasible. If overcoming a phobia will improve the quality of your life, then by all means, seek professional help to overcome it. Everyone has fears, or things that make them nervous. Public speaking, asking a person out, fear of failure. Examine what your fear is and try to determine the reason for the fear. When you can get to the root cause of the fear, you can deal with that issue. A lot of times, it is a self-esteem issue. You may be able to peel back the layers of the fear and find out what's causing it and deal with the real issue. Some fears are caused by trauma. Someone with PTSD is going to have an exaggerated fear response and will find themselves being kicked into "fight or flight" mode over things that someone without the trauma experience wouldn't notice or react to. In cases like this, exposure therapy would be the wrong approach and could actually make things worse. If there is a possibility that a past trauma is the cause of your fear, I strongly urge you to seek a therapist - not just any therapist, but one who is trained to work with trauma and abuse victims.

Question 488: I have a fear of something and I want to face that fear to overcome it, but I don't know how. What can I do?

Answer 488: Hello, and thank you for your question. Overcoming fears is something that everyone struggles with at one time or another. Sometimes we come across something that scares us, we push through it and suddenly we aren't afraid anymore. But sometimes it can seem like our fears just take over and we cannot overcome them. There are some options: 1. You can go to a counselor and receive some type of treatment. What kind of treatment would depend on the type of fears you are experiencing. For example, if you have a general phobia about something, they may use various techniques to help you manage it. 2. There are different websites and even some self-help books that you can use to try to overcome your fears. When it comes to overcoming certain fears or phobias, exposure therapy is well-studied and proven to work. A therapist would help you with this, but some websites give instructions for how to do it yourself. I am not sure how well it works when you try it by yourself, but here is a link to a website that does offer some tools. <http://psychology.tools/anxiety.html> Some colleagues may offer you some other types of advice. Be well. Robin J. Landwehr, DBH, LPCC, NCC

Question 489: I don't remember when the voices in my head started, but I remember Hearing them when I was little. I know it's not normal to hear voices that aren't your own. I fight the voices and I want them to stop. They've been here so long and I want them gone. How can I make the voices stop?

Answer 489: How is your life going overall? Since you hear voices since you were young I wonder whether you mean the thoughts each of us has about what to do, our opinions, including self-criticism and praise. I try to understand how severe a problem these voices are if you've managed to get to a point in life of

awareness about the voices. Usually when mental health people hear about voices the immediate thought is you need drugs bc you are psychotic. Since this is going on for a number of years, I wonder if the problem is something different.

Question 490: I don't remember when the voices in my head started, but I remember Hearing them when I was little. I know it's not normal to hear voices that aren't your own. I fight the voices and I want them to stop. They've been here so long and I want them gone. How can I make the voices stop?

Answer 490: You are right. It is not normal to hear voices that aren't your own but the fact is some people do. In my experience, medication seem to help. It is also important to understand when you hear voices the most - meaning it is important to understand what the triggers are. It is also important to understand when the voices are the least - meaning what helps you deal with the voices better. My clients have reported that their triggers are being in social gathering or around strangers or for some even the TV. Trying to identify your triggers is helpful for some people. Clients have also reported that listening to music, watching TV, being with friend or family helps them deal with their voices. Every individual is different and you need to figure out what works for you and what triggers your voices. My suggestion is to see a therapist / health care provider and then go from there. I hope this helps.

Question 491: I don't remember when the voices in my head started, but I remember Hearing them when I was little. I know it's not normal to hear voices that aren't your own. I fight the voices and I want them to stop. They've been here so long and I want them gone. How can I make the voices stop?

Answer 491: First, let me express my support and compassion for what you're going through. Hearing voices can be incredibly difficult and can feel like you can't get a moment's peace, even in the privacy of your own mind. And not everyone will necessarily understand what you're dealing with, so I imagine you may also be feeling isolated or somehow different. Atta girl/boy on reaching out for help! Many people find benefit to taking medications, such as risperdal, seroquel, and so on. These should be prescribed by a nurse practitioner or psychiatrist -- I do not recommend a primary care doctor venture into this area, as a general rule. Discuss the options thoroughly and insist on a good rapport with your prescriber, if you decide to go this route. Some people are having results with a talk-therapist to develop coping strategies. There is a new and somewhat less conventional approach to challenging voices with a professional to assist you, rather than to suppress the voices, which medication will do. There is peer-run organization and a general approach that attempts to live with voices in a different way. You can read about it in *Living With Voices* by Marius Romme. I have heard interviews but have not read the book(s) and can't speak to its efficacy. No matter what steps you decide to try, managing your stress, sleep, exercise, healthy food is essential -- in other words, just the daily care and feeding of yourself should be included in all of your efforts and bears surprising benefits to your brain and emotional health. Best wishes to you, Karen Keys, LMHC, CASAC

Question 492: I don't remember when the voices in my head started, but I remember Hearing them when I was little. I know it's not normal to hear voices that aren't your own. I fight the voices and I want them to stop. They've been here so long and I want them gone. How can I make the voices stop?

Answer 492: This isn't something you can do on your own. If you haven't already, you need to see a medical doctor ASAP to rule out medical causes for this. Many diseases, illnesses, and conditions can cause hallucinations. In the elderly, sometimes it's something as simple as a urinary tract infection. Some medicines may have that side effect as well. However, you say you've been hearing them since you were little. I have no idea how old you are now, but something that has been going on for many years does lead me to think it could be a type of schizophrenia. A psychiatrist could diagnose that after taking a complete look at your history, medical history, etc. There are medications that they can put you on that will help. One thing that I find encouraging is that you recognize you're hearing voices. This means you are not so far into a delusion as to believe it is real. A lot of people that hear or see things that aren't there are not able to have the awareness that these things are not real. They fully believe what they're hearing/seeing. It's completely real to them. Because you have the awareness that you do, I feel this is a very good sign that with treatment you can live a normal life (assuming you are not already receiving treatment for it. If you are and are still hearing the voices, please know that medications often need to be changed and adjusted, and the voices may never completely go away but medicines certainly help dull them a lot. Always talk to your doctor when it seems your symptoms are getting worse so that they can make the necessary medication adjustments for you). If at any time the voices are telling you to do something, please go to an ER as this is an emergency. Sometimes people hear voices telling them to harm themselves, harm someone else, or do other things that are against the law. Do not try to deal with

something like that on your own. There are people who can help.

Question 493: I've hit my head on walls and floors ever since I was young. I sometimes still do it but I don't exactly know why, I have anxiety and I had a rough childhood but now I'll start to hit my head and sometimes not realize it but I don't know how to stop or even why I'm doing it. How can I help myself to change my behavior?

Answer 493: Give yourself a lot of empathy and care for having had a rough childhood and realizing that life can be better than how you were treated when growing up. Be patient with yourself too bc lasting change takes time. Alternatives to hitting your head require constant gentle reminders to do these new behaviors, or if you've discovered a satisfying alternative in one moment, time is required for you to repeat this alternative until it feels natural. Anxiety usually means someone did not feel well understood growing up and was rushed to comply with the wishes of others who were a regular part of their lives. Anxiety lessens as the person starts to know and accept their wishes and needs as valid. Allow yourself to learn who you truly are in the spirit of accepting whatever you discover about yourself. The behaviors will naturally change with your new understanding and self acceptance. Good luck and enjoy this self discovery project!

Question 494: I've hit my head on walls and floors ever since I was young. I sometimes still do it but I don't exactly know why, I have anxiety and I had a rough childhood but now I'll start to hit my head and sometimes not realize it but I don't know how to stop or even why I'm doing it. How can I help myself to change my behavior?

Answer 494: Hello. I have to wonder from a behavioral perspective if what you are doing is useful for you. In other words, does it serve a purpose in some way when you find yourself doing it. Yes, this could well be an expression of anxiety, or maybe some type of coping skill you have developed over the years to deal with stressful situations. Yet it sounds like you have developed a sort of knee-jerk behavioral conditioning that causes you to do this behavior during specific (or perhaps even non-specific) circumstances. Do you think it is a self-soothing behavior? Do you feel good after you have done it? The behavior itself is likely causing some form of slow physical damage, so I would recommend you have yourself checked by a doctor, to rule out any injury. If none exists, this obviously doesn't excuse the behavior, it just says that for the moment luck is on your side. When we do any behavior of any kind, it is good to ask if what we are doing has merit or value. Is the behavior helping us to solve our problem, or is it merely creating yet another problem by doing the behavior in the first place. In the same way that a person might drink excessively because they are stressed and need to cope with some unresolved issue, when they are done drinking the original problem will still likely be there, but now they are intoxicated. No closer to solving the issue. When we deal with things like anxiety or depression, we need to do things that work on dealing with the symptoms, but also get to the root issue that created those feelings and find effective solutions. So the things we do to cope with life events need to not be ones that cause us harm, but rather support us as we move forward and work to deal with what life throws at us. Sometimes seeking support from a friend or a counselor is a good idea. Being given the opportunity to express your feelings about what is going on around you and getting feedback and insight from others is much more effective than actions of self-harm, wouldn't you agree? So I would encourage you to find a counselor or a trusted friend who can help you find positive behaviors you can take to deal with your feelings, as you also work to find the answers to the day to day issues of living a life filled with promise and opportunity. Reach out if you need help...there will likely be a hand there waiting for you.

Question 495: I've hit my head on walls and floors ever since I was young. I sometimes still do it but I don't exactly know why, I have anxiety and I had a rough childhood but now I'll start to hit my head and sometimes not realize it but I don't know how to stop or even why I'm doing it. How can I help myself to change my behavior?

Answer 495: The best way to handle anxiety of this level is with a combination of appropriate medication given to you by a medical doctor, and therapy to help you understand the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are causing the anxiety. This is not something that anyone should just "white knuckle" and try to get through on their own with no help. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is a technique that has been proven helpful for depression and anxiety. This takes a therapist trained in CBT. You will learn to recognize when and why you perform the behavior of hitting your head, help you deal with the underlying cause of this, and replace the behavior with a more positive behavior. You'll learn coping skills. You mention having a rough childhood. Anyone who has experienced trauma like this, especially long-term ongoing trauma from abuse of any kind, definitely does not need "exposure therapy", which is what is

recommended for phobias. You need a therapist trained specifically in trauma informed therapy. You are on the right path by recognizing there is an issue and what it is. Good luck with your healing journey!

Question 496: I have several issues that I need to work through. However, I am afraid of and do not trust therapists after a horrible experience. I'm dealing with grief and guilt over losing my sons due to drug use. I have a very complicated traumatic relationship issue that is causing me severe anxiety and fear.

Answer 496: I am sorry that you had this experience. Therapy should be a healthy positive experience off g growth. You have the right to look for certain high qualities in a therapist and finding the right one. Each therapist is bound by a code of ethics and clients should have high expectations. You are trusting them to guide, support and help you achieve the absolute best outcome and success. You should never be or feel judged, and you should feel comfortable and feel as though your therapy process is moving along with YOUR GOALS IN MIND. Speaking as a therapist, I encourage my clients to always let me know how they feel, even if they disagree with me, they also have the right to inform me if something I'm doing simply is not working for them, communication is critical in maintaining a healthy therapeutic alliance/ therapeutic relationship. I'm able to offer ways of thinking and strategies to my clients they may not have thought of. Its important to listen to my clients. It's also critical for clients to feel they can share in a environment that feels safe, non judgmental and confidential. Remember, you are the driver in your healing process, you should be the one in control because you know what your life struggles are. Speaking as a therapist, I'm here to guide my clients toward achieving their goals, encouraging and empowering my clients in what is meaningful to them to achieve. You should feel comfortable speaking your thoughts, my advice would look one who open hearing toy feel, even it's regarding them a therapist. That they are open to feedback. With all of that being said, it will take time to trust again but remember, ask questions and communicate with the next therapist share your experience and how it made you feel and that trust and being spoken in a respectful , non judgemental and non condnsconding way is critical for you. Be honest clearly state your expectations from start. I offer free 50 minute first sessions for clients. The reason. I do this is because I feel that clients deserve opportunity observe the environment, ask me questions and have the opportunity to determine their level of comfort and decide if it's a good fit. Other therapists sometimes offer the similar, try finding one willing to offer a consultation as that could give you the opportunity to feel things out and set forth expectations. The article below is an excellent article about what to look for in a therapist. It is worth your time reading because you are WORTH FINDING THE BEST HELP AVAILABLE! This article was written based on both evidence from research and clinical experience. I would strongly encourage anyone searching for help to read this and even use it as your guide. I hope this was

helpful. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/insight-therapy/201603/10-ways-spot-good-therapist> Laura Cassity, LMSW, LMAC

Question 497: Why am I so afraid of it? I don't understand.

Answer 497: Your fear is somewhat reasonable. No one wants to be raped and I imagine everyone is afraid of what being raped would feel like. Do you mean that this fear is on your mind more often than you would like? If this is the case, then try understanding the reason behind your fear. Is it because you personally know or know of someone who was raped? One general direction of what would help is to regain confidence in your decisions of keeping yourself safe. The more you trust yourself to avoid social situations with lots of drinking, isolated physical surroundings, and being in isolated locations with someone with whom you're not very familiar, probably your fear will decrease. The other general direction to understand is if in your family history, people have been violated severely, either emotionally, mentally, or physically. In families in which people have suffered severe violations of themselves, often the emotional patterning of expecting to be hurt by others, plants itself very deeply and transmits to the younger generation. Its possible then, that you are suffering from fears established in other family members who have not yet been able to fully understand and accept their own suffering. The good news is that individual therapy, with a credentialed and licensed therapist, is ideal for a safe place to open and clear this type of emotional burden.

Question 498: Why am I so afraid of it? I don't understand.

Answer 498: Why are you afraid of rape? Because it is a problem in the United States! The National Sexual Violence Resource Center reports that one in five women (Or 20%) will be raped (http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/publications_nsvrc_factsheet_media-packet_statistics-about-sexual-violence_0.pdf) and that 80% of women know their assailant. Given these statistics, it is perfectly logical to be afraid. However, there are things you can do to reduce the risk of rape, such as being aware

of your surroundings, and limiting the use of drugs or alcohol. The Enhanced Access, Knowledge, Act program for college-aged women has been shown to reduce the risk of rape by more than 50%. (<http://www.blueprintsprograms.com/factsheet/eaaa-enhanced-assess-acknowledge-act-sexual-assault-resistance-education>) You may want to see if a program like this is available in your area. Another great app for when you need to walk somewhere alone, is the Companion App (<http://www.companionapp.io>). Friends or family can track your progress from one point to another via the GPS in your phone. In addition, talking with a counselor about your fears would also be a good idea. Sometimes fears are rational and reasonable. Sometimes they are over-reactions and unreasonable. When there are over-reactions and unreasonable, they can have a negative impact on your life. In this case, a counselor could help you understand why your fears are unreasonable, and how you can stop them from negatively impacting your life.

Question 499: I have attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety, anger, and memory problems. I can't work. I have no income. I'm on medicine, but I feel worthless. I want to be normal.

Answer 499: I am so sorry to hear that you are struggling. It sounds like you've had a traumatic experience that has impacted your life in many ways. Without knowing much about your history, I wonder if the trauma you suffered has led to the anxiety, anger, and memory problems you are dealing with, in addition to PTSD. I would encourage you to look for a trauma therapist who offers a sliding scale or pro bono services. There may also be community mental health services in your area that offer free therapy if you are eligible for grant.

Question 500: I never feel like myself. I can't even think straight anymore. I start stuttering and I can't remember anything. I always get nervous and usually talk myself down but recently end up fighting with, what feels like, someone else. I don't know why I feel this way, but I hate it.

Answer 500: Hi Houston, Okay, something's definitely going on, right? My gut is to start with your family physician, because you have some physical symptoms. While it seems anxiety is a likely problem here, your doctor will hopefully know your history and can help you decide if you need some medical tests or some therapy. Without knowing more, that's all I can say at this point. Best of luck.

Question 501: I never feel like myself. I can't even think straight anymore. I start stuttering and I can't remember anything. I always get nervous and usually talk myself down but recently end up fighting with, what feels like, someone else. I don't know why I feel this way, but I hate it.

Answer 501: What you are describing sounds like it may be a form of dissociation. Dissociation is our mind's way of disconnecting us from aspects of our experience in an attempt to protect us in overwhelming situations. It also sounds like you are noticing anxiety in certain situations. In working with a competent therapist, you may be able to gain insight into these experiences, learn skills for coping with anxiety and reconnecting with yourself, and alleviate these symptoms over time.

Question 502: I never feel like myself. I can't even think straight anymore. I start stuttering and I can't remember anything. I always get nervous and usually talk myself down but recently end up fighting with, what feels like, someone else. I don't know why I feel this way, but I hate it.

Answer 502: Hello, I am wondering if you might be experiencing some form of dissociation. People who dissociate might feel like the world around them is unreal and unfamiliar, or that they are not really in their bodies and that they are observing themselves from outside of their bodies. Dissociation can also mean that there are parts of you that have "split off" and sometimes parts can feel like they are at odds with each other or are locked in conflict. Sometimes dissociation happens after someone experiences a trauma. Therapy can help you to understand what is going on and help you to integrate your experiences and ultimately heal. I am a therapist in Houston who specializes in dissociation. On my website I have information specific to dissociation that might be helpful to you. Sarah

Question 503: I had to put a restraining order against my ex-fiancé. He was served last night. He was mentally and verbally abusive towards me. I thought it was my nerves, but every time I stand up, I get sick. If I sit and rock, I'm fine.

Answer 503: Hello, and thank you for your question. You may be right, your physical symptoms of getting sick to your stomach may very well be your nerves or anxiety. That is totally normal and understandable given your circumstances. Another thing that is not unusual is that you feel better when you sit and rock. That is actually a fairly common way that many people comfort themselves in times of high stress. If you are concerned that there is an actual physical illness causing these symptoms, you may want to visit your primary care provider. They may tell you that they don't see anything physically wrong with you, and at

that point you may want to visit a counselor about the symptoms and your relationship experience. A visit with a counselor may be a good idea either way. I work as a counselor in primary care, and I promise you that many people have very real physical symptoms when they have gone through abuse. Unexplainable stomach and headaches are very common. Sometimes, with counseling, those physical symptoms actually stop. Be well, and I hope you feel better soon. Robin J. Landwehr, DBH, LPCC, NCC

Question 504: I've been dealing with this for years. My mom thinks I'm overly emotional and refuses to offer any help, like therapy or seeing a doctor. She's seen me when I'm having a panic attack and just said I was faking for attention or that I'm a hypochondriac. I just want to get better.

Answer 504: I don't know how old you are, but in Pennsylvania, if you are over 14, you can have therapy without your parents' consent. If you are young enough to use their insurance, that could be complicated, but depending on the state, there may be ways to work around that as well. If transportation is a problem, call a local mental health agency and see if they can connect you with assistance. In the meantime, try searching for a phone helpline in the county where you live. They may be able to help you figure out where you can get help. Another idea is that if you are in school, your guidance counselor may be able to provide links to where you can go for help. He or she may also be able to give you more specific ideas to help with your panic attacks. I know you said your mom refuses to offer help, which included seeing a doctor, but I wonder if she trusts the doctors that is your primary care physician (also called a family doctor) who you see when you have a minor medical ailment that may need medication. That doctor may be able to help you as well. Some of the information here may be helpful to you because it explains some of what anxiety is and there are some quizzes there that may give you information to discuss with a doctor or therapist when you get connected with

one. <http://www.webmd.com/anxiety-panic/guide/mental-health-anxiety-disorders> This may give you other information to speak with your mom about. Remember that I'm not asking you to actually diagnose yourself with one of these things, but just offering some basic information that may help you be able to talk about what is going on. If you are having a panic attack or having a moment of anxiety, try focusing on different things in the room around you. It may help to shift your focus briefly outside of what you are feeling and that may lessen the feeling a bit. Also remember that sometimes anxiety leads to more anxiety about having a panic attack in the future. Remember that they usually and after a few minutes. It would also be helpful for you to keep track of what leads up to your anxiety. Best wishes to you and keep trying until you get connected to someone.

Question 505: I've been dealing with this for years. My mom thinks I'm overly emotional and refuses to offer any help, like therapy or seeing a doctor. She's seen me when I'm having a panic attack and just said I was faking for attention or that I'm a hypochondriac. I just want to get better.

Answer 505: How old are you? Are you old enough in your State to have therapy without your mother's consent? Your mom's attitude toward you may be one significant reason on why you feels so much tension in the first place. Don't let her opinions and beliefs get in the way of what you know about yourself. Are you in school and does that school have a guidance counselor? Would you talk with that person about your difficult getting your mom to retain helping services for you? Keep looking for local resources which will support you either directly or indirectly by advocating for your right to receive mental health care.

Question 506: I've been on 0.5 mg of Xanax twice a day for the past month. It hasn't been helping me at all, but when I take 1 mg during a big anxiety attack, it calms me down. I was wondering how I can ask my psychologist to up the dose to 1 mg twice a day without her thinking I'm abusing them. I just have very big anxiety attacks. Should I stay on the 0.5mg and deal with the attacks or should I ask to up the dose? I'm afraid she will take me off them and put me on something else.

Answer 506: Do you think you're abusing xanax? It is a highly addictive drug so maybe one reason you feel compelled to take more is bc you already are addicted. Drugs don't do anything helpful in solving life's problems. Once the effect wears off, the stressful situation is once again waiting for you to address it. Think over your reason for not directly asking your psychologist about upping your dose. Also, do you ever talk about your life problems with this psychologist or only your need for drugs? The more gradual path to a better life is to not need drugs in the first place. This consists of your willingness to face the matters that are creating such terrible feelings inside you.

Question 507: I've been on 0.5 mg of Xanax twice a day for the past month. It hasn't been helping me at all, but when I take 1 mg during a big anxiety attack, it calms me down. I was wondering how I can ask my psychologist to up the dose to 1 mg twice a day without her thinking I'm abusing them. I just have very big

anxiety attacks. Should I stay on the 0.5mg and deal with the attacks or should I ask to up the dose? I'm afraid she will take me off them and put me on something else.

Answer 507: Staying on the lower dose may give you more room to learn strategies for coping with your anxiety. Medications are so helpful, and needed at times, but it's also important to have a variety of tools you use to manage your responses to stress. If you are not already seeing a therapist, consider finding one who can help you learn some effective strategies, like replacing self-defeating thoughts with ones that work better for you, or mindfulness, relaxation, or other tools to keep your anxiety in the manageable range!

Question 508: I've been on 0.5 mg of Xanax twice a day for the past month. It hasn't been helping me at all, but when I take 1 mg during a big anxiety attack, it calms me down. I was wondering how I can ask my psychologist to up the dose to 1 mg twice a day without her thinking I'm abusing them. I just have very big anxiety attacks. Should I stay on the 0.5mg and deal with the attacks or should I ask to up the dose? I'm afraid she will take me off them and put me on something else.

Answer 508: In general, Xanax is very short-acting. You mentioned that you are afraid that your medical provider will take you off of the Xanax and put you on something else. If the Xanax is not working well for you, I wonder if something else may work better. What is your reasoning there? Also, sometimes there are medications that you can take in addition to Xanax. In addition to talking with your medical provider about changing the medication, try to track your levels of anxiety on a scale of 1 to 10 throughout the day so you can get a pattern of what is happening. Also consider writing down what is happening before you have anxiety attacks. This may help your medical provider know what medication may be helpful to you or what changes could be made. As far as how to discuss this with your medical provider, I would suggest mentioning the symptom changes you are having (anxiety attacks that are not helped with 0.5mg of Xanax) and ask what they would suggest that might help. If your medical provider suggests taking you off of the Xanax, I would recommend talking about the reasons why you would prefer to stay on the Xanax and what your concerns are about coming off of it. You could also ask whether anything could be combined with Xanax. There are also many other anxiety medications. I have seen lots of people that take more than one medication to lessen anxiety that they are having. I would also consider talking with a therapist (unless the person who is prescribing a medication is also doing therapy with you). Getting more information about your anxiety and how it is affecting you may be greatly helpful to you.

Question 509: I've been on 0.5 mg of Xanax twice a day for the past month. It hasn't been helping me at all, but when I take 1 mg during a big anxiety attack, it calms me down. I was wondering how I can ask my psychologist to up the dose to 1 mg twice a day without her thinking I'm abusing them. I just have very big anxiety attacks. Should I stay on the 0.5mg and deal with the attacks or should I ask to up the dose? I'm afraid she will take me off them and put me on something else.

Answer 509: Hello, and thank you for your question. While counselors work closely with medical providers, and sometimes have discussions about medications with people, we rarely make recommendations about how much or what type of medication a person should be taking. This is because prescribing and advising on medication is out of our scope of practice. The only exception would be if a counselor is also a physician, nurse practitioner, physician's assistant, etc. Having said that, I certainly understand that anxiety is a real serious problem that many folks struggle with. If you are currently not in therapy to help you with these panic attacks, you should consider it. Medications can be helpful for anxiety, and medications like Xanax may help for immediate relief, but they do nothing to deal with the root of anxiety and may not help with anxiety long-term. Therapists who have experience in exposure therapies would be good people to start with. Exposure therapy has good outcomes for people with anxiety disorders and panic attacks. If you are interested in speaking with your provider about the Xanax, I think explaining it the way you did on here is just fine. The provider will then decide if they feel comfortable increasing your medication. Please remember that medical providers are not trying to give people a hard time. Medications like Xanax really are highly addictive. The more you take, the more you may feel you need. The more often you may feel you need to use it. Depending on the frequency and amount of use, some people suffer serious withdrawal symptoms when they do not take the medication. It is a good idea to talk to medical provider about all of those things so that you can partner on right course of action to manage this anxiety. I certainly hope that you get some relief.... I know anxiety is awful. Robin J. Landwehr, DBH, LPC, NCC

Question 510: I am so terrified of having sex anymore because I have been told over and over that sex is dangerous even though me and my partner used both forms of protection. My partner is not happy about

this and simply wants more sex, and honestly, I want to give that to her.

Answer 510: I would suggest possibly talking with a physician about all the different types of protection. They may be able to help you to know about all of the options that are available. It sounds like your partner is open to understanding your concerns. Perhaps until you have the chance to speak with someone about the effectiveness of different contraception and forms of protection, are either of you open to other forms of engaging in sexual intimacy (without penetration, but with use of vibrators, toys designed for sexual interactions, etc.)?

Question 511: I am so terrified of having sex anymore because I have been told over and over that sex is dangerous even though me and my partner used both forms of protection. My partner is not happy about this and simply wants more sex, and honestly, I want to give that to her.

Answer 511: I am wondering who is telling you that sex is dangerous. Is this medical advice, or is this someone's

opinion trying to scare you from having sex?

And if so, how old are you? Is it ok to have sex, do you want to have

sex? It sounds like you want to make

your partner happy, and that you are taking care of protecting yourself and

your partner, but maybe you are forgetting to consider what do you really want. Having sexual relations is a very personal decision;

you and your partner have to consent. It

is also important to talk about the possible consequences and being responsible

for them as well. But sex should be something

that you enjoy, not that you should be fearful of. A therapist can help you to process those

negative thoughts and feelings that may impair you from enjoying your sexual

life. ¿Cómo puedo superar mi miedo de un

embarazo no deseado y poder tener sexo otra vez? Estoy

aterrorizado de tener sexo porque me han dicho una y otra vez que el sexo es

peligroso, inclusive cuando yo y mi pareja usamos dos métodos de protección. Mi pareja no está contenta y simplemente

quiere más sexo, y honestamente, yo quiero darle lo que ella quiere. Me pregunto quién

te está diciendo que el sexo es peligroso.

¿Esto es aviso medico, o es alguien intentando asustarte para que no

tengas relaciones? ¿Y si es así, que

edad tienes? ¿Es apropiado que tengas

sexo a tu edad? ¿Quieres tener sexo? Me

parece que estas enfocado en hacer feliz a tu pareja, y te estás protegiendo y protegiéndola,

pero tal vez están olvidando analizar que tu quieres realmente. Recuerda que tener una relación sexual es una

decisión personal, en la que tú y tu pareja deben de estar de acuerdo. También es importante hablar de las posibles

consecuencias de tener relaciones, como un embarazo, y discutir sus opciones e

intenciones, si eso ocurriera. Ya que

han tenido comunicación al respecto, el sexo debe ser algo que disfruten, no que temen.

Un terapeuta te puede ayudar a procesar esos pensamientos negativos y

los sentimientos que te pudieran impedir disfrutar de tu vida sexual.

Question 512: I am so terrified of having sex anymore because I have been told over and over that sex is dangerous even though me and my partner used both forms of protection. My partner is not happy about this and simply wants more sex, and honestly, I want to give that to her.

Answer 512: Maybe you'll feel less fear by understanding that whoever told you sex was dangerous, was wrong. If this message came from your upbringing, then it may be a deeply embedded belief. Since the belief itself instructs to avoid risk, and overturning this belief requires taking the risk to believe the logic that reasonable safe sex measures are adequate protection, give yourself time to absorb this new understanding. Talk w your partner about your psychological difficulty bc their patience will help you.

Question 513: I am so terrified of having sex anymore because I have been told over and over that sex is dangerous even though me and my partner used both forms of protection. My partner is not happy about this and simply wants more sex, and honestly, I want to give that to her.

Answer 513: A lot of our choices have to do with what we have been taught and partly our fear of trusting ourselves to do what is right. There is so much more going on within you than you realize. We can help you bring it to the surface. Please contact us when you can and in whatever way you can to discuss what's going on with you.

Question 514: I was in a car accident and totaled my car. I gave up my job of nine years to pursue school full-time to better myself. I failed a class, and my boyfriend that I live with thinks I'm stupid and wants to break up with me. I have nowhere to go, and I feel like I'm losing everything.

Answer 514: When we feel overwhelmed by life situations, it is important to understand where the feeling is coming from. Once we understand the source, it is important to normalize the situations that got us there and find balance in our lives. First, car accidents are common, and since they are accidents they are not a reflection of us. When we have an accident we feel anxious, worried, and may have some trauma after the accidents. If you have been experiencing anxiety since the car accident, talk to your doctor or therapist about it. Second, a lot of people fail classes, tasks, deadlines, etc. but they don't give up on their goal. We have to remember that failing is part of the learning process, and having the courage to try again is what gives us determination and character. Remind yourself what motivated you to leave your job, and the courage and determination that took to do so, then channel that energy back into school.

Third, when we have problems in our relationships, it is helpful to look for ways to improve communication, discuss our concerns and how we want to resolve them, but it may be that the relationship needs to end if there isn't enough interest in one of the parts or if there's verbal or emotional abuse. Consider talking to your boyfriend and set some boundaries regarding appropriate communication. At all times: focus on being kind to yourself and improving your self-esteem: increase self-care activities, do more things that you enjoy, meditate in what gives you peace and make an effort to have more of that in your life. At the end, you are the one in control of your life, and you determine who you become. ¿Qué puedo hacer cuando siento que mi vida está fuera de control? Estuve en un accidente de auto, y fue pérdida total.

Deje mi trabajo de 9 años para completar un grado a tiempo completo. Falle una clase, y mi novio piensa que soy estúpida, él quiere dejarme. No tengo a donde ir y siento que lo estoy perdiendo todo. Cuando nos sentimos agobiados es importante reconocer donde estamos parados y entender de donde vienen esas emociones. Ya que entendemos la fuente de agobio, es importante normalizar las situaciones que lo causaron, y volver a encontrar el balance en nuestra vida. Primero, los accidentes de auto son comunes, y por ser accidentes no son un reflejo de nosotros o nuestras destrezas. Cuando experimentamos accidentes no nos sentimos ansiosos, preocupados, y puede que experimentemos algún trauma. Si sientes ansiedad, extrema preocupación habla con tu doctor o terapeuta al respecto.

Segundo, muchas personas fallan clases, tareas, fechas de entrega, pero no se rinden. Tenemos que recordar que fallar es parte del proceso de aprendizaje, y tener el valor de intentarlo de nuevo, es lo que nos da determinación y carácter. Recuerda que te impulsó a dejar tu trabajo y canaliza esa energía en la escuela. Tercero, cuando tenemos problemas en las relaciones, es importante comunicar nuestras preocupaciones y diferencias, pero puede ser que la relación termine si no hay interés mutuo o si hay algún tipo de abuso. Considera hablar con tu novio y establecer límites respecto a la comunicación apropiada. En todo momento: enfócate en cuidarte a ti misma y mejorar tu autoestima, aumenta las actividades que te ayudan a sentirte bien, medita sobre lo que te paz y pasa más tiempo practicando esas actividades.

Question 515: It's especially bad at night time. I am scared of sleeping alone.

Answer 515: Being able to know you feel anxiety and write about it, is the first step to addressing and handling it! Generally, anxiety is deep fear of not being able to handle what comes up in life. Somehow the person was insufficiently nurtured and so felt insecure when very young. Usually the person had to fend on at least a psychological and emotional level for themselves before reaching an age when doing so would have been reasonable. Their inner feeling of overwhelmed from when very young, hasn't faced the reality that the grown person is now capable, even if this takes some practice. Try asking yourself what you are afraid of and theorize how you would handle these situations as a grown person. Also, sometimes anxiety comes from feeling lonely. This loneliness is reminiscent of the loneliness that the grown person now, felt when being left to take care of situations as a child which were too difficult and complex for any child to address.

Question 516: I am on the track and softball team. My school is small, so I play all four sports it offers. I feel obligated to do track because I'm not a horrible runner, and my dad wants me to. The catch is that the days before a track meet and the morning of, I get sick and cry.

Answer 516: Does anyone notice that you get sick and cry on track meet days? Have you told anyone? From what you write, as much as you would like to please your school and dad, something within you doesn't quite want to fully follow through. Step one in life always is to know what you want and what your limits are. It already is difficult to avoid listening to your body. Try understanding what is difficult in telling your father that you'd like doing as he wishes, only are not able to do so because you are emotionally and physically distraught on the days you have track. After finishing the season for this year with your school's track team, then expect to concentrate on taking care of your own need to not do track. Hopefully your father will understand and care about your problem. If he does not and track is more important than your well being, then you have a different problem entirely.

Question 517: I am on the track and softball team. My school is small, so I play all four sports it offers. I feel obligated to do track because I'm not a horrible runner, and my dad wants me to. The catch is that the days before a track meet and the morning of, I get sick and cry.

Answer 517: It sounds like you are no longer committed to track emotionally. It can be hard to talk to your dad about this, but he may think you love track and may not know you are getting so upset the days of meets. An idea would be to first write a letter to your dad to see what feelings come out and then preparing to speak with him. I think he will appreciate your honesty and maybe this conversation will bring you relief and also time to find something you really will enjoy.

Question 518: I'm socially awkward. I've always want to be popular. I've had the opportunity to be popular, but every time I get it I'm too scared. All I have to do is talk the popular people. They're really nice to me, but I'm too scared of change. I really want to work up the courage to lose my fear.

Answer 518: Change can be uncomfortable, but sometimes those uncomfortable moments are the opportunity for us to be the person we feel we really are. It sounds like you like to spend the time in your head anticipating the worst, why not be in the present and encourage yourself that you can talk to people and it will be okay. By telling yourself it will not be okay, or that it will go wrong you are hurting your confidence to do what you want. Give yourself some credit for being awesome and tell yourself you can build new friendships...it may be the motivation you need to move past this fear.

Question 519: I often get the feeling that I'm being watched, like video cameras are hidden wherever I am, even at home. I feel like people can see all that I do and are reading my thoughts. Things I read or hear on the radio seem to be about (or meant for) me, and people are talking about me when they whisper.

Answer 519: It sounds like you are feeling pretty overwhelmed with worry about being continuously monitored, with no privacy even in your own mind, and as if people are constantly saying things about you in whispers on in the media. It's hard to say from a post online what is at the root of this experience, but you may be able to get insight into that, as well as develop ways of coping with the distress of feeling this way, with the help of a good therapist. There is no pill or technique that can guarantee that this experience will go away, though it might, however, there are things that you can do so that you can understand it better and so that it does not have such an impact on your ability to lead a satisfy life.

Question 520: I have a bad habit of thinking and worrying about what others may think of me. I really want to stop it and enjoy things.

Answer 520: Thinking about what others think of us is a natural tendency. Human beings are social creatures and rely on feedback from the outside world of people, places, and things to let us know more about ourselves. We also have an inner voice, dialogue, conscience, etc. that helps us to determine the path for us. Often, when someone is worried about the external feedback, and focuses on this as the sole source of information, it can create a dependency that can become problematic. Balance is key to so many things in life. Your own voice is powerful and has strength to provide you the enjoyment you seek. Don't discount it and rely only on the voices of others.

Question 521: I feel really uncomfortable when I have people's attention. It makes me not want to talk in public or answer questions in class. Can I get over this social anxiety?

Answer 521: you can learn lots of skills/techniques to feel more confident in what you need to do that will decrease your anxious response for sure! :) And you can also learn how to work with your personality that may not like the attention. You may find that "talking" to others through the internet is more comfortable and you are great at it, or that you love one on one talking but aren't really made for group talking. There is a place in this world for you either way! Public speaking skills can be practiced in speech class, or toastmaster group, they will give you practice in a safe environment where the cool kids or cutest boy aren't ready to laugh at you. What topics are you interested in and what groups can you do a little speaking up? Maybe in your small group at church try and raise you hand to share your opinion, or maybe

your Girl Scout troop? Look around for a peer and one adult who you like to hear speak out, ask them to share with you 2 things that help them feel comfortable speaking in public. Check out some Ted Talks and see how they share in groups. Social anxiety is a difficult concern and picking apart what is your awesome personality and what needs skill building and mindfulness/anxiety help are important steps. Good luck!

Question 522: I feel really uncomfortable when I have people's attention. It makes me not want to talk in public or answer questions in class. Can I get over this social anxiety?

Answer 522: Since anxiety usually about anticipating a bad result, or fear of being judged negatively, as though having failed some sort of test, consider what would give you the feeling of anticipating a good result from talking to an audience? Maybe, for example, if you prepared and rehearsed your talk more than what you typically would, you'd feel more secure in speaking in front of an audience. Once you sort through your particular reason as to the source of your discomfort, it may feel more manageable. Yes, social anxiety can change. You may naturally prefer smaller groups than an audience. And, it is possible to decrease anxiety in what may always be somewhat uncomfortable for you.

Question 523: I have been having a lot of nightmares where I am being killed in different ways. I either wake up in a panic or just crying and sweating. It has made me terrified of falling asleep and is now affecting my daily life too. Can I make the nightmares stop?

Answer 523: Hello, and thank you for your question. Sleep problems, including insomnia and even the nightmares that you are writing about, are really common for people and so many people suffer from them. Here are a few things to consider or to try: 1. Have you changed or started taking any new medication lately? Medications can certainly affect your sleep and some can even cause vivid or frightening dreams. If you are taking a new medication, talk to your provider about the nightmares, this may be the cause. 2. Stress can certainly increase our difficulty with sleep and can also begin to affect our dream states. The dreams may not make much sense, but then again even good dreams don't always make much sense. Ask yourself, do I have any new or renewed stressors in my life? Work, school, relationships, health.... all of these areas and many more are places where stress can hide out. If this is the case, talk with your provider or consider seeing a counselor who may be able to help. 3. Something to consider is that once we start to have anxiety or stress about something, we can begin to obsess about it. My guess is that going to bed for sleep is no longer a pleasant thing for you. Your stress and fear of what may happen when you sleep could start way before you actually go to bed. This could increase your chances of having another bad dream. Try relaxation techniques before going to bed. If you have YouTube, you can pull up "Guided Meditation for Sleep" exercises to help you relax. There are many different ones to choose from. You may also want to try deep breathing. 4. There are self-help ideas for managing bad nightmares. If you Google search "Nightmare Rescripting" or "Nightmare Exposure" you may find some ideas and instructions on how to manage dreams. I hope these ideas help. Be well...

Robin J. Landwehr, DBH, LPC, NCC

Question 524: My boyfriend and I have been dating for almost a year. We go to different schools, and we don't see each other that often. I just feel very paranoid that there's someone else or that he could be hiding something from me.

Answer 524: Have you spoken to him about your fears? Perhaps you can explain this feeling to him and let him know what might lead to feeling more secure. Also, it is important to trust your intuition! Perhaps there are good reasons to feel concerned. It may not be paranoia - it may be based in reality!

Question 525: My boyfriend and I have been dating for almost a year. We go to different schools, and we don't see each other that often. I just feel very paranoid that there's someone else or that he could be hiding something from me.

Answer 525: Paranoid is a mental disorder word. That is a strong word I think to use in this situation. Honestly the bottom line is either you don't trust him for some reason or you are insecure with yourself. Which is it? Do some soul searching to help you figure which one it is. Work on either discussing why you don't trust him and work on building that trustor why you feel you are not good enough and work on that.

Question 526: I'm concerned about my boyfriend. I suffer from anxiety, but I always have this feeling he wants to hurt me because he told me he was interested in BDSM intercourse. We haven't tried it, but I've had this feeling he always wants to.

Answer 526: Hello! Thank you for your question. There are few things that people find more personal than their sexual relationships. When we feel

connected to our partner, sex can be best thing since sliced bread. However, if we feel disconnected in some way, sex can feel degrading and even painful. I don't know the specifics about your relationship or how comfortable you are in talking to your boyfriend, but this is one of those situations where communicating your fears is a good idea. The only exception to that would be if you believe he is actually a threat to you in some way. If you believe that, then you should do whatever you think is safe. It sounds like there is a part of you that is already afraid of him, and if that is the case then remaining safe is your top priority.

Assuming you are able to share with him your feelings, telling him what you are and are not interested in sexually is very appropriate and sexually healthy. Sex is something that is supposed to be enjoyable for all parties. All parties should feel respected and able to say "no" to absolutely anything they are not comfortable with.

I call the respectful agreement between sexual partners, "sex trust." Sex Trust means your partner respects your boundaries. It means they won't degrade you sexually with hurtful words, forced sex, or forcing or coercing sex in ways someone is not interested in having. Your personal safety and mental well-being is what is most important.

Now, if there is a part of you that is curious about BDSM and may be interested in participating in it, there are many websites that you can explore to learn information. I will warn you, some websites and articles are better or worse than others, but you may at least feel more informed. Many people engage in BDSM and have happy relationships, but again, it completely depends on what each person in the relationship wants. It is also important to know that BDSM is not just one thing and people practice it differently based on comfort. If it is something you are uncomfortable with, then you shouldn't feel obligated to do it.

I hope this was helpful. Be well.

Robin J. Landwehr, DBH, LPC, NCC

Question 527: I get so much anxiety, and I don't know why. I feel like I can't do anything by myself because I'm scared of the outcomes.

Answer 527: This is a very common question in my practice. Panic attacks typically emerge from an underlying issue (ex. Depression, low self-esteem, fears). To decrease your anxiety symptoms it's recommended to seek treatment with a therapist who specializes in working with anxiety disorders and most importantly one with whom you feel comfortable with. In my practice I educate clients about their anxiety and discuss building a framework with helpful tools for decreasing anxiety: 1. Starting a daily mindfulness practice. For example: listening to guided meditation; engaging in deep breathing exercises; yoga practice; or other positive calming activities. 2. Understand your negative and positive thoughts. Many times we tend to focus on the potential for bad things to happen. Increase positive self-talk when feeling down or when anxious. For example: "I don't need to worry, I am calm and relaxed". 3. Exposure to fearful or anxious situations. This can be accomplished under the care of a mental health professional. Many times we shy away from things that make us feel uncomfortable or insecure. This may lead to an increase in isolating behaviors resulting in difficulty in performing things we were once able to do. For example: leaving the house; presenting in front of others; going to social events; and having conversations with people. However, the more we expose ourselves and practice the use of our positive coping skills (ex. deep breathing) the chances of anxiety will decrease. I hope this was helpful. Keep in mind, a therapist can help with guiding you through self relaxation and improvement.

Question 528: I get so much anxiety, and I don't know why. I feel like I can't do anything by myself because I'm scared of the outcomes.

Answer 528: The other two post answers to your question are very good and I don't feel the need to repeat what has already been said quite well, but I will offer one other option I have been able to utilize quite successfully with those dealing with panic attacks. Chain analysis is a fantastic way for you to map

out the situation starting with the prompting event, the chain of events ((links) that lead up to the behavior - in this case a panic attack, and then what the consequences were. See the illustration below: This is very useful in that it lays everything out for you to see so that it becomes possible to alter one of the links leading up to the unwanted behavior (panic attack), allows you to come up with strategies for similar situations (prompting events) and allows you to understand how you are reinforcing the behavior when it does occur (consequences). Finally - it would also allow you to identify any particular vulnerabilities, such as not enough sleep, poor nutrition, trauma history or having a cold the time it occurred. Working with someone who utilizes a behavioral approach, such as DBT or behavioral analysis, you can find solutions that replace one of the links and therefore breaks the chain of events.

Question 529: I get so much anxiety, and I don't know why. I feel like I can't do anything by myself because I'm scared of the outcomes.

Answer 529: Anxiety is simply your system communicating to you that you are in danger. The issue that I see in most of my clients is that they try to reason with this anxiety. You do not reason with sensory states in the body. If your system tells you in danger (your stomach feels like it is knots, your heart is beating out of your chest,) validate by just being present with it. Take your breath to it. Breathe in and out of that space. Say ok, I am in danger. I always tell my clients, "a crying baby wants to be held, not told to shut up." Listen to your system, validate it like you do a child and see what happens.

Question 530: I get so much anxiety, and I don't know why. I feel like I can't do anything by myself because I'm scared of the outcomes.

Answer 530: There are two ways that such anxiety can be dealt with. One is an attempt to replace maladaptive thinking by examining the distorted thinking and resetting the fight-or-flight response with more reasonable, accurate ones. As an example "I'm scared of spiders." But if you change the thinking from being scared to "I'm bigger than the spider," it allows the mind to reach a calmer state of mind. Mindfulness-based therapy can also help focus on the bodily sensations that arise when you feel anxious. Instead of avoiding or withdrawing from these feelings, remain present and fully experience the symptoms of anxiety. Instead of avoiding distressing thoughts, open up to them in an effort to realize and acknowledge that they are not literally true. Although it may seem counter-intuitive, fully realizing the experience of anxiety enables the release of over identification with negative thoughts. You can practice responding to disruptive thoughts, and letting these thoughts go. By remaining present in the body, you'll learn that the anxiety being experienced is merely a reaction to perceived threats. By positively responding to threatening events instead of being reactive you can overcome an erroneous fight-or-flight response.

Question 531: I started dating my fiancé two years ago. My first cousin is married to my fiancé's sister. There has always been a communication issue between my uncle and aunt and my cousin and his wife. My uncle goes to my mom instead of talking to my cousin, and it upsets my mom.

Answer 531: Based on the information provided, this is an issue with boundaries. Sounds like your uncle goes to your mom and possibly your mother takes the issues to you. I do not like to assume so I will direct you to information regarding families dealing with enmeshment and triangulation. Enmeshment is the concept of diffused boundaries in families and other personal relationships. Triangulation is two individuals relaying information to a third party what cannot be said directly to each other. From someone who has dealt with both these issues on a personal level, being informed about family dynamics is beneficial and can help you develop healthy boundaries for yourself within your family structure. You may need assistance with developing healthy boundaries. Although it is possible, it is not easy to change the way you have been operating for any extended amount of time. Hope this helps!

Question 532: I started dating my fiancé two years ago. My first cousin is married to my fiancé's sister. There has always been a communication issue between my uncle and aunt and my cousin and his wife. My uncle goes to my mom instead of talking to my cousin, and it upsets my mom.

Answer 532: When you're upset about something, the first question you can ask yourself is "Whose problem is this?" It is amazing how many problems will disappear right at that point, because you realize the problem isn't even yours. You can't fix everything in your family. You are starting a new family of your own, and it's time to create a protective bubble around your family unit that keeps other people's issues away. I tell myself "Not my pig, not my farm, not my problem." When you stop trying to take care of other people's problems, they are more likely to step up and deal with it themselves. :)

Question 533: Whenever I have to speak in public or be in big crowds, I freak out. I get light-headed, sweaty, and I have trouble breathing.

Answer 533: Basically, your response is the fight, flight or freeze reaction which is hard wired into the human nervous system, specifically, the autonomic nervous system (called the autonomic response). This system is responsible for regulating the heart, digestion, respiratory rate as well as other aspects which match the symptoms you describe. It is largely an unconscious function, but with training it can be managed such as a public speaking course in which you prepare and even have some exposure to smaller experiences to help you prepare and cope for larger presentations. One of the greatest applications of addressing this response is the NASA program which exposes the astronauts to situations they will encounter while in space which will trigger the response so that when it does happen (not if but when) that they are able to move through the challenge with success. You can learn more about his by going to TED Talks "What I learned about going blind in space" It is a truly inspiring look at what you are experiencing as well as how to deal with it.

With that being said, finding a program like a Dale Carnegie Public Speaking program can help. Working with a counselor who can help you utilize visualization of an upcoming speech has been shown to help and you can always talk to your doctor to see what options might be available there as well. Good luck!

Question 534: Whenever I have to speak in public or be in big crowds, I freak out. I get light-headed, sweaty, and I have trouble breathing.

Answer 534: As you do it more, it should get better or at least with less anxiety. Anxiety is normal for most when speaking in public. I hear this from even the best of facilitators who have been doing it for years. I even experienced that when I first became a counselor and had to lead classes. I asked myself why were I so anxious? I admit at that time I didn't have confidence in myself. The more I prepared and practiced, the more my confidence level increased. Yours will too...

Question 535: I am a teenage girl. I've been seeing the same dream once in a while since I was very young. The problem is that I don't remember anything about this dream. I still know that it's the same one, and then I wake up in a panic, and I cry really loud without knowing the reason. Why do I see the same dream, why can I not remember it, and what should I do to remember it?

Answer 535: There is no scientifically established formula for understanding dreams, that I know about, however, many people get a great deal of value from exploring what their dreams mean. It is believed by many that our dreams contain metaphors that represent meaningful patterns in our lives and relationships and if we pay attention to them we can learn important things about ourselves. One thing you might try, to see if you can get more insight into the dream and possibly begin remembering things, is to take note of whatever you do remember, any details about your experience, such as when do you wake up from the dream, how do you feel, both emotionally and physically, what are you thinking about when you wake up, is there any pattern in terms of what happens to you in your waking life around the time you have this dream... If you can keep a journal or a recording device to speak into by your bed, you can try to record whatever you do remember and notice as soon as you wake up. People seem to have more difficulty remembering dreams, the more time they let go by before attempting to record the dream, or if you go back to sleep before recording what you remember.

Question 536: I've been with my boyfriend for a year and a half. He loves me a lot, and I love him. It hurts to be apart from him for so long. It hurts all over, and then I feel like it won't last.

Answer 536: I would suggest that you look up the word codependency and its characteristics. See if you relate to those characteristics. I have a feeling you have suffered some form of loss in your life that you have not dealt with properly. For some reason you are depending on your boyfriend to fill that loss.

Considering working with a counselor to work through your emotions and resolve any lingering issues.

Question 537: I started seeing this guy that I met at a mutual friend's place. He recently broke up with his ex-girlfriend and started seeing me. Everything was great in the beginning, then I started having low self-esteem thoughts and thinking he was hanging with his ex-girlfriend again. It's all I think about. I am still seeing him, but things have changed because I am at a loss for words. I get stuck in my own thoughts. I like and care for him a lot. He just makes me nervous and gives me the butterflies.

Answer 537: Sounds like you are struggling with your own negative thoughts. As you stated, everything was great then you started having low self-esteem thoughts and thinking. What is contributing to these negative thoughts? His actions or your past experiences with unhealthy relationships would be my question..

Question 538: I have not had a friend since I was 19. I don't go anywhere, and I have no job, all because I'm afraid of people.

Answer 538: Individual and/or group therapy can be a powerful antidote for social anxiety. Often in therapy, the things that tend to get in the way of our securing satisfying and lasting personal relationships will appear in some way in the therapy relationship and a competent therapist will be able to help you work through this anxiety, in a sensitive way, and eventually encourage you to seek out the personal relationships that you want. In group therapy, you have an opportunity to have a relationship not only with the therapist, but several other people who are all in the group in order to give and receive mutual support to one another.

Question 539: I feel insecure in my life. I don't think my wife truly wants our relationship even though she says she does. I have turned to drinking to help relieve my repressed stress about this and other issues. I have had a drinking problem for a few years. I feel the reason I drink is not just because I like to, but because I have lately been on edge. I've been very oddly emotional when watching movies that I have been watching for years. I'm paranoid about driving on main roads. I'm very jumpy at the slightest noises.

Answer 539: Given the description you have posted here, it may be time to find someone to work with.

First and foremost, look into working with someone who specializes in working with individuals with challenges surrounding drinking. This would need to be assessed first since if it has been ongoing, it may be making the situation worse and given the time it has been utilized as a coping mechanism, there is reason to believe that the structure of your brain may have been effected as has been demonstrated by current neurological research. There are however, ways to address this. As for coping mechanisms, the person you work with should also look at offering you alternatives such as the skills found within the Dialectic Behavior Therapy model (DBT) which has several useful tools to help address the underlying anxiety and difficulty managing emotional regulation. Mindfulness, another component of DBT should also prove to be useful in both becoming aware of your state of mind and emotional state to allow you to make different choices which has been supported by a growing body of evidence. There are also other tools designed to help repair damaged relationships. Well worth looking into. Seeking help is never easy and it is only human to be hesitant given some of the cultural views of working with therapist. This is a difficult place to be in and one that is not easy to move out of, but sitting on it is not going to help it go away. Think of it this way, if you broke your arm, would you just wrap it up and hope for the best? or seek out a professional to help you set the break and teach you how to mend the wound. The same applies here. Think of it as first aid for the mind.

Question 540: I feel insecure in my life. I don't think my wife truly wants our relationship even though she says she does. I have turned to drinking to help relieve my repressed stress about this and other issues. I have had a drinking problem for a few years. I feel the reason I drink is not just because I like to, but because I have lately been on edge. I've been very oddly emotional when watching movies that I have been watching for years. I'm paranoid about driving on main roads. I'm very jumpy at the slightest noises.

Answer 540: Sorry hearing about the big amount of stress which you are feeling at this time. Since a lot of your stress is directed to uncertainty of whether your wife is happy being with you, would you consider continuing the conversation with her about your understanding of her answer to you? Your observation that she says one thing and behaves in a different way, is meaningful. Bringing your point to her attention would at the very least demonstrate her interest in showing and explaining her viewpoint about you. Basically, you'd be expecting her to care about you and how she handles herself with this question, may clarify what you're trying to find out. The good news about your relationship with alcohol, is that you realize you're overdoing it. From what you write, the emotional pain and helplessness you feel currently, seem too much to know about all at once. One possibility is to accept your feelings of hurt and insecurity.

This is the first step of working with them. If they start feeling overwhelming, then maybe too, you can distract yourself for a while from the intensity by engaging in an activity that is not self-harming. After all, you are the most important person in your life, so keep yourself safe and healthy!

Question 541: I think I'm annoying and bothersome, but my girlfriend says I'm just fine. I don't think so, I think I'm stressing everyone else out

Answer 541: I think you have identified something important here. It's not unusual to experience feelings

that don't seem to match up with what your rational mind recognizes. In this case, it sounds like a part of you recognizes that the people around you do not find you "annoying and bothersome." Despite knowing that people like you, it seems that there's still a part of you that feels like you're a bother. Finding a local counselor who can work with you to process those feelings might be just the help you need.

Question 542: I think I'm annoying and bothersome, but my girlfriend says I'm just fine. I don't think so, I think I'm stressing everyone else out

Answer 542: "Where you put your attention is where you will go". I forget who said this first, but it's very powerful. If all you think about and talk about is how annoying you think you might be, that will get annoying. Your intense self reflection is lovely; it will help you monitor yourself so that you're not affecting others negatively, but your alarm is going off too easily here and you risk having the opposite effect. You don't have to be perfect. She's with you, so she probably likes you as you are. She seems to put far less emphasis on your possibly annoying traits. We all have faults and if that's what we focus on, that's all we will see. My hunch is that your most annoying trait might be your negative self-talk. How ironic is that? There's another irony here...your goal is to be a better partner...but when you are self-critical, your focus is on you, not her. Every moment that fear grabs ahold of you is a moment that you're not being present in the actual relationship; you're gazing at your imagined faults. Fear steals your ability to focus on your loving partner. Maybe take a moment to image how she sees you...all of you. Put yourself in her shoes to see the entire you...how are you loving...thoughtful...a good partner? Confidence is a very attractive quality!

Question 543: I think I'm annoying and bothersome, but my girlfriend says I'm just fine. I don't think so, I think I'm stressing everyone else out

Answer 543: I'm glad to hear you have friends and that your friends say they like you. Trust your own sense of who you are which tells you that something feels uneasy within yourself. Is the friend who says you're "just fine", very familiar with who you are? "Friend" is a broad category. She may not know you as fully as you know yourself. Basically, it is possible to be "fine" and have some inner stress. Follow your own thoughts and observations to more fully learn about yourself in ways your friend may not notice or be aware.

Question 544: I think I'm annoying and bothersome, but my girlfriend says I'm just fine. I don't think so, I think I'm stressing everyone else out

Answer 544: Interesting: How much of your issue is your own self-judging and how much of your perception is real? There are many ways to stop judging and self-judging using Cognitive Theory (CBT).

You could find a (CBT) counselor/ therapist to help you reduce your judgments. In addition, I've written extensively about this in my book, *LIVING YES, A HANDBOOK FOR BEING HUMAN* (www.LivingYes.org). I recommend you visit the webpage and pick up a copy. As to your own perception:

You seem okay being who you are, and your girlfriend agrees. Instead, you appear to be upset by your own guess at what others may be thinking. That's a trap that stresses a lot of folks out. Consider this:

Many happy people don't mind what others think of them. And consider this: Many heroic characters in literature and movies are unlikeable. ("Colombo" is annoying and bothersome, but we love him. So is Johnny Depp's Jack Sparrow and many of the roles played by George Clooney, Sandra Bullock, and Jack Nicholson.) Would it be okay with you to be an "antihero" in your own life? If you don't want to be an antihero, you have the power to be the person you want. Your behaviors and thoughts are completely under your control. What other people think of you is not under your control. You are completely in the driver's seat here. The choices are all yours. Enjoy who you are, and use your will power to make yourself who you want to be! ~Mark (www.MarkMorrisLCSW.com and www.LivingYes.org)

Question 545: I'm a little paranoid. My mind does get the best of me. One night, I put chairs under all of my door knobs because I thought someone might break in. I also think a lot, which is probably the reason for the paranoia. I can't stand loud noises, like the sound of cars going by. The grocery store is too noisy, and I feel like people are looking at me.

Answer 545: Paranoid people don't realize they are paranoid. They believe their actions to be reasonable responses to potential threats. From what you write, you are aware that your actions may be understood as extreme. Instead of trying to fit your behavior into a negative psychological category, try seeing each of the behaviors you list here, as your own uniqueness. This way you will become more tolerant of what very well be your natural tendencies. If you are someone who needs a lot of time in quiet, then not liking loud noises doesn't make you paranoid, it is simply the way of who you are. One possible way of feeling better is if you would accept the answers you've developed so far for yourself. They may be a little unusual

compared to what we consider mainstream. From what you describe, you already are dealing with what you call "paranoia".

Question 546: When I go to school, I feel like everyone is judging me, even my friends. I get overwhelmed which these thoughts and sometimes cannot get out of what I call a deep hole of thoughts. I barely go to any of our school dances because of all of the people. Not even when I am completely alone do these thoughts go away. I still feel like people can see me and are judging me.

Answer 546: It sounds like a couple of things are going on here; you are noticing yourself feeling judged by the people around you and that you are avoiding social activities and in addition to this you have intrusive thoughts that you are being judged, even when alone. It sounds like these thoughts are pretty distressing and you are wondering what is happening to you. Many people who come to therapy experience intrusive and distressing thoughts of various kinds, which often influence their behavior in ways that they may not like, such as leading them to isolate. In therapy, you may be able to gain insight into the nature of your distress as well as learn ways to cope and eventually alleviate this distress so that you can have satisfaction and security in your life and relationships.

Question 547: Recently, I had a close call after delivering my second child (blood clot followed by internal bleeding and several blood transfusions). It was a close call. I am currently undergoing medical treatment because of the event, and I am constantly afraid the whole ordeal will happen again. I have never really had anxiety in the past, but I find now that it consumes my every day and night. With two beautiful children to raise, I am most terrified of not being able to raise and protect them.

Answer 547: Hi Meriden, it's natural that after a serious scare like that you would have some anxiety and fear. This fear is helpful to some extent, because it will assist you in taking care of yourself and not taking unnecessary risks with your health. You can say "thanks very much" to fear for trying to protect you, and then you can take steps to reduce it. Right now, fear is working overtime and stealing your quality of life. You can work to put it into perspective. I invite you to imagine that your job is to convince fear that you don't need it screaming in your ear constantly in order to be as safe as you can be. Imagine that fear is in front of you. It's saying "hey, you need me! If I wasn't keeping you alert, you would be very ill". Fear doesn't trust you to take care of yourself. What is the evidence you are caring for yourself and doing everything you can to prevent a recurrence? What is the evidence that this won't likely happen again (it was specifically connected to the stress of labour, right?). What is the evidence from your doctor that this is unlikely to recur? What is the evidence that you are healing? What is the evidence that you are very aware of the danger and will respond quickly if there is a recurrence? What is the evidence that worrying about it will hurt you, not help you? How many hours of your life do you want to hand over to fear? Fear is trying to keep you safe, but you can turn the volume down by talking to yourself about all these things. I wish you well.

Question 548: I constantly have this urge to throw away all my stuff. It's constantly on my mind and makes me feel anxious. I don't sleep because I'm thinking about something I can get rid of. I don't know why I do it. I started years ago when I lived with my dad then I stopped when I moved in with my mom. Years later, it has started again.

Answer 548: Since you wrote that you noticed a change in your throwing away urge when you changed with which parent you lived, would you feel that throwing away things is connected to wanting to be done with certain areas of influence with either parent? Play in your mind with the metaphor of "throwing away" and whatever associations you feel toward this. Are you feeling alarmed or freed, by throwing away things? I'm only suggesting these, not telling you that they apply necessarily. Anxiety comes up when people feel helpless to manage a meaningful part of their lives. So pay attention whether your stuff represents difficult scenarios or phases of your growing up years. Possibly you are trying to rid yourself of painful feelings which were part of your early years' relationship with either parent. Basically, sounds as though you are trying to establish a clearer sense of who you are and the throwing away part is a means of discovering who you are, once all the clutter is released.

Question 549: I met a guy a while ago, and I can't stop thinking about him. I feel like I love him, but I don't think I know him. What if he is not who I think he is? I cry sometimes thinking someone is going to be with him or that he has a girlfriend. I don't know, am I too obsessive? Every time we talk though, it's like magic. He makes me feel amazing, but what if I'm mistaken?

Answer 549: Keller, it sounds like you're living this relationship in your mind, instead of in the real world. You can get answers to your questions by talking to him...getting to know him will answer all the curiosities you have. You're asking the questions in your head instead of being in the friendship. So what

is it that gets in the way of actually asking the questions and getting to know him? Fear of rejection? Fear of something else? If you have fear that keeps you from having fulfilling friendships, I recommend a therapist to help you work through that. I wish you well. :)

Question 550: I've been experiencing a lot of anxiety and panic attacks lately. I was recently diagnosed by my psychiatrist with obsessive-compulsive disorder. Lately, I've been questioning everything from my career to my relationship. My boyfriend and I just moved in a few months ago. All of a sudden, I don't feel as comfortable around him as I used to, although I can't seem to find a reason as to why I feel this way.

Answer 550: How is your boyfriend responding to your discomfort around him? Has he told you that he's noticed changes in you? The good news about a relationship is that you can talk about matters with the other person. Doing so can only help clarify feelings and what either of you expect from the relationship.

Given that the two of you recently moved in together, it is natural for new dynamics, feelings and expectations to arise. It just adds to the reasonableness of talking with each other about how living together feels to each of you. Psychiatrists earn their living by diagnosing people and telling them to take pills. Very often, just being told the person has a "condition" makes them feel fragile and less capable than they actually are. Anxiety and panic attacks do mean that there is a great deal of emotion and situation needing to be addressed. It is the normal sign of having to address many or deep matters. Be patient and give yourself time to learn the details of your relationship and whatever the career particulars are that are bothering you. You're apparently self-aware since you're the one describing your own problematic situations. Keep the label of being "disordered", aside. Psychiatry labels do more good for psychiatrists than they do for people who are trying to live their lives.

Question 551: I've been experiencing a lot of anxiety and panic attacks lately. I was recently diagnosed by my psychiatrist with obsessive-compulsive disorder. Lately, I've been questioning everything from my career to my relationship. My boyfriend and I just moved in a few months ago. All of a sudden, I don't feel as comfortable around him as I used to, although I can't seem to find a reason as to why I feel this way.

Answer 551: Hi New Jersey, You talk about two very big changes in your life that have happened lately; the diagnosis/anxiety, and the moving in together. That's a lot! I love how you recognise that you been 'questioning everything'. I think anxiety's got its toe in the door and it's pushing you around, wanting some power over you. Fear and anxiety try to convince us that we need protection and that it's best to either pull away or fight. But letting anxiety control how you see your relationship isn't the answer here. I think you know that already. You must have moved in with him for a reason, and it's appropriate now to simply trust that, to ask him for some patience, and to focus on learning to manage the anxiety rather than questioning this decision to move in. Fear is getting in the way of you trusting yourself and your decision. You can figure the anxiety piece out while living with your boyfriend. When you're in a bit of a crisis is not the right time to make a major change. I suggest you use a therapist who works with cognitive behavioural therapy to learn to manage the anxiety, and then the relationship will likely seem more clear.

Question 552: My toddler defies everything I say and doesn't see me as authoritative, so she says no about everything. I'd like to hear some ways I can work on not needing to feel so much in control all the time.

Answer 552: Hi Biddeford, This is a super goal. Feeling powerless is something parents are wise to get used to; there's a creature in the home whose job it is to find and use their power in the family and in the world. Of course your toddler defies you, and that's healthy. I worry more about the overly compliant ones. She is wanting to know what the rules are, and all you have to do is show her clearly where the lines are. I'll give you some tips. First, remind yourself that it's her job to learn what the rules are, and where her power is. Don't be so surprised when she wants it her way. If we go through our days being ready and prepared for these beautiful creatures to have minds of their own, we're less caught off guard when it happens. Avoid situations that invite power struggles. Any time you tell your daughter "do this now", you set up a power struggle. The good thing is that she's young enough you can pick her up; now is the time to teach her that mom's (or dad's) word means something. So, if you say "let's get you dressed", then be prepared to pick her up right away and show her that when you say something will happen, you can make it happen. And I'm talking about gently picking her up here...not roughly. Pick your battles; only give instructions when you have the power to make it happen. Give her choices, so she can see her power. Instead of opening her drawer and asking what she wants to wear, give her two choices. Here's an example...she's on the ipad and you say ipad time is over. She says "no". You can say "ipad time is over. If you put it down, you can play later. If I have to take it away, you don't play it later." The choice is hers. Then follow through. "When...then" statements are really helpful. Your child asks for something. Instead of

saying no, try "as soon as the toys are picked up, we can have a snack". You're simply a pleasant parent who wants the same thing they do...but they have to earn it. Staying calm yourself is the key, because then at least you will feel in control of yourself, which is the ultimate goal. Use self-talk to calm yourself. Remind yourself her behaviour is normal and healthy. Breathe through a moment in which you would have reacted, and it will be over by the time the breath is done. You can give yourself time to think before you make parenting decisions. Time is a useful tool not enough parents use. Good luck!

Question 553: My toddler defies everything I say and doesn't see me as authoritative, so she says no about everything. I'd like to hear some ways I can work on not needing to feel so much in control all the time.

Answer 553: That's a good question. I would say learn to pick your battles. What types of behavior/situations can you let go of? If you allow yourself to worry about the various areas in life that you cannot control, you will find yourself stressed out and unable to manage everything. Know that toddlerhood comes with lots of "no's," tantrums, non-compliance, and a growing need for independence. When your toddler does something that you don't approve of, remain calm, explain to him/her the appropriate way to act, and model it for him/her. Remember to give your toddler praise when he/she does something good or acceptable. Be consistent and follow through with your instructions. Finally, know that you are not alone. Parenting comes with its set of challenges but all you can do is your very best. Good luck to you!

Question 554: My toddler defies everything I say and doesn't see me as authoritative, so she says no about everything. I'd like to hear some ways I can work on not needing to feel so much in control all the time.

Answer 554: Trust that you are a good mother and that you love your child. Trust and love are their own authority and come from a different inner place than the urge to be obeyed. Trust and love are effective guidance and usually feel happier and lighter too!

Question 555: I was violently raped by another women who was my friend of 13 years. I'm having bad flashbacks. I'm scared to sleep because I see it in my dreams. I don't leave the house because I have panic attacks.

Answer 555: I'm sorry for your suffering. There are therapy programs which help people to gradually feel more at ease so that daily living does not feel so frightening. Once you feel stronger and more secure from such a behavioral program, you'll be able to sleep more peacefully and leave the house whenever necessary to do your regular life. Then, you will be able to open and clear the deep emotional hurt that always occurs from being violated by a trusted friend. Sending good wishes in your work!

Question 556: I have lately been having lots of anxiety and self-loathing about the fact that I am a young adult virgin girl who has never had a boyfriend before. It seems like everyone my age has already had boyfriends by now or are not virgins anymore, and I just had my first kiss five months ago. I'm worried that, at this rate, I won't have a boyfriend for a very long time. The problem is that I want to lose my virginity to my first boyfriend who cares about me, but at the same time, I don't want to be waiting forever in order to experience sex. I have already given in to bad temptations by hooking up with random strangers on social media sites and having oral sex with them. Luckily, they were nice guys, but none of them wanted a relationship with me. I feel dirty by doing this, but I feel pressured to do this things in order to seem normal.

Most people are surprised when they find out that I am a virgin or never had a boyfriend because people think I am really good looking. I am tall, I play lots of sports, and I get excellent grades in school. I am in my first year of university right now, and no guys have approached me to go out on a date or showed any interest. It bothers me. Most of the people in my family have been in relationships at my age already. I feel like I will be single forever sometimes.

Answer 556: Hi Winters, I'm so glad you wrote, because I think there are a lot of young women experiencing the exact same thing. You feel self-loathing for both being a virgin, and for being sexually active. Young women have always gotten crazy mixed messages about what they're supposed to be. They feel pressure to be pure, and they also feel pressure to be the vixen and please men sexually. But you can't be both, so you can't ever win if you buy into all that horse manure (excuse my language). This current hook-up culture puts added pressure on girls to expect nothing more than random sexual encounters that leave you feeling empty and used; perhaps desirable in that moment but mostly worthless. The stupid part is that research tells us that young men are also impacted negatively by this cultural norm that values sex and not relationship; they feel guilt, and loneliness. I urge you to talk to

other girls and women about your feelings. My hope and prayer is that they will echo my words here. Your value and power cannot ever be found in whether a man wants you, whether you turn his eye, or how he treats you. Your sexuality is a beautiful part of who you are, and it is to be celebrated. I love that you want to celebrate it with someone who cares. Who you are is so very much more than your sexuality. You sound like you have a lot of things going for you. Try to see all of those things when you think of yourself. There are many more virgins out there, and many are afraid, like you, that they don't fit in. We are all different, and you don't have to be anything but who you want to be; who you are. You don't have to have any kind of sex until you're ready, and that makes you brave and smart, not weird. You're tall and beautiful, and guys may be intimidated by that. It may take time for you to meet the right guy, but he's out there. The question is: How do you want to spend your time until he crosses your path? I hope you talk to someone soon and find out that your feelings are normal. I wish you the best.

Question 557: I have lately been having lots of anxiety and self-loathing about the fact that I am a young adult virgin girl who has never had a boyfriend before. It seems like everyone my age has already had boyfriends by now or are not virgins anymore, and I just had my first kiss five months ago. I'm worried that, at this rate, I won't have a boyfriend for a very long time. The problem is that I want to lose my virginity to my first boyfriend who cares about me, but at the same time, I don't want to be waiting forever in order to experience sex. I have already given in to bad temptations by hooking up with random strangers on social media sites and having oral sex with them. Luckily, they were nice guys, but none of them wanted a relationship with me. I feel dirty by doing this, but I feel pressured to do these things in order to seem normal.

Most people are surprised when they find out that I am a virgin or never had a boyfriend because people think I am really good looking. I am tall, I play lots of sports, and I get excellent grades in school. I am in my first year of university right now, and no guys have approached me to go out on a date or showed any interest. It bothers me. Most of the people in my family have been in relationships at my age already. I feel like I will be single forever sometimes.

Answer 557: I think that every person who has been single for any extended period of time has felt the same worries - myself included. Since relationships are so important to us we fear not having them and being single. It is similar to fearing that we won't ever get a good job when we have been out of work for awhile or fearing that we won't be healthy when we have been sick. We fear these things because they are so important - not because these fears are realistic or true! There is immense pressure put on young single people from peers and media to conform to ideas of what is normal and to meet expectations in terms of sexual experience, dating, etc. While some people may judge an adult who is a virgin - others will respect your choices and feel even more attracted to you because of your choices. Experimenting with sex, so long as you are being safe and respectful is also completely okay and normal. Since expectations vary and we can't be happy if we are always comparing ourselves to other people, we need to ultimately trust that being who we are and building a loving relationship with ourselves is the key to meeting someone who will cherish us for all the ways that we are special and unique, virgin or not. When we are able to really accept ourselves and trust in our loveableness (not a real word but you get what I mean!) then meeting someone special is simply a matter of time and effort - putting ourselves out in the world in situations where we are likely to meet other single people looking for relationships. When you are most afraid of being alone - remember that this fear is simply a reminder of how much you value relationships. Use that passion about wanting relationships to build the best relationship you can with yourself and then one day soon some lucky person will stumble into your life and benefit immensely from your passion and your ability to be authentically who you are rather than pretending to be "normal" or whatever that is anyway. Hope this helps!

Question 558: I have lately been having lots of anxiety and self-loathing about the fact that I am a young adult virgin girl who has never had a boyfriend before. It seems like everyone my age has already had boyfriends by now or are not virgins anymore, and I just had my first kiss five months ago. I'm worried that, at this rate, I won't have a boyfriend for a very long time. The problem is that I want to lose my virginity to my first boyfriend who cares about me, but at the same time, I don't want to be waiting forever in order to experience sex. I have already given in to bad temptations by hooking up with random strangers on social media sites and having oral sex with them. Luckily, they were nice guys, but none of them wanted a relationship with me. I feel dirty by doing this, but I feel pressured to do these things in order to seem normal.

Most people are surprised when they find out that I am a virgin or never had a boyfriend because

people think I am really good looking. I am tall, I play lots of sports, and I get excellent grades in school. I am in my first year of university right now, and no guys have approached me to go out on a date or showed any interest. It bothers me. Most of the people in my family have been in relationships at my age already. I feel like I will be single forever sometimes.

Answer 558: It is very hard to want a loving relationship, and either see or imagine all around you, the great times other couples are having. Extra hard is that other people's comments may start giving you the sense that you are letting them down to not have a relationship! All the fantasies that develop from viewing Facebook photos and imagining everyone or most people in ideal relationships, just augments any frustration of not being part of this group. Your post sounds like you're being true to yourself and honoring who you are really, by developing clear standards of what you'd expect from a relationship. For the longterm, whatever develops in your relationship life, you will always be able to look back and know you had self-integrity. By being your natural self, you're being attractive. Probably very unlikely that a young woman who would like a relationship, will never have one. Maybe the young men in your school are not yet emotionally mature enough to know how to see and appreciate you. Even though it may be hard, have patience with bringing in someone who is good for you. And, continue your keen insight of yourself because it is guiding you to be the best in all areas of living. Sending good luck in all areas!

Question 559: I have lately been having lots of anxiety and self-loathing about the fact that I am a young adult virgin girl who has never had a boyfriend before. It seems like everyone my age has already had boyfriends by now or are not virgins anymore, and I just had my first kiss five months ago. I'm worried that, at this rate, I won't have a boyfriend for a very long time. The problem is that I want to lose my virginity to my first boyfriend who cares about me, but at the same time, I don't want to be waiting forever in order to experience sex. I have already given in to bad temptations by hooking up with random strangers on social media sites and having oral sex with them. Luckily, they were nice guys, but none of them wanted a relationship with me. I feel dirty by doing this, but I feel pressured to do this things in order to seem normal.

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Answer 559: I think one of the first questions that springs to mind for me is, "what's the rush?" Just because other people in your circle have had experiences that you are still warming up to does not mean that there's something wrong or something to be ashamed of. If anything, I want to commend you on the self-respect you have in wanting to wait and share this most intimate of experiences with someone that will feel the same way about it. One of the most common distortions in our thinking is when we try to directly compare ourselves to others; while these people and even those in your family share a level of closeness to you they are not exactly like you - they don't see or feel things in the exact same way as you nor do they share the exact same perspective. It's important to be making choices for you and for your own desires and life goals. Once you stop comparing your happiness, you may find that you are already experiencing it and allow more of your guard to fall down.

Question 560: For my whole life, I've been very unconfident, insecure, and self-questioning. I'm super quiet because I'm scared of what people will think of me. I avoid all social situations as it causes me great anxiety. It is how both of my parents have always been, and I feel like I'm doomed to that life also. It makes it super hard for me at work as the other employees try to use me and walk all over me because I'm too nice. It causes me depression and brings me down. I'm in my early twenties, and I really need to create a better life for myself. I've been like this for so long, so how do I change?

Answer 560: One of the greatest ways that we can promote ourselves is by learning how to assert ourselves. Despite what most people think of when they hear the word assertive, assertive communication is one of the best ways to manage interpersonal conflict as well as maintain personal boundaries. Once we become comfortable with acknowledging our boundaries, there is usually a follow-up whereby we realize that we have the right to those boundaries. In effect, assertiveness communication becomes its own self-motivating force in managing positive self-esteem. You may want to invest in a workbook that can help you to develop these skills on your own, or work directly with a therapist to develop them in a safe situation. One of the Workbooks that I have found to be very helpful is, "The Assertiveness Workbook: How to Express your Ideas and Stand Up for Yourself at Work and in

Relationships" by Randy J Paterson.

Question 561: I have a lot of issues going on right now. First of all, I have a lot of trouble sleeping at times, while other nights I sleep too much and still feel quite tired. I'm also noticing increased irritability and experiencing anxiety attacks that last for hours. Is there something wrong with me and if so what should I do?

Answer 561: Hi there. I have to commend you on reaching out to get some answers on why you are feeling the way that you are feeling. A lot of people secretly go about their lives every day feeling this way because they are too afraid of what the answer might be. First off, what stressors do you have in your life right now? Financial, relationship and unemployment are all common stressors for people. They can often make it difficult for us to sleep at night due to the constant racing thoughts and wonders of how you will deal with it all. Secondly, do you have a history of depression or does depression run in your family? Some of the symptoms listed here in this question (i.e. trouble sleeping, constant fatigue, too much sleep, anger & anxiety) are all common symptoms of depression. Often times, these symptoms can be overlooked and mistaken for "just being tired." Furthermore, it's important to ask yourself, if you are feeling worthless, problems with concentration and recurrent thoughts of death. If you are having these symptoms, please seek help IMMEDIATELY. Lastly, considering your stated symptoms I would recommend reaching out to your Doctor for further consult. It's always better to be safe and the earlier you catch the symptoms the faster you will get to feeling better! Some helpful tips for the your Doctor would be to monitor your sleep habits (i.e. how much or little are you sleeping), make a list of your triggers for your anger outbursts as well as your triggers for your anxiety attacks. I hope this was helpful and the best of luck to you.

Question 562: I have a lot of issues going on right now. First of all, I have a lot of trouble sleeping at times, while other nights I sleep too much and still feel quite tired. I'm also noticing increased irritability and experiencing anxiety attacks that last for hours. Is there something wrong with me and if so what should I do?

Answer 562: It sounds as if you may be experiencing a bout of anxiety and/or depression. Sleeping difficulties, irritability and anxiety attacks all are correlated with these mood disorders. And it's actually quite common for someone to deal encounter this during their lifetime. Also, keep in mind that just because you are experiencing this now does not mean that you will be dealing with it the rest of your life. Many times, it can be a single episode and if treatment is received, you can help prevent any recurrent episodes. However, you may want to first talk with your primary physician to rule out any medical issues that could be causing these problems. There may be a reason for the sudden onset of these symptoms that can be addressed quickly. On the other hand, if it is determined that you are experiencing anxiety and/or depression without a medical reason, there are two methods that are very helpful in your treatment: #1 Talk therapy with a certified therapist He/She will be able to address the concerns you're experiencing and discovering if there is an underlying issue that may be causing it. #2 Medication There are many medications that can assist you with the feelings that you are experiencing. Your doctor will be able to help you find the right one that works for you. If one doesn't work, keep trying. There are many different options to address your specific needs. Also, a combination of these two options is extremely beneficial! Thank you for your question. I sincerely hope that you feel better soon!

Question 563: I have a lot of issues going on right now. First of all, I have a lot of trouble sleeping at times, while other nights I sleep too much and still feel quite tired. I'm also noticing increased irritability and experiencing anxiety attacks that last for hours. Is there something wrong with me and if so what should I do?

Answer 563: It sounds like you are noticing yourself becoming overwhelmed with anxiety, feeling more irritable, and struggling to sleep consistently. There are many possibilities, in regards to what may be contributing to these things you are noticing, and a competent therapist may be able to help. In therapy, you may be able to gain insight into these experiences as well as develop strategies for coping with and eventually alleviating anxiety, irritability, and inconsistent sleep.

Question 564: I feel that I need to end my present relationship. He lives three hours away and likes the reassurance of having someone to talk to multiple times per day and seeing me once or twice a month. I want someone who is more present and more of a life companion. Lately, he has had a very busy work schedule and I have only seen him a few times in the last 6 weeks. I told him that I can't continue in this way because I constantly feel frustrated and angry and that he is not making the relationship enough of a priority. I also feel it is keeping me from possibly finding the relationship I want. We have been together 7

years. The problem is that I panic and experience anxiety and depression thinking of him with someone else and then thinking I will never meet someone I like. We have gone through this cycle already 4-5 times and I feel it is unhealthy to stay in it, but my aversion to the anxiety and depression I experience upon separation always leads me to reconcile.

Answer 564: It sounds like you have some insight into the cycle that you describe with your current relationship and at the same time you are still feeling stuck. It also sounds like the distressing feelings that you experience, when you imagine what will happen for you and your current partner, are pretty overwhelming. A competent therapist may be able to help you work through these difficult thoughts and feelings and find a resolution to this cycle that will feel right to you.

Question 565: I feel that I need to end my present relationship. He lives three hours away and likes the reassurance of having someone to talk to multiple times per day and seeing me once or twice a month. I want someone who is more present and more of a life companion. Lately, he has had a very busy work schedule and I have only seen him a few times in the last 6 weeks. I told him that I can't continue in this way because I constantly feel frustrated and angry and that he is not making the relationship enough of a priority. I also feel it is keeping me from possibly finding the relationship I want. We have been together 7 years. The problem is that I panic and experience anxiety and depression thinking of him with someone else and then thinking I will never meet someone I like. We have gone through this cycle already 4-5 times and I feel it is unhealthy to stay in it, but my aversion to the anxiety and depression I experience upon separation always leads me to reconcile.

Answer 565: Sounds like your panic is less about losing the relationship you are in (which by the way doesn't sound like it's meeting YOUR need for connection) and more about being alone. Being with him is serving you, even if the relationship is less than ideal, from being alone. Being alone can be scary. You'd have to face yourself. You'd have to learn to love and care for and cherish yourself. All important skills and tasks in maturing and growing up, but scary none the less. What if...What if you gave yourself permission to be in a relationship with YOU?

Question 566: I'm a teenager, and I struggle with going out and talking to people. I feel awful about leaving home. I know I can't afford a therapist so I don't know what my problem is, but I think I might have social anxiety.

Answer 566: If you are noticing that anxiety tends to be triggered around interactions with others, then you may have social anxiety. Working with a therapist, you may be able to gain insight into the nature of the anxiety, develop tools for coping with it, and take steps that may alleviate it over time, so that you can enjoy your interactions with others. If you are short on money, there still may be options for you to be able to see a therapist. Check with your insurance provider about your behavioral health coverage. If you have medicaid/apple care, there are some private practice therapists who accept this form of insurance, as well as community clinics which do. If you are not insured, some therapists and clinics will work on a sliding fee scale, and accept either low fee or may even work with you pro-bono (for free).

Question 567: Whenever I don't tell my friends or anyone what I did or stuff that's not really important, I feel terrible, like there's a hole in my stomach. It only goes away when I hurt myself.

Answer 567: Hi Kansas, I feel strongly that the help of a professional therapist is important here. Feelings are never wrong, but it can help to understand where they come from and talk to someone who can teach you healthy ways to cope. Self-harm is not the answer to managing those emotions you feel in your stomach. Although I'm glad you said something here, a professional would need to spend some time with you and get a deep understanding of your life in order to help you sort all these reactions out effectively. I hope you reach out to someone soon.

Question 568: Whenever I don't tell my friends or anyone what I did or stuff that's not really important, I feel terrible, like there's a hole in my stomach. It only goes away when I hurt myself.

Answer 568: Sorry to hear of your situation. Possibly you are overlooking that your own Self is someone worth talking to as well. None of us are ever really alone because we are always with ourselves. Self-talk is a major part of what guides our decisions and how we make sense of relationships and situations. Even after telling people the stories or activities, hearing their comments, it is always within ourselves that we decide if the way we were received by these others, the comments we heard back, feel right and accurate to our lives. I hope the feeling of a hole in your stomach would decrease by enjoying your Self. I am guessing that hurting yourself makes the stomach hole feel less bad because the physical pain you create in yourself distracts you from feeling it. Enjoying your Self by talking kindly, loving, and having inner dialogue may very well decrease the feeling of a hole, altogether. Sending lots of good luck!

Question 569: I was raped repeatedly when I was younger. I told my parents and action was taken, but now that I'm an adult, I suffer from extreme anxiety.

Answer 569: While anxiety can come about for many reasons, trauma is definitely one of the factors that makes anxiety a possibility both immediately following a traumatic event and later in life. When we have experienced such scary violations of our bodies - we may experience residual effects of fear for many years to come. This is normal, natural and in many ways helpful - at least initially. This fear is in some way a sign that your body/mind is taking good care of you - trying to keep you on your toes in order to protect you from anything terrible happening to you again. However, as it sounds like you know, anxiety feels awful and there are certainly ways of learning to reduce anxiety. In order to get the tools you need to manage anxiety and also understand where it comes from and how it works in your life, I would encourage you to seek professional help and check out anxiety resources online.

Question 570: I was raped repeatedly when I was younger. I told my parents and action was taken, but now that I'm an adult, I suffer from extreme anxiety.

Answer 570: Hi. Even though (thankfully) your parents responded well to you telling them, and you received treatment, it's possible, and very normal for sexual abuse trauma to affect you in different ways as you age and develop. Please see a therapist, who can help you find the root of the anxiety.

Question 571: I was raped repeatedly when I was younger. I told my parents and action was taken, but now that I'm an adult, I suffer from extreme anxiety.

Answer 571: It's not unusual for traumatic experiences that happened when we were younger to stay with us when we get older. Traumatic experiences can become embedded in our bodies, as well as in our emotions. If the issue doesn't get a chance to get resolved within, then external action doesn't necessarily take care of the problem. Seek out a qualified trauma therapist so you can start to deal with the issues you're grappling with.

Question 572: I find myself being very outgoing most of the time, but there are some times when I don't know what to say. I don't even want to talk at all. It's like, I search for the right thing to say and nothing ever comes out. I don't know if I'm outgoing only to fill the void of not knowing what to say. I don't know if people like that about me. I'm very self-conscious and always think people are talking about me, so it makes me have a cold shoulder and not want to talk.

Answer 572: Would you feel more secure in conversations if instead of talking soon after meeting someone or entering a social situation, you simply listened attentively to the other people? This way you'd have a more secure idea of what topics the group likes talking about and whether you like talking about these topics as well. Maybe you simply are in groups or situations in which you don't care for the people or focus. Start by trusting your own evaluation of your true interest in being among the groups in which you are. Maybe you simply need new and different groups.

Question 573: This is preventing me from getting a job. I have bad relationship with my bipolar mother. I am living with her but it stresses me out so much to be around her that I have locked myself in my room. I have no friends or other family to help me. I have no money for therapy, but I think I need therapy before I can secure a job.

Answer 573: Overwhelming fear, social anxiety and depression are especially painful because they make behaving constructively a challenge. But there are also lots of examples of folks who have successfully worked their way through this. So there is hope! In addition to the suggestion to visit your doctor (who may prescribe a medication to help you relax), there are many social service agencies who provide free counseling or take medicaid. A good CBT therapist will help you look at your thinking so that you may see how you are distorting your thoughts. Behavior is also important. Despite how you may feel: it is helpful to go out, to do things that relax you (maybe a yoga class or a meditation class?). Exercise. Diet. Eat well. Think back on the things that you used to do that helped in the past, and force yourself to do these things again. I know that this seems hard, but it beats the alternative, doesn't it? Of course, I recommend you pick up a copy of my book, *Living Yes*, which will help you look at these and other ideas to help you out. I hope you get unstuck soon! ~Mark (www.MarkMorrisLCSW.com and www.LivingYes.org)

Question 574: This is preventing me from getting a job. I have bad relationship with my bipolar mother. I am living with her but it stresses me out so much to be around her that I have locked myself in my room. I have no friends or other family to help me. I have no money for therapy, but I think I need therapy before I can secure a job.

Answer 574: A good first step would be to make an appointment with your primary care provider &

discuss your concerns. They would have resources available to help in your particular situation.

Question 575: I feel like my time is going too fast

Answer 575: Thank you for reaching out! That is a great question! As an American, I can truly say that I spend way too much time on the go! It is a proven fact that Americans live in a fast paced environment compared to Europe! I often ask myself, what if I only had one day left on this Earth? What would I do? Well, that is an easy question. I would spend it with my family! Easier said than done when we are living in a tomorrow kind of World, right? Its hard to focus on the now when we are so consumed in what tomorrow shall bring. Time management is a very important factor when learning to "live life to the fullest"! In fact, this is a required course in undergraduate college now. Everyone manages their time differently and it is up to you to decide how you would like to do this. Personally, for myself I like to keep a calendar with a to-do list. I always place my most important tasks at the top of the list. That way, if I do not get through the list, I am not stressing over the little things. When planning your day, it is important you schedule work, eat and play. As much as it is hard not to work after getting off work, it must be done. There is discipline involved in this process. If you have trouble with this, then maybe seeking out some accountability such as including a coworker to make sure you do not bring work home once your shift is over or your spouse/partner reminding you that this is a time for play and not work. These are just some ideas that I am throwing out there. Again, everyone has their own style on time management. I hope this was helpful for you. Please don't hesitate to reach out for anything further!

Question 576: My dad refuses to acknowledge my anxieties about going to parties, dinners, etc.

Whenever I have an opinion it gets shut down. My mom and everyone else behaves likewise. For my father who heads a company, this is normal. He has to be right all the time. He blatantly refuses to even try to see it from my angle. Recently however, it's been getting to the point where I feel pressured and unable to speak my mind. It isn't possible for me to get professional one-on-one help. He tells me to grow a pair and get over it. I recently have been developing more severe body image and self-confidence issues, which I have had all my life. I feel invalidated by my dad. I have been more paranoid lately as well. I can't turn on location services anymore on my phone because of a past incident. He makes me feel guilty about it. I feel rather worthless more often than not, unfortunately. What do I do?

Answer 576: I'm sorry to hear that you are unable to get through to your parents. It sounds like you are experiencing a great deal of anxiety that needs to be addressed by a professional (despite the fact that you are unable to at the moment). I would recommend talking with another adult such as a school counselor that can offer you support in this area. Perhaps they can work with you on your anxiety issues and schedule a meeting with your parents so that he/she may help mediate the conversation with them. If you are unable to reach out to a school counselor maybe you can try a member of the family such as an aunt or an uncle that feels comfortable addressing the issue with your parents. Sometimes it helps hearing it from a third party before the situations is taken seriously enough. Good luck!

Question 577: Whenever I leave my girlfriend I get panic attacks. I'm taking medications to control them, but I'm thinking of moving in with her since I get so anxious.

Answer 577: I'm sorry to hear that you are currently experiencing panic attacks. I hope that the medication you have been prescribed has provided you with some relief. Unfortunately, I don't feel that moving in with your girlfriend would alleviate your anxiety. Although you may feel very anxious about leaving her, your body is reacting to this stressful event in your life in an unhealthy manner. You may be able to render this particular situation but it's likely that you may experience another panic attack when an additional stressful event arises. Therefore, it is essential that you address the reason for why you are experiencing panic attacks in the first place followed by practicing coping mechanisms in the case that one would arise in the future. Talk therapy has shown to be effective with those affected by anxiety along with breathing exercises and yoga. A trained therapist will be able to assist you in finding the right stress reducing method so that you can reduce the chance of another attack occurring. I wish you the best of luck! It sounds like you are very happy in your relationship and I hope you are able to reduce your anxiety so that you are able to enjoy one another.

Question 578: I had a head injury a few years ago and my mind races all the time. I have trouble sleeping and have a lot of anxiety. Every medicine I have been on my body rejects; I get sick to my stomach and get blisters in my mouth. How can I calm my self down? I'm a wreck.

Answer 578: You didn't say what or how many medications you've tried. Certain anxiety medications can make you feel nauseous, but I haven't heard of any that cause mouth blisters, so there may be some other underlying medical issue there. I would definitely talk to your primary care physician and whoever

has prescribed the medication as well as a neurologist if you've suffered a severe head injury. There are so many medications available for anxiety or insomnia or even depression that there may be others with lesser side effects. But beyond that, have you tried any other treatments such as deep breathing or meditation? Meditation can be very effective, but it takes practice and you don't have to sit cross-legged for hours chanting "Ohm" to meditate. It's about focusing on your breath, rather than all the thoughts that are racing through your head. And when they do take your mind off your breath, simply refocus (and refocus and refocus). Like I said, it takes practice, so don't give up. You can find many sites offering different ways to meditate, so look around and see what works best for you. Like medication, you just have to find the one that works best and that might take some experimentation. I hope this helps and best of luck to you.

Question 579: When my daughter is stressed about a silly thing from school, she starts crying and freaking out. She is a bright student, always has a 4.0, but I am afraid she is stressing too much. I'm afraid it's going to break her. I don't know if I should get her to a doctor or someone because this is not normal.

Answer 579: Watching children go through challenges in their lives is difficult. On a very basic level, There exists a primal need to protect them from harm. The hard part for parents is letting them feel those challenges and working through them as they get older. At some point, there is a moment that occurs when the role as a parent shifts. Children no longer need the basics (food, shelter, water, safety) as much as when they were toddlers, but rather, their needs shift to wanting more support, encouragement, advice, and room to make mistakes. This is where the ability to communicate with them, letting them direct the sails to gather the wind needed to move, is so important. Keep the lines of communication open and be available to give feedback when they ask for it.

Question 580: When my daughter is stressed about a silly thing from school, she starts crying and freaking out. She is a bright student, always has a 4.0, but I am afraid she is stressing too much. I'm afraid it's going to break her. I don't know if I should get her to a doctor or someone because this is not normal.

Answer 580: Oh dear - this is becoming all too common. I suggest you have some conversations with your girl to figure out where she is getting the "information" that she builds anxiety around. I see teens who have heard teachers, parents, coaches, etc push the "highly selective colleges" idea on kids way too much. Teens in particular are prone to black and white thinking, leading them to see one poor test performance, one off day, one not-great assignment as the make-or-break task on the path to successful adulthood. If that's the case with your daughter, she needs you to help modulate both the incoming information (there are nearly 5000 colleges in the US - she will get into one of them!) as well as her reaction to that information. As well, you and any other adults that are involved in parenting her need to discern fact from fiction. The recent scandal around celebrities "buying" their kids into college is an indicator of how far off track we, as a culture, have gotten in terms of education. A college education is certainly important, but we have allowed the marketing push to create so much stress and upset for our kids (and ourselves as parents) that they are actually less prepared to leave home and really engage in higher education than ever. You may want to include a therapist in these conversations if you get stuck, but start with a parent-child conversation. Help her figure out what is going on - if it is the "I have to get it right or I will have no future", calmly walk her through all the evidence that says that's just not true. As well, let her know that being anxious now is NOT preparing her for a bright adulthood - it's preparing her for an anxious future. She needs help figuring out how to balance her effort to attend to real and reasonable expectations, not over-inflated fear-based actions.

Question 581: When my daughter is stressed about a silly thing from school, she starts crying and freaking out. She is a bright student, always has a 4.0, but I am afraid she is stressing too much. I'm afraid it's going to break her. I don't know if I should get her to a doctor or someone because this is not normal.

Answer 581: Sometimes stress helps us become motivated and thrive to do better however, if your daughter is stressing to the point that she is crying and freaking out then that would be concerning. Helping your daughter with relaxation techniques like deep breathing or guided imagery would be a good start. Also, reminding your daughter that you see her doing so well in school and that most importantly you are there for her. I would also make an appointment to see a mental health therapist they can have more ideas on ways to de-stress.

Question 582: When my daughter is stressed about a silly thing from school, she starts crying and

freaking out. She is a bright student, always has a 4.0, but I am afraid she is stressing too much. I'm afraid it's going to break her. I don't know if I should get her to a doctor or someone because this is not normal.

Answer 582: The most important action you can take here is validating her feelings and staying calm when she is crying and "freaking out". It's equally important to do some self exploration regarding your own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors towards making mistakes and how you respond to your mistakes.

When she is calm, ask her what a mistake means to her. Giving her examples of different kinds of mistakes and listening to her responses will give you an idea of how extreme her thoughts are. Taking this opportunity to share with her your own struggles with perfectionism or some other area would help her feel more at ease. Reminding her that she is enough just as she is would be helpful as well.

Encouraging her self care routine will help develop a greater sense of balance regarding her priorities.

The practice of mindfulness will be helpful in self awareness. Creating a plan on what to do when the early signs of "freaking out" surface will strengthen her coping skills. Your fears as a parent are completely understandable and this definitely needs to be addressed. Your daughter cannot bring about change on her own and will need the family to work towards this change as well. A therapist that specializes in anxiety/perfectionism would be a great resource. They may also help you all have a greater understanding of what the root of this need for perfection is and how it plays a role in the family. I suggest one or two sessions without your daughter would be helpful to develop a course of action. I hope this was helpful. It takes a lot of courage to seek help and guidance, I'm glad you posted.

Question 583: When my daughter is stressed about a silly thing from school, she starts crying and freaking out. She is a bright student, always has a 4.0, but I am afraid she is stressing too much. I'm afraid it's going to break her. I don't know if I should get her to a doctor or someone because this is not normal.

Answer 583: I hear your concern that your daughter might break under the pressure and stress that she is dealing with. It is a good thing that your high achieving daughter is calling out for help and that you are listening. The education system is wrought with social and emotional problems, and there is a disproportionate emphasis on test taking, scores and achievement in school. It sounds like your daughter would benefit from some social and emotional education and learning to understand how her feelings are impacting her thoughts and behaviors. I'd like to also assure you that crying and freaking out is a normal part of growing up. Depending on your daughter's age, it is likely that she is going through a growth spurt and she may be feeling her feelings in a unique way to her too. If this is the first time you are having a concern about anxiety then rest at ease and see if you can ride the emotions with her and be a stable sounding board for her. Use empathy and compassion and allow her a safe place to process through her concerns. Try not to solve it for her, but allow her a space to fumble through and find her own answers to the problems she is faced with. Give her confidence that she can figure it out, and be patient as you sit with her. Our presence is key to our children's well being. Make eye contact with her, allow her to squirm and get frustrated and work through it while you witness her process. As parents, when we can model calm in the storm of life our children learn that all of their feelings are ok too. When our children see and feel our fear, it can create more insecurity and low self evaluation of their own efficacy to manage the stress. When we can be calm and reassuring, then we can boost their confidence in their own ability to problem solve what they are going through. Let's face it we all have irrational thinking from time to time, and usually it is when we are under stress. If your daughter continues to show concerning anxiety, check with her school and see if she can benefit from an opportunity with the social emotional learning curriculum. In Texas at least, schools are required to have resources for children like your daughter who are experiencing anxiety and other mental health concerns. Her teacher is with her all day and you may request to have a conference with her to see if she can help her in any way as well. If resources in your school are limited then I would seek an outside therapist who specializes in working with children your daughter's age. Call around and see if she can benefit from a therapeutic relationship outside of school and home. Once you have plenty of feedback from her teacher and a therapist or counselor then you will be able to determine if seeking medical care is necessary with their support and guidance. Thank you for your courage to reach out for help on behalf of your daughter. You are her greatest advocate. I hope that you find support to help you navigate this time in her life and that you both grow and learn from this experience.

Question 584: When my daughter is stressed about a silly thing from school, she starts crying and freaking out. She is a bright student, always has a 4.0, but I am afraid she is stressing too much. I'm

afraid it's going to break her. I don't know if I should get her to a doctor or someone because this is not normal.

Answer 584: Aye, you're correct, that isn't normal, and maybe you should get her to a doctor! Before you do that, and if she were my daughter, I would provide her the necessary physical support that can be given readily at home; that is: proper natural diet, rest, and a good sense of detoxification before she readies herself to approach it. Basic listening is warranted here and would be of great use.

Question 585: When my daughter is stressed about a silly thing from school, she starts crying and freaking out. She is a bright student, always has a 4.0, but I am afraid she is stressing too much. I'm afraid it's going to break her. I don't know if I should get her to a doctor or someone because this is not normal.

Answer 585: Your daughter is suffering from extremes of perfectionism. She needs to know that God accepts her as she is. I can provide her with a knowledge of her God-given, inborn temperament to help her find her God-esteem.

Question 586: When my daughter is stressed about a silly thing from school, she starts crying and freaking out. She is a bright student, always has a 4.0, but I am afraid she is stressing too much. I'm afraid it's going to break her. I don't know if I should get her to a doctor or someone because this is not normal.

Answer 586: As parents, it's hard not to have "freak out" moments when our children are being bullied, stressed, or exhibit other symptoms of teenage angst. We walk a delicate balance of letting go and giving autonomy to our teens get older. Adolescents are learning how to be functional adults and it's important to allow them to try (and sometimes fail) in managing their emotions. Grades are a pretty good indicator of how a student is doing, overall. If your daughter has a 4.0 and there's no pattern of "crying and freaking out" I'd offer gentle support and encourage her to find ways to relax when she's stressed. If her grades start to decline and her crying spells become more frequent, a call to a counselor who specializes in teens might be in order. Good luck!

Question 587: When my daughter is stressed about a silly thing from school, she starts crying and freaking out. She is a bright student, always has a 4.0, but I am afraid she is stressing too much. I'm afraid it's going to break her. I don't know if I should get her to a doctor or someone because this is not normal.

Answer 587: I am sorry to hear about your daughter. Many of the youth I see in my practice are going through similar behaviors and concerns. If she feels like she can talk to you about this I think that is a great place to begin. There are many life stressors that youth have to manage and seeing others on social media seems to exacerbate these feelings and can feel like even more pressure to strive for perfection. You may be able to offer her support by listening to and validating her concerns, reviewing all that she has accomplished and praising her for doing her best and not push that she needs to be "the best." If she feels she would like to speak to someone it may be good to find a therapist where she can vent her feelings and find a way to increase her coping skills. She may benefit from additional support outside the home where she can cry, learn to manage her worries and gain skills to triage the expectations of each day. She may benefit from skills that would help her to learn that she is enough already!

Question 588: When my daughter is stressed about a silly thing from school, she starts crying and freaking out. She is a bright student, always has a 4.0, but I am afraid she is stressing too much. I'm afraid it's going to break her. I don't know if I should get her to a doctor or someone because this is not normal.

Answer 588: Hi there Mom! Just look at all of the things that a teen has to juggle and it's no surprise they're stress out. There are simply not enough minutes in the day to get everything done. So, they react by cutting into important times such as social interaction and sleep. Our fast paced, fast food, society is taking its toll on our teen generation. While multi-tasking seems to be a hot pop word, it simply doesn't work. We aren't wired to do our best at multiple things at once. We are not machines but rather humans who are going to quickly expire if we don't get a handle on our stress. As adults, it's time we intervene and teach our teens how to maintain a healthy balance between work and play. We need to help them prioritize and put first things, first. Are you putting first things, first in your life? If not, it's a good time to start. Best of luck to you and your daughter in whatever you decide to do.

Question 589: When my daughter is stressed about a silly thing from school, she starts crying and freaking out. She is a bright student, always has a 4.0, but I am afraid she is stressing too much. I'm afraid it's going to break her. I don't know if I should get her to a doctor or someone because this is not

normal.

Answer 589: I understand that as a mom it must be really hard to see your daughter stressing about things at school. Based on your description it sounds as though she has very high expectations of herself and is pushing herself to keep up. I hear your concern and recommend that to start, you provide her a space where she can express herself openly to you without judgement. Although it may seem as though this is "not normal", unfortunately it is. From standardized testing, to awards, to scholarships, the pressure is on to perform at high levels for kids today. Secondly, I would recommend that you connect her with a therapist that can teach her coping and stress management skills that can help alleviate some of her anxiety. A therapist can also help her identify any faulty beliefs she may have in regards to perfectionism or fear of failure. You're doing a great job keeping an eye out for your daughter and being in tune with her emotional wellness!

Question 590: When my daughter is stressed about a silly thing from school, she starts crying and freaking out. She is a bright student, always has a 4.0, but I am afraid she is stressing too much. I'm afraid it's going to break her. I don't know if I should get her to a doctor or someone because this is not normal.

Answer 590: I hear that you are concerned about your daughter's reaction and her emotional well being. Her behaviors are worry some as you feel she seems to be approaching her breaking point. I would suggest speaking to your daughter about the situation at school and her feelings. Listening and acknowledging your daughter's feelings without judgement or giving solutions is a very effective communication skill. Ask your daughter how she feels about speaking to a therapist or her doctor. Someone that she knows and feels comfortable talking to about her feelings and learning healthy coping skills to address stressful situations.

Question 591: When my daughter is stressed about a silly thing from school, she starts crying and freaking out. She is a bright student, always has a 4.0, but I am afraid she is stressing too much. I'm afraid it's going to break her. I don't know if I should get her to a doctor or someone because this is not normal.

Answer 591: It sounds to me like your daughter is anxious to be perfect and has a low tolerance for failure. As her mother one of the most important messages you can share with her is that she need not be perfect, nor is it necessary. As a matter of fact, failure and making mistakes are only opportunity to learn and grow. Give her permission and more importantly she needs to give herself permission to be a perfectly flawed human. It may be a good idea to see a therapist to help her learn how to reframe some of her negative beliefs so she can form healthier thinking habits. Warm wishes.

Question 592: When my daughter is stressed about a silly thing from school, she starts crying and freaking out. She is a bright student, always has a 4.0, but I am afraid she is stressing too much. I'm afraid it's going to break her. I don't know if I should get her to a doctor or someone because this is not normal.

Answer 592: children and adolescents who have a desire to achieve high grade point averages often have the symptoms you are describing. It sounds like, your gut is telling you to help her find ways to de-stress. Listen to your gut-always; as her mom, you know her needs better than anyone else. She would probably benefit from seeing a therapist to help her deal with the stress of being a high achiever. I provided the following suggestion to another parent with a similar concern: First identify the three most stressful aspects of the day. Do this by creating a circle on a regular size paper. (do this three times); ask your daughter how much of that circle can she confidently say she has under control. shade that in. The remaining parts of the circle are then named by intensity. (for example, in the circle labeled school anxiety, the client identified that she felt she could handle school anxiety 1 out of 4 days. The circle was split into 1/4. 1/4 of the circle was shaded . the remaining parts were labeled with the challenges that caused the client school anxiety.(these were 1. walking to class during passing time. 2. not having the assignments completed or at all. 3. feeling fat. after labeling each part; and making note of the percentage of the stress associated with each concern, free form thinking takes place and a pile of unwanted behaviors and genetic responses are portrayed around the circle in bright colors. Using note cards, create a tree of concern; the concerns can be written on note cards. a concern = the behavior that leads to more trouble. For example, "all i could do was think about that extra slice of pizza, I was unable to concentrate on the teacher's explanation of the assignment" (the concern you would write on the note card is inability to concentrate. Now, fill up the back of the notecard with all of the different factors causing this pattern. nack. (

Question 593: When my daughter is stressed about a silly thing from school, she starts crying and freaking out. She is a bright student, always has a 4.0, but I am afraid she is stressing too much. I'm afraid it's going to break her. I don't know if I should get her to a doctor or someone because this is not normal.

Answer 593: Dear Concern Mom, Sadly, kids nowadays stress a lot about school and compete with one and another. Determine Career-minded students, tend to be very hard on themselves and can eventually become very anxious about things. Whereas, it is a good thing to be driven it can break you down too. Therefore, I recommend that you find your young daughter someone that can help her find ways to cope with her strong desire to doing well in school. Getting ahead of it now before she gets worst is the best thing you could do for her. Best of luck to you and your daughter. Sincerely, Mirella~Image and Likeness Counseling

Question 594: When my daughter is stressed about a silly thing from school, she starts crying and freaking out. She is a bright student, always has a 4.0, but I am afraid she is stressing too much. I'm afraid it's going to break her. I don't know if I should get her to a doctor or someone because this is not normal.

Answer 594: Thank you for being an observant parent and taking the very important step toward getting help for you as well as your daughter. The period of adolescence and emerging adulthood are tumultuous times for youth (and their parents). The pressure to fit-in, be liked, and succeed could be some of the contributing factors for your daughter's stress. I have had many adolescent clients who do very well academically, but keep it well hidden from their peers so that they can fit in. She is still learning about herself, her abilities and how to like herself none of which are easy tasks even for adults. The academic success that you refer to only tells part of the story. As I read your statement, I got a sense of what your daughter does and that you are proud of her academic accomplishments. However, I would also want to ask her who she is as a person and encourage her to explore that with assistance from a therapist. By working with a therapist your daughter will have the opportunity to discuss her stress, fears, and focus on achievement with an objective person. As she gains a better understanding of the source of her stress and learns some stress management, she can also learn to communicate her concerns to you. I do recommend starting with a therapist rather than the doctor. If the therapist believes that your daughter's symptoms would benefit from a health exam and/or medication they will make that recommendation.

Question 595: When my daughter is stressed about a silly thing from school, she starts crying and freaking out. She is a bright student, always has a 4.0, but I am afraid she is stressing too much. I'm afraid it's going to break her. I don't know if I should get her to a doctor or someone because this is not normal.

Answer 595: Hello! First of all, thank you for paying attention to your daughter and noticing that she is concerned! It sounds like you have been a positive influence on her for her to be so focused on achievement and for her to care so deeply about her performance! Based on what you've said here, I understand that you are concerned that she is overly stressed, though. I share your concern. People of all ages have meltdowns when they become overwhelmed with stress, and the negative consequences of those meltdowns can definitely have a ripple-effect into other areas of our lives. For your daughter, the thing I would want to know FIRST is this: does she feel she has adequate healthy coping skills to manage the stress she is experiencing? Because, it doesn't really matter WHAT she is stressing on...what matters is how she deals with her stress when it threatens to overwhelm her. I'd like to know what, exactly, that she does when she is feeling stressed that helps her to feel better. If she has only unhealthy coping skills (for example, sleeping, shutting-down, raging, self-attack with critical self-talk, etc.), or only one or two healthy skills, we would want to teach her some additional healthy strategies to help her KNOW that she can cope. Just one risk of not addressing this issue now could be that she may come to "learn" that stress is 'unbearable' which may cause her to turn to destructive or escapist strategies to avoid the discomfort, the pain of feeling hopeless, and/or the negative belief that she "cannot help herself." I definitely think it would be worth both your whiles to have her evaluated by her family doctor and/or a professional counselor. With a counselor specifically, she could learn the needed skills as well as be evaluated for other issues that may be contributing to the issue (for example, a learned belief that she "must be perfect or she is not worthy.") Plus, having a neutral support person to help her meet her personal goals is always a good thing. Good luck, mom and daughter! Learn more about me and my practice at www.EMDRheals.com

Question 596: When my daughter is stressed about a silly thing from school, she starts crying and

freaking out. She is a bright student, always has a 4.0, but I am afraid she is stressing too much. I'm afraid it's going to break her. I don't know if I should get her to a doctor or someone because this is not normal.

Answer 596: As a therapist and mother of four children (3 of whom are teenagers)...I hear your pain. Raising children in our society is no joke. Kids are under a tremendous amount of pressure from parents, peers, teachers, coaches and the list goes on and on. Fear and anxiety can suffocate students particularly as they approach their high school years where they are bombarded with questions about their future and expected to select professions before they have even gone to college!! I highly encourage the teens I work with to strive for balance in their lives- and we can model this for our children by how we choose to live! Encourage your child to spend time with friends, join you for a yoga class, read a book, pick up a hobby or go out to exercise. If your daughter continues to feel overwhelmed by stress, it would be a good idea to select a therapist for her to go speak with. As much as we love our children, there are times where kids need to consult with a neutral 3rd party. It can be a wonderful thing for kids to have a therapist whom they can confide in.

Question 597: When my daughter is stressed about a silly thing from school, she starts crying and freaking out. She is a bright student, always has a 4.0, but I am afraid she is stressing too much. I'm afraid it's going to break her. I don't know if I should get her to a doctor or someone because this is not normal.

Answer 597: As a Parent it can be very hard to see your child struggling. It sounds like they're experiencing anxiety from their stress. It's always a good idea to check in with your family doctor. Many children are experiencing anxiety and can benefit from individual counseling services to help them cope with their stress. School pressures and academic achievements can you create physical stress responses in the body. Seeing a counselor can also help you as the mom or dad have available tools to provide Continued support. It sounds like you are a great support for them and helping them connect to their resources.

Question 598: When my daughter is stressed about a silly thing from school, she starts crying and freaking out. She is a bright student, always has a 4.0, but I am afraid she is stressing too much. I'm afraid it's going to break her. I don't know if I should get her to a doctor or someone because this is not normal.

Answer 598: It sounds as though your daughter is struggling to manage her anxiety and she is having really big reactions to what you view as small problems or issues. What have you tried with her in the past? As exhausting as it might be, a good first step is to empathize and validate her feelings.

Question 599: When my daughter is stressed about a silly thing from school, she starts crying and freaking out. She is a bright student, always has a 4.0, but I am afraid she is stressing too much. I'm afraid it's going to break her. I don't know if I should get her to a doctor or someone because this is not normal.

Answer 599: It may be helpful to register for a class you can take together. I would recommend mindful meditation or yoga, just the two of you. Something you find time for in a weekly basis. Yoga is amazing in learning mindfulness and reducing stress. I use yoga and mindful techniques when working with children and recommend it to parents to engage with their children. Hope this helps.

Question 600: When my daughter is stressed about a silly thing from school, she starts crying and freaking out. She is a bright student, always has a 4.0, but I am afraid she is stressing too much. I'm afraid it's going to break her. I don't know if I should get her to a doctor or someone because this is not normal.

Answer 600: Its hard to answer this question based on the information presented but I shall give it a go, Is it possible that your daughter is afraid of failing, I've seen many children and kids who get stressed out over grades or performance in sports, can you tell me "what was your grade in fourth grade English? Or what was the score of the 7th game you played in football when you were a junior? Much of what happens to us is insignificant and we worry over things which really , in the long term don't matter much to us. But ask yourself this question, Is your daughters reaction to what is going grossly out of proportion with what would normally be expected, if the answer is yes, a visit to a psychotherapist might not be a bad idea to learn some coping skills and to alter our reaction to life.

Question 601: When my daughter is stressed about a silly thing from school, she starts crying and freaking out. She is a bright student, always has a 4.0, but I am afraid she is stressing too much. I'm afraid it's going to break her. I don't know if I should get her to a doctor or someone because this is not

normal.

Answer 601: I agree with your observation about your daughter feeling stressed. Are you able to open this topic in conversation with her? Also, reflect on your own expectations as a parent. It is possible that your daughter is trying to please you by getting consistently high grades. If your daughter prefers talking in confidence to a therapist, then this may help her regain a sense of balance in her life so that schoolwork feels less stressful. I wouldn't take her to a doctor because based on what you write, the problem is psychological and emotionally based. While the stress may have physical symptoms, addressing the root cause of the problem has nothing to do directly with something being physically wrong with your daughter. Unless there is some other medical or physical problem that would explain your daughter's sense of stress, I'd start first by bringing your areas of concern to your daughter, then possibly to a therapist.

Question 602: I have four children. One of them is in her 20s, and she cannot afford to go, nor can I pay for her. She went last year for two weeks by herself.

Answer 602: I imagine you are trying to figure out a way to be "fair" to your adult kids. The key word is "adult". If your daughter can afford to join the family for a vacation that's great, she's welcome to come. However, as you pointed out she took a vacation by herself last year - she chose to put her resources (time off work and money) into doing that. Good for her - she did what she wanted. If she wants to budget time and money for a family vacation she will. As for feeling guilty, let me echo the sentiments already offered - vacations are lovely, but not a survival need. Your girl is in her 20s and it's her turn to provide for herself. You did your parenting - now go enjoy your vacation with whoever can, and wants to, join you!

Question 603: I have four children. One of them is in her 20s, and she cannot afford to go, nor can I pay for her. She went last year for two weeks by herself.

Answer 603: Of what do you feel you'd be guilty? Family vacations are not a basic human right to existence. They are fun, ideally. You're not violating a basic human right. You wrote that you don't have enough money to pay for her to come along. You may find yourself feeling more guilty toward yourself if you give more than you reasonably can afford to give. My suggestion is to tell your daughter your reason for not taking her along. Maybe this will open more dialogue between the two of you.

Question 604: I'm being verbally abused on a daily basis by my parents in front of my child. I feel like I'm trapped and I have no escape. I feel like I have to listen to the horrible things they say and just take all of it.

I need some way of learning how to cope with listening to it especially since I have nowhere else to go. I feel very emotionally drained How can I deal with this?

Answer 604: All you can do/control is work on yourself. When you have enough sense of self, you will know how to deal with your family. Therapy is an investment in yourself, which affects your family.

Question 605: I'm being verbally abused on a daily basis by my parents in front of my child. I feel like I'm trapped and I have no escape. I feel like I have to listen to the horrible things they say and just take all of it.

I need some way of learning how to cope with listening to it especially since I have nowhere else to go. I feel very emotionally drained How can I deal with this?

Answer 605: Hello, I am sorry to hear about you feeling verbally abused, trapped without an escape, and emotionally drained. Sounds to me like you are being treated more like a child than an adult. It's time to learn about healthy boundaries and being treated like an adult. This process will take time, but beyond elevating your self-esteem and worth, you will be modeling to your children a healthy adult. Model to them an empowered, confident, and person that is worthy of respect. Please invest in yourself. Find yourself a therapist that encourages and empowers you to have a voice and not feel invisible. You'll be so glad you did!

Question 606: I'm being verbally abused on a daily basis by my parents in front of my child. I feel like I'm trapped and I have no escape. I feel like I have to listen to the horrible things they say and just take all of it.

I need some way of learning how to cope with listening to it especially since I have nowhere else to go. I feel very emotionally drained How can I deal with this?

Answer 606: I am so sorry this is happening to you. One thought I have is for you to create a mantra or a soothing statement to say over and over to yourself as you are being bombarded with this negativity and abuse. For example you could say "Living here is temporarily, one day I will have my own place". Or you

could say something like "I am a good person, I am a good parent, and I always try to do the best I can". Saying this over and over to yourself as you are listening to your parents will help you to tune out some of their words but it will also start to build more positive neural connections and start to wire your brain to build and/or strengthen your self esteem. Focus on the temporary nature of your situation, start making plans for leaving the situation. If you are under 18 and can't leave because you are in school, now is a good time to start planning for when you can leave. That when the opportunity is available you know how you will get a job, how you will find an apartment, who will provide daycare. This will make the transition out of your parents home much easier and it will give you something to look forward to while you are in their home. Take care!

Question 607: I'm being verbally abused on a daily basis by my parents in front of my child. I feel like I'm trapped and I have no escape. I feel like I have to listen to the horrible things they say and just take all of it.

I need some way of learning how to cope with listening to it especially since I have nowhere else to go. I feel very emotionally drained How can I deal with this?

Answer 607: Your situation is a difficult one, but I would encourage you to start considering how to set boundaries for yourself and your family members. Often, times we believe we have to allow a certain behavior because a person is family. This is not true. It sounds like you could use some help understanding finding your voice and asserting yourself with your family members.

Question 608: I'm being verbally abused on a daily basis by my parents in front of my child. I feel like I'm trapped and I have no escape. I feel like I have to listen to the horrible things they say and just take all of it.

I need some way of learning how to cope with listening to it especially since I have nowhere else to go. I feel very emotionally drained How can I deal with this?

Answer 608: I am so sorry you are experiencing this situation. Considering that you mentioned not having a place to go, it may be best to address the problem as oppose to "just take all of it". Confrontation can be done in a healthy and effective way. Being able to communicate your feelings with the intent of improving the problem can be a great skill needed in multiple settings in life. The therapy process can help build this skill set and goal plan to remove yourself from the home. Good luck.

Question 609: I'm being verbally abused on a daily basis by my parents in front of my child. I feel like I'm trapped and I have no escape. I feel like I have to listen to the horrible things they say and just take all of it.

I need some way of learning how to cope with listening to it especially since I have nowhere else to go. I feel very emotionally drained How can I deal with this?

Answer 609: The first step is realizing your value and establishing firm boundaries. When your parents cross that boundary and are verbally abusive, you have to have a plan to stand your ground and act upon it. That plan may include a better job to afford a place of your own, a domestic violence shelter if you are unable to provide for your needs, a firm talk with your parents about your parental authority, or other. Whatever you do has to be firm or consistent, a boundary that you allow someone to cross is no boundary. There is always a way, if you have no where to go, ask yourself why is that the case(which I am sure you have considered already) and what can I do about it. If you choose not to take any action then you are enabling your parents to remain abusive. Ask yourself too, why am I not acting on my situation. Am I too dependent on them? Do I not want to change? Is it easier just to let them provide for me? Be honest with yourself. You need to work on your self esteem, and things that empower you. Support groups in person or online, Church groups or organizations, friends, books, music, etc.... but think on things that will empower you. Are you stuck financially because of the need for a job? Do you need to go back to school? Do you need training in a new field? There are a myriad of possibilities and answers. Action, think action and Change, what can I change?

Question 610: I'm being verbally abused on a daily basis by my parents in front of my child. I feel like I'm trapped and I have no escape. I feel like I have to listen to the horrible things they say and just take all of it.

I need some way of learning how to cope with listening to it especially since I have nowhere else to go. I feel very emotionally drained How can I deal with this?

Answer 610: I can't imagine what you are feeling but I can tell you that you are right to be concerned about your children baring witness to this abuse. This is a great teachable moment for your kids. How you handle yourself will be very important for your children to see. Your "REACTION" is what you should

focus on. Will you react with rage and name calling? Will you listen to your parents with respect and talk to them in private about how they are speaking to you in front of your kids? Will you talk your kids about what is going? From reading this I am assuming you live with your parents. If this is the case you have to think about what you can do to change your situation. Have a plan! Set a goal! Don't lose hope!

Question 611: I'm being verbally abused on a daily basis by my parents in front of my child. I feel like I'm trapped and I have no escape. I feel like I have to listen to the horrible things they say and just take all of it.

I need some way of learning how to cope with listening to it especially since I have nowhere else to go. I feel very emotionally drained How can I deal with this?

Answer 611: I think one of the best things to pass on to our children, or simply one of the best lessons in life, is to learn when to internalize (it's an issue in me) and when to externalize (it's an issue in them), as well as always finding the balance of the two. In this case, you don't seem to be the issue. Sure, living with your parents with your child probably is not your dream scenario, nor your parents'. But, there are ways to process that without someone feeling abused, and your parents clearly have zero ability or boundaries if they are willing to verbally abuse you in front of your child, and their grandchild. If there is a reason they are doing so, I'm sure they think they have a good one. However, the dynamic that they are willingly setting up is problematic. And it is THEIR problem. However, by being strong and not taking in someone's verbal abuse, you are going to role model for your child how it's about what is inside of you, your own drive, that will be what is important, NOT what others say about you. It's important to always come back to yourself inside, and seeing the good that is in you (or even just noticing that it's there, if you can't quite see it in its entirety.) I would also advise your parents to think about their own role modeling.

Question 612: I'm being verbally abused on a daily basis by my parents in front of my child. I feel like I'm trapped and I have no escape. I feel like I have to listen to the horrible things they say and just take all of it.

I need some way of learning how to cope with listening to it especially since I have nowhere else to go. I feel very emotionally drained How can I deal with this?

Answer 612: When their verbal abuse starts, tell them you are exiting the conversation because the way they're talking to you is unacceptable. Explain you are willing to hear their point of view only not when it is expressed as abuse. They may not agree with your opinion and also may not want to change. Even if they do not change, you are entitled to be treated as a human being who is worthy of respect. Explain your reason to exit the conversation and ask them to write down their requests for you to consider.

Question 613: When they come home from their dad's and I fuss at them for anything, they move like they are dodging being hit. They say they're sorry over and over really fast. I ask and they say no one has hit them, and I've seen no marks. Am I being paranoid or am I right to be?

Answer 613: This sounds frightening and overwhelming, and I'm glad you are reaching out for help. I can't say for sure your children are being abused but I can understand your suspicion since there appears to be a change your children's behavior. I think it would be important for you to keep an eye on the situation in case you notice any other changes. If you become more concerned, even suspicions of child abuse are reportable to Family protective services. If they feel it is necessary they can do an investigation. You are doing the biggest thing for your children by being there for them and supporting them.

Question 614: When they come home from their dad's and I fuss at them for anything, they move like they are dodging being hit. They say they're sorry over and over really fast. I ask and they say no one has hit them, and I've seen no marks. Am I being paranoid or am I right to be?

Answer 614: It sounds like your children are walking on eggshells, and behaving in a manner that suggests that (at minimum) they may be receiving an undue amount of anger from someone in their lives. In addition to addressing this delicately with your children's father, it would be wise to speak with your children's teachers and pediatrician as well. Please closely monitor the situation, and express to your children that they can always come to you with any information, and they will never be in trouble for confiding in you.

Question 615: he just walks in the house whenever he wants to see his kids. My fiancé tells me it makes her angry and doesn't like it, but she seems afraid to say anything to him about it for some reason. Is it okay for him to do this?

Answer 615: The short answer to your question is "No" it's not okay for anyone to ever be doing this. There's a lot of unanswered questions and other factors going on here that need attention. Nevertheless, don't hesitate to seek out legal counsel and/or call 911. Ideally, your fiancé would be able

to speak directly to her ex-husband and set reasonable boundaries that honor whatever legal agreements are in force resultant from the divorce and custody agreements. The fact that she's afraid to say anything to him about his inappropriate behavior, and that she hasn't been able to give you any reason for her fear, suggests possible factors of past abusive behaviors, entitlement, and/or co-dependence. I hope things work out well for all and I'm confident a skilled therapist could help all navigate how best to set boundaries and experience greater healing.

Question 616: he just walks in the house whenever he wants to see his kids. My fiancé tells me it makes her angry and doesn't like it, but she seems afraid to say anything to him about it for some reason. Is it okay for him to do this?

Answer 616: The kids are actually her Property, and he does have a claim to them as he wishes;The house is yours, I presume;So require that if he wishes to see his Property, it be done off of your Property;And, that as long as it remains your Property, you have jurisdiction over all those, therein;Require compensation for visits, and send him a bill;When he doesn't pay, send to the local sheriff, go to small claims court, and win a judgment against him for non-payment;I wonder how that might work out... act as man :)

Question 617: he just walks in the house whenever he wants to see his kids. My fiancé tells me it makes her angry and doesn't like it, but she seems afraid to say anything to him about it for some reason. Is it okay for him to do this?

Answer 617: The obvious answer is no, it's not okay. There are other you should be asking though. You said your fiance "seems afraid" of her ex. Did you ask her about that? Is there a reason he still has a key to the home? Has there been any discussion of appropriate boundaries? I work with a lot of people parenting from different households and the stickiest spots are the ones that have not been discussed. There is obviously conflict there or they wouldn't have split, but your fiance and her ex do need to stay aligned for the kids and that can't happen if she feels fearful or resentful. If she doesn't have a problem with his barging in, clearly you do (and who wouldn't? He's not YOUR ex!), so you and she need to have some agreements around his access to the home. If she is afraid to bring up the discussion then I strongly recommend that she and the ex get some help with a good therapist. The kids health, your health and hers, and the health of your relationships in the family depend on it!

Question 618: he just walks in the house whenever he wants to see his kids. My fiancé tells me it makes her angry and doesn't like it, but she seems afraid to say anything to him about it for some reason. Is it okay for him to do this?

Answer 618: Do you know the reason your fiancé puts up with the ex's behavior?If not, then ask her.The answer could be anything, from some agreement the two of them made either formally or informally before you came into her life, to residual sense of obligation she feels toward him as a parent, or that she genuinely does fear his physical or verbal anger if she disagrees with what he wants.Facts are the best starting point to know how to handle a situation.There is no blanket rule and certainly no law which prohibits what he's doing. The situation is entirely in the hands of the people involved.

Question 619: My daughter is in later elementary school. She can't color in the lines. Her words jumble together when she writes unless there are big spaces or she skips lines.

Answer 619: Depending on your daughter's age, this could be a learning disability. I suggest contacting the school counselor and asking for an evaluation, once she is evaluated and depending on the diagnosis, she could be provided with treatment recommendations like occupational therapy, reading glasses, or assistance in class. These and more accommodations are enforced under the 504 act. Consider if the observations that you have done are affecting her performance in school only, or also in other settings. Observe her behavior and or her emotions and see if they change as well. Discuss these with your daughter's counselor as well.¿ Tiene mi hija un desorden mental?Mi hija está en la escuela elemental. Ella no puede colorear dentro de la línea. Mezcla las palabras cuando escribe, a menos que tenga grandes espacios, o brinca las líneas.Dependiendo de la edad de tu hija esto puede ser un problema de aprendizaje. Te sugiero que contactes al consejero escolar y solicites una evaluación, dependiendo de la diagnosis, ellos pueden recomendar tratamientos como: terapia ocupacional, lentes para leer o asistencia en clase. Estos acomodados son provistos bajo la acta 504. Considera si las observaciones que has hecho afectan el desempeño de tu hija en la escuela, o en otras áreas, también observa su conducta y emociones y repórtaselo al consejero escolar.

Question 620: My daughter is in later elementary school. She can't color in the lines. Her words jumble together when she writes unless there are big spaces or she skips lines.

Answer 620: At times when a child is not displaying milestone behavior at the same rate that is average for their peers, this should raise concern, so you are correct in reaching out for advice. Speaking with your child's pediatrician, as well as school staff may be the first places to start. You can request that she receive an assessment and evaluation, with a subsequent treatment plan to meet any needs she may have.

Question 621: My daughter is in later elementary school. She can't color in the lines. Her words jumble together when she writes unless there are big spaces or she skips lines.

Answer 621: Kids develop in different ways and different speeds. It can sometimes feel like your kid has a delay because of these different ways of development. If you have concerns about your child's development then addressing it with the school is the best solution. They will be able to provide a full assessment if needed with an academic diagnosis as well as academic support.

Question 622: My daughter is in later elementary school. She can't color in the lines. Her words jumble together when she writes unless there are big spaces or she skips lines.

Answer 622: Contact your daughter's school and ask for an occupational therapy evaluation. An occupational therapist can determine if your daughter struggles with eye-hand coordination, visual processing or sensory motor difficulties. The therapist will develop a plan of care if your daughter demonstrates delays or difficulties in learning. OTontheGo.org mobile therapy that comes to you! Accepting most insurance.

Question 623: My daughter is in later elementary school. She can't color in the lines. Her words jumble together when she writes unless there are big spaces or she skips lines.

Answer 623: Developmentally, there are ages where not coloring in the lines, writing words that are jumbled together, and leaving big spaces or skipping lines are completely normal. I have seen children in 3rd and in some cases, 4th grade who do not have learning disabilities write in the manner you have described. There is, however, a type of learning disability called Dysgraphia which can present in the ways you have described. If you suspect that your daughter might have Dysgraphia, then the best thing to do is to have educational testing done. You can request testing by going through your school system and asking for an IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) meeting. Your school is required to honor your request for an IEP meeting. At the meeting, you can ask the school to do educational testing that will be at no cost to you. I will say that depending on where you live and your school system, it can sometimes be difficult to get the school system to do testing. If that is the case, you can go to a psychologist or find an agency near you that can also perform this type of testing as well (some will accept insurance and others will not.) There are also educational advocates that you can hire to help you if you ever have difficulty getting your daughter properly assessed by the school system. I also highly recommend seeing a developmental ophthalmologist and/or a developmental pediatrician. They can be great resources in helping you to determine if your daughter does have a learning disability. I always say that a parent should "trust their gut" and if you feel that your child is struggling and that there may be a learning disability then there is no harm in getting your child evaluated. The best case scenario is that your child is completely on track and what you are seeing is developmentally appropriate. On the other hand, if your child does have a learning disability, then you have caught it early enough where she can receive services that will help her in the long run. Either way, it is a win, win.

Question 624: My daughter is in later elementary school. She can't color in the lines. Her words jumble together when she writes unless there are big spaces or she skips lines.

Answer 624: It sounds like it might be worth asking the school for an evaluation to determine whether your daughter has any learning disabilities such as dysgraphia or dyslexia or seek an evaluation through an educational neuropsychologist. I would also suggest having her vision checked by a developmental optometrist.

Question 625: My daughter is in later elementary school. She can't color in the lines. Her words jumble together when she writes unless there are big spaces or she skips lines.

Answer 625: If your daughter is the same age as most of the other students in her class, and the other students easily complete the tasks you list here, then there is a problem in the performance of these tasks for your daughter. Without knowing more about the context of your daughter's life, for example, is she a new student to the school and class, are there major stressors in the home environment, does your daughter have friends, does your daughter have the same problems she has in school, when she is in other environments? Also, who is telling you she has these problems? Are you the one who notices what you describe here or is your daughter or is her teacher telling you these facts? Depending on your

answers to the questions, start to get clarity with the classroom teacher and the school guidance counselor as to the source of your daughter's problem. Good luck!

Question 626: My daughter is in later elementary school. She can't color in the lines. Her words jumble together when she writes unless there are big spaces or she skips lines.

Answer 626: There could be a number of things going on here. For instance, have her eyes been checked by an optometrist? She might just not like writing or coloring. She could be rushing through assignments so that she can spend time with friends, play games, or do something else. She might need some extra help with fine motor skills. What are her grades like? Does she rush through other things like cleaning her room or getting ready for bed?

Question 627: My daughter is in later elementary school. She can't color in the lines. Her words jumble together when she writes unless there are big spaces or she skips lines.

Answer 627: It's hard to tell from the information that you were able to provide here, but talk with her elementary school a guidance counselor. Someone working with the school (usually a school psychologist) should be able to evaluate her to see if she needs extra help and to tell you more clearly what may be happening.

Question 628: My daughter seemed to be developing at a normal rate until about the age of 10. She then started to act younger than she is. Now she only wants to play with younger kids and she doesn't act her age. I don't know why this is happening. Is this normal?

Answer 628: This is certainly an important issue to look into, It is always helpful to speak with the child's pediatrician since they are most familiar with the child's developmental history. Also, children tend to regress behaviorally when facing events and interactions they feel to have no control over, this can be as simple as a loss of a pet, a recent move, death in the family, and/or as serious as sexual abuse, and other things. If you have not spoken to the school that can be a good starting point.

Question 629: My daughter seemed to be developing at a normal rate until about the age of 10. She then started to act younger than she is. Now she only wants to play with younger kids and she doesn't act her age. I don't know why this is happening. Is this normal?

Answer 629: Your daughter is fortunate to have an observant parent, who is willing to seek out help in this regard. Regression can be indicative of some stress in your child's life, so the issues she is facing should be examined. Seeking advice from your daughter's pediatrician, as well as a practitioner familiar with adolescent issues or perhaps play therapy can equip you with insight into the causes of the behavior, and give you tools to assist your daughter in learning age appropriate social interactions.

Question 630: My daughter seemed to be developing at a normal rate until about the age of 10. She then started to act younger than she is. Now she only wants to play with younger kids and she doesn't act her age. I don't know why this is happening. Is this normal?

Answer 630: Hello. It sounds like you are really concerned about your daughter because you have noticed a significant change in her behavior . It's really a great first step that you are reaching out to get some ideas about what might be going on . You are clearly an observant and hands on mom who wants to be sure that her daughter is ok. This is a tough question to answer without more information . With that said , I have found that "under stress people regress." In other words , many people , children and adults alike , often regress and behave differently - as if they were younger than their actual age - when under stress . Therefore , my first question would be : has anything been happening recently that is causing your daughter stress ? This could be anything from conflict at home , recent changes such as moving , divorce , a loss of some kind , switching schools , or losing a friend or friends . Additionally , sometimes if children are feeling bullied or left out by same age peers , they may gravitate toward younger playmates as a way to boost their social confidence . I would suggest that you think about what stressors / changes may have occurred recently. You may also want to check in with her teacher (s) to see if they have noticed any changes in your daughter's behavior at school . I also think that you can have a conversation with your daughter in order to see if you can get a sense about whether or not something has been bothering her. Something as simple as " I have noticed that you aren't spending time with the friends you used to hang out with ; it seems like you have been playing with a lot of younger kids lately .

Am I right about that ? " and then if she says yes you might ask a few questions such as : "did something happen with your friends that is making you not want to be with them?" "Has something been bothering you lately ? Are you feeling upset or worried ? " If she denies that there is anything wrong you might even say " I know that sometimes when I feel stressed or worried , I tend to act a little differently - sometimes I withdraw from my regular group of friends , or I get cranky and feel less like myself . I wonder if

something like that is happening with you ?" If you are really concerned and not getting any answers from her and / or her teachers , perhaps you can consult with a therapist to discuss your concerns further and decide if it might help for your daughter to talk to a therapist a few times , or at the very least you can get more specific tips from a therapist about how to approach this issue with your daughter more effectively . The more detail you can provide about what you have noticed with your daughter , including any changes or new stressors , any possible patterns to this behavior , if school has become more difficult socially and or academically , the more a therapist can guide you about how best to handle your concerns and talk with your daughter in a way that is helpful to her. Good luck! I believe that this may just be a phase and it seems to me to be well within the normal range of children's behavior. I do, though, think that you will feel more assured about this if you can get to the bottom of what's going on .

Question 631: My daughter seemed to be developing at a normal rate until about the age of 10. She then started to act younger than she is. Now she only wants to play with younger kids and she doesn't act her age. I don't know why this is happening. Is this normal?

Answer 631: Good for you to know your daughter's friendship circles and to notice when these have changed. While friendships are key relationships, they are not the only indicator of someone not developing normally. Is your observation and opinion that your daughter isn't normal based on other factors or just this one? If this is the only factor then start with reflecting on what circumstances may be influencing your daughter to socialize with younger kids. Has she been ostracized or bullied by her peers and may be retreating to avoid further emotional hurt? Is she keeping up with her school work? Sometimes kids who feel overwhelmed by schoolwork will regress into conditions in which they feel more success and control. Are there family circumstances such as the death of someone with whom your daughter felt close? Or, is there a new younger sibling in the family or a younger sibling who due to their own circumstance receives more attention than your daughter may wish for herself. Once you've reflected on which areas may be affecting your daughter, gently ask her some questions about her comfort with what you theorize may be the source of the problem. It's also possible that offering her your extra time and interest may increase her sense of self so that she feels secure enough to increase her social time with her age group.

Question 632: My ex-wife married and used me to have a child. She now uses that child as a pawn. I know my child misses me, but I need to move on and not live in the past. How do I do this? Do I see my child as much as possible or very little? Is it more confusing for the child?

Answer 632: You can "move on and not live in the past" in the context of your ex-relationship, but that does not mean moving on from your child. "Moving on" then would involve accepting the end of the relationship and developing a civil relationship with your ex-partner as far as is possible for the sake of your child's development. Generally, it's good for a functional (non-abusive) parent to spend time with his/her child, but only insofar as that doesn't cause your child unnecessary stress. That requires the two adults to act like adults with each other for the sake of their child. What's confusing for children is seeing their parents act uncivilly or manipulatively. Children also do well with routines so regular dependable visitation is preferable to random visitation or, worse, not following through on commitments. But if one person is exploiting their child to harm their ex-partner, then visiting your child in that context may be stressful to him/her (depending on what you mean by using your child as a pawn). When dealing with a hostile ex-partner, your first challenge is to negotiate rules and boundaries with your ex-partner about appropriate behavior for the good of your child. If you cannot come to an agreement, a counselor can help mediate a conversation. If that's not an option, then it may be possible to turn to family court to stipulate visitation rules (for which you'd have to consult with an attorney).

Question 633: My ex-wife married and used me to have a child. She now uses that child as a pawn. I know my child misses me, but I need to move on and not live in the past. How do I do this? Do I see my child as much as possible or very little? Is it more confusing for the child?

Answer 633: Your child is not part of your past, he or she is part of your present and future. Your child needs you. Statistics about fatherless children are staggering. Research shows children raised in a father-absent home experience the following: 4x greater risk of poverty, more likely to have behavioral problems, 7x more likely to become pregnant as a teen, more likely to face abuse and neglect, more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol, 2x more likely to suffer obesity, 2x more likely to drop out of school, more likely to commit crime and more likely to go to prison. Listen to your heart and ask yourself, what do you want for your child? Co-parenting is hard when each parent is unable to prioritize the best interests of the child. You and your ex-wife can get help learning how to co-parent in a way that will work for each of you

with the best interest of your child in mind. What is confusing for a child is why did my parent abandon me and they will struggle with issues of worthiness and self-esteem for the rest of their lives. Here are some websites for you to check out and get help with the most important job you'll ever have...being a father!<https://fatherhoodfactor.com/us-fatherless-statistics/><https://www.fatherhood.org/fatherhood-data-statistics/><https://thefatherlessgeneration.wordpress.com/statistics/><http://fathers.com/statistics-and-research/the-consequences-of-fatherlessness/>

Question 634: My ex-wife married and used me to have a child. She now uses that child as a pawn. I know my child misses me, but I need to move on and not live in the past. How do I do this? Do I see my child as much as possible or very little? Is it more confusing for the child?

Answer 634: Hi, your situation sounds very complicated and sensitive. It is important to handle it with care as it involves your children. When parents are attempting to co-parent, the clearer the boundaries and expectations are the easier it gets to effectively co-parent. Parenting your child is not "living in the past", allow me to reframe that approach and instead view it as an investment in your future. Your child will forever be your child and deserves an active loving and caring father. Staying away sends a different message to your child and leaves room for resentment. Find a way to create an agreement between you and your ex-wife with the best interest of your child as the focus. The courts are able to assist with this goal as well.

Question 635: My ex-wife married and used me to have a child. She now uses that child as a pawn. I know my child misses me, but I need to move on and not live in the past. How do I do this? Do I see my child as much as possible or very little? Is it more confusing for the child?

Answer 635: The thing that confuses a child the most is for a parent to come and go from their life. Children have a way of making things their fault, even when they have done nothing wrong. Because of this, when parents cut off contact, the child thinks it's their fault. As hard as that already is for a child, it is even worse when a parent pops in and out of their life. This makes the belief even more strong for them. They start to think, "why does dad keep leaving? What am I doing to keep making him go away?" I believe a child needs both parents in their life. Whether she used you for a child or not, that child still exists and never asked for this. They didn't ask to be born into drama and two parents that can't make things work. You can move on and start over while still maintaining a relationship with your child. If you start over far away, this may mean less visits but you'll still be a part of their life. Just make sure when you make a commitment to this child to stick to it. Every child deserves that much. Good luck to you! :-)

Question 636: My ex-wife married and used me to have a child. She now uses that child as a pawn. I know my child misses me, but I need to move on and not live in the past. How do I do this? Do I see my child as much as possible or very little? Is it more confusing for the child?

Answer 636: What are the ways your ex-wife uses your child as a pawn? This answer determines the best ways to handle particular situations. Basically, distinguish that your father relationship to your child lasts has great meaning for your child and as the adult, the responsibility for managing this relationship falls on you. Your relationship to your ex wife took place between two adults and therefore you are only responsible for your own actions to repair the damage done to you. From what you write, you already have a plan in progress to do this by separating yourself as much as possible from contact with the ex. In a way the challenge of keeping active as a parent while also distancing and clearing your emotions of the hurt and betrayal done to you, will establish both a solid relationship with your child and grow more acceptance and self-forgiveness of having been taken advantage of and tricked.

Question 637: My ex-wife married and used me to have a child. She now uses that child as a pawn. I know my child misses me, but I need to move on and not live in the past. How do I do this? Do I see my child as much as possible or very little? Is it more confusing for the child?

Answer 637: I am really glad you reached out. When parents get divorced, they still need to figure out how to have relationship so that they can parent their child. We might divorce our partners, however, we don't divorce our children. If anything our children need to know that we are still a stable force in their lives. Unfortunately, in some relationships children get used as a bargaining piece and I am hearing that may be happening in your relationship. You can move on from the relationship with your ex while still maintaining a relationship with your child. It is possible and it takes both parents to agree to do the right thing by their child. It is important for your children to have some consistency in his or her time with you. For example, if you and your ex don't have a parenting schedule it is something that you want to create so that you can not only decide for you when you will see your child, but your child can know when you will be available just for her. This will lay the foundation for consistency and allow your child to have some

security in troubled times. I would highly recommend you sit down with your ex and discuss how you can both be a positive source in your child's life. How you can both be there to help raise her. If this is not a conversation that you can have on your own you might seek out help from the court. There are parenting experts and mediators who might be able to assist you. Remember, in any discussion keep the focus on what is best for your child and you will be moving in the right direction. Best of luck to you!

Question 638: My ex-wife married and used me to have a child. She now uses that child as a pawn. I know my child misses me, but I need to move on and not live in the past. How do I do this? Do I see my child as much as possible or very little? Is it more confusing for the child?

Answer 638: If you have a good relationship with your child then you have already accepted and been accepted as this child's parent and you have a commitment and an obligation to play that role. If you suddenly absent yourself from this child's life then you may be doing real damage. Working out an arrangement with the child's mother for regular visits the child can count on and committed to by both parents will serve the best interest of the child, which I assume is what both parents are truly concerned with. The visits don't have to be every day, once a week, even once a month, is better than hit and miss with long absences in between. Best of luck to you, and the fact that you asked the question says volumes about your parenting potential. Feel free to follow up with me, on line or in person.

Question 639: My ex-wife married and used me to have a child. She now uses that child as a pawn. I know my child misses me, but I need to move on and not live in the past. How do I do this? Do I see my child as much as possible or very little? Is it more confusing for the child?

Answer 639: You're in a difficult situation and on behalf of you and your child, I commend you for trying to find the right thing to do. Short version: your child needs you as much as possible. period. Always. We used to think that children were almost always harmed by divorce, unless there was extreme conflict or violence. More recent data shows that children are not necessarily harmed by divorce if they keep both their parents. In other words, the damaging part is losing half of themselves and losing the value of being connected to everyone who loves them, especially the other parent, in addition to the extra benefit there is from the other parent's perspective, strengths and so on. The best thing for your child is for you to be available and loving and doing everything possible to allow the child to be whole - a person who incorporates BOTH parents. It's a tragedy for everyone to use a child to achieve adult aims, like getting back at a former spouse. In such a circumstance, your child needs you more than ever. If you and your wife have different rules and so on, your child will learn to adjust and adapt, just as they would if you remained in the household. A child quickly learns that they talk to mom about x,y,z or get away with whatever, but has different rules with dad. He/she will not be too confused in the long run. Please stay the course in dealing with a difficult ex-wife for you and your child's wellbeing. Best of luck to all.

Question 640: I am a counselor at day camp where we have a child with severe autism. We try to keep him entertained by carrying cards around for when he starts acting up so we can get him to focus on something else. The day camp administrator has told us not to yell at him because he will zone out and not listen, so we just talk in a calm voice. However, other kids see the treatment as unfair.

Answer 640: Behavioral interaction with someone who has severe autism requires highly specialized training, both for any professional staff involved with the person and for the family members. It is an unfair situation for both the person who has autism as well as the campers who do not, to expect both sides to get along harmoniously. In order to achieve this, the campers would need specialized training to know how to respond to distress in the camper who has autism. This would obviously stretch and burden the summer camp budget as well as provide an activity which usually isn't part of summer camp for children. What you can do which may be productive in helping the camper who has autism, is to point out the interaction difficulty to the summer administrators. Ultimately it is their problem to only take campers who are able to reasonably adjust to socializing together and from what you write, the administration has overreached whom they consider reasonable camper mates.

Question 641: When my son was a teenager, we sent him to live with his dad because of the constant disrespectful attitude. A week after he graduated, his dad made him leave because of the same issues. All four parents tried to talk to him, and he just refuses help all around. He is now living with his grandparents. He had a job, and took steps to get his license and an insured vehicle. I thought he was heading down the right road, and then he tells me he quit his job because he didn't like it. I just don't know what to do.

Answer 641: Probably the best way to be supportive of your son is to tell him what bothers you about the way he's handling himself. If you'd like him to work with your suggestions then before you make critical

comments be sure to validate his strong points and to recognize his natural talents. People are much more likely to take advice if the person feels the criticism is spoken by someone who respects them and isn't only critical of them. Offer your availability to talk with him if you genuinely feel available to speak with him in a non-judgmental way.

Question 642: When my son was a teenager, we sent him to live with his dad because of the constant disrespectful attitude. A week after he graduated, his dad made him leave because of the same issues. All four parents tried to talk to him, and he just refuses help all around. He is now living with his grandparents. He had a job, and took steps to get his license and an insured vehicle. I thought he was heading down the right road, and then he tells me he quit his job because he didn't like it. I just don't know what to do.

Answer 642: I admire your efforts. You can continue to offer assistance for your son, but it is ultimately up to him to decide what to do with the information or ideas that you are giving to him. One thing you might try is to ask questions in a way that enables you to learn more about what he is experiencing. For example, if he is willing to talk to you about what he does on a daily basis and/or what he would like to be doing, you may be able to get a sense of what he finds difficult and find some resources to help. I might ask things like this (just as examples): Can we talk for a few minutes about some things that I would like to learn more about? I'm just looking to learn more about what has been happening for you recently and I'm not trying to make you do anything. I know you said you quit your job because you didn't like it. Could you tell me more about what you liked and what you didn't like? Do you see yourself doing the same kind of job in the future? What is it that makes you happy or what is it that you look forward to doing? Can you think of anything that I can do to be of support to you? If he is interested, you may be able to connect him with an area community college to learn more about possible job opportunities. With the way that I wrote the questions above, it probably sounds like it's relatively easy. In reality, it may not be an easy conversation and your son may choose not to discuss it with you. If that's the case, I'd remind yourself that you are trying to do everything you can.

Question 643: She cried because she lost all trust in me. Now I feel disgusting and like my heart just got stabbed, what do I do?

Answer 643: You felt bad when you lied, so you told the truth. I imagine your mom was really shocked and upset - both of those things tell me you are a pretty honest person. It's possible that your mom had a big reaction simply because she has learned that her child, from whom she always assumed honesty, was capable of being dishonest. That's not awesome, but it's not the end of the world. You made a mistake - you'll make more of those in your life, just try not to make the same ones over and over again. It sounds like you and your mom are close so I can see why it would feel so awful to have her distrust you. Since you are a fundamentally honest person, the way back to being trusted is going to be simple, but may take a little time. The "recipe" is easy - say what you are doing/going to do; do only that unless change is necessary, in which case you inform others involved, and repeat. And cut yourself some slack. Your mom will recover and so will you. It's an important and painful lesson about integrity, but once learned it will serve you well.

Question 644: She cried because she lost all trust in me. Now I feel disgusting and like my heart just got stabbed, what do I do?

Answer 644: It sounds like you've already learned that just being honest is often the best approach. What do you think about telling your mom how you're feeling? She might really appreciate it if you also let her know that regaining her trust is really important to you.

Question 645: She cried because she lost all trust in me. Now I feel disgusting and like my heart just got stabbed, what do I do?

Answer 645: Hey! Sounds like the part of you that knows the RIGHT thing to do won here! I am so proud of you for admitting that you lied to your Mom! Sometimes lies come out of our mouths before we can even catch them because we are trying to say what the other person wants to hear. I bet that, as you begin to show her that you are not going to lie any more, she will begin to gain trust in you again! Be open with your feelings with you Mom - she is there to support you, guide you and love you! Give her lots of hugs - and give yourself one too for being so brave! Be Wise!

Question 646: There is just no communication at all between us. She sleeps constantly all day (not at night). She acts angry and unfocused and stays in her very messy room all the time. The only time she comes out is to eat. She has aches and fatigue, weight gain, hair loss and skin problems. She does not look after her health.

I don't know how to communicate with her. She is not open to any suggestions. How do I get through to her?

Answer 646: That sounds awful, and is clearly unsustainable. There are some great answers that give some guidance about what might be an underlying condition. If all physical and mental health issues are ruled out, it's time to take action. Get backup from friends or family members if you need to, but let your daughter know you are giving her 30 days notice. She needs to find another place to live within that time. If she wants to stay with you, be clear that first she has to go, with a potential to return after she has been out for a good chunk of time. Once out, she can prove to you, and more importantly to herself, that she is capable of maintaining her health and her environment. Remember, you are going to rule out issues that would make it impossible for her to be successful; if she is in good health, her staying with you and living this way is actually harming her.

Question 647: There is just no communication at all between us. She sleeps constantly all day (not at night). She acts angry and unfocused and stays in her very messy room all the time. The only time she comes out is to eat. She has aches and fatigue, weight gain, hair loss and skin problems. She does not look after her health.

I don't know how to communicate with her. She is not open to any suggestions. How do I get through to her?

Answer 647: Hello, I know that your situation is frustrating and debilitating. It sounds like she either has a medical or mental condition. She needs help, and for the sounds of it, you want to help her. I suggest that you take the time to contemplate the best way and time to approach her. Rehearse ahead of time what you want her to hear and what the end goal is. I know it might seem like a lot of work for you to do and perhaps you even feel frustrated about that, but the only way you will reach her is if you approach it in a way she hears your concern and desire to help her. Be prepared with facts and places to go for help. The better prepared you are, the better the chances of her to act on it. Remind her how much you love her and how it is not healthy for her or for the relationship for this to continue. With lots of love and patience, you can make a difference. Stay Strong! Best of luck to you and your daughter, Mirella~

Question 648: There is just no communication at all between us. She sleeps constantly all day (not at night). She acts angry and unfocused and stays in her very messy room all the time. The only time she comes out is to eat. She has aches and fatigue, weight gain, hair loss and skin problems. She does not look after her health.

I don't know how to communicate with her. She is not open to any suggestions. How do I get through to her?

Answer 648: I'm sorry for what sounds like a frustrating situation. For how long has your daughter lived the way you describe and did it start all of a sudden or more gradually come on? What you write sounds like a major depressive disorder and this can start for a variety of reasons and improve in just as many different ways. Start with how you are feeling about the situation. Ask yourself for how long you will be able to tolerate the way your daughter lives and if you feel any satisfaction in your mother daughter relationship. If she is of legal age, and you don't want her to live with you, you've tried convincing her to get medical care for its own sake and to more clearly see her emotional and psychological health, and she is unwilling to take care of herself, you can discuss your options with the adult protective services agency in your state. The first step is to know what exactly is her problem so you can decide if its own you are willing to take care of or not.

Question 649: There is just no communication at all between us. She sleeps constantly all day (not at night). She acts angry and unfocused and stays in her very messy room all the time. The only time she comes out is to eat. She has aches and fatigue, weight gain, hair loss and skin problems. She does not look after her health.

I don't know how to communicate with her. She is not open to any suggestions. How do I get through to her?

Answer 649: 1. She's an adult. 2. She lives in your house? She follows your rules. 3. What you're describing could be any number of things, but could potentially be a medical issue that needs attention. Thyroid issues, autoimmune diseases - there's a ton of medical possibilities for her symptoms. I'm not a doctor; this is a forum of therapists. 4. I recommend the book "Codependent No More" which may help you navigate your rocky relationship with your adult daughter. You may be inadvertently making things worse by "helping" her which can instead enable her to continue her behaviors. Another book you may find helpful is "Boundaries: Where you end and I begin". You cannot control another person, especially an

adult. The only person you can control is yourself. Tough love is sometimes needed, and she is an adult - treat her like one. Maybe then she'll act like one. If we were having this conversation in person, you would interrupt me at this point with a "but..." and then explain all the reasons why you can't tell her to move out, get a job, get up and cook or clean the house, etc. I already know that you have a myriad of excuses for things being the way they are. Yes, I said excuses instead of reasons, because that's what they are. You may feel stuck and like you have to take care of her, but you have choices - you just may not like them. I know that when children are small, parents' lives are focused around them (some more than others) and decisions are made around what is best for your child. But you said your daughter is an adult. The relationship dynamics must change if the relationship is to be a healthy one. I know how difficult it is to watch your child make life choices that you wouldn't want for them, no matter what that choice may be. As a parent, we want to force them to do what we think is "the right thing" but trying to do that only results in frustrations for everyone involved. Whether the issue is a hair color, a tattoo, a lifestyle choice, a job, or choosing not to work or take care of their health, or doing drugs, or drinking - the choice is theirs and theirs alone and so are the consequences of those choices.

Question 650: My son stole my debit card and lied about it. It's not the first time he has lied. I don't know what to do anymore. I don't know if I should punish him or make him do something. I've tried talking to him and asking if anything was wrong. I have grounded him, but nothing works. What should I do?

Answer 650: A lot depends on the age of your child, but given that it was a mis-used debit card, I am going to guess he's a teen? Assuming that, there are a couple of important things to keep in mind...1. That he lied about the misuse indicates he knows he was in the wrong. That's a dreadful feeling - getting caught out- and an impulsive lie may have popped out of his mouth before he thought it through (after all a debit spend is pretty easy to track). 2. Once he lied he stuck with the lie. Somewhere along the line, even though he knew that you knew he wasn't telling the truth, he stuck with his story. And as you said, it's not the first time he lied. Now it looks like a habit has formed. Going forward, when there is a dishonest act of any kind, it's essential that you set it up so your son can be truthful. Simply put, do not ask questions. If you know for certain that he has, for example, misused your debit card, say so. Asking "did you" invites him to get creative with denial; asking "why did you" implies that, with a good enough reason, he might not be in hot water with you. Instead, say what is: "I see this charge on my debit card and realize you used it without my permission". (You can only do this if you know for sure it was him but it sounds like you do). If he meets with denial, stay calm, restate that you are aware this happened. Then deliver consequences that match the transgression (he has to return the item if it's returnable or find a way to pay you back for the charge as well as any fees incurred in using it). Make it harder to find your card because he isn't that great at curbing the impulse to use it yet. And most importantly, once the consequence is delivered you have to let it go. Continuing to bring it up won't benefit him, but it does have the potential to make him more sneaky. Every time he asks respectfully to use it, whether you allow him to or not, be sure to praise him for asking nicely. "Catch" him doing it right as often as possible. Hang in there - this isn't super unusual behavior but it isn't acceptable, so address it but don't let yourself get too wound up about it.

Question 651: My son stole my debit card and lied about it. It's not the first time he has lied. I don't know what to do anymore. I don't know if I should punish him or make him do something. I've tried talking to him and asking if anything was wrong. I have grounded him, but nothing works. What should I do?

Answer 651: Hi Enid, You sound like a sensitive parent; I like that you talked to your son to see if anything is wrong. There is some key information here (I don't know your son's age, whether he spent any money, whether he put the card back, or how many times he's stolen), and my answer might be different depending on those details, but I'll give you my thoughts. I see it as every child's job to figure out the rules and find where their power is in the world. In order to accomplish that, many of them test limits. "What can I get away with?" is a question they have to find the answer to. If a child knows the rules, they're much more likely to not test limits (because they already know the limits). So, part of testing limits is experimenting with stealing and lying. Not all kids steal, but I would say pretty much every child lies at some point. It's a normal behaviour, and most of the time it's about small things that don't matter and we don't even find out. Stealing a debit card is a bit more serious, and I'm not surprised he lied about it. If you absolutely know that he took it, it's okay to tell him that you believe he did this thing and also lied about it. It's appropriate to give a consequence for this type of behaviour, so that the child doesn't do it again. The consequence should be as natural and logical as possible. The behaviour (stealing) was harmful to you, so doing you a favour with extra chores might be a good idea. It's funny, because as parents we try to tell

our kids that lying is bad, but they know they'll get a consequence if they tell the truth so there are natural deterrents to being honest (we don't want people to know our mistakes). It's a dilemma. If you really want to focus on the lying part, you can tell him that you won't give him a consequence for the lying if he decides to come clean with the truth within one day. That gives him incentive to come to you with truth. It sometimes works with kids to give them a chance to come clean and then reward them for telling the truth. You can set your child up for success and train them to tolerate honesty. Put a cookie on the counter. Tell your child to take the cookie at some point in the day. Then ask them later if they took the cookie. You're making honesty fun. Kids love games. Basically, there's as much power in rewarding the positive behaviour as punishing the negative. If this is the first serious offence for your son, don't make a big deal of it; consequence him and see if he learns. If it's a pattern, that's different and you may want the input of a therapist.

Question 652: I'm concerned about My 12 year old daughter. About a month or two ago she started walking on her toes, as well as coloring and writing very messy. This all happened very suddenly. She has never walked on her tiptoes and has always colored and written very neatly. Is this something I should be concerned about? Any advice will help.

Answer 652: It is great that you are noticing these changes with your daughter. I can't offer advice without knowing much more about your particular situation but some things to think about: Has something else happen recently that has been stressful, upsetting? Is your daughter trying to communicate something to you and if so what might that be? Have you discussed these recent changes with her? (Without being too serious or accusatory) There is so much changing for her (and you) now-communication and connection are crucial. I hope you both can talk to a supportive person about all these changes.

Question 653: I'm concerned about My 12 year old daughter. About a month or two ago she started walking on her toes, as well as coloring and writing very messy. This all happened very suddenly. She has never walked on her tiptoes and has always colored and written very neatly. Is this something I should be concerned about? Any advice will help.

Answer 653: Have you asked your daughter why she's doing the behaviors you describe? Often the best way to find out why someone does something is to simply ask them their reason. Her answer will give you some guidance as to next possible steps. If she's pretending to be a fantasy figure or trying to find out how being taller feels, or walking on high heels or some other image then knowing this rules out that she has some unbearable pain in her arch which may require more practical answers such as new shoes or even indicate a medical problem. Ask if she's noticed any change in the way she walks. Maybe she doesn't know she's doing this and maybe she feels embarrassed to tell you she's doing something a bit odd. Since usually 12 year olds don't color, is it new that she started coloring? Maybe given the fact of messy handwriting, she's in a phase of pretending or reflecting on good times as a young child. Then this becomes the topic of examination. Does she feel insecure about being on the cusp of adolescence? Some of these questions can be asked directly and some are for you to first decide based on what you know of your daughter, which questions and what direction to take in understanding your daughter's motivation.

Question 654: I have three children. The oldest is nine and not my biological child. The middle child is three and the youngest is one. I have a great relationship with the oldest two children but I haven't developed the same level of attachment to the youngest child. I rarely want her around and look forward to her nap times. Is this normal?

Answer 654: This is your experience, your feeling and you are wondering if it is normal, which means is this common or the rule. This question about how you feel about your third child leads me to believe you are dis- turbed [etymology: agitated or stirred up]. Feelings are messages from our soul or spirit that something is not right. So, though it might be normal [common, the rule] to look forward to a one year olds nap time when you have a three year old a nine year old, the dis- turbance or stirring up in you, is important and requires your attention, your listening, if you will to your higher self.

Question 655: I have three children. The oldest is nine and not my biological child. The middle child is three and the youngest is one. I have a great relationship with the oldest two children but I haven't developed the same level of attachment to the youngest child. I rarely want her around and look forward to her nap times. Is this normal?

Answer 655: This is a common response parents can have. There are many reasons for attachment disruption. But attachment is important for the child as well as your long term relationship with them. I would want to know more about the history of the child and any stressors you have gone through during the child's lifetime. Often if there is stress parents will not have the time or energy to attach well to the

child. Sometimes the energy of the child and the parent are mismatched as well. But whatever is at the core this is something that can be addressed in counseling. The earlier the better because adult relationships are based on parental relationships we had as children. Therapy can start at age 3 to address these types of issues. Visit staceybshapiro.com for more information about getting started.

Question 656: I have three children. The oldest is nine and not my biological child. The middle child is three and the youngest is one. I have a great relationship with the oldest two children but I haven't developed the same level of attachment to the youngest child. I rarely want her around and look forward to her nap times. Is this normal?

Answer 656: Congrats on being honest about the way you feel! Many people state having a favorite child so the reverse would also be possible, of having a least favorite child. Try to understand your own reasons for not liking your youngest child as much as the others. One point to consider is whether it is the child's personality or the way they interact with you which gives you the feeling of not liking this child as much as the others, or does the reason have more to do with younger children requiring more care? Also, do you generally prefer older kids to younger ones? It is possible the problem will go away as your youngest grows older. Is there another parent in the household who can make up for what you feel unable to naturally give to your youngest? Is it possible you feel your own need to be involved with activities or to have time on your own? Maybe you simply need a break from constant mothering. Continue to give as much as possible to your youngest child.

Question 657: I was a single mom most of their growing up life and have guilt about trying to work three jobs and being gone a lot. My children are successful with their own business's, have lots of nanny and cleaning help, but I just feel they have such a great opportunity to spend it with their kids.

Answer 657: You seem to have been a very positive influence in your kids' lives. They may have worked so hard because they understood how difficult and tiring your life was as a single mom. I feel you are seeing your kids' lives through the measurement of how much toil was in your life as a single mom. In other words, what you see your kids overlooking or not appreciating, may remind you of your wishes during the many years you raised your kids. If it helps you and is possible, then maybe you could spend more of your own time tougher with your grandkids. This may give some reward for the many years you spent working to support your kids and had no choice in the amount of time you had with your kids. As far as your kids relationship to their kids, it is now their turn to raise them as they wish, within ethical boundaries of course. Depending on the topics you and your kids talk about, consider to bring up your concern as to whether they feel their kids, your grandkids, are missing anything due to the limited time they have with the parents.

Question 658: She's in her early 20s, and she has a toddler.

Answer 658: Well, first let's identify what factors are involved in the situation about which you wrote. Are you the only decision maker regarding your stepdaughter living with you? Is her dad, and your partner, living under the same roof? Would you feel any obligation to consult with your husband about his opinion and his way of handling the situation? Have you talked with your stepdaughter about your observation and your reaction to the fact of her not honoring your boundaries? Consider too that there will be an effect on the toddler, your grandchild, if you kick out your daughter. Is your daughter financially ready to live on her own and support herself and her child? You certainly have the right to define the terms of what goes on under your roof. It is only fair to everyone that as many variables as possible, be considered. The conclusion may be that it is in everyone's best interest for your stepdaughter to move out. If everyone feels respected and a well thought out plan is developed, then the least amount of hurt and stress, and the most amount of happiness, will be possible from this change.

Question 659: She's in her early 20s, and she has a toddler.

Answer 659: This is something you will have to discuss with your husband. It should be a joint decision if you value your marriage. You can mention your frustration about your stepdaughter not honoring boundaries. After you talk to your husband you both can have a talk with your stepdaughter about expectations in order to stay living in the house. When it comes to stepchildren you need to be very careful you do not take the lead on the authority part. It should be the biological parent.

Question 660: She's in her early 20s, and she has a toddler.

Answer 660: It may be helpful to first have a discussion about what you are expecting and put a timeframe on it that if she is not doing certain things by a certain date, she will have to leave. If you don't know where she can go, there is probably a list of shelters for the county that you live in.

Question 661: My dad is always, and I mean always, cussing and screaming at me for no reason at all.

He makes me feel stupid. He also compares me to my other siblings in a negative way and demeans me. Is this abuse?

Answer 661: Oh my goodness, my heart goes out to you!! I pray you have other strong and supportive loved ones or friends surrounding you. If you are in school, please consider speaking with a counselor on site who can help give you some good coping mechanisms as well as other resources. I believe most therapists would agree that this type of behavior is indicative of emotional AND verbal abuse. And quite often the two overlap because someone who is being yelled at and demeaned is also frequently having his/her emotions preyed upon as well. Healthy Place offers us some great examples of emotional abuse which certainly fit the criteria of what you describe: Yelling or swearing Name calling or insults; mocking. Threats and intimidation. Ignoring or excluding. Isolating. Humiliating. Denial of the abuse and blaming of the victim. And abuse survivor and author, Kellie Jo Holly, offers some other great examples of verbal abuse: Emotionally Abusive Statements You're so cute when you try to concentrate! Look at you trying to think. I can't believe I love a stupid jerk. Aw, come on, can't you take a joke? Sexually Abusive Statements You should know how to please me by now. I hoped you were less experienced. Stop acting like a whore. Financially Abusive Statements You are going to nickel and dime me to death! In what world does buying that make sense? Fine. You handle your finances. Let me know when things go to hell. Societally Abusive Statements How dare you spread around our private business! Let me do the talking; people listen to men. You took a vow in front of God and everybody and I expect you to honor it! Threatening and Intimidating Statements If you don't train that dog I'm going to rub your nose in its mess. I will take our kids if you leave me. You're scared?! This isn't angry! You will KNOW when I'm ANGRY! Spiritually Abusive Statement Keep your stupid beliefs to yourself. God will find a way to get you back, and it ain't gonna be pretty. I can feel myself being pulled into hell just listening to your nonsense! It's been my personal clinical experience that children who are experiencing the types of things you describe often say they feel misunderstood, lonely, or scared and don't want to make things worse by standing up for themselves. Even if you feel you can't defend yourself outwardly, that doesn't mean your father's awful and toxic behavior is something you should ever internalize (i.e., believe to be true) which is why I hope you are surrounding yourself with people who will speak life and positivity back over you. We are ALL worthy of respect, love, and kindness. Don't ever forget that! My love and light to you hon. Tamara Powell, LMHC

Question 662: My dad is always, and I mean always, cussing and screaming at me for no reason at all. He makes me feel stupid. He also compares me to my other siblings in a negative way and demeans me. Is this abuse?

Answer 662: I'm really sorry to hear that you are going through this. It's a little difficult to answer your question because the laws that define child abuse are different from state to state. But usually, things like what you describe your dad is doing are not considered to be child abuse. The more important thing is how you feel about what is going on. It sounds like this is really bothering you. If you don't think you can talk to your dad about how you feel, you might want to try talking to another adult you trust (like a family member or teacher). They may be able to help you figure out some ways to communicate with your dad. I think you might feel better if you can talk to someone about how you are feeling.

Question 663: My dad is always, and I mean always, cussing and screaming at me for no reason at all. He makes me feel stupid. He also compares me to my other siblings in a negative way and demeans me. Is this abuse?

Answer 663: Yes, this emotional abuse. There is no abuse without emotional abuse. His abuse is demeaning and can have lasting negative impact on your perspective of your self and people around you. Please find someone support to talk to.

Question 664: My dad is always, and I mean always, cussing and screaming at me for no reason at all. He makes me feel stupid. He also compares me to my other siblings in a negative way and demeans me. Is this abuse?

Answer 664: Everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. Having said that, everyone gets upset once in awhile and may yell or scream, which can be disrespectful. You said "always, and I mean always" and that is troubling. If your dad curses and screams at you on a regular and consistent basis, it can (as you stated) impact the way you feel about yourself. While the definitions of child abuse differ from state to state, talking to someone can help. Perhaps there is a counselor at school, or another trustworthy person you could confide in to help you understand how this situation is impacting you? Counseling is a good option. There is also help available through the national hotline at 1-800-422-4453, 24 hours a day,

7 days a week. You can call (press 1) and talk to a counselor while being anonymous. You can also check out this website: <https://www.childhelp.org/hotline/resources-kids/> I am sorry that you are going through this situation. There is help available. You do not have to go through this situation alone.

Question 665: My dad is always, and I mean always, cussing and screaming at me for no reason at all. He makes me feel stupid. He also compares me to my other siblings in a negative way and demeans me. Is this abuse?

Answer 665: Yes, screaming and cussing at your child is considered abuse. Here are two points I suggest you consider for your situation. If your dad is ever calm when you and him are with one another, ask for some time to talk about your relationship with him. Schedule it for sometime in the near future from your request. This way he has time to consider his points of view on his relationship to you. Even if he does no thinking about your relationship at all, he will not feel pressured by the surprise of suddenly being expected to talk about a topic he may prefer to prepare himself. My second point to you is to keep steady in your own views of who you are. When a parent demeans and mistreats a child, the child is affected in a negative way. Concentrate on loving yourself and keeping people in your friendship circle who care about you.

Question 666: My step nephew, a preteen, has begun masturbating. I also had to take away the internet because he was caught looking up porn. I'm worried about him.

Answer 666: Your nephew's behavior sounds normal and developmentally appropriate. Masturbation is a healthy expression of sexuality. Most families to create some rules about where it's ok to masturbate-- for example, stating that it should be done in the privacy of the child's own room. I'm wondering if you or another adult in his life have talked to him about his developing sexuality? It seems like that would help him and you handle his increasing maturity.

Question 667: We have tried gentle talking, counting to calm her and talking about it, sending her to her room and then trying to talk when she's calmer, and now calisthenics. However, nothing is working.

Answer 667: There's two things this post relays - one, which I'm sure you've already looked into - is working with the school to address this problem. Sure, sometimes kids don't get along, but most schools look at bullying seriously, and this sounds serious. The other, though, is additional tools to consider to help your daughter. If you haven't already read Greene's Explosive Child, you might give it a shot. While it's a little preachy, many of the tools are wonderful and can help parents navigate tantrums.

<https://www.amazon.com/Explosive-Child-Understanding-Frustrated-Chronically/dp/0062270451> Another tool that can redirect a child that's losing it is a task. If her tantrums, say, involve throwing things, maybe she's in charge of throwing all the sticks and acorns off the driveway into the garbage bin. I.e: 'Hey Jenny, you seem really angry right now, let's use all that energy and get some work done!' Go with her, throw with her, even - if possible - making a game out of getting the acorns into the bin from a distance. I wish you all the best~

Question 668: I am in my 30s with 2 kids and no job and I'm behind on the bills. I've been trying everything with no results. I feel like everyone else puts their needs in front on mine. I give until it hurts and I'm afraid that I'm going to fail my babies. I've been struggling for 5 yrs in a relationship with no communication and no alone time. How can I get some support?

Answer 668: Financial stability is probably a good place to start your new life project. If your partner doesn't work or doesn't contribute his money to the household bills, then maybe you are eligible for some type of stipend from the government. Especially since you have kids the child welfare service may intervene to help you. Sometimes too, a partner who is unwilling to pay for their kids' wellbeing may be pressured by child welfare to make regular contributions to you and your kids. I'm glad you are thinking of your needs and those of your kids. This is the philosophy which will show you what road to follow so all three of you are in a secure financial place.

Question 669: I am in my 30s with 2 kids and no job and I'm behind on the bills. I've been trying everything with no results. I feel like everyone else puts their needs in front on mine. I give until it hurts and I'm afraid that I'm going to fail my babies. I've been struggling for 5 yrs in a relationship with no communication and no alone time. How can I get some support?

Answer 669: I would want to know where do you put your needs? Often times we show people how to treat us based on how we treat ourselves. First identify how to practice good self care which can only happen when you are authentic and real about your needs and desires. You cannot pour from an empty cup and must take time to find the time to explore your purpose in life. It may be helpful to seek out additional support to work on your intrapersonal relationship.

Question 670: My daughter was overly tired and throwing a fit at her grandparent's house. She wanted to come home at midnight and cried screamed said she said she hated her grandma and that she wanted to kill herself!

We also have a new baby in the house i didn't know if this would contribute to this. How should I approach this?

Answer 670: You wrote a very full family context w many directions to examine. Do you know or can you find out what the grandma and your daughter were doing in the evening of the screaming episode? Is it possible the grandma abuses your daughter, or tells her scary stories, watches scary movies. These are only suggestions of some problem between grandma and your daughter. Also, ask your daughter directly why she wants to kill herself and what "killing herself" means. Seven year olds don't have a concept of death being a forever condition. Seven year olds don't have a sense of future meaning besides liking/disliking them. Maybe the new baby is a factor. Do you feel this is a factor? Trust your intuition to tell you if your daughter is resentful of your new baby. Even if she is, I doubt a seven year old has the capacity to connect current unhappiness with the intention of a future action, including suicide.

Question 671: The birth mother attempted suicide several times while pregnant. The adopted mother was terminally ill upon adopting the baby and died when the child was just over one year old. The adopted father then remarried to a physically, psychologically, and emotionally abusive woman. The child was placed in foster care at 11 years old. What might be the long term effects on an adult with this childhood history?

Answer 671: The true answer is, "no one can really say with certainty". The variables are the way this child absorbs and adjusts to these significant changes in their life. All anyone can do is guess at this point and there's no good reason to guess. The only general certainty is that the adult whom this child becomes will have had a profound encounter with the biggest types of human losses a child can go through. Some people become great teachers, therapists and philosophers who have this background. Some give up on life and hide away from others. The best anyone could do who knows this child is to offer love bc this is the greatest guarantee to show there are good people on this earth.

Question 672: My grandson's step-mother sends him to school with a pink Barbie backpack as a form of punishment.

Answer 672: Parents are to teach discipline to children, not punishment. Punishment is another word for wanting to cause hurt. There is a difference in discipline and punishment. Punishment could have long term affects on a child's self image and growth. It can lead to others issues such as bullying from peers as well. Whatever your grandson has done, there is a much better way of getting him to understand that his actions are not acceptable. Punishment is not one them. Encourage the step-mother to build a positive relationship with him, this way he will learn to respect and trust her. His actions would improve. She may need to attend a parenting class for blended families.

Question 673: My grandson's step-mother sends him to school with a pink Barbie backpack as a form of punishment.

Answer 673: Absolutely not! It is never in a child's best interest to use humiliation as punishment. This can lead to issues in the relationship between parent and child as well as the child's social relationships. Kids have a hard enough time. To then go and cause them embarrassment is unconscionable. The entire job of a parent is to prepare their child to become a successful, healthy adult. You do this by using healthy ways to teach a child when they make a mistake. Discipline shouldn't be seen as punishment. It should be seen as a way to teach a lesson. What lesson could this possibility be teaching him? Absolutely nothing. Meanwhile, she is most likely damaging her relationship with him and causing great distress in his school day and peer interactions. She should be one of the people he can come to when he's hurting; not someone who causes him pain.

Question 674: I am in my early 20s and I still live with my parents because I can't afford to live alone.

My mother says that if I live under her roof I have to follow her rules. She is trying to control my life. What should I do?

Answer 674: Hi! I'm sorry you are having such a tough time with this situation. I have worked with a number of young adults in their 20's who have had to move back home after college, or even stay at home through the college years. Bottom line is that either way, it is so difficult when you are trying to discover who you are and what you want your life to be, to have to live at home. I have even heard much older adults clients say that when they visit their childhood home, they suddenly feel like a "kid" again. The old dynamics between adults and their parents and siblings can pop right up as if they have

gone back in time and are no longer adults !I would suggest that you approach your mom and say something like "I am hoping we can talk about the best way for us to manage me living here. I really appreciate that you are giving me a place to live until I get on my feet , and I want to be respectful of you and our home ; at the same time , though, I feel like it's important for me to have more independence than when I was younger because I am growing up and trying to learn more about myself and become more autonomous. Can we talk about what might be fair rules that we can both live with ?" If she is receptive , maybe you can each write a separate list of what you think would be fair and reasonable and then compare lists and try to make compromises and come up with a list of "guidelines" that feel fair to you both . If this is too hard to do alone , perhaps you and your mom can meet with a therapist a few times who can help you to come up with some kind of "compromise contract." This is not an easy situation , but if you can approach your mom in a calm and "mature" way and suggest a planned, structured discussion that doesn't take place in the heat of the moment , your mom may be impressed by your maturity and even more receptive to working out some rules that you can both live with. Good luck !!Elissa Gross

Question 675: I am in my early 20s and I still live with my parents because I can't afford to live alone.

My mother says that if I live under her roof I have to follow her rules. She is trying to control my life. What should I do?

Answer 675: Hello. Even though legally you are an adult, it is a matter of courtesy to respect the homes of your parents. As long as you live there, you should be considerate of their needs. At the same time, there should be conversation about what each of you considers appropriate as it pertains to communication between a parent and an adult (even though you are still her offspring). This will require openness, honesty, and a willingness to give from both sides in a respectful way. Healthy boundaries can be established and honored when each is willing to do their part in this new relationship. Your mother knows you are an adult, but has not had as many years of treating you like one. So mentally and emotionally this will take some time for her to adapt. Share your concerns with her, and see if you can come up with a set of rules that you both can honor. It will be a great stepping stone for both of you as you move into this new chapter together as you begin relating a little differently. Reach out for help to a counselor if needed. You don't have to sort this out on your own. And lastly, take good care of yourself in the process. You are moving through some exciting times in your life. The more you can have support as you explore new events, the better you might feel less stressed. Warm regards.

Question 676: I am in my early 20s and I still live with my parents because I can't afford to live alone.

My mother says that if I live under her roof I have to follow her rules. She is trying to control my life. What should I do?

Answer 676: Unfortunately you seem to have yourself in a double bind. By living with your mom she is not going to stop her attempts at what you perceive as "controlling". There is no use in trying to debate or get her to "see your point". As long as you're there and you personalize her attempts at control, then you will find yourself frustrated and resentful. Try to find an extra job or a roommate so that you can do the natural process of moving on out. www.lifecounselingorlando.com

Question 677: I am in my early 20s and I still live with my parents because I can't afford to live alone.

My mother says that if I live under her roof I have to follow her rules. She is trying to control my life. What should I do?

Answer 677: Unfortunately I think most of us have heard this, so you are not alone. If you are still under her roof she has leverage as to what her expectations are while you are living there. I would consider therapy for the both of you to see if there could be a middle ground that could be agreed upon. Often times a 3rd party can help with conflict. If there is no resolution then I would look to get creative in finding a place of your own.

Question 678: I am in my early 20s and I still live with my parents because I can't afford to live alone.

My mother says that if I live under her roof I have to follow her rules. She is trying to control my life. What should I do?

Answer 678: Hello. It sounds like you and your parents are not balanced in your communication and awareness of expectations. Your growth is not only reflected in your ability to understand and apply new knowledge and skills, it is also reflective of your parents' acceptance of your understanding and application. Have you tried talking with your parents to let them know your concerns? This talking is best when face to face and during non active conflict (can't begin stating rules during an argument, etc). Sometimes it is even helpful to write down ways you feel you can be supported by them and supportive to

them. Maybe share this list or reflective piece with them to review, or use when communicating the expectations. Unfortunately, until there are clear expectations stated and expressed, the scale will be uneven and frustrations will increase. Dr. T

Question 679: I am in my early 20s and I still live with my parents because I can't afford to live alone.

My mother says that if I live under her roof I have to follow her rules. She is trying to control my life. What should I do?

Answer 679: That is a really tough situation that a lot of young people are experiencing right now. The first thing to under is that you can't change who your parents are and cannot change their behavior. The thing to keep in mind is that you can control your responses and actions. You may need to keep living at home with them for the next few months or years and the best way to do this is to have a plan. The second thing is to keep in mind that their controlling behavior is most likely not about based your behavior. Controlling parents are often driven by their concept of what will keep their children safe and happy. Unfortunately this is not always accurate but keep in mind it is not a personal attack. There are ways you can deal with controlling parents – and most of them require creating a plan of action. Examples of action plans: Decide in advance how you'll calmly and rationally respond to your parents when you feel they're trying to control you. Arrange to phone a friend or trusted adult when you feel like you're losing control. Talk in person to an adult you trust. There aren't any quick tips on how to deal with parents who want to control you; you need to find strategies that are geared to your specific family situation. Get specific coping tips from books about family dynamics, such as: *Toxic Parents: Overcoming Their Hurtful Legacy and Reclaiming Your Life* by Susan Forward. *Cutting Loose: An Adult's Guide to Coming to Terms with Your Parents* by Howard Halpern. A counselor can be a good resource and provide support and guidance about issues addressing normal growth and development during periods of transition.

Question 680: I am in my early 20s and I still live with my parents because I can't afford to live alone.

My mother says that if I live under her roof I have to follow her rules. She is trying to control my life. What should I do?

Answer 680: You're among many millennials who live with their parents due to financial reasons. Does your mother mean rules pertaining to the way your family household organizes its daily or does she mean something else? Every household needs rules as responsibilities to keep the house clean, who does the grocery shopping, the way costs are distributed for this and all the other carrying charges and tasks of maintaining the house in decent order, as well as respecting the privacy and noise level requests of others who live in the home. This set of responsibilities applies whenever more than one person lives with another person. Have you tried simply telling your mom that you're willing to be a responsible household member and that you prefer to keep the details of the way you live the rest of your life, to yourself? This would show respect to your mom and start the discussion as to the areas of your life you feel deserve privacy and how you would like to handle when your right to run your own life overlaps with any household duties.

Question 681: My dad makes me feel like shit and like I'm worthless. He calls me names and makes me feel depressed. I want to move out because I swear if I stay here, I'm going to lose it. What can I do?

Answer 681: If you're actually able to afford to move out and support your own life, then this is a reasonable choice. If you're not in such a position and must continue for a while to live w your dad, then emotionally protect yourself from him. Doing so is much more difficult than maybe it sounds. Do you have privacy in your house and can you spend more time in a self-created safe space than around your dad? Also, limit the amount of dialogue you have with him so you don't offer him a chance to feel invited to criticize you. Are there other people who live in the household w you and dad? If yes, then are they similarly called names or are you singled out by him? What do the other family members do when they hear your dad calling you names? Is it possible the other family members don't realize how hurt and upset you are by your dad's behavior? If yes, then make a project for yourself to tell the other family members that you suffer from your dad's name calling. It is possible the other family members will step in and tell your dad to stop. Not necessarily that he will stop. Knowing the others support you emotionally and find you credible is helpful on its own.

Question 682: My dad makes me feel like shit and like I'm worthless. He calls me names and makes me feel depressed. I want to move out because I swear if I stay here, I'm going to lose it. What can I do?

Answer 682: Are you old enough to move out? Then by all means, what's stopping you? If not, is it possible for you to move in with another family member? If you're a minor, CPS may need to step in. They often do in cases of abuse. Your safety is the number one priority. It's difficult to offer advice without

knowing more about your situation. But I can say this: Don't let other people define your self worth. You can choose NOT to allow him to make you feel anything. It really is that simple. By looking at it as a choice you make, you will be empowered to take control over your emotions and learn to feel better about yourself because your self-worth will no longer be defined by what someone else says about you or how they treat you. Let me say that again in a different way: Your self-worth is NOT defined by someone else. The way he treats you is a reflection of who he is as a person - not you. Don't take ownership of that! I understand that if you are a minor, setting healthy boundaries and refusing to accept this kind of treatment can be difficult. Reach out to others for help. But if you are 18 and over, there is absolutely no excuse for you to be there having to put up with maltreatment. Put up some boundaries and create the distance needed to protect yourself emotionally. You owe it to yourself, and deserve to live a healthy, happy life. Anyone who tells you otherwise is wrong.

Question 683: I want to live with my mom. My dad gets angry and makes me feel like everything is my fault. I still talk to my mom although My dad tells me that I'm not allowed to. I'm scared I will make the wrong decision and that my dad will hate me. How do I tell him that I want to live with my mom?

Answer 683: Yes, from what you wrote, your dad doesn't accept responsibility for the way he feels and blames you for his feelings. I'm glad you recognize he's handling himself less as a grown person and more like a young child. I also understand your hurt and frustration that your father handles himself in a way which shows for now that he is unwilling to respect your wishes. Your decision is not surprising since most people wouldn't want to live with a parent who shows little interest to respect their kids' decisions. In terms of how to tell him your choice, do this in simple and most basic information terms. "I've decided for now to live w mom". I suggest to not offer reasons to him bc he doesn't seem interested in hearing them. Giving him reasons would likely trigger him to rebut them. If he asks questions, answer them as simply as possible. If and when you feel he is more willing to understand and know you, then you'd feel more free to have genuine dialogue with him. Right now he doesn't seem very ready to handle this.

Question 684: I want to live with my mom. My dad gets angry and makes me feel like everything is my fault. I still talk to my mom although My dad tells me that I'm not allowed to. I'm scared I will make the wrong decision and that my dad will hate me. How do I tell him that I want to live with my mom?

Answer 684: There is a lot of information that needs to be filled in first. So what the custody arrangement? Does your dad have full custody? Is the custody shared? What does your mom think about the situation? Is she willing to go to bat for you? What is your age? Usually you have the right to choose based on age requirements set by the state. Legally you can't be kept away from your mom unless there is some legal complications that prevent it. Is your father abusive and should you seek protection? Many details need to be filled in. You can seek counseling without your parents approving or knowing, depending on your age. Find counseling through school or local agencies. You have rights and one of those is the right to choose.

Question 685: I have three children: a biological daughter, a stepdaughter, and a stepson. I found out my stepdaughter overdosed today. My daughter blames me. I told her to stay out of it. I'm scared of all three kids now. They all blame me for their choices they made. All three have drug addictions. I had a stroke in 2013 so I need to depend on people from now on.

Answer 685: Blaming others is one of our greatest coping mechanisms. It is not just for addiction, and often we blame the ones closest to us. You can not stop them from blaming you, you can stop yourself for taking on the burden. We are all in charge of the choices we make. No one makes us do something other than our self. We choose how we internalize and react to situations. I would find a good therapist who understands family dynamics and addiction to help you cope with your current environment and help you move forward.

Question 686: She refuses to talk to me and told my mom (her grand mother) that she is remembering things from the past. I don't know what to do. My daughter blames me and swears she hates me.

My parents say I should just let my daughter live with her dad, but I don't see how I could fix things if I only see her every other weekend. What should I do?

Answer 686: Sorry to hear about your high degree of stress. How old is your daughter? Who abused your daughter? The answers make a difference to your decision. Obviously if the father was the abuser, then unless your ex demonstrates to you and you believe, he will not abuse her, your daughter should stay with you. If someone other than the father was the abuser and the father has a good relationship with your daughter, then it is possible that the time away from your household will give each of you time away from arguing with one another. What does your daughter tell you she wants? Her wishes must be considered

too. Relationships can be fixed. Sometimes being apart helps this process because the two people each have time to reflect more deeply on what they value about the other.

Question 687: She's a teenager, and for the last two years, she's lived with her older brother. She's angry because she wants to come live with me, but my current living situation is not the best for her. She refuses to see any reason. She's being disrespectful. Her sexual curiosity is waking up.

Answer 687: You're her mom and she needs you. I would suggest focusing on connection. Since you are not currently living together, one way to do this would be to plan a date in which she gets to decide what you do together. Give her time to think about what she wants to do. As long as the activity is safe and affordable, try to do it, even if it's not your thing. While you are with her, turn off the phone and give her your undivided attention. The goal would be just for you to enjoy each other and connect.

Question 688: I told her that if daddy dies, we will never see him again. She started crying because I wouldn't make her daddy die.

Answer 688: Children often have a difficult time expressing emotions accurately. It is also very likely that your daughter does not understand the permanence of death. Having said that, she is using some very specific ideas here and I would recommend contacting a local mental health professional with some experience working with children. I would also wonder where she is getting this idea. Sometimes children hear things on TV or from an adult and we are not even aware of how much they are remembering. It may be helpful to teach her things that she can do when she is angry, like say that she is mad because she cannot have the toy that she is asking for. I'm curious as to how long it is that she stays mad like this and whether she talks to her dad after she is no longer angry. Does she say the same sorts of things about you? It may also be helpful for you to work with a mental health professional (possibly the same one who is working with your daughter) so that you can have some support with this as well.

Question 689: I told her that if daddy dies, we will never see him again. She started crying because I wouldn't make her daddy die.

Answer 689: Toddlers don't have the intellectual capacity to conceptualize. Better to find out why she wants daddy to die than explain the future consequences of death to your toddler. A person must be around 9, possibly 8 years old before absorbing the potential effects of an action taken in present time. Pretty much your toddler demonstrated to you here age appropriate and limited understanding of the loss of a parent, by crying that you weren't able to magically make her father disappear. Also, please pay attention and form your own opinions as to the reasons why your toddler would wish her father's death. She may be pointing out that the father behaves in frightening or harmful ways towards her.

Question 690: I told her that if daddy dies, we will never see him again. She started crying because I wouldn't make her daddy die.

Answer 690: It's normal for a child to be so angry she wanted someone to die, but this seems to be heading into a dangerous realm. I think it would be wise to have her seen by a child psychologist just to rule out anything more serious.

Question 691: My husband's ex-wife married a man who was charged with seven felony counts of pandering involving a minor. He, by his own admission, is addicted to child pornography. My step-daughters are now all teenagers. They do not know. My husband's ex-wife has kept this information from my step-daughters. The step-father has had issues regarding his pornography addiction recently. The ex-wife minimizes it by saying that he has "repented." It is a constant strain on my husband, knowing that his girls are living with a man who is addicted to child pornography. My own therapist believes the girls should be told. The ex-wife says her therapist says the opposite.

Answer 691: If the daughters are old & mature enough to understand substance abuse. They should be told for their own empowerment. KNOWLEDGE is their power of safety and protection.

Question 692: My husband's ex-wife married a man who was charged with seven felony counts of pandering involving a minor. He, by his own admission, is addicted to child pornography. My step-daughters are now all teenagers. They do not know. My husband's ex-wife has kept this information from my step-daughters. The step-father has had issues regarding his pornography addiction recently. The ex-wife minimizes it by saying that he has "repented." It is a constant strain on my husband, knowing that his girls are living with a man who is addicted to child pornography. My own therapist believes the girls should be told. The ex-wife says her therapist says the opposite.

Answer 692: The information from the other therapists here is sound and prudent. There are what sounds to be real legal (is this man a RSO [registered sex offender]; is he prohibited from being in proximity to minors? use/possession of child porn violates any # of state and federal statutes...) and safety issues at

play here. Your husband's daughters have an immediate "need to know" and this can be done developmentally-contextual, factually and in a non-shaming fashion. I would further counsel that you and your husband (his daughters welfare is at stake) seek immediate legal counsel. The ex-wife here seems to be between a "rock and a hard place" of her own creation -- she desperately needs care, treatment for herself. Resources for Your Consideration: 1) <http://www.missingkids.com/home>;

2) <https://www.justice.gov/criminal-ceos/citizens-guide-us-federal-law-child-pornography>
Question 693: My husband's ex-wife married a man who was charged with seven felony counts of pandering involving a minor. He, by his own admission, is addicted to child pornography. My step-daughters are now all teenagers. They do not know. My husband's ex-wife has kept this information from my step-daughters. The step-father has had issues regarding his pornography addiction recently. The ex-wife minimizes it by saying that he has "repented." It is a constant strain on my husband, knowing that his girls are living with a man who is addicted to child pornography. My own therapist believes the girls should be told. The ex-wife says her therapist says the opposite.

Answer 693: Lorain, you're correct that your husband's ex-wife is (seriously) minimizing this problem. I have a very strong opinion here. In my book, the safety of children trumps potentially insulting or hurting the feelings of adults. Of course the girls should be told, because they have the right to know. Their voice is not the only one I'm concerned about here though. I believe your husband has the right to insist that his daughters be in a safe home, and there is clear evidence this man is not safe. This woman is putting her own comfort (she simply doesn't want to deal with her partner's situation, her own fears, or anyone else's needs) above the safety of two vulnerable girls. Honestly, if it was me, my kids wouldn't be even visiting that home with that man present, "repented" or not. It's not worth the risk. If she decides to stay with him, the natural consequence of having a known perpetrator in your home is not having access to vulnerable children in that same home.

Question 694: Her father and I have been dealing with this problem for quite some time now. She is an adolescent, and the problem is mostly food. She is now overweight, and we just don't know what to do anymore. She can be disrespectful and doesn't listen to or respect what we say.

Answer 694: I would be curious about there potentially being some emotional or physical trauma in your daughter's history that she is struggling with. Physical trauma is usually easier to identify, but emotional trauma can be feeling a lack of emotional connection in her important relationships, having experienced bullying, or some other emotional injury. The fact that there are some defiance symptoms going on suggests that she might be in need of a safe place to process what she's going through, and the potential issue with control or meeting emotional needs with food is also concerning. I would recommend looking for a therapist/counselor who works with children/adolescents in the area of addressing trauma for an assessment. They may be able to ask the right questions to see whether trauma is truly the issue.

Question 695: Can a counselor take sides with one parent and allow a parent to order the child to tell the counselor "every detail" about what happened during the other parent's visitation in order to help build a case for child custody?

Answer 695: I see a few issues here: First, the age of the child is important. If the child is considered an "adult" by state law with regard to counseling (states differ on this - the range is typically between age 13 and age 18), no one is allowed to be in the session without the child's consent. Second, ethical and legal standards generally require that a counselor be in the role of a therapist, or in the role of an evaluator, but not both. This means that a counselor

should not generally provide both counseling and offer an opinion regarding who should have custody of a child. Third, knowing the details of any parenting plan or separation agreement is important.

Generally, either parent can consent to counseling for a minor child and can be present during the child's sessions.

If a court order, parenting plan, or separation agreement specifies that one of the parents has sole decision making authority, then only that parent can consent to counseling for the minor child and only that parent can be present during the child's sessions. In a situation like this I would strongly recommend seeking out legal advice specific to your state law.

Question 696: He is an adolescent. He has peed his pants multiple times over the last few years, all at times when he is too wrapped up in a video game or video. We have taken away games and videos for

long periods of time as punishment, but after a few months of having then back, he pees his pants again.

Answer 696: Sounds as though your son is "pissed off" about something. Punishment will most likely result in more of the same, not less of the peeing you would like to stop from happening. "Laziness" is more of a social judgement than it is a characteristic of its own merit. Is this your description of your son or his description of himself? First step always before addressing any of the family dynamics, emotions, and psychology of the people involved, is a medical rule out as to why your son pees at times he plays video games. If he has medical clearance that there is no physiological problem, then talk with your son on his opinions as to why he pees, if he is aware of the urge to pee and ignores it, or that his attention gets so absorbed he doesn't notice the urge to pee. See what modifications you can create by cooperating with your son. Maybe it is as simple as each two hours, he sets a timer and when it goes off, he takes a bathroom break.

Question 697: He is an adolescent. He has peed his pant multiple times over the last few years, all at times when he is too wrapped up in a video game or video. We have taken away games and videos for long periods of time as punishment, but after a few months of having then back, he pees his pants again.

Answer 697: From a behavioral standpoint you should refrain from punishing your son. Instead of utilizing punishment when he wets himself provide contingencies prior to any accidents. Sit down with your son and discuss the importance of utilizing the bathroom and responsibilities and inform him that if he chooses to wet his pants that his video games will not be available for use for him the next day (or your designated realistic time frame). This way if an accident occurs, no heated words have to be exchanged because you have already laid the ground work. Also allow him to clean up himself. Gather cleaning supplies and oversee cleaning operations without ridicule or negative feedback. Since you have stated that you have an adolescent who is experiencing enuresis, you may want to check with your PCP and a licensed professional for underlying diagnosis that can be treated. You can also call a local behavioral analyst.

Question 698: Is this something I should be worried about? Should I do something about it?

Answer 698: It can be tricky to figure out if a child is truly satisfied with his lack of friendships. Parents can usually tell when their child is happy. But kids who are unhappy may be masking disappointment, perhaps acting out their feelings in an aggressive manner. Others may internalize symptoms, appearing sad or withdrawn. A parent may learn a great deal by asking the teachers questions such as whether the child works with others on group projects or if he eats lunch alone. A parent can also talk with the recess supervisor about what happens on the playground, and whether your child stays on the sidelines of play, unsure of how to join the group. There respectfully is a difference between kids who are shy but happy and kids who feel isolated because they do not know how to make friends. It is not necessarily that there is something wrong with that child, but they will in fact need help and suggestions for breaking into a peer group. Ask a child if there is someone he would like to have over to play. If a mom or dad can make the play dates happen, or if they hit on an activity the child truly enjoys, the young person may begin to forge friendships on their own. I encourage well-meaning parents to choose words carefully. Use phrases like, "Hey, I noticed something," or "Let me help you be successful." By showing respect, parents should feel more comfortable nudging their children beyond their comfort zone. When to seek professional help. When does isolation raise a red flag for long-term issues? True personality disorders are not typically diagnosed until adulthood. Still, professional counseling should be considered if the anti-social behavior is causing the child significant distress, perhaps keeping him from functioning in everyday activities. Also, parents should pay attention to how the child's social behavior changes over time such as social anxiety. The vast majority of children who define "quality time" as time alone are perfectly happy, healthy and normal. If the child is able to nurture at least one friendship, exhibiting what experts call "social reciprocity," then parents can relax, and can cherish that child who enjoys the pleasure of his or her own company.

Question 699: Is this something I should be worried about? Should I do something about it?

Answer 699: My son plays alone at recess. Is this something I should be worried about? Should I do something about it? Every mom is the expert on their children's behavior. First of all, I suggest checking with your son, asking him if he is happy while playing alone, or does he complain that no one wants to play with him? Does he play alone in school, but is social in other environments, with family or neighbors? Playing alone is healthy for children, it helps them to be independent and confident, it allows them to explore their environment and use their imagination, among other benefits. On the other hand, it is also important to develop social skills early on and become confident in our skills as we grow. Children go through stages of exploration until they develop a sense of "social confidence". Depending on your son's age, he might need some input or advice. Provide the opportunity to interact with other children,

without pushing it. Take him to the park to play with a friend or to children's activities in your neighborhood. Later ask him, what did he thought of the activity, and if he enjoyed playing there. Children also follow their parent's model, so you can encourage social interaction by greeting other and asking your son to do the same, ask him to receive the guests who come to the house with you and sit to enjoy the conversation. If you notice any shakiness, becoming tearful, anxious or aggressive when approaching social encounters, you may want to talk to the school counselor or children's therapist to evaluate those symptoms and rule out any behavioral problems or social anxiety. Mi hijo juega solo en el receso. ¿Debería preocuparme al respecto? ¿Debería hacer algo al respecto? Cada mama es experta en la conducta de sus hijos. Primero que nada te sugiero que revises con tu hijo y le preguntes si él se siente contento jugando solo, o si se queja porque nadie quiere jugar con él. Observa si él juega solo en la escuela, pero es sociable en otros ambientes como con la familia o los vecinos. Jugar solo puede ser saludable para los niños, les ayudo a ser independientes, desarrollan sentido de seguridad, y les permite explorar su ambiente y utilizar su imaginación, entre otros beneficios. Por otro lado, también es importante desarrollar destrezas sociales y perfeccionarlas con la práctica. Los niños van por etapas de exploración y prueba hasta que desarrollan un nivel de confianza en sus destrezas sociales. Dependiendo de la edad de tu hijo, puede que el necesite algunos consejos. Provéele la oportunidad de interactuar con otros niños, sin obligarlo. Ya sea yendo al parque a jugar con vecinos, o a actividades comunitarias infantiles con algún amigo. Luego pregúntale como le pareció la actividad y si le gusto compartir allí. También recuerda que los niños siguen el modelo de sus padres, así que puedes motivarlo invitándolo a que salude a otros después de ti, o invitándolo a recibir a la visita que llega a la casa y que los acompañe durante la conversación. Si observas que tu hijo está nervioso, lloroso, o agresivo cuando se acerca alguna actividad social, consulta con el consejero escolar o un consejero infantil para evaluar sus síntomas y descarta cualquier problema de conducta o ansiedad.