



F O C U S

FALL 2015



A SIMPLE REMEDY FOR RELATIONSHIP ANXIETY

The concept of dating, relationships, marriage—even divorce—can evoke feelings of anxiety in many. This is a natural component of relationships with others; after all, we are sharing ourselves with somebody else, and that can make us feel vulnerable at first. According to neuroscientist, Dr. Claudia Aguirre, every important relationship we have shapes our brain, which in turn shapes our very relationships. She suggests that the anxiety of one particular relationship transcends into our overall psyche, and consequently gets transferred to our other relationships. This knock-on effect can have a pretty significant impact on our happiness, making us feel a bit out of control for the most part. What's more, the anxiety we experience in childhood (even in the womb!) can stay with us for a lifetime if we don't take an active course in diminishing it. One of the most discernible ways that pre-

dict whether we fear rejection or fear intimacy is in our 'attachment styles,' a trait rooted in our childhood that extends into our adult relationships. In psychology, there are two ends of the attachment spectrum—avoidance and anxiety. Those on the 'avoidance' end of the spectrum tend to be very self-reliant and uncomfortable with closeness and intimacy. At the other end of the spectrum, those with high anxiety fear rejection and are more dependent on others. For instance, someone with high attachment anxiety may think their partner will leave them on a regular basis, constantly seeking reassurance, and may even interpret their partner's actions in a negative way. If they have a more 'avoidant' partner (one who fears intimacy), this clinginess may cause their partner to pull further away making the anxious person feel even more insecure. See how this could turn into a vi-

icious cycle of anxiety? Increased attachment anxiety is reflected in elevated levels of cortisol, the primary stress hormone, and lower T-cells, (white blood cells essential for our immunity). While every effective immune response involves activating T cells, they are especially important in cell mediated immunity, which is the defense against tumor cells and pathogenic organisms inside body cells. A study showed that recently divorced women had fewer numbers of a variety of T-cells compared to married women. Even in a relatively stable relationship like a marriage, those with higher attachment anxiety also showed decreased levels of immune-boosting cells and increased cortisol. So on top of increasing our stress levels, relationship anxiety can also affect our own body's immunity against disease and infection. On the flipside, think of how the positive effects reduc-

Inside this issue:

- Middle School Dating Risks **2**
- How Much Do You Know About Manopause? **3**
- Distracted Driving Pledge **4**

A SIMPLE REMEDY FOR RELATIONSHIP ANXIETY

(Continued from page 1)

ing relationship anxiety could have on our immunity and hormonal balance! If reading this is making you frantically analyze your childhood and your current dating choices, don't fret. While our past shapes much of our behavior, the fantastic plastic brain shows us that nothing about our behavior is set in stone. True, taking some time for self analysis can be insightful and fruitful, but the fact is that we are constantly changing and may feel more or less attached depending on our current

partner. The practice of meditation can help us learn about our own thoughts and behaviors, and gently, over time, lead us to a place we want to be within ourselves. What's more, studies show that meditation is also linked to higher levels of compassion and greater immunity against cellular invaders. We are only beginning to understand the science behind relationship anxiety and the links between interpersonal relationships, stress, and health. Remember though, that the human experience is a shared ex-

perience, and that we affect each other in ways previously thought unimaginable. Meditation practice can help us find the balance within ourselves so that we are better equipped to find harmony with others. *Further reading:* Your Brain On Love (via Headspace (www.headspace.com/blog/view/372/your-brain-on-love-))

Dr. Claudia Aguirre (<https://twitter.com/doctorclaudia>) is a neuroscientist specializing in mind-body connection.

...the human experience is a shared experience, and we affect each other in ways previously thought unimaginable.

MIDDLE SCHOOL DATING RISKS

Students who date in middle school have significantly worse study skills, are four times more likely to drop out of school and report twice as much alcohol, tobacco and marijuana use than their single classmates, according to research from the University of Georgia.

"Romantic relationships are the hallmark of adolescence, but very few studies have examined how adolescents differ in the development of these relationships," said Pamela Orpinas, study author and professor in the College of Public Health and

head of the Department of Health Promotion and Behavior. Orpinas followed a group of 624 students over a seven-year period from sixth to 12th grade. Each year, the group completed a survey indicating whether they had dated and reported the frequency of different behaviors, including the use of drugs and alcohol. Their teachers completed questionnaires about the students' academic efforts. The Healthy Teens Longitudinal included schools from six school districts in northeast Georgia. Investigators

used two indicators of students' school success: high school dropout rates and yearly teacher-rated study skills. The results of the study were recently published in the *Journal on Adolescence*. "In our study, we found four distinct trajectories," Orpinas said. "Some students never or hardly ever reported dating from middle to high school, and these students had consistently the best study skills according to their teachers. Other students dated infrequently in middle school but increased the frequency of dating in



MIDDLE SCHOOL DATING RISKS

(continued) high school. We also saw a large number of students who reported dating since sixth grade.” Of the early daters, a large portion of the study group—38 percent—reported dating at almost all measurement points throughout the study. The second at-risk segment, identified as “high middle school dating,” represented 22 percent of the sample. One hundred percent of these students dated in sixth grade. “At all points in time, teachers rated the students who reported the lowest frequency of dating as having the best study skills,” according to the journal article. Study skills

refers to behaviors that lead to academic success such as doing work for extra credit, being well organized, finishing homework, working hard and reading assigned chapters. “A likely explanation for the worse educational performance of early daters is that these adolescents start dating early as part of an overall pattern of high-risk behaviors,” Orpinas said. Children in these early dating groups were also twice as likely to use alcohol and drugs. “Dating a classmate can have the same emotional complications of dating a co-worker,” Orpinas said. “When the couple splits, they have to continue to see each other in class and perhaps witness the ex-

partner dating someone else. It is reasonable to think this scenario could be linked to depression and divert attention from studying.” Authors indicate that more research is needed to identify characteristics that distinguish dating as a healthy developmental process from dating as part of a problem behavior syndrome. Orpinas says this study suggests, “dating should not be considered a rite of passage in middle school.”

Writer: April Reese Sorrow, The University of Georgia Public Affairs News Service, Friday, March 15, 2013.

The journal article is available at onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.

“...these adolescents start dating as an overall pattern of high-risk behaviors.”

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT MANOPAUSE?

Manopause, clinically known as andropause, is also referred to by many other names, including male menopause, testosterone deficiency and late-onset hypogonadism. All describe the same condition: an age-related decline in the hormone testosterone, potentially resulting in symptoms that affect quality of life. Men gradually lose testosterone beginning in their 30s. Low testosterone is

typically diagnosed when the level of the hormone in the blood dips below 300 nanograms per deciliter. Nearly 50 percent of men older than 45 have low testosterone, according to the Urology Foundation. Andropause goes unnoticed by some men, but for others, it affects nearly every aspect of life, including:

Energy— Male menopause can lead to fatigue by dis-

rupting sleep cycles.

Libido— Sexual desire and ability may suffer.

Mood— Men might struggle to focus on tasks, find inspiration or shed feelings of sadness.

Strength— Muscle volume and bone density may decrease.

Weight— Some men see their body fat increase.

Speak with your doctor about the possibility of

male menopause if you experience physical and emotional changes. He or she will likely order a blood test to check your testosterone level. If it's low, a combination of topical or injected testosterone replacement therapy, exercise, healthful eating and treatment for emotional issues may help you feel more like your old self.

Affinity For You, Affinity Medical Center Newsletter (archives).

Vista Psychological & Counseling Centre



1201 South Main Street
Suite 100
North Canton, Ohio 44720

Phone: 330.244.8782

Fax: 330.244.8795

Email: info@vistapcc.com

We're on the web
www.vistapcc.com

Welcome to Vista!

We offer the very best in psychological
and counseling services.

Established in 2008, our staff is committed
to helping you achieve
greater emotional wellness and adjustment
through individual, child/adolescent,
couples, family, and group therapy.

We are available to you
Monday thru Saturday
with day and evening hours
for your convenience.

Distracted Driving

Distracted driving is a dangerous epidemic on America's roadways. In 2013, 3,154 were killed in distracted driving crashes.

The U.S. Department of Transportation is leading the effort to stop texting and cell phone use behind the wheel. Since 2009, we have held two national distracted driving summits, banned texting and cell phone use for commercial drivers, encouraged states to adopt tough laws, and launched several campaigns to raise public awareness about the issue.

Distraction.gov is your resource for learning more about distracted driving. Get the facts, get involved, and help us keep America's roadways safe.

TAKE THE PLEDGE

The fight to end distracted driving starts with you. Make the commitment to drive phone-free today. Distracted driving kills and injures thousands of people each year.

I pledge to:

- Protect lives by never texting or talking on the phone while driving.
- Be a good passenger and speak out if the driver in my car is distracted.
- Encourage my friends and family to drive phone-free.

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

