

# Anxiety, Impostor syndrome, Non-guilty relaxation

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PV236 – TIME MANAGEMENT & EFFECTIVENESS

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# Epidemiology of anxiety

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- Symptoms of anxiety and depression are by far the most common psychological conditions in population
- Some studies reported that approx. 33 % of general population suffered a significant anxiety disorder episode at some point throughout their lives
- There is extremely high comorbidity between anxiety and depression → people suffering from anxiety very commonly suffer from depressive symptomatology as well

# Pre-disposition to anxiety

- Hereditary factors
  - Anxiety in family tree
- Parenting factors
  - Anxious parents strengthen anxious child reactions
- Nature vs nurture → attachment (0-4 years) → personality structure



# Definition of anxiety

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*“ Experience of fear resulting from threat to mental and physical integrity”*

- Rudimental fears
  - from evolutionary perspective, people are often afraid of objects/situations which threatened their lives
  - insects, snakes, tiny and dark places, heights...

# Anxiety has central role in our psyche

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- Regulatory character of our behavior → a balance between anxiety and ego
- Motivational aspect
  - Aspiration for achievement to avoid failure, critique, rejection...
  - Opting-in for challenges to seek self-confirmation and success
- Inhibitory aspect
  - Limiting risky behavior
  - Avoiding situations that can confront our ego
- Impact on quality of life
  - Does the anxiety level prevent you from doing things you would otherwise enjoy?
  - Major anxiety episodes (panic attacks) can be completely incapacitating


# Processing anxiety

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## Healthy model

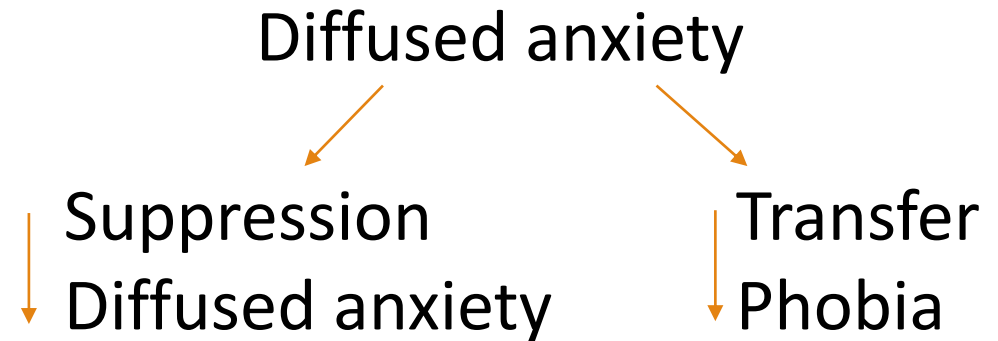
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Diffused anxiety  
Fear  
Conscious awareness  
Adaptation



## Neurotic model

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# Processing anxiety

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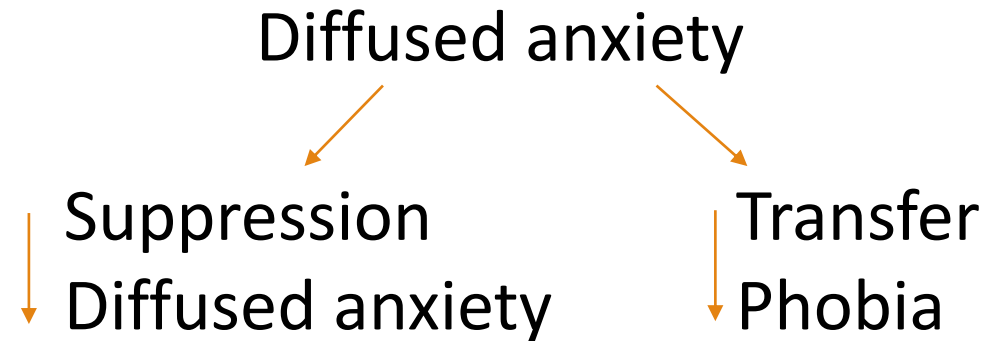
## Healthy model

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Diffused anxiety  
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## Neurotic model

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*Awareness is the key to adaptation*

# Hardiness & Fighting spirit

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- There is no objective measure how people experience stress / anxiety triggers
- Research shows that higher amount of negative / stressful life events does not necessary lead to lower quality of life / impact on health
- What does make difference is the **subjective perception** of life events and emotional reaction to them



# Hardiness

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- Personality feature providing courage and motivation to overcome stressful events
- 3 dimensions:
  - **Commitment** disposition – interest and involvement in life activities
  - **Control** disposition – belief that I can affect course of events by own effort
  - **Challenge** disposition – believe that change is an opportunity for personal growth rather than threat

# Fighting spirit

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- Personality style characterized by
  - Determination
  - Optimism
  - Constructive approach to problem solving
  - Active help-seeking
  - Orientation on resources (information, social support...)
  - High level of autonomy

# Anxiety has central role in our psyche

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## Implications for time management:

1. Know yourself (e.g. level of hardiness, response to challenges / stress / incoming deadlines...)
2. Use time management techniques (planning, prioritization...) to control level of anxiety that will
  - Motivate you to deliver
  - Not hamper your productivity and performance
  - Mediate avoidant reactions (procrastination)

# What to do with anxiety?

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## 1. Mitigation

- Relaxation
- Raising awareness
- Support seeking

## 2. Strengthening Ego

- Focus on success
- Challenge yourself
- Seek appreciation

# Relaxation

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- Do hobbies you enjoy
- Relaxation techniques, guided meditation
  - Breathing techniques
  - Safe place imagination
  - Self-suggestion techniques
- MHealth Apps
  - AnxietyCoach, SuperBetter, Happify, HealthyHabits, iCouch CBT....

# Raising awareness

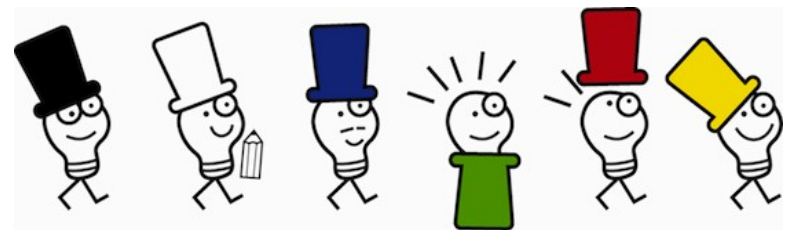
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- Introspection
  - What is happening to me?
  - Why am I nervous?
  - Six thinking hats technique

# Six Thinking Hats Model

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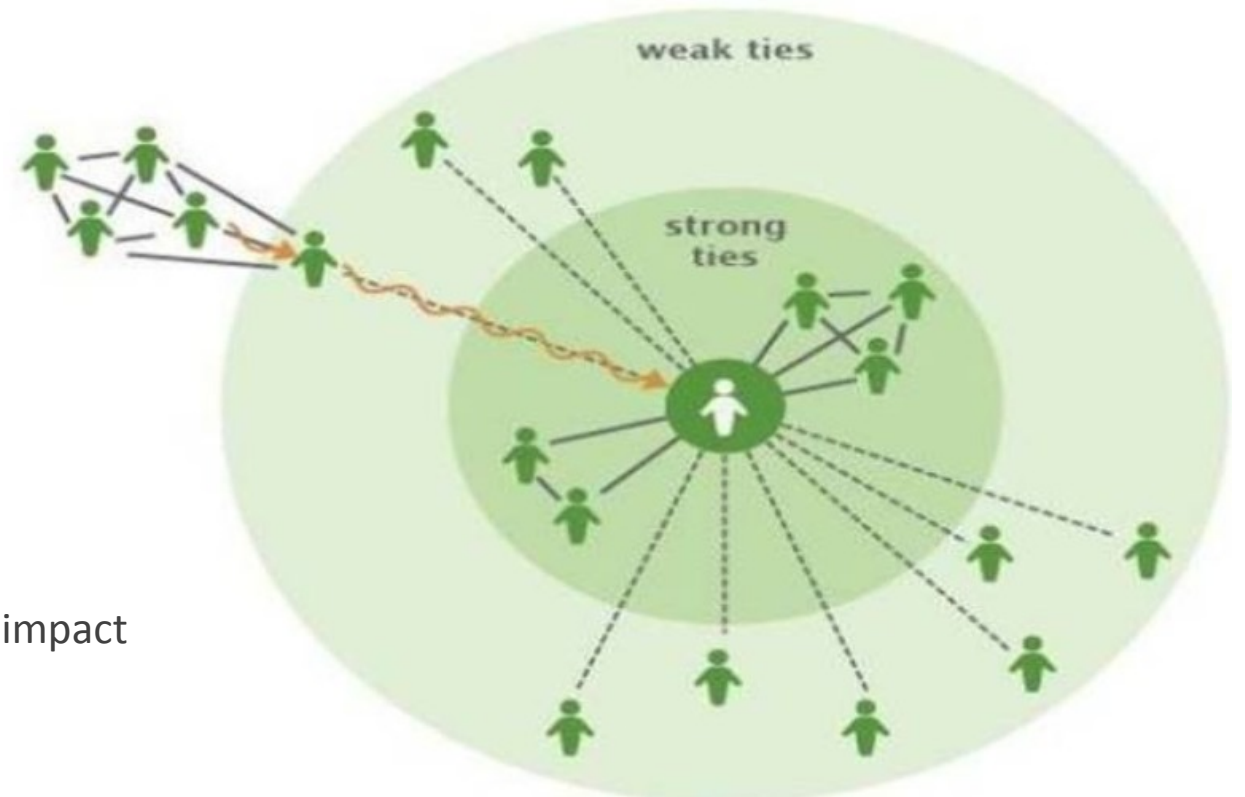
- White Hat – facts, statistics, objective reality
- Yellow Hat – optimism, exploring opportunities, advantages
- Black Hat – pessimism, what can go wrong, risk management
- Red Hat – intuition, emotions, “gut feeling”
- Green Hat – creativity, brainstorming, “anything goes”
- Blue Hat – summarization, reflection upon the whole process



# Support seeking

## Concept of strong and weak links

- Strong link
  - Stable in time
  - Has great impact on network features
  - Adding or deleting has major consequences
  - Close family and friends, long-term relationships
  - Low probability of unique information
- Weak link
  - Unstable in time, highly transitory
  - Can be easily added or deleted without significant impact
  - Acquittances, friend-of-a-friend, distant family
  - High probability of unique information
  - *“Strength of weak links”*





# Optimal network

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## Too little weak links:

- Rigidity
- Strength but fragility
- Lack of flexibility
- Impaired adaptation
- Impaired relaxation

## Too many weak links:

- Weak structure
- Instability
- Lack of organization
- Impaired possibility for growth

Ideal network structure

20 % strong links : 80 % weak links

- good integrity and structure, good information processing providing flexibility and adaptation, good stress relaxation

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# Focus on success

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- Sometimes people tend to overlook their achievements and exaggerate failure because of anxiety
- When feeling anxious, try to calm down and restore balance in your perception of past events
- Think of similar challenges you have faced in the past
  - Were you successful?
  - Were you admitted to university?
  - Have you defended your bachelor thesis?
- Do I have achievement that I can be proud of?

# Challenge yourself

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- Netflix Story (“Aftershock”) including Sara Safari – First Irani woman to climb Mt. Everest
- Sometimes you need to challenge yourself to have an achievement to be proud of
  - (not necessarily that challenging 😊)
- What Sara did have was a couch
  - A partner (strong link) to support and encourage her



# Seek appreciation

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- People naturally seek for appreciation by authorities
- In our childhood, we (should) receive it from parents → attachment
- If not, this can be substituted in adulthood by long-term relationships
  - Best friend
  - Partner / fiancée / husband / wife
  - Professional – coach, psychotherapist
- Seek people who appreciate you, who acknowledge your achievements and qualities
- In a long run, their support will stabilize your ego and help you reduce the anxiety level

# Impostor syndrome

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**ME: Happy that someone complimented me**  
**ALSO ME: kinda sus**



**IMPOSTOR (SYNDROME)**

Do you suffer from impostor syndrome?

- Objectively, you perform well
- Subjectively, you think you underdeliver
- You procrastinate because you think you will underdeliver anyway
- You tend to doubt appreciation or compliments from others
- You fear that one day others will find out

# Impostor syndrome – root cause

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Psychologist: lack of self-confidence ← attachment

Sociologist: socially constructed problems and/or inequalities (e.g., gender, race) at workplace

# Non-guilty relaxation

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## What we already know:

- We need to do enjoyable things to experience positive emotions
- We need to spend time with friends to receive (and provide) social support
- We need to relax to prevent burnout
- We need to work on ourselves to grow and tackle anxiety

How to do that?



# Non-guilty relaxation

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1. Acknowledge the importance of relaxation (we already did)
2. Use time management techniques (planning, prioritization...) to find time for relaxation and actively incorporate it in your schedule

# Mental Health Tips

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Throughout the semester, we were already talking about several techniques which have an impact on mental health...

- Narcissistic Equilibrium
- How to prioritize / schedule
- Effective communication model
- How to say no
- Stress, how not to get overwhelmed
- Today – what to do with anxiety

# Mental Health Tips

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What else is recommended to do?

- Exercise on a regular basis
- Enjoy sunshine
- Eat healthy, drink enough
- Sleep enough
- Practice relaxation techniques
- Practice gratitude / forgiveness
- Does something bother you? Put it on a paper
- Step out of your comfort zone, challenge yourself

# Mental Health Tips

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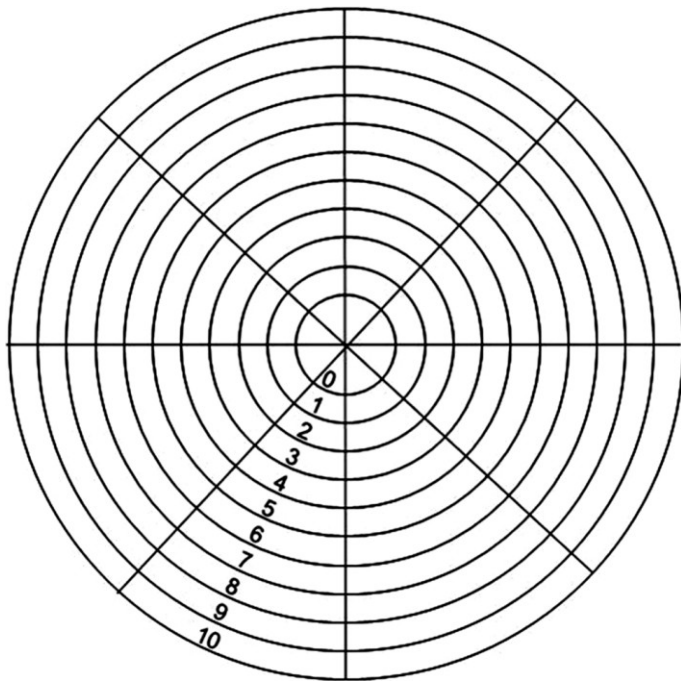
... or maybe

- Try out some Mental Health app?
- Talk about what bothers you
  - with friends
  - with coach / mentor / psychologist

*Remember that repeating patterns of experience rewire your brain and can be even passed on to DNA level.*

# Homework assignment – Wheel of Life

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The wheel is divided into 8 segments.

Think of important aspects of your life that you devote your time to.

It may be:

- an area that is important for you (e.g., school, sports, career...)
- a role you play in life (e.g., partner, son/daughter, girl/boyfriend...)
- goals you want to achieve (e.g., write a thesis, find new job...)

*Print out the wheel or use graphic editor of your choice.*

# Homework assignment – Wheel of Life

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- 1) Assign each wheel segment with one of the abovementioned life aspects.
- 2) For each of those wheel segments, reflect upon how much time/attention do you currently spend on these aspects (on a scale 0-10, where 10 is maximum attention and 0 no attention at all). For example, if you think that segment "Being a good boyfriend" is worth 7, make a dot there. Repeat for all wheel segments.
- 3) Connects the dots.
- 4) Now think about the ideal case. Do you pay those aspects as much attention as they would deserve? Maybe you spend too much time with work while you would rather finish your studies with good outcome?
- 5) Make "ideal" dots for each segment and connect them. Using a different color (or dotted line) would be a good idea how to distinguish "real dots" with "desired dots".
- 6) Reflect upon the differences - reality vs. ideal.

*Note: Do not overthink this exercise. The goal is not to have it "mathematically precise" ("hmm, is it really 7 or just 6???" or "hmm, does all numbers add up to 100 % ?"), but to reflect upon your life.*