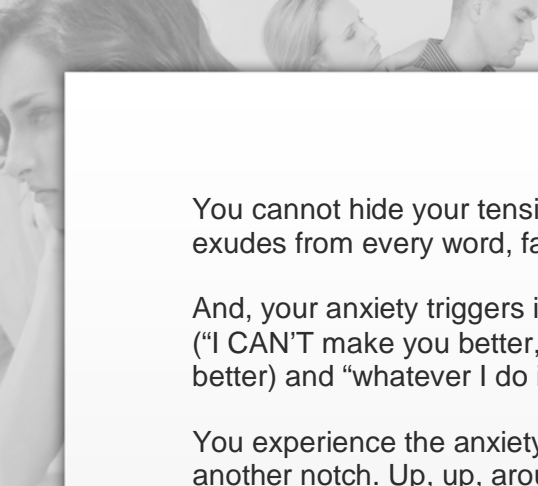


How Tension and Worry Kill your Relationship

By: Dr. Bob Huizenga



You cannot hide your tension or anxiety from your other. Even if unspoken tension and worried exudes from every word, facial expression and body language.

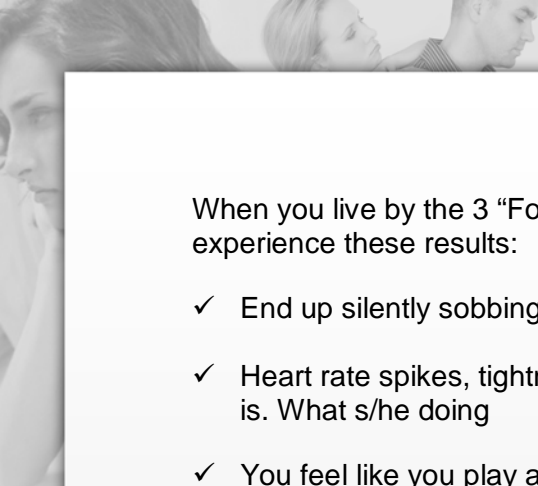
And, your anxiety triggers in your spouse or significant other thoughts of personal victimization ("I CAN'T make you better,") "I'm inadequate and defective also" (since I cannot make you feel better) and "whatever I do is not good enough (my performance lacks the capacity to help you.)

You experience the anxiety and tension of your other which amps your tension and anxiety another notch. Up, up, around and around you swirl.

This underlying anxiety, tension and worry MUST be addressed for healing to take place.

What specifically does this worry and anxiety look like? Here are some comments from those who took my survey:

- ✓ I worry that there are more things that I don't know about — that she is still harboring secrets.
- ✓ How do I get her to admit she is wrong? What can I do or say or find that I can put in front of her to get her to stop what she is doing?
- ✓ I'm anxious and worried about being cut adrift and feeling isolated and alone in the world.
- ✓ I worry about what is actually happening. I see behaviors which are erratic and appear to be to keep me away from the truth. He explodes with anger or is moody and quiet. Then sad and loving.
- ✓ I guess that I'm afraid to be hurt again, it was the most searing pain i have ever experienced – the rejection, the emotional slap in the face, that everything i knew was now unstable, i had no foundation, nothing solid in my life to hold onto.
- ✓ I worry whether or not I will survive intact emotionally.
- ✓ I worry that I am going to be alone without the love of my life (after 36 years together) who I thought I was going to spend the rest of my life with. It has devastated me.
- ✓ I worry that we will never be able to trust each other again. That I will never be able to talk to him without worrying that I am going to hit a trigger.
- ✓ I worry that it will never end, never get to a better place. The pain and suffering will go on and on.
- ✓ I worry the most about a divorce and finances.
- ✓ Since mine involves an affair that my husband is not willing to be truthful about (I smelled a rat and followed him and found him and the other woman at a restaurant hugging and kissing, and confronted him only after he pulled off in his car.), I worry about GERMS.
- ✓ I am most anxious about whether or not I can save my marriage, is there hope, will he leave the other woman and reconcile? Is it over will I be alone?



When you live by the 3 “Force it/Fix it” laws and the emerging anxiety and tension, you experience these results:

- ✓ End up silently sobbing after sex, feel so alone
- ✓ Heart rate spikes, tightness in chest when spouse comes home □ You wonder where s/he is. What s/he doing
- ✓ You feel like you play a role. You’ve lost ‘you.’
- ✓ Particular words or looks trigger the anxiety and tension
- ✓ You feel unappreciated, not wanted
- ✓ You fear s/he is becoming more distant
- ✓ Your self esteem continues to erode
- ✓ You resent giving so much
- ✓ You are afraid to speak the truth
- ✓ You feel trapped, stuck

Trying to build an intimate marriage or relationship trying to make love happen or believe you must fix what is broken, generates tremendous tension.

You feel that underlying tension when you think of moving “close.” Moving “close” becomes a source of anxiety, not excitement:

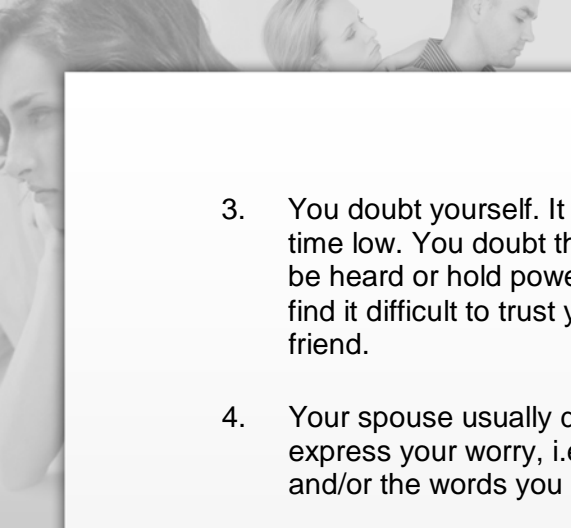
- ✓ One eye will always be on the other wondering what s/he is up to. You will be vigilant, sometimes hyper vigilant. You will live on pins and needles.
- ✓ You give away your personal power. You are at the mercy of the other. Your welfare depends on his/her good graces and efforts. You will feel terribly dependent or become reactive and terribly resentful.
- ✓ You will attempt to conceal your “defects.” You will not want the other to see, which would mean further diminishment of who you believe you are.
- ✓ You will expend a great deal of effort. You will focus on “working on” the relationship. The relationship becomes a burden of further concerted effort.
- ✓ There will be much you will truly want to express, but will bottle the message inside you. Your words are surrounded with fear and you use them carefully. Your voice shrinks.
- ✓ You feel needy and desperate. Your neediness begins to dominate your life and you hate it.
- ✓ You live on edge, wondering when the next go-around will take place.

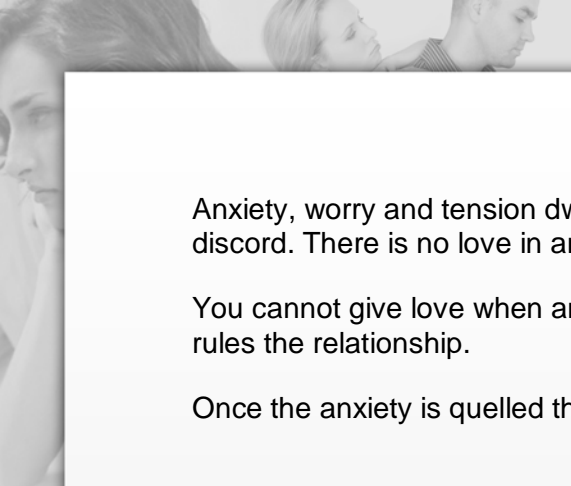
Further, these limiting beliefs, an outgrowth of the “Force it/Fix it” laws become anchored in your heart and mind:

- ✓ Your welfare determines my welfare
- ✓ I must mirror back to you what whom you think I need to be □ I must perform for you
You complete me
- ✓ I'm afraid to say something that might hurt you
- ✓ I will rescue or take care of you
- ✓ Your needs come before mine
- ✓ I will sacrifice for you
- ✓ I am jealous
- ✓ You are my hero
- ✓ I will cover up, make excuses for you
- ✓ I get angry to quiet you or get my way
- ✓ We keep secrets
- ✓ Put downs, abuse, angry explosions
- ✓ I feel smothered and need space
- ✓ I need sex with you (to be one)
- ✓ I don't want sex with you (I'm afraid of being too close)
- ✓ I feel like a child
- ✓ I feel like a parent

With this undercurrent of tension you worry. You are anxious.
Here are 11 practical ways that anxiety erodes a relationship or marriage:

1. You react rather than act. You focus almost exclusively on what is occurring around you. You worry about what s/he will say or not say, will do or not do next. You watch. You always have one eye “out there.” You wait. You worry. Something happens, or doesn't happen and then you react.
2. You feel like you have no control. You feel powerless. You feel victimized. You feel like a leaf blowing in the wind. You feel like you are at the mercy of your spouse or that significant other.

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3. You doubt yourself. It seems as if you have lost your self. Your self esteem feels at an all time low. You doubt that you have anything to give or have any words to utter that will be heard or hold power. You cannot articulate what is unique or of value about you. You find it difficult to trust your desires or your thoughts and insights. Doubt is a constant friend.
 4. Your spouse usually does not know how to respond helpfully to your worry. How you express your worry, i.e. the look on your face, your body language, your tone of voice and/or the words you use, trigger his/her worry. His/her level of worry is intensified.
 5. You revert to old patterns of coping with your worry. How do you typically handle your worry? What do you do when it ramps up? What do you do when the constant thoughts and feelings of worry are triggered by the worry of your partner or spouse? Do you attack? Do you avoid? Do you cry? Do you scream? Do you run away? Do you fight? Do you get quiet? Do you shut down? Do you get sick? Do you "kick the dog?"
 6. Your worry may set up a cycle of doing or saying something "stupid," that you know is "stupid," but it comes out anyway. There are few filters on your thoughts, feelings and actions when you are grabbed by worry and what you expressed before again spews forth. And once it comes out, you go, "Oh crap, I did it again!" You then emotionally beat and deride yourself. This adds another level of worry and tension.
 7. Worry tends to push you in the direction of seeing your partner or spouse as the enemy. It's you vs him/her. S/he, during these moments, is your adversary. You must argue. You must convince. You must placate. You must oppose - all in the name of making your point to someone who is against you.
 8. You want to protect your feelings rather than confront effectively. You go into a protection mode. You shrink away from what you really want to say and either say it in an abrasive manner or don't say it at all. You hide you, for fear of the possible rejection you may encounter.
 9. You want to protect rather than give. You become so absorbed in the protection theme, you feel so overwhelmed by the overwhelm and worry that the thought of giving and sharing of yourself is not considered. As well, at that moment, you believe you have very little, if any, to offer.
 10. You feel like your life is shrinking, constricting and the joy, freedom and fun are lost. You become consumed with your worry. Your life is narrowed to your own lack and how your partner or spouse contributes to that lack. It seems as if your marriage and life is living a slow but certain death.
 11. You, your spouse and your marriage or relationship explode. You attempt for so long to "keep the lid on" and eventually all hell breaks loose. S/he wants a divorce. Infidelity becomes a major issue as a third party becomes part of the drama. S/he walks out. S/he becomes depressed. The addiction becomes severe. Your children start acting out. A serious illness enters the picture. Some other catastrophe breaks the painful silence.



Anxiety, worry and tension dwell beneath many external symptoms of marital and relationship discord. There is no love in anxiety, tension or worry.

You cannot give love when anxiety rules the relationship. You cannot accept love when anxiety rules the relationship.

Once the anxiety is quelled the door of a new world of intimate possibilities swings open.