
Bioenergetics & Anxiety

Bioenergetics the study of human personality, in terms of the energetic processes of the body.

Armoring refers to the total pattern of chronic muscular tensions in the body.

One's **energy economy** refers to the balance one maintains between energy charge and discharge.

To go through life with a closed heart is like taking a voyage locked in the hold of a ship.

Depression is a lack of energy to keep moving, breathing is often depressed, drained of energy or vitality; inner conflicts drain our life force

Knowledge becomes understanding when it is coupled with feeling. Only a deep understanding coupled with strong feeling is capable of modifying our defenses.

When feelings have a threatening quality, they are generally pressed down—

- Fear because it paralyzes;
- Anger because it is dangerous;
- Sadness or Grief because it is discouraging.
- We cut off feelings of sadness and despair caused by being hurt, attacked or rejected.

A constricted throat and tight neck block feelings from passing through. Then the heart remains closed off.

We are all vulnerable, but we all don't feel vulnerable to being attacked. At the moment of vulnerability, the person panics, closes up and tries to re-establish the defenses ... he will experience anxiety. Anxiety develops when a stronger feeling attempts to get through and gets chocked off. Then when you don't get to discharge your emotions it leads to anxiety

We need to express our emotions and discharge the energy through expression of feeling. When a person makes a strong move to heal, the defenses choke off the impulse and throw him into anxiety so the person contracts again.

You feel an emotion or a need (an excitatory state that drive behavior). You don't express it, you withdraw energy, hold against the impulse, the muscles contract. Then under intense stress it can break through or chronic patterns of holding back authentic impulses prevent natural breath patterns and anxiety can build. Avoid situations that evoke suppressed feelings;

Uses abstract intelligence to disconnect from body. Feels unsafe with high emotional charge, interpersonal contact and liveliness. Needs to flight from the body. The work is to feel your emotions and not act them out towards others or act them in (repress) them, judge them, deny them or avoid them. Be with them so they can have emotional completion, meaning

In adults, anxiety is often an indication that the client is getting closer to their core internal conflict.

- Sometimes referred to as "signal anxiety" - what is it that the anxiety is signaling? What's the deeper message?
 - Anxiety is a signal to us about something that's unresolved
- You don't want to just hang out in fear/anxiety as there is little value in going deeper into fear states
 - These are generally just contracted states, and while there are times when individuals can come out the other side, mostly diving deeper into fear states just reinforces contraction
 - You also don't want to avoid fear/anxiety, because anxiety signals intrapsychic elements that are unresolved
 - The idea is to stop running from fear/anxiety and address it, or in other words, to see what it's all about. Anxiety is a signal about something that we need to listen to.

NARM Model for Working with Affect

People can spend their entire lives running away from their primary emotions - using all sorts of strategies, including narrowing their lives, in order to avoid facing their core feelings.

- Seen through the lens of the NARM Character Styles:
 - *Attunement*: Forecloses their expression of needs, and can become givers, martyrs, etc.
 - *Autonomy*: Avoid all kinds of situations where appropriate confrontation or speaking up for themselves would be helpful for them; authentic self-expression is limited

In NARM, we support the possibility that people can become increasingly present to themselves, and don't have to run from their emotions and internal conflicts.

- NARM helps you recognize avoidance behaviors
 - Without ever becoming goal-oriented, in other words not trying to push yourself into a specific feeling, you may directly challenge the survival mechanisms designed to avoid feeling - including the various acting-in & acting-out behaviors
- NARM helps you understand that the more you fight against your feelings the more overwhelming these feelings seem.
- Fighting against oneself also takes significant life energy away from other areas of one's life and often leaves one feeling stuck, like in a "hamster's wheel"
- It is more important to work with your fear of feeling than to get to the feeling themselves. Once you deal with the fear of feeling, then you will just let yourself feel what you need to feel.
- In NARM, just as we do not push for emotional feeling and expression, we also do not resource emotions away - even if they seem distressing or scary
- We support relating to these emotions from our adult consciousness, where we experience greater agency and stability
 - You may experience over time that even though your emotions can be distressing or scary, you can trust in their capacity to manage them and know that they'll be okay.

- Getting closer to your primary emotions can be scary and distressing, so NARM supports your increasing capacity to tolerate and integrate these split-off core feelings
- Using the NARM Model, you can experience these deep, difficult feelings from an increasingly embodied, adult perspective.
- NARM helps you track the physical sensation of your emotions
- It provides psychoeducation on the transitory nature of emotions - that these feelings are like waves, they come, and they go.
- NARM supports your connection to your inner emotional world with neutrality and curiosity.
- Integrating once-threatening emotions feels liberating, enlivening and empowering
- Once you are able to feel what the emotion is trying to effect, that itself is a major part of integrating the emotional energy
- Healing occurs in re-owning disowned, rejected and split-off parts of oneself
- Instead of symptoms, there's more energy available for aliveness, connection, joy, pleasure, love, creativity, etc.

NARM Affect Core Principle: Joy, Pleasure, Love & Aliveness

Joy & love are centered in the heart and are an expansive process. With these emotions come an enhanced capacity for:

- Pleasure
- Connection
- Sense of aliveness
- Gratitude
- Hopefulness / Confidence
- Compassion / Empathy
- Humor
- Play