

Don't let anxiety ruin your life

People often feel anxious and stressed when they are in unfamiliar places or situations– especially if they feel there is no escape. It may mean they avoid going to the theatre or a football match or even picking the children up from school. It may mean they avoid speaking in public, or dread going to board meetings.

Judith had avoided flying for the past eighteen years ever since having a panic attack when flying out to the States as a teenager. Indeed, she has continued to experience anxiety and panic attacks in everyday situations up until very recently

She came to see me because she had two immediate problems. The first was that she, her husband and children were emigrating in a couple of months, which meant she had to fly. The second was that before they were able to leave she had go through the unpleasant ordeal of a court case and she did not know how she was going to manage this.

The process of feeling anxious or panicking has some significant characteristics. Usually people imagine the worst. They imagine everything going wrong and themselves panicking – which is enough to make them feel anxious for a start. Also, there is often a body memory left over from previous unpleasant or frightening experiences. This can result in feelings of fear, which seem both illogical and overwhelming. Both characteristics need attending to.

As we talked through Judith's case using a therapy called EMDR, she became aware that at the time of her first panic attack there was a lot of stuff going on in her life, which she had good reason to be anxious about. It just so happened that it had all come to a head in the unfamiliar context of the plane. None of these things were happening now and she did not have to feel that way now. We erased all the feelings associated with that first panic attack. They belonged in the past.

Using hypnotherapy, which results in being able to achieve a very relaxed state, I then had her think about the upcoming flight going really well. I had her imagine being in court and sailing through the experience remaining calm and relaxed. I let her know that as soon as got into court she would feel just like that, and that she would be able to enjoy the flight too.

Judith did sail through the court experience and won the case. And she emailed me to say that the flight was perfectly fine too.

There are times when it makes sense for any of us to feel anxious,. It can be to protect us from doing something dangerous. But there is no reason why anxious feelings should prevent us from doing things we would like or need to do, such as going to the theatre, speaking in public, picking the children up for school. If this is your experience; it can be changed.