

The Importance of Treating Anxiety in Early Recovery

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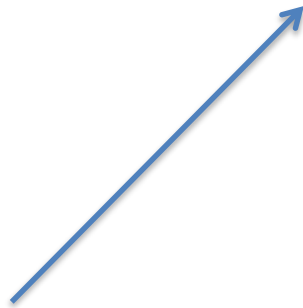
What is “Anxiety”?

- Physiological activation in the body
- NOT in mind
 - NOT worrying/perseverating/ruminating
 - We’ll get to those later....

What is “Anxiety”?

- Triggered in response to unconscious emotions and/or conflict

Anxiety



Unconscious emotions/conflict

Levels of Anxiety: Skeletal

- Level 1: Skeletal (muscles we can control)
 - Muscle tension: neck, shoulders, jaw
 - Fidgeting, shaking
 - Tension headache
 - Tightness in chest
 - Shortness of breath, sighing (diaphragm)
 - Dry mouth, voice shakiness, lump in throat

Levels of Anxiety: Smooth

- Level 2: Smooth (muscles we **can't** control)
 - Gut: nausea, heartburn, diarrhea
 - Bladder: urgency to urinate
 - Blood vessels: migraine headaches
 - Muscles: weakness, spasms

Levels of Anxiety:

Cognitive Perceptual Distortion

- Level 3: “Blipping out”
 - Tunnel vision, ringing in ears
 - Fuzzy thinking, “spacing out”
 - Decreased concentration and memory
 - Severe fatigue
 - Dissociation
 - Paranoid thoughts, auditory hallucinations

Levels of Anxiety

At levels 2 and 3, stress hormones are rising (or chronically elevated):

- Impaired memory-making
- Negative bias in recall and new memories

Levels of Anxiety

So trying to do therapy when a client is in level 2 (Smooth muscle) or 3 (CPD) won't help!

- She won't remember past events objectively
- She won't remember the session objectively (if at all)

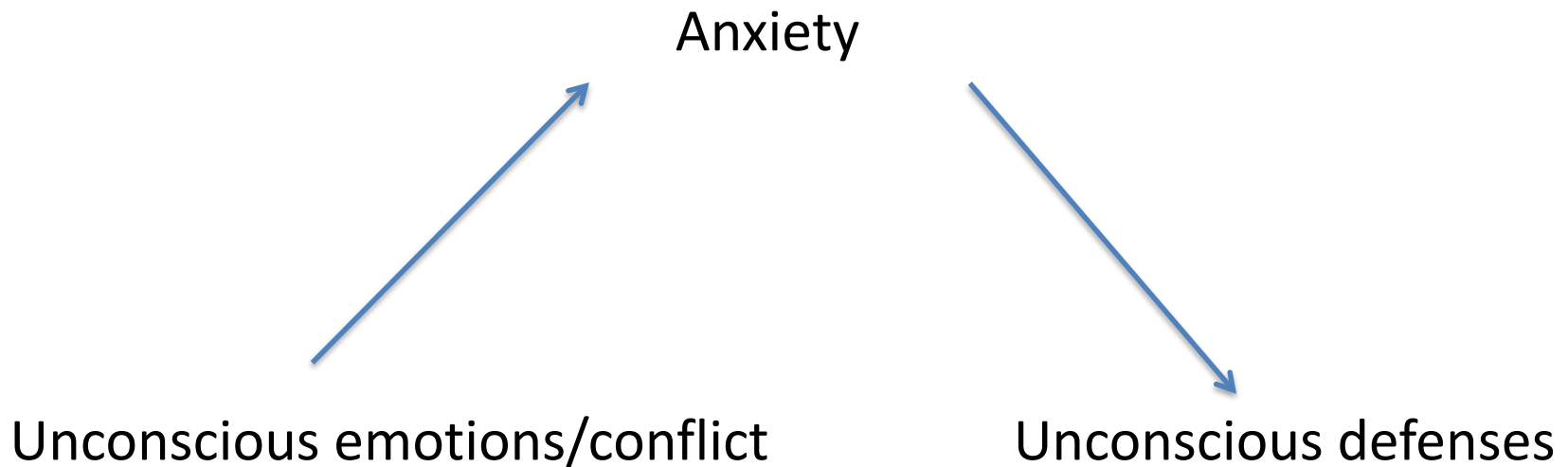
Which emotions can cause anxiety?

Which emotions can cause anxiety?

All of them!

What happens with anxiety?

- Let's finish the triangle....



What are “unconscious defenses?”

What are “unconscious defenses?”

- A behavior or thought pattern that we use to reduce or get rid of anxiety and/or emotion
- Unconscious

How well do they work?

Which one is your “go-to” defense?
(a moment of introspection....)

Discharge of Anxiety

Like a tea kettle letting off steam

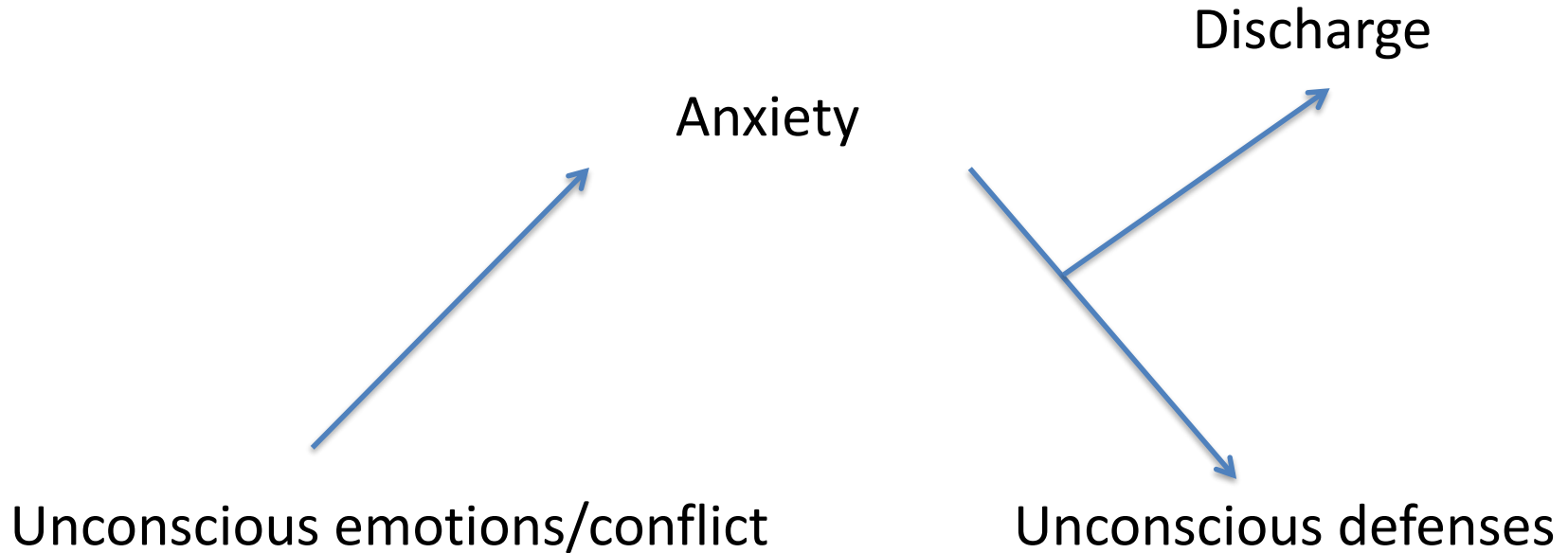
Discharge of Anxiety

- Swearing
- Inappropriate laughter or tears
- Talking under breath
- Leaving suddenly
- Interrupting
- Yelling/screaming
- Talking to others out of turn

***Signs that
anxiety is
TOO HIGH!***

Triangle of Conflict

- Let's finish the triangle....



How do we regulate anxiety?

First, ***we*** have to notice anxiety
in the client.

Inquire about sensations.

Link each sensation to anxiety.

Breathe.

SOBER Space

Help client intellectualize about the possible source/trigger of anxiety.

Educate.

Repeat.

Repeat.

Repeat.

Repeat.

Questions?

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