

## Health Anxiety

Health Anxiety is on the rise, the reasons for this could lie in the connect-ability we now have in this technological era. Information is king and it is all too easy to become our own experts. If we don't know the answer to a problem we can search for it on the internet, any topic, any field of expertise, there is the helpful search engines ready to offer an array of wonderful pages written about absolutely anything we want to know about.

But how careful are we really being in relation to our research methods? What credibility do we give the author of the article we are reading? How did we frame the question we put into the search engine? The information that has been loaded on to the internet over the years is so plentiful that the likelihood of any two words put together will be found in some article somewhere on the internet. What may start as a harmless reassuring process may result in outright panic.

From that one google search we set a ball rolling of algorithms which influence what we see next, based on the searches we make, the things we click on and read. Adverts are suggested based on our choices of articles that we click on, trying desperately to please the keyboard researcher the search engines provide more compelling evidence for the originally searched information. Suddenly the deadly disease feared suddenly seems to surround us, as helpful adverts start to pop up in our social media, and at the side of search engines and shopping sites. This new distorted reality is then mistaken for real life.

Over recent years we have become less accepting of uncertainty finding it uncomfortable. Those that try to quash that uncomfortable feeling of uncertainty search for answers which can quickly become habitual approach to any situation or ailment. In the eyes of the health anxiety sufferer the continual search for truth and understanding stops the sufferer accepting the answers when they are given, so that they start to seek out second opinions and third opinions, never quite satisfied by the answer given.

But the world of medicine does not work like this, it seeks to look at the symptoms arising and come up with a list of medical problems that portray this pattern of symptoms and on this basis they will test for these conditions, in order to find a diagnosis. Doctors do not have a test for everything, but what they do have is knowledge and understanding about how our bodies work and how disease works and they also understand the probability of whether the symptoms being perceived require treatment or further investigation. It is true that sometimes things can be missed and diagnoses can be left untreated, but these situations are few and far between and nowhere near the level that the anxiety sufferer may believe them to be.

Through a program of CBT, Talking therapy, Meditation and Hypnotherapy I teach my clients to challenge these unwanted and unhelpful thought processes and behaviours and create a more balanced outlook on their health.