

# Local

— SPOTLIGHT ON MENTAL HEALTH —

## Anxiety and panic disorders

BY SUNNY WERNER  
Sunny@TheBakerCountyPress.com

Anxiety Disorders were not recognized until 1980 by the American Psychiatric Association. Prior to that time, people suffering from one of these disorders usually received a generic diagnosis of “stress” or “nerves.”

The sufferers are frequently women (the ratio of females to males diagnosed with Anxiety Disorder is 3:2, according to the CDC, the Centers for Disease Control), and the disorders were dismissed as “hysteria” in previous centuries.

There was no understanding of the disorders by mental health professionals and, consequently, effective treatment was rare.

Since then, worldwide research continues to show the severe disabilities associated with these disorders. The assumption that those who suffer from these conditions are weak, lazy or just not trying has been debunked by extensive scientific evidence proving the disorders are real.

Measurable chemical changes in the brains of those who suffer are evidence that the symptoms are the result of events that were not within the control of the patient.

The National Institute of Mental Health explains Anxiety Disorder:

“Anxiety disorders involve more than temporary worry or fear. For a person with an anxiety disorder, the anxiety does not go away and can get worse over time. The feelings can interfere with daily activities such as job performance, school work, and relationships. There are several different types of anxiety disorders. Examples include generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, and social anxiety disorder.”

Medline.gov describes Panic Disorder:

“Panic disorder is a type of anxiety disorder. It causes panic attacks, which are sudden feelings of ter-

ror when there is no real danger. You may feel as if you are losing control. You may also have physical symptoms, such as

- Fast heartbeat
- Chest or stomach pain
- Breathing difficulty
- Weakness or dizziness
- Sweating
- Feeling hot or a cold chill

- Tingly or numb hands

Panic attacks can happen anytime, anywhere, and without warning. You may live in fear of another attack and may avoid places where you have had an attack. For some people, fear takes over their lives and they cannot leave their homes.”

Grace (mid-60s, a Baker County resident) describes her experiences with anxiety and panic.

“The attacks began when I was very young, probably around seven or eight. My family had moved across the world and everything familiar to me was gone. I believe my mother also suffered from it, but she self-medicated with alcohol.

“I began having these very strange symptoms, where I felt that I was spinning out of control. My parents weren’t supportive in finding help for me, and of course back then anything remotely ‘different’ in one’s mental health was considered something you would hide. Nobody wanted to be put in a ‘looney bin,’ which was what we called mental hospitals in those days.”

Grace goes on to describe how the attacks continued throughout her younger years.

“The symptoms seemed to calm down in my teen years. I got married in my first year in college. My husband was very kind. He wanted to help. We knew something strange was going on but even then, back in the 70s, mental health problems weren’t something you wanted to talk about.

“He would just encourage me to do whatever I needed to do to get through an ‘episode.’

“I would have to stay home, inside the house, and couldn’t answer the phone or the door. I was terrified. I didn’t know what it was I was terrified of, but the fear was very real.”

Experts now recognize the patterns in Grace’s life are fairly typical for those who experience Anxiety and Panic Disorders.

- Early childhood trauma (in Grace’s case, her family made a major move to an unfamiliar location)
- Family members who display symptoms of the disorders. (Grace’s mother probably suffered from anxiety and panic, but self-medicated with alcohol)
- Shyness, inhibited social interaction (Grace became shy and inhibited following her family’s move, being unfamiliar with the new social expectations and cultural norms)
- Being female

From the National Institute of Mental Health:

Researchers are finding that genetic and environmental factors, frequently in interaction with one another, are risk factors for anxiety disorders. Specific factors include:

- Shyness, or behavioral inhibition, in childhood
- Being female
- Having few economic resources
- Being divorced or widowed
- Exposure to stressful life events in childhood and adulthood
- Anxiety disorders in close biological relatives
- Parental history of mental disorders

Grace’s story continues. “I could go years without an attack, and even thought I had managed to escape having any more episodes. But then, out of seemingly nowhere, there would suddenly come those awful physical sensations, and I’d know another attack was about to start. I was pretty sure that I was seriously mentally ill, but the more I worried about it, the less I could talk to anybody—including a doctor. Talking about it just seemed to make it even

more real, and I wanted to ignore it.

“As time went by, I began hearing about Anxiety and Panic Disorder, and recognized the description as exactly what I had been experiencing all my life! The relief, realizing that I wasn’t alone, that other people had the same problems, was unbelievable.”

Treatment for the disorders include therapy, counseling and medication. Some patients have found relief with natural remedies, and some continue to rely on pharmaceuticals. While Anxiety Disorder is not currently curable, some of the symptoms, for some patients, respond well to medication.

Therapies include: Cognitive Behavior Therapy, or CBT. CBT is a type of psychotherapy, or “talk therapy.” It teaches the patient different ways of thinking, behaving, and reacting to anxiety-producing and fearful situations.

### Stress-Management Techniques

Stress management techniques and meditation can help people with anxiety disorders calm themselves and may enhance the effects of therapy. Many people have found relief from the frequency and/or severity of anxiety or panic attacks by following a regular exercise routine. Others find that the practice of meditation gives them the tools to calm themselves when they become aware of an impending episode.

### Medication

Medication does not cure anxiety disorders but often relieves symptoms. Medication can only be prescribed by a medical doctor (such as a psychiatrist or a primary care provider), although a few states allow psychologists to prescribe psychiatric medications.

Sometimes doctors will prescribe antidepressants for a patient with Anxiety Disorder. There are concerns with this, as there are increasing reports of some antidepressants actually increasing the severity of the anxieties.



Stock Photo.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. Starting this week and ending in April, *The Baker County Press* is running a six-part series on the subject of mental health, two articles per month leading up to May. Written in installments by various reporters, the series will address both well-known and lesser known mental illnesses, their symptoms, how they affect individuals and families, and methods for treatment. We will move into areas like Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Autism, Personality Disorders and more, stressing both tragedies and mental health successes. Remember, there is always help.

Additionally, antidepressants may cause some people to have suicidal ideation (thoughts of suicide) or make suicide attempts. For this reason, anyone taking an antidepressant should be monitored closely, especially when they first start taking the medication.

### Natural medicines

Herbs such as St. John’s Wort and Valerian have long been recognized as having relaxing properties. Some people with Anxiety Disorder have found relief by using these, along with other, well-studied, herbs and herbal compounds. Any health food store, or section of the supermarket, has a wide variety of herbal substances which may be helpful to some who suffer.

Also of interest is the mounting evidence that CBD oil, a derivative of the marijuana plant, can be helpful in treating the disorders.

“Rigorous clinical studies are still needed to evaluate the clinical potential of CBD for specific conditions. However, pre-clinical research (including both cell culture and animal models) has shown CBD to have a range of effects that may be therapeutically useful, including anti-seizure,

antioxidant, neuroprotective, anti-inflammatory, analgesic, anti-tumor, anti-psychotic, and anti-anxiety properties.” —From a presentation June 24, 2015, by Nora D. Volkow, Director, National Institute on Drug Abuse to the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control.

Grace’s story ends with this

“My husband had died by the time Anxiety and Panic Disorders were acknowledged and I wish he could have known that I wasn’t all that weird after all. But, knowing how horrible it had been to live with that and not be able to get any help, I am very vocal about it now.

“A couple of my daughters also struggle with the disorder, and we all know our triggers, and how to help each other through an attack. We can even do it over the phone, or through text! Knowing that there is help available is one of the biggest anxiety relievers you could have.

“Don’t be afraid to ask for help. Even though talking about it seems really scary, it truly is the best way to get through an attack and out the other side.”

## County: Tri-county weed structure discussed

BY TODD ARRIOLA  
Todd@TheBakerCountyPress.com

The Baker County Board of Commissioners held its second, regular session of the month, on Wednesday, February 15, 2017, 9 a.m., in the Commission Chambers of the Baker County Courthouse, which included a zoning change public hearing, an Emergency Management update, a Tri-County Weed structure draft proposal, and a 2015-2016 audit review.

Present from the Board were Chair Bill Harvey, Commissioners Mark Bennett and Bruce Nichols, and Executive Assistant Heidi Martin.

Attendance also included Baker County Planning Director Holly Kerns, Baker County Planner Eva Henes, Baker County Administrative Services Director Christena Cook, Baker County Weed Master Arnie Grammon, Baker County Emergency Management Director Jason

Yencopal, Baker County Emergency Management Deputy Director/Fire Authority Gary Timm, Baker City Manager Fred Warner, Jr., Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash, Baker County Facilities Maintenance Foreman Dan McQuisten, David Lindley and Megan Adams of Guyer & Associates, Jan and Ken Alexander, Art Sappington, Don and Lori Sutherland, John Creighton, Chuck Chase, and Tork and Wanda Ballard.

The meeting was called to order, and the Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance were recited, both led by Harvey. The agenda was adopted, with one noted addition, a liquor license application, with a motion from Bennett, and a second from Nichols.

Citizen Participation included comments from Sappington, on behalf of the Jefferson Mining District (JMD), of which he is Coordinating Officer. He provided an update

regarding JMD’s efforts in responding to the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM) Withdrawal from Mineral Entry in Sagebrush Focal Areas, and he thanked the Board’s for its own efforts, in responding to that proposal.

He said that Eastern Oregon University (EOU), on behalf of Baker County, had completed a patented mining claim inventory in 1984, and they were recorded (he provided copies). He asked the County to include this record as part of the County’s Comprehensive Land Use Plan, and he asked that the Board communicate with Governor Kate Brown, if appropriate, because he’s had great difficulty himself, regarding this subject, and others, including Brown’s designation of Oregon as a sanctuary state, through executive order.

A second public hearing was held in the matter of PA-16-002, A Zone



Todd Arriola / The Baker County Press

Baker County Weed Master Arnie Grammon.

Change and Plan Amendment Request by Helge Bros., LLC Requesting the Re-Zoning of Tax Lot 1600 of Map 09S37E20, from Rural Residential, to Mineral Extraction (the first public hearing was held on Wednesday, Febru-

ary 1, 2017, as detailed in the Friday, February 3, 2017 issue of *The Baker County Press*).

Kerns provided copies of a letter to the Board, in which she states that she had spoken with County legal counsel Drew Martin,

regarding issues discussed during the Board’s first hearing on this matter, and Martin said that the application process in this case is the appropriate mechanism, to request that zoning change.

SEE COUNTY PAGE 7