

Why Are The Simplest Things So Hard?

Most of us have some tasks or areas of life that we avoid because they make us anxious. It can be balancing the checkbook, going to a movie alone, or phoning someone to ask for help.

While we all have different styles of learning and some projects will appeal to us more than others, activities that create significant anxiety often have their roots in old experiences where an event and a negatively charged feeling paired together. For example, John's wife complains that she cannot get him to tackle even the simplest household repairs. While John did learn to do handiwork with his father, he experiences no pleasure in it because his skills in this area are paired with memories of being scrutinized and criticized by his father.

Cultural stereotypes may also affect our comfort with certain activities. If you are male, your interest and pleasure in doing needlework may be inhibited by anxiety. A woman might feel some anxiety because her ideal birthday gift is a new drill or jigsaw.

So, if you find that you have anxiety that inhibits you from doing what brings you pleasure or that keeps you from doing day-to-day life tasks, be curious about what is causing it. If you are putting yourself down, stop it! Second, take the time to research the source of your anxiety. Was it a past experience that was coupled with a negatively charged emotion? Are you a victim of stereotyping?

Instead of saying, "I can't," tell yourself, "I can learn to do this, even if I am afraid." Or, "That was then, this is now. I can do it differently." Get support. For example, take a basic class in money management or sit down with a caring, trusted, and skilled friend if you get anxious and avoid balancing your checkbook.

Sometimes our anxieties are more complex or have broad effects on our lives. When that is the case, you may need to consult a psychotherapist who can help you understand the origins of your anxiety and work through the problems that are inhibiting you. When we choose to work through our problems, we not only release fear, but we expand our self-definition and send a message to our whole being that we have the power to change and create the life we want to live.

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