

# Anxiety and Panic Attacks

You've just woken up and it's already there...tight chest, shallow breathing and dread. You are in the midst of another panic attack. You either can't think or you are thinking of everything at once. If anything your view of the world has focused down to a single dot and for the moment it's like being trapped in a very small box with no way out, and you want out....yesterday!

If you have had a history of either panic attacks or anxiety, you are probably already finding solace in some antidepressant or SSRI and feel a bit threatened by being lured out of their protective haze. It doesn't take much to remind you of that tight-chested feeling of paranoia, that feeling of chaos all around you, your heart pumping wildly, while you are absolutely unable to foment a single clear thought. It is certainly not something you want to go back to, nor would you venture to trust someone that said it was in part, an adjustment your body has made to your mind, that seems to make it increasingly ever present. You'd probably find it more familiar to have someone determine that you are certifiably nuts. Of course the questions I think you should be asking are whether the meds are actually curing the problem or just allowing you to live in a condition oblivious to the imbalances that persist. Will you ever be able to function without them?

Most of medicine is starting to realize that all maladies are a total physical response, a function of both the body and the mind. Now that we are accepting the reality of *mind/ body* medicine we can no longer just see something like a panic attack as totally "in your head" anymore. I know it sounds like a broken record when I say it, but in Chinese Medicine, we have never separated the head from the rest of the body.

## Who is affected?

Further to this lesson, the stomach and the spleen are the centers in the body most affected by over-thinking and over- concern, which points the finger most often to just the type of person that suffers from such anxiety and panic attacks. Typically, these people feel the need to hold a certain amount of control over their environment. While assuming a higher level of responsibility has always been a high regard for them, they have always been fearful that something could go wrong at any turn. If they are unable to maintain a very strong vector of control and order in their world and they may find themselves a little upset if things don't end up going their way. Of course, no well ordered world is going to last forever, and so when things start to crumble so also may the precarious balance of the body-mind.

## The physiology

Most of us have had occasion to find ourselves worrying about something and then grabbing our stomachs. Our stomach is like a balloon which is held in place by vital energy or *Qi* (pronounced chi). Worrying too much, apprehension and sort of too much thinking or just staying in our heads about what we have to do in general, interrupts the Qi of the stomach, and it just falls (see article: [\*A Sinking Feeling in Your Stomach\*](#)). In fact all the digestion is dampened and we fall into a vicious cycle(see also: [\*The Swamp Inside Us\*](#)).

The body and the mind, not being separate, reflexively causes us to be more prone to worry and think too much once the stomach is down or prolapsed and the digestion is compromised. In fact, as all of these factors progress, we form a true inability to cope with the runaway nature of our thoughts.

Another factor is what we call Kidney deficiency (see article: [\*Kidneys in Support of Everything\*](#)). A depletion of Kidney energy will mean a depletion of our basic supportive energy. A lot of people I see today have lived a good portion of their lives being this level of deficiency and barely coping, but never realizing it. Or, just as well, the worry and non-function of the digestive system over time would mean that we were getting less from our food and eventually cause this type of deficiency and eventuate in this kidney deficiency.

At any rate, when we are this kind of deficient, we are more prone to be fearful and easily frightened. Most things seem to become insurmountable and too challenging to begin to deal with. Everything that is not familiar to us seems like a major calamity. So, with the stomach and the kidney energy in such a state, we are abnormally prone to being worried and scared at the same time.

Now, enter the Liver. The Liver is our aggressive organ (see article: [\*Your Right Side, Your Liver\*](#)). There is an interrelationship between our organs; a balance that can be precarious. At any rate, when the

kidneys and the stomach energies are weak, the Liver becomes imbalanced at the slightest provocation.; a little like the bully in the schoolyard.

When the Liver is overwrought, it will cause the chest to feel like it is closing in on us. Our quality of sleep goes down so that we will sleep lightly or even wake us up during the middle of the night. At night it may even attack the heart and cause dream disturbed sleep and sweating or sadness of spirit in general. We may even become generally irritable.

### **Put It All Together**

I guess I am trying to say that all or part of this could end up being an anxiety or panic attack. It is hard to describe exactly everyone who may possibly wake up in the morning with an overriding anxiety and the way we come into this state is not ever the same for any two people. For some people, the anti anxiety medications are all the answer they need, and see coping with life under the control of some pill as perfectly normal. However, these days, most of the time, I find myself writing for people who are looking for the kind of solutions I offer; the ones that can see themselves in a pattern of dysfunction and are searching for a way out without giving up control to some medication. They realize that using a stopgap remedy has nothing to do with retaking control of our lives and returning themselves to mind-body health.

The mind and body are one in the same. A depression or a stagnation of the mind, or an unbridled fear, when uncontrollable, are extensions of the body that houses it. If we don't treat both the mind (see article: *Emotional Allergies*), and the body as two sides of the same problem we will never get out of the vicious circle that makes endpoint solutions like anti anxiety drugs a way of life.