



# Just Enough Anxiety: A Blueprint for Successful Leadership

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Leadership Connection Program

Red Lion Hotel at the Park

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# Definitions

What is the difference between fear and anxiety?

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- Fear – Present oriented emotional response to a stimulus that is threatening
- Anxiety – a future oriented state of arousal, a sense of worry or foreboding about something that could happen in the future



# How are Fear and Anxiety Similar and Different?

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- They can have similar:
  - Physiological signs
  - Feelings
  - Thoughts
- They are different:
  - Fear is short lived – focus is on the present
  - Anxiety tends to last longer and is triggered by something in the future



# Are Fear and Anxiety Useful?

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- Robert Rosen's book **Just Enough Anxiety**
- Anxiety is a fact of life
- Leaders need to have access to their anxiety
- If too much: It can be crippling
- If too little: Take unwarranted risks or become too complacent
- Leaders need to use their anxiety for the good of themselves and the organization



# How Does the Brain Work with Anxiety and Fear?

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- Cells in brain – neurons
- Projection neurons – excite
- Interneurons – inhibit the excitement by releasing GABA
- Modulators – slow acting calming influences
  - Peptides
  - Monoamines
  - Hormones



# Brain is Impacted by Genetics and Experience

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- Children come into the world with various capacities to excite or inhibit excitement
- Caregivers provide executive functions for children



# The Anxiety Continuum

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■ **Too Little**

**Just Enough**

**Too Much**

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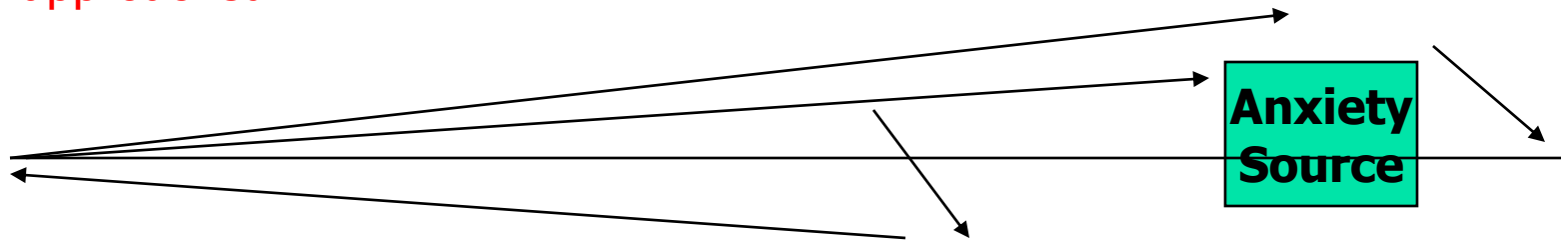
# Leaders with Too Much Anxiety

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- Manage the anxiety in ways that are counter productive to their leadership effectiveness
  - Too controlling or micro managing
  - Excessive preparation
  - Avoidance of anxiety producing situations

# What Happens When Leaders Avoid Anxiety Producing Situations?

- Anxiety increases as the leader approaches the anxiety source
- Anxiety is lowered when the problem has been solved
- Anxiety can also be lowered by avoiding the problem
- **Danger: Anxiety level increases the next time the problem is approached**





# How To Lower One's Anxiety Level?

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- Herbert Benson The Relaxation Response
- Mindfulness – Daniel Siegel The Mindful Brain
- Focusing on 8 senses: ***Without Judgment***
  - 5 Senses: 1 through 5 (see, hear, taste, touch, and smell)
  - 6 – body sensations
  - 7 – thoughts, feelings, intentions, attitudes, beliefs, hopes
  - 8 – relationships - who is important to me?



# Anxiety Reduction Continued

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- John Forsyth and Gerog Eifert The Mindfulness & Acceptance Workbook for Anxiety
  - Learning to let go and distinguish between what you can and cannot control
  - Accept anxiety as your friend
  - Focus on the present without judgment



# People With Too Little Anxiety

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- Live dangerously as leaders – take unwarranted risks
- Idealistic leaders who don't deal with reality
- Cautious leaders who don't take any risks



# How To Increase Anxiety?

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- Become more aware of yourself and your experience
- Start with body awareness
- Work with a consultant who can:
  - help you confront reality more effectively
  - support you to take more risks



# Just Enough Anxiety: Rosen's 3 Paradoxes

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- Realistic and Optimistic
- Constructive and Impatient
- Humble and Confident



# Staying in the Paradox Requires:

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- Welcoming anxiety as an ally not an enemy
- Embracing change and challenges
- Being able to modulate one's anxiety internally rather than change the external environment to do it



# Conclusion

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- Leaders who:
  - Know themselves
  - Are able to be themselves
  - Challenge themselves
  - Love themselves
    - Are able to lead others because they are able to manage the level of their anxiety and stay in that middle area of having “just enough anxiety.”