

ANXIETY AVOIDANCE ESCAPE

A Baaaaaaaad Deal!

By Christie Vosseller

Did you know that the song “WALTZING MATILDA” was written by a poet as he reflected upon the GRACE and HISTORY of a SHEEP STATION in WESTERN QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA? A sheep station is land reserved for raising LIVESTOCK for the purpose of WOOL and MEAT. Meat? Yikes! No matter how PASTORAL the setting you can imagine a sweet, grazing sheep could have anxiety after the first shearing. SHREK, a sheep in NEW ZEALAND, once lived in a cave for 6 years to avoid SHEARING. Shrek said.... “this looks like a baaaaaaaaaad deal” and escaped for the hills! ANXIETY, AVOIDANCE and ESCAPE are concepts that no one should waltz around.

Spell: WALTZING **Spell:** WRITTEN **Spell:** LIVESTOCK

Name one of the concepts we are talking about today. ANXIETY, AVOIDANCE, ESCAPE

What country was “Waltzing Matilda” written in? AUSTRALIA

What part of Australia? WESTERN QUEENSLAND

Name another place in Australia.

A poet wrote “Waltzing Matilda” as he reflected upon what? GRACE AND HISTORY OF A SHEEP STATION

What two things are produced on a sheep station? WOOL, MEAT

What is the act of obtaining wool from a sheep called? SHEARING

What was the name of the sheep that avoided shearing? SHREK

What is a synonym for avoided?

How many years did Shrek avoid shearing? 6 YEARS

Where did Shrek live for those six years? IN A CAVE

In what country did Shrek live? NEW ZEALAND

Shrek was born in 1994 and avoided his ANNUAL shearing from 1998 through 2004. Sheep are generally shorn once a year. When Shrek was finally captured he was SHORN by one professional in 20 minutes! His FLEECE produced enough wool to craft as many as 20 wool

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suits. Shrek went on to become a national ICON and even met the New Zealand PRIME MINISTER.

Spell: ANNUAL **Spell:** GENERALLY **Spell:** PROFESSIONAL

What year was Shrek born? 1994

How old would he be today? Current year - 1994 =

What does annual mean?

What year did Shrek begin avoiding a shear? 1998

What year was Shrek captured and finally shorn? 2004

How long ago was this? Current year - 2004 =

How many professionals did it take to shear Shrek? ONE

How many minutes did it take one professional to shear Shrek? 20 MINUTES

How many wool suits could be produced by that one shearing? 20

If the professional took 20 minutes to shear, and the fleece produced could make 20 wool suits

– how many suits per minute could Shrek produce after his capture? ONE WOOL SUIT PER MINUTE

What happened to Shrek as a result of his avoidance, capture and shearing? HE BECAME A NATIONAL ICON What is a national icon?

Who did he meet? THE NEW ZEALAND PRIME MINISTER

Great story, right? But the real story here is... why? Shearing doesn't sound so bad – we all need a haircut every once in awhile. Shrek experienced anxiety and DEFAULTED to avoidance and escape. Avoidance and escape can be a way of COPING; an effort to avoid dealing with stress. The goal is protection from PSYCHOLOGICAL or PHYSICAL damage.

Spell: HAIRCUT **Spell:** EXPERIENCED **Spell:** DEFAULTED

When Shrek experienced anxiety, what did he default to? AVOIDANCE AND ESCAPE

Avoidance and escape can be a way of _____. COPING

What does it mean to cope? Or have a way of coping?

When we are coping, what are we trying to avoid? STRESS

What is the goal of coping via avoidance or escape? PROTECTION FROM PSYCHOLOGICAL OR

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PHYSICAL DAMAGE.

The term psychological deals with what organ in the body? BRAIN

When people cope by avoidance they can end up experiencing the very thing they were trying to protect themselves from. Avoidance tends to cause more anxiety; nearly a SNOWBALL effect of EMOTIONAL build up. If you take a look at Shrek when he was captured in 2004 you can see the physical effect of his avoidance. Imagine how emotionally ANXIOUS he must have felt as his physical movement was RESTRICTED and he was super INSULATED with all that fleece!

Spell: SNOWBALL **Spell:** RESTRICTED **Spell:** INSULATED

When people cope by avoidance they can end up experiencing what? THE VERY THING THEY WERE TRYING TO PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM.

What does Avoidance tend to cause more of? ANXIETY

What is anxiety?

This is nearly a snowball effect of what? EMOTIONAL BUILD UP

What does snowball effect mean?

What physical effect of avoidance can you see when you look at the picture of Shrek upon capture?

What emotional effect do you believe Shrek was experiencing when the physical effects became overwhelming?

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So what about people; not sheep? Many folks with GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER engage in avoidance as a way of coping with anxiety. If a person has SOCIAL anxiety, they may decide to avoid a large social situation. When this is successful in decreasing anxiety, that person may prefer to forgo additional social events in the future. People with PANIC DISORDER sometimes do not leave their home to avoid panicky feelings! Oddly enough, the more situations they try to avoid, the more every situation (even those in their own home) begin to TRIGGER feelings of panic. In that sense, it is no longer a viable “coping” MECHANISM; it is more of a NEGATIVE REINFORCEMENT. The removal of UNPLEASANT feelings (negative) leads to increase in that behavior (reinforcement).

Spell: ENGAGE **Spell:** DECREASING **Spell:** MECHANISM

Name one health disorder that engages in avoidance as a way of coping with anxiety.

GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER, SOCIAL ANXIETY, PANIC DISORDER

If someone has social anxiety what might they choose to avoid? LARGE SOCIAL SITUATIONS

What place do some people with panic disorder choose not to leave? THEIR HOMES

Why do folks with panic disorder choose not to leave their home? TO AVOID PANICKY FEELINGS

At what point does avoidance no longer serve as an effective coping mechanism?

WHEN EVERY SITUATION BEGINS TO TRIGGER FEELINGS OF PANIC

What does mechanism mean?

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When avoidance is no longer effective; i.e. the person with panic disorder begins to have anxiety attacks at home too, avoidance is considered a negative _____. REINFORCEMENT

How did Shrek's avoidance eventually become a negative reinforcement?

As you can imagine, once avoidance becomes a negative reinforcement it can snowball into a much larger concern than the original issue! Shrek's fleece eventually became too heavy and dense; his general quality of life decreased! When avoidance becomes a negative reinforcement for people it can decrease our quality of life. It can eventually INTERFERE with activities we enjoy, it makes INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS difficult and we are no longer able to engage in daily activities and RESPONSIBILITIES.

Spell: IMAGINE

Spell: EVENTUALLY

Spell: INTERFERE

What decreased as Shrek's fleece became too heavy and dense? HIS GENERAL QUALITY OF LIFE

Once avoidance becomes a negative reinforcement, it can interfere with ___ that we enjoy. ACTIVITIES

What type of relationships can become difficult? INTERPERSONAL

What is an interpersonal relationship?
Besides daily activities, what is another aspect that people may no longer be able to engage in? DAILY RESPONSIBILITIES

In a way Shrek totally escaped to DODGE the shears all those years! Inability to have relationships and take care of daily responsibilities would certainly decrease my quality of life. So what are the symptoms...what does anxiety look like? There are physical signals that can alert anyone that avoidance/escape is EMINENT. Rapid HEARTBEAT, BUTTERFLIES, OBSESSIVE thoughts or worries, RESTLESSNESS, IRRITABILITY or fear of losing control are sure signs. Anxiety can lead to avoidance of people, places or things. With people this can look like leaving a party early, walking out in the middle of a class or hiding in a restroom. Shrek simply disappeared to a cave!

Spell: DODGE

Spell: INABILITY

Spell: EMINENT

Name two of the physical signals, mentioned, of anxiety that may signal that avoidance or escape

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are eminent. RAPID HEARTBEAT, BUTTERFLIES, OBSESSIVE THOUGHTS OR WORRIES, RESTLESSNESS, IRRITABILITY, FEAR OF LOSING CONTROL

What is a synonym for eminent?

What does it mean to have butterflies? Question Type Key

Name something a person avoids once the signs of anxiety become overwhelming. PEOPLE, PLACES OR THINGS What is one example given that people may do? LEAVING A PARTY EARLY, WALKING OUT IN THE MIDDLE OF CLASS, HIDING IN A RESTROOM

Shrek may have been uncomfortable after 6 years, but bringing him back into the FOLD was still hard! For people, overcoming anxiety and CEASING to avoid or escape is a PARADOX. A paradox is essentially doing the opposite of what you want to do to cope; it is COUNTER-INTUITIVE. To overcome anxiety we must do the opposite of what our brain and body tell us to do. If you have told yourself you will NEVER be able to go to the shopping mall without a panic attack, you will NEVER WANT to go to the shopping mall. Create a plan, partner with a family member, and take small steps; walk a hundred feet further each time you visit the local shopping mall. Your brain and body say NO; it will take hard work to get to YES.

Spell: UNCOMFORTABLE Spell: PARADOX Spell: OVERCOME

What is a paradox? DOING THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT YOU WANT TO DO TO COPE.

What does counter-intuitive mean?

To overcome anxiety we must do the opposite of what our __ and __ tell us to do. BRAIN; BODY

Why is overcoming anxiety, avoidance and escape often a paradox? BECAUSE IT IS THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT WILL ACTUALLY HELP YOU COPE

In order to work towards overcoming anxiety, you can create a __. PLAN

Your brain and body say no. It will take hard work to get to? YES

CREATIVE WRITING: Have you experienced anxiety? If so, what are your trigger situations?

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What symptoms of anxiety have you experienced?

When the symptoms become overwhelming, what has your avoidance or escape coping mechanism been?

Have you ever noticed your avoidance/escape coping mechanism transition to negative reinforcement that impedes your quality of life? What paradoxical approach could you take to enhance your quality of life?

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