

Jonathan Leeming **Eco-Anxiety**

turning anxiety into action during periods of change

Summary

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Realities of Our Time

We are living in the most confusing and challenging period of at least my life. There is no doubt that the way we have fabricated society is just not working. Everything from what we eat and drink, where we go on holiday, the car we drive, the clothes we wear, the financial system and where we live... are being questioned, poked and prodded. It is not as if the challenges of our time are going to disappear like magic, the next few years will see a disruption of our expectations of society, and at the same time, usher in a rejuvenation of how we live our lives.

On a global scale, Covid-19 has been the catalyst for a unique and fascinating period of life. Within minutes of a presidential address, entire countries were locked down and its citizens confined to their houses, disrupting normality, destroying livelihoods, creating panic, anxiety, and a rampant fear of the future. However, Covid-19 is not the only thing that we should be concerned about.

Climate change, the water crisis, biodiversity loss, human health crisis, Ocean degradation, Challenge of waste. What we do in the next 10 years, will have a profound affect the next 1000 years. We need action and we need it now!



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Anxiety

With all of the challenges forced upon us, right here, right now has never been a more stressful and confusing time to be a human being! The anxiety that we all feel, influences our lives in many ways, as it:

- Prevents us from making sense out of the world and the challenges that we face.
- Increases frustration and anger.
- Manufactures self doubt, where there should not be any.
- Gives credence to conspiracy theories and fake news.
- Prevents or slows down the adoption of change that is so desperately needed.
- Prevents us from feeling comfortable with who we are and what we have become.

But, is there anything we can do about reducing anxiety and can we prevent it from paralyzing our ability for action? If we learn from the Covid-19 pandemic, we can identify that anxiety was generated from 2 different areas of our lives. There are those areas that:

- We have no control over.
- We have full control over.

For those things that we have no control over, we needed to learn acceptance, embrace the moment, and make the most of it. For those things that we can control, we need to focus upon what is important to us in a holistic way. It would be easy to reconcile and deal with these challenges objectively, however, we live in a world of misinformation and manipulation where we lack the capacity to differentiate fact from fiction.



You Are Influenced By Social Manipulation

In the same way that young children cannot differentiate between facts and marketing, many adults cannot differentiate reality from fake news, hoaxes and misinformation.

Have you noticed that:

- News has become more about getting your attention.
- There is no middle of the road.
- It's been turned into political agenda.
- It is more about selling you stuff!
- Organised misdirection and misinformation.

If you think that we are not influenced by these forces, then you are in denial. Entire industries have been built up around subversive influence. From the car that you drive, political party you vote for, the brand of whisky that you drink, clothes you wear and Facebook posts that you Like! Everywhere you look, you'll find persuasive and subversive messages.

The marketing budget of organisations is testament to how desperate they are, to hold on to their market share in the face of change. These organisations have created a society with an ever shifting reality that is no where near a true reflection of the world. The world we live in, is a lie.



You Manipulate Yourself

There is no more of a convincing person than ourselves, and because the human mind has an infinite capacity for self deception, what goes on in our heads can easily become a danger to ourselves and society.

Have you noticed that:

- You only consume information that you agree with.
- You see change as a personal attack on your lifestyle.
- Many aspects of your life are complex, and beyond your understanding.
- Change is not happening fast enough.
- You don't want to give up anything.
- You think it is someone else's responsibility.
- Debate focuses upon who is right and who is wrong.
- Your values and beliefs are a square peg in a round world.

There is an innate frailty of the human mind that we all share, an inherited trait, passed down through generations. If we continue to engage in self sabotage, engage in activities that mislead our intellect and create a self perpetuating ignorance, then we will forever suffer the effects of anxiety. We have to be mindful as to what we let into our minds, and catch ourselves in that moment of intellectual derailment.

How Manipulation Fuels Anxiety

Anxiety effects us all in vastly different ways, for some people anxiety prompts a subliminal, yet obvious change in who we are, while others keep anxiety bubbling just under the surface.

Charles Spurgeon said “Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but empties today of its strength.” Irrespective of who we are, anxiety can have 2 influences on our lives:

- Anxiety can propagate negative feelings towards the present and the future.
- Anxiety can inspire us to step up to the challenge ahead.

Now is the time to acknowledge anxiety as an influential force, create meaning from the struggle that anxiety creates in our lives, and step up to the challenges that we face. The only way is forward with an optimistic mindset which in turn, provides a catalyst for action.

Re-Imagining The World

Today, we find ourselves no different, except for the ignorance of man is multiplied by our population, multiplied by our technology, has resulted in the amplification of our influence upon Earth to catastrophic levels of destruction. We are destroying the world with 21st century technology and yet our values and beliefs are based upon iron aged principles.

The reality of our situation is that if we have caused these challenges, then we can solve them. Every moment of our lives provides an opportunity to catch ourselves derailing our future.

The Antidote For Anxiety

Today, I see a revolution for the future. Never before have we been in a position to solve the challenges of our time, and never before have so many people recognised hope for the future. People said “we need to get back to normal as fast as possible, but “normal” is what got us all into this mess in the first place.

The secret to saving ourselves from ourselves is firmly held within your ability to unlearn and relearn our current reality. In order to relearn and re-imagine are new reality, we have to understand that:

- Reasoning from first principles is the only way to truly understand the world.
- You will be wrong about certain things, and may be corrected by people who are more knowledgeable in that area of understanding.
- You have been purposefully taken for a fool by charlatans or misled by fake news and social media.
- If something has a significant impact in your life, you owe it to yourself and the people around you to educate yourself and understand the facts.
- The people you look up to and admire, do not know all the answers and can be equally wrong as you can.
- You can never know everything about everything.

Our anxiety towards the world, exists within the difference between reality and our expectations of reality. The wider the disparity, the more anxious we become. In order to close this gap, we have to reframe what it means to be human, without being afraid to step beyond our own humanity. We must not be afraid of change or resist change, but rather work proactively through change. If we can do this, then reality and our expectations of reality become one, and there is no reasons or feel anxious.