

Anxiety & Depression

As elementary school children during the Cold War, we'd crawl under our desks during air raid drills. Though it caused some anxiety it was mostly entertaining. Teachers said Russians could bomb us, but it seemed unlikely. Wars occurred elsewhere, and America felt safe.

We only saw bad things on the local 6 o'clock news – if our family's one television antenna worked. If we needed peace of mind, we could probably find it. The world's problems weren't continuously aired on 24-hour news cycles, satellite radio, the Internet, and social media.

Today, even when you're alone in the bathroom your phone vibrates! Private contemplation is necessary for mental and intellectual health. Reflection distinguishes humans from even the smartest of animals. Monkeys don't meditate. Our inner voice makes us human. But today, quiet thoughts are smothered by this inescapable connectivity.

In 2001, I'd drive our children past NYC's Twin Towers to a nearby school on a regular basis. They'd sit in the back seat and play "I spy my Towers" as their adored Towers rose high above.

After the terrorist attack of 9/11 their school and many other buildings were fenced off for a few days. The next drive to school was solemn as we rode through still lingering smoke. They were too young to fully understand, but not too young to be traumatized. They sobbed in the back seat as we silently passed the once majestic skyline. This was the first time they weren't giggling and playing "I spy." My wife and I tried to shield them from the trauma but it was all over the media in a constant barrage.

People around the world were traumatized by 9/11 and by what now seems like daily calamities. The incessant onslaught of

negative news hasn't stopped. Today's younger ones grew up without the feeling of peace and security many of us once enjoyed.

Many ask why our younger generations have such anxiety and depression. Aside from chemical, biological, or other causes, perhaps the burdens of the entire world "became theirs" at too innocent an age. For the first time in history parents weren't able to shield their children from the larger world.

Regardless of age we're all affected by chaos and disorder. Many rely on drugs and alcohol for a release, only to find their conditions get worse, not better. Anxiety and depression are beyond the power of quick fixes that only exacerbate it. And no individual can heal alone! Along with support from others, prayer, etc., competent medical assistance is often required.

In the meantime, mental solace may be found in the hope that there's good in every bad. As the world falls apart, a stronger and brighter world is gradually rising up from the ashes. As one nation attacks another, a dozen unite in its defense. As natural catastrophes strike one country, fifty come to its aid. After severe birth pangs of conflict, the world is maturing as nations learn to work together as better neighbors. After the dust of each war or calamity settles, it's increasingly easier to discern even a little more unity in the world.

And emotional solace can be found in the hope that our true human nature is spiritual, not physical, and that "this too shall pass," as the ancient Persian proverb goes.

Please see References