

Demon In The City – The Urbanization Of Anxiety

How anxiety is driving people away from their homes and lives in cities, as they search for peace in rural settings.

By Faust Ruggiero, M.S.

On a tranquil morning in the rural countryside, the sun is shining, the birds are chirping, and a warm breeze is spreading across the landscape. People are smiling; warmly greeting each other. Arms are extended to welcome loving embraces, and smiles are everywhere. The pace of life is slower here, and there is time to be grateful for a simple easy way of life in a world with few complications.

Ninety minutes away, the hustle bustle of city life has begun. Crowded streets lead the way into high energy, high finance corporate world, while homeless people do what they can to survive a vicious and empty existence. High security is everywhere, doing his best to keep it frenzied citizens safe. It is a loud, expensive, and demanding way of life.

Life in the city is competitive, fast-paced, and over-stimulated. Unlike its country counterpart, city life exists in a dense and crowded world. It often fools its inhabitants to believe that this level of excitement represents living the good life. The city does have much to offer. Everything you need is right around the corner, there is exhilarating night life, and entertainment to please a wide variety of individual tastes. There's more opportunity, more money, and more diversification.

Urbanites, however, are significantly more likely to have both anxiety disorders and mood disorders. There are also greater incidents of PTSD, anger management issues, and generalized anxiety disorder. Those living in urban environments tend to have their immune systems more significantly challenged. As a result, they experience more physical disorders, and an enhanced risk of developing psychiatric conditions, such as anxiety, depression, or bipolar disorders.

To keep up with the pace and the demand of urban life, one needs to become more responsive to people and events, and more aggressive as they do. The more tranquil way of living found in the rural countryside has given way to an intense and on guard way of living in urban environments. This stressed out way of life has led to what is becoming a mass exodus out of urban environments, and into the more laid back an easier way of life that rural living can afford.

Decisions, Decisions

The Urban existence can be addicting as the human brain adjusts to the enhanced adrenaline rush that life in the city provides. However, something interesting happened during the pandemic. City life was brought to a screeching halt, and people had time to think and reevaluate the conditions that defined their lives. They began to think about their options. The previous hustle bustle in the city didn't provide a tremendous amount of time to think, and life was lived on a surrealistic and fast-paced autopilot joyride.

It was beginning to become apparent that even with all the amenities that cities have to offer, it's not always a very healthy way to live. Urban life has become excessively expensive, and the pandemic introduced an aggressive style of life that brought living in the city into a whole new level of danger. As the stress increased and both somatic and emotional effects became more visible, decisions needed to be made.

To stay in the city means to redefine the way one chooses to live life. It means trying to introduce a slower pace in that adrenaline-packed, big city experience. A second option was to leave the city altogether. That would mean either relocating to a rural location that still allowed for travel to and from work on daily basis, or giving up the urban lifestyle altogether, and attempting to adjust to a much slower pace, with fewer amenities. Some people were willing to leave the city, live sixty to ninety minutes away, and commute daily, rather than invite the negatives of urban life into their homes and their families. All of these can work, but there must be adjustments in each case.

Life In The Balance

If your decision is to remain in the city, then it is important that you work for more balanced way of life, one that can pave the way for a less stressful way of living. Here are a few suggestions:

- Deceleration is a must. Begin to work with ways to slow your body down. Yoga, meditation, prayer, and breathing exercises are good examples of a productive way to begin.
- Program periods of time where you can remove yourself from the city's fast pace way of life. Stay home a little more. Try to stay away from that feeling that tells you need to get "into the flow".

- Exercise regularly. Exercise is a great way to relieve stress, and a healthier body provide more of the resources you need to address stressful situations.
- Create a positive network. This means having people who can help you live a more positive, healthy, and decelerated style of life.
- Try to stay away from the autopilot merry go round. Infuse your life with conscious thought. Think about what you're going to do before you do it, and make decisions that are based on facts that help keep you healthy.
- Don't be a stuffer. Talk to others regularly about what's happening in your life. If necessary, incorporate a professional counselor into your life.

Regardless of where we live. Keeping your life balanced is so important. That means working with our physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual attributes. This is hard to do in aggressive, fast-paced, crowded world. In the rural settings, this style of life flows a bit freely. It doesn't always have the exciting amenities that a city can offer, but balance can be attained there much easier.

If you are considering a move to a rural setting, spend some time there and understand what that style of life is all about. If your brain is accustomed to the intensity of city life, it will take some time to adjust to the slower pace, and the style of life that urban living offers. If, on the other hand, your choice is to remain in the city, then do incorporate more healthy living measures into your life.

There is no style of life that completely alleviates anxiety. Urban life will always be fast-paced, and it will always be intense. There will always be more competition and more aggression there. A decision to stay there requires the ability to decelerate and desensitize from the intensity. The decision to leave will require an adjustment both in terms of the people you will be living around, and an environment which is far less exciting.

Don't make this a quick decision. Do the research. Get the facts. Talk to people, and if necessary, a professional. Either world can be satisfying. It's important that you do the research before you make the decision.

Faust Ruggiero is the award-winning author of *The Fix Yourself Empowerment Series*, and the new *The Fix Your Anxiety Handbook*.

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