

THE HISTORY OF ANXIETY

INTRODUCTION

- Anxiety has developed through time from prehistoric to contemporary society.
- Anxiety is common within modern life.
- Therefore, it's vital to understand it from a historical lens.
- Let's begin this journey through time!



PRE-HISTORIC

- Evolutionary forces influenced the reaction of the 'fight or flight response'. Shyness was used as a defence mechanism from predators, to protect themselves and the tribe. This has transpired into contemporary society, without the imminent risk (Robert, 2009)
- In Ancient Mesopotamia anxiety was documented onto tablets in symbols. High emphasis on spiritual possession, and the use of psychosomatic treatments (Collyer, 2023)
- Hippocrates' four humours (Black bile, yellow bile, blood, and phlegm) go together to create a balance.
- Anxiety stems from an excess of black bile which causes tension (Lloyd., et al)



MEDIEVAL PERIOD 5TH - 15TH CENTURY

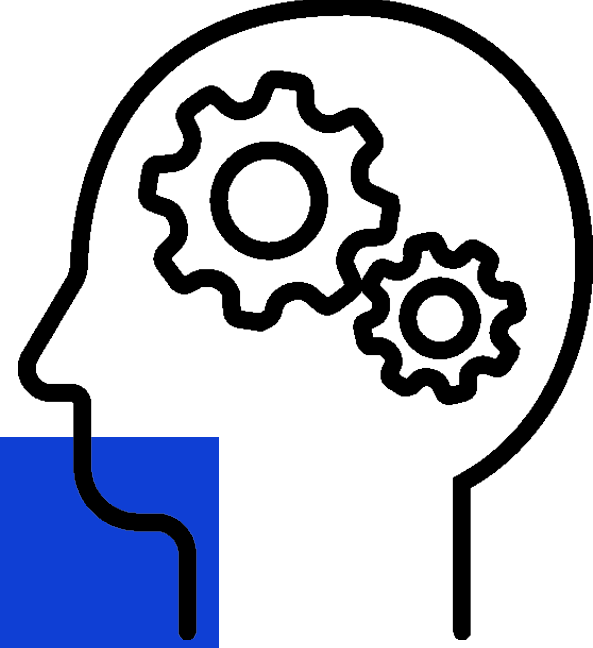
- **Medieval Persia – anxiety could be treated, from a holistic approach. This parallels from Western beliefs (Abdollahi, 2024)**
- **Folktales to provide direction on anxiety which provided hope – The Moth and the Flame (Jackson, 1916)**
- **Visiting places with religious significance to heal anxiety.**
- **Sin of Acedia is a movement away from God – 'Spiritual Sloth'**
- **Exorcisms used to eradicate the Devil and witch trails (Crawford et al., 2010)**



ENLIGHTENMENT PERIOD



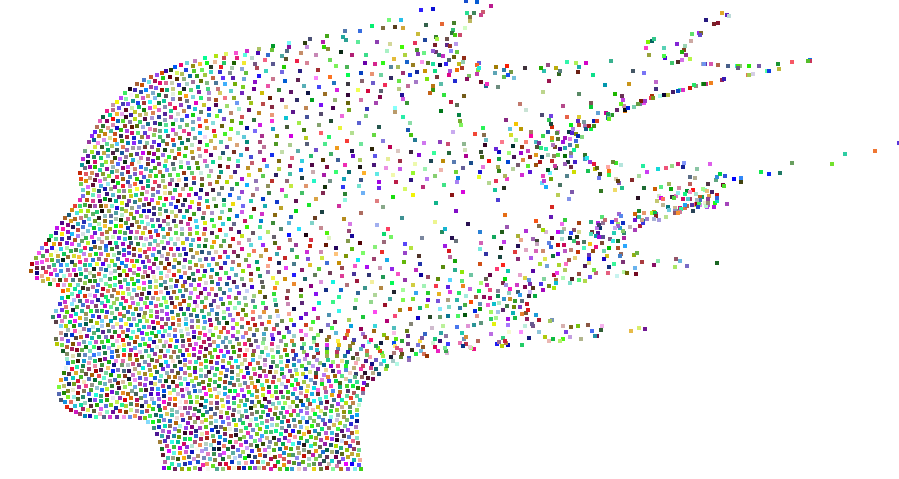
18TH - 19TH CENTURY



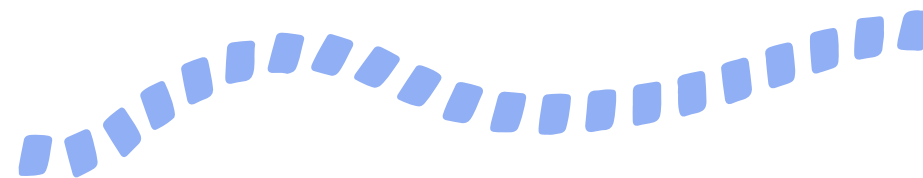
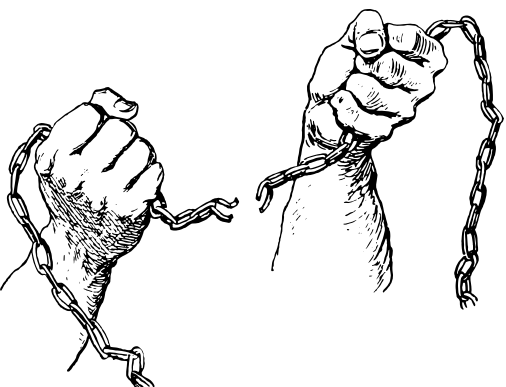
- **Enlightenment period – Reinhold holds the idea that freedom and the self conscious provokes the feelings that people with anxiety would experience.**
- **Kierkegaard developed this theory and focused directly on anxiety.**
- **A 'normal' experience many of us go through – work, school, etc.**
- **This should not be looked down upon (Cohen, 1955, as cited in Lader, 2014)**



18TH - 19TH CENTURY



- **Pinel introduced a kinder approach to disorders, and destigmatised this to aid societal acceptance and improve treatment effectiveness (Hashemi et al., 2020)**
- **Key event – Liberation of the mental ill by the removal of chains in Bicetre (Flis, 1995)**
- **Freud stated that an internal conflict with the id, ego, and superego caused tension and anxiety. The use of the ego defence causes unresolved conflicts.**
- **Realistic, neurotic, and moral anxiety (McGrath, n.d)**



ANXIETY THROUGH ART



(Bacon 1953)

- **Francis Bacon**
- **"Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X"**
- **He was able to illustrate the intense feeling of anxiety, through his thick brush strokes.**
- **The lines over the Pope portray a feeling of helplessness, which relates to the struggles of the artist himself.**
- **Important to capture anxiety from a creative medium (Kilgore, 2023)**



Reference list:

Abdollahi, M. (2024). A Discussion about the Scientific and Humanitarian Approach of Traditional Persian Medicine to Mental Disorders. *Journal of Research on History of Medicine*, 13(2), 87-96.

Bacon, F. (1953) *Study after Velazquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* [Painting]. MutualArt, New York, United States. <https://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/Study-after-Velazquez-s-Portrait-of-Pope/AEC14C66219F3AC2>

Collyer, A. (2023). Demons and mental illness in Ancient Mesopotamia. UKAT London Clinic. <https://www.ukatlondonclinic.com/blog/mental-health/demons-and-mental-illness-in-ancient-mesopotamia/>

Crawford, S., & Lee, C. (2010). *Bodies of knowledge : cultural interpretations of illness and medicine in medieval Europe*. Archaeopress.

Department, T. A. W. C. P., & McGrath, M. (n.d.). Chapter 14, Part 2: *Personal Construct Theory*. Open.baypath.edu. <https://open.baypath.edu/psy321book/chapter/c14p2/>

Fils, P. (1995). On the removal of chains from the insane. Phillippe Pinel. *Psychiatric Bulletin*, 19(7), 434–434. <https://doi.org/10.1192/pb.19.7.434>

Hashemi, A., & Morrison, A. (2020). *Psychiatry and Mental Health (SC)*. Pressbooks.pub; Pressbooks. <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/rhop/chapter/psychiatry/>

Hippocrates, Chadwick, J., Lloyd, G. E. R., & Mann, W. N. (1983). *Hippocratic Writings*. Harmondsworth Penguin Books.

Jackson, A. V. W. (1916). The Allegory of the Moths and the Flame, Translated from the Mantıq at-Tair of Farīd ad-Dīn 'Attār. *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 36, 345. <https://doi.org/10.2307/592692>

Kilgore, W. (2023, November 13). *Artful Anxiety: 10 Artists Who Channel Stress Into Stunning Creations*. Well Beings. <https://wellbeings.org/artful-anxiety-10-artists-who-channel-stress-into-stunning-creations/>

Lader, M. H. (1972). The Nature of Anxiety. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 121(564), 481–491.
<https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.121.5.481>

Robert, L. L. (2009). *Anxiety Free: Unravel Your Fears Before They Unravel You*. Hay House UK.
<https://www.scribd.com/document/371972827/Anxiety-Free-Robert-Leahy>