

**D**o you often find that you have a nagging feeling in the pit of your stomach that just won't go away?

Do uncomfortable thoughts creep into your head in the early hours of the morning?

Is there something bothering you that you just don't feel you can talk about or deal with? Have you something worrying that's been on your mind for a very long time?

Do you avoid talking about a subject because you don't want people to tell you an uncomfortable truth which you may have to do something about?

Do you find yourself deliberately using distraction as a means of not thinking about something?

If you have answered yes to any of these questions, then there is a good chance you are avoiding something.

People who avoid do it for lots of reasons, but the main ones are:

- ✓ to avoid conflict.
- ✓ to avoid upsetting someone.
- ✓ to avoid upsetting oneself.
- ✓ to avoid discomfort.
- ✓ fear.

The truth is, avoiding conflict creates conflict, every time.

Avoiding upsetting someone usually ends up with you being upset, and also the person you are avoiding upsetting being upset because they feel something is wrong but don't know what!

Avoiding discomfort is stressful and ultimately leads to more discomfort.

Not facing fear helps it to grow.

Avoidance behaviour can occur as a result of things that have happened in childhood, or as a result of a particular upbringing, for example:

- ✓ witnessing conflict in childhood.
- ✓ a volatile family environment.
- ✓ being bullied.
- ✓ an overbearing parent.
- ✓ very strict and/or controlling parents.
- ✓ traumatic events during childhood or adolescent years.

If you have been brought up in a volatile family environment where shouting and conflict was the norm, you may have learned that in order to feel safe and secure, you have had to try to keep the peace



## Facing up to your 'troubles' will make you feel better



It's a difficult issue but it simply cannot be avoided. Let's Talk columnist **Amanda Jayne**, the King's Lynn-based psychotherapist and counsellor, looks at the subject of 'avoidance'.

and keep everyone happy and you will more than likely be very sensitive to people's moods.

This can make you sometimes difficult to be around as nobody knows what you are really thinking, what you really want or like, or don't like, leaving you unreachable. You may also be very sensitive to the point that you think that people are angry or upset with you, when the source of their upset maybe nothing to do with you. For the person on the receiving end, this can be extremely frustrating.

If you are a serial avoider, it's time to take action. It's not easy and it can feel like an impossible task, but as soon as you start to face things, life will seem easier and you will feel much more free and at ease.

Here are some steps to follow:

Try breaking down the worry into smaller pieces to see what it is you are so frightened of.

Write out what it is you are avoiding, this will give you a better perspective on it.

Write out the worst case scenario; when you read it back, it may not be as bad as you think.

If it's challenging saying something to someone, try imagining it being said to you, but in a very kind way.

Break it down into very small steps ... then take the first step.

Speak to someone you know and trust and feel comfortable with, and ask them their thoughts on what you are avoiding.

Take action, even if it is the first, very small step. You will feel better immediately after facing up to it. 

### Ask Amanda Jayne

I would love to hear from you and will reply to letters which, if we print them, will remain anonymous. Your details will be treated confidentially. Write to Amanda Jayne MA MBSCP at Feelgood Therapy, Room 11b, St Ann's House, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE30 1LT; email [amandajgoss@gmail.com](mailto:amandajgoss@gmail.com); professional counsellors at [www.kingslynnwestnorfolkcounselling.co.uk](http://www.kingslynnwestnorfolkcounselling.co.uk), on 01553 827689 or 07760 669246.