



BY TRENT MORROW

WINNING
THE
WAR
ON
ANXIETY

the perfect time is now



About the Author



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Trent is a licensed clinical social worker receiving his undergrad at Appalachian State and Masters in social work at University of North Carolina-Charlotte. He started his practice in 2010, with a focus on helping teens and adults overcome anxiety and depression.



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Hello, I'm Anxiety:

anx·i·ety

apprehensive uneasiness or nervousness usually over an impending or anticipated ill : a state of being anxious
(according to the Merriam-Webster)



Anxiety Versus Worry.

Worry is fear with facts. Worry is the response to fear which is your natural instinct to run away from danger. For example, the feeling to run if a bear is chasing you in the woods. Anxiety is fear without facts. For example, not going out in the woods because you think you are going to see a bear.

Anxiety can appear for no valid reason – or it may be constant and/or very intense. You may find these symptoms are interfering with everyday life and make it difficult to perform simple tasks.

This e-book is designed to help readers understand anxiety and achieve a happier life by overcoming anxiety.





CHAPTER 01

Recognize the Signs

What are some symptoms of anxiety?

Anxiety can look like a lot of different things in various individuals. Here are some common symptoms you may experience:

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

- Pounding Heart
- Sweating
- Headaches
- Stomach aches
- Dizziness
- Frequent urination
- Diarrhea
- Shortness of breath
- Muscle tension
- Twitching
- Shaking
- Insomnia
- Fatigue
- Weakness
- Tightness in throat

MENTAL SYMPTOMS

- Racing thoughts
- Over-thinking situations
- Difficulty concentrating
- Impending feeling of doom
- Irritable
- Heightened alertness
- Lack of appetite
- Vomiting



Anxiety can also be called:

- Worry
- Concern
- Apprehension
- Consternation
- Uneasiness/jitters
- Fear
- Disquietude
- Perturbation
- Agitation
- Angst
- Nervousness
- Scared
- Impatient
- Butterflies
- Creeps
- Goose bumps
- Nail biting
- Doubt
- Stress
- Impatient
- Controlling
- Downer



ADHD vs Anxiety

What happens in the brain with anxiety is different from that of someone with ADHD. Although sometimes they look the same, these two conditions are not.

In an individual with ADHD, the brain will have LOW neurotransmitter norepinephrine (also known as Adrenaline).

Parts of the brain that are affected by ADHD:

Frontal Cortex – Responsible for helping you complete sequential tasks and pay attention.

Limbic System – Helps regulate emotions and attention.

Basal Ganglia – A central relay station of the brain that is responsible for input and output of the information.

Reticular activation system – Major pathways from the central station that relays information back to the rest of the body.



ADHD

What ADHD looks like in an individual:

- Inability to complete a task on time.
- Inability to pay attention to tasks that are not interesting – example, homework.
- Daydreaming.
- Trouble completing sequential tasks.
- Poorly prepared for the task.





CHAPTER 02

The Science Behind Anxiety & the Brain

Anxiety in the Brain:

Anxiety becomes a problem when specific brain areas function inappropriately (or fail to function), setting off a stream of inappropriate or irrational behaviors.

The amygdala:

Located deep inside the brain, this tiny almond-shaped structure is part of the emotional brain (the limbic system) which is the part of your brain that deals with emotions and moods. The amygdala is like your brain's watchman, staying on the lookout for any danger or threats. When the amygdala notices potential danger, it sends signals to your body's nervous system and results in your body releasing excessive stress hormones, which triggers a fight or flight response.

Eventually, if you have a habit of being hyper alert throughout the day, by the end of the day you will be more vulnerable to anxiety.

Examples of survival functions:

- Heart beats faster so you can breathe in more oxygen, which is important if you need to fight or run away.
- Extra energy goes to your limbs so you are faster and stronger.
- Senses become sharper.
- Reserves of blood sugar and fats get triggered.
- Non-essential functions, such as growth or digestion, ceases (ex: fingernails and hair stop growing).



Anxiety in the brain

Does your brain cry wolf?

In an anxious brain, the amygdala can send a lot of false alarms. Think of a hypersensitive amygdala as a watchman that cries wolf every time it hears a noise. In other words, your brain will sense threats even in non-threatening situations. The amygdala is incredibly useful because it reacts before visual and sound information can be fully processed. That means it can react very quickly to potential threats, it doesn't wait until we've thought about the situation.

The prefrontal cortex is your brain's wise counselor. It helps you process information, make informed decisions and solve problems.

In non-anxious brains, the prefrontal cortex can rationalize these false alarms, and understand there is no danger. However, this process doesn't work the same in anxious brains. Instead, the connection from the amygdala that alerts the prefrontal cortex to danger is weak. Thus the rational, problem-solving part of the brain isn't activated, which can lead to irrational thoughts and behavior.



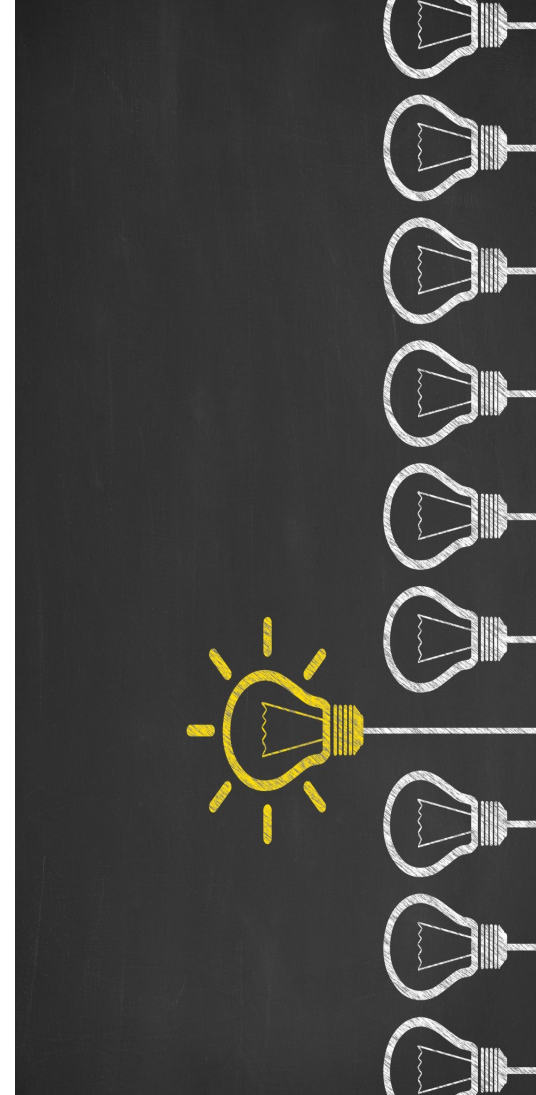
Anxiety in the brain

Loss of intelligence, concentration and decision making

Have you ever had the experience of giving a presentation and gone blank in the middle of it? There is a scientific reason for that. Anytime the amygdala is triggered, many resources in your brain become concentrated on it.

The prefrontal cortex and other parts of your brain are drained in order to power up the amygdala, sending oxygen and blood to this area. Lacking the essential resources, the prefrontal cortex shuts down, in turn our decision making, intellect and concentration diminishes.

When our thinking gets temporally impaired like this, it is like we are operating with 10-15 fewer IQ points.



Three responses of anxiety

Before the logical part of your brain has processed what is going on, your amygdala has hard wired your brain to react to threats in one of three ways:



1. **FLIGHT/ FLEE** – This is the feeling when you want to run from a situation. It could be running from a responsibility, attack, danger, work or a hard conversation.
2. **FIGHT** – You move towards the challenge. You may fight back or decide to take on the challenge. It could be a presentation, a new job or riding on an airplane.
3. **FREEZE** – You may also respond by freezing when you perceive danger. It is not as common, but it's also an adaptive response. The freeze response is more of an automatic shut down in functioning, like a deer caught in headlights.

Did You Know? Habits on average take 66 days to form but an anxiety habit can be quicker due to the neurochemicals involved that are designed to protect you.





CHAPTER 03

The Difference Between Worry & Anxiety

The difference between worry & anxiety

Worry resides in our minds | Anxiety affects both body and mind

According to Psychology Today, “Worry tends to be more focused on thoughts in our heads, while anxiety is more visceral in that we feel it throughout our bodies.”

In fact, anxiety can have a multitude of physical and mental symptoms as described on page 6.

Worry is specific | Anxiety is more vague

Worry is related to a realistic concern. An example of a worry could be “If I don’t study hard enough, I will not pass my test.” Once you have identified the problem and arrived at the solution- which is to study hard; you are likely to move on and the worry diminishes.

With anxiety, you feel unsettled, but you can't pinpoint what you're really anxious about — and that can make problem-solving difficult. An example of this is persistently thinking something will go wrong every time you take a test. As a result, you may experience fear or other emotions that will cause your body to react negatively.

The Difference Between Worry & Anxiety



Worry is a threat or concern with facts | Anxiety is uncontrollable fear or concern with no facts

With worry, our brains think logically and are trying to make sense of a real and present danger. For example, "There is a bee chasing me and I'm worried that I am going to get stung". The anxious person would think, "I am going to look for bees everywhere I go because I am sure I am going to get stung." This person may also decide to stop going outside in fear of bees.

Worry is temporary | Anxiety is not

Worry is usually short term. When we are worried, we are able to use problem solving skills to solve the issue, and then move on. Anxiety is unceasing, even when thoughts are unrealistic.

Worry doesn't impair function | Anxiety does

If you are worried about something, you still have the ability to perform daily tasks and maintain relationships with others. With anxiety, your ability to function can be affected, as a result, school or job performance and personal relationships can suffer.

Bottom Line: Anxiety does not provide a positive outcome.



CHAPTER 04

Attacking Anxiety

The decision tree

STEP BACK AND ASK WHAT DO YOU FEEL?

IF IT IS CONCERN/FEAR/WORRY ASK YOURSELF QUESTIONS

Worry

Is this a real problem supported with facts?
(The brain gives you the right facts)

Ex: Fire alarm goes off or you have an upcoming test

The logical thinking part of the brain allows you to use decision making skills and reasoning to create a plan with a solution.

Anxiety

Feels like a real problem but there are no facts to support the feeling.

Ex: If I go into the ocean, I will get bit by a shark.

If the feeling is anxiety, the next step is to make a decision to attack or not to attack



ATTACK

Invite the anxiety in and use the shoulder technique on page 20



DON'T ATTACK

You avoid facing the anxiety and instead use coping tools (see pg 22-25)



How to fight back

The Shoulder Technique

This involves opening the door to your anxiety and inviting it into your life. When you face anxiety, you are taking control rather than the anxiety controlling you.

Remember you do not have anything to fear because you do not have any facts. You allow your emotional temperature to rise (because it is supposed to be uncomfortable).

How to use the shoulder technique:

- 1- Pick a scary image on your right shoulder
- 2- Pick a strong & powerful image on your left shoulder.
- 3- The right shoulder (Anxiety) tells you hypothetical/interesting stories and your left tells you the TRUTH about the situation.
- 4- The left shoulder tells you that there are no facts to support the right shoulder
- 5- The left shoulder tells you that you are winning, and you elevate your left shoulder to be the louder shoulder over time.

The outcome is that you allowed anxiety to make you uncomfortable, but you overcame it by listening to your left shoulder. Just by trying, you are slowly winning the war on anxiety.



Example of shoulder technique

The demonstration below is from an anxious brain, attending a social event.
The goal is not to be perfect but to practice



The LEFT Shoulder

Even though you are nervous no one can see that. There are no facts to prove that people are laughing at you. They are laughing at a funny joke that was just told. You are a kind and friendly person that people want to talk with.



The RIGHT Shoulder

Are they laughing at you? I see people talking quietly, I just know they are talking about YOU. I hope you don't mess this up. I hope you don't say the wrong thing. No one likes you here at this party.

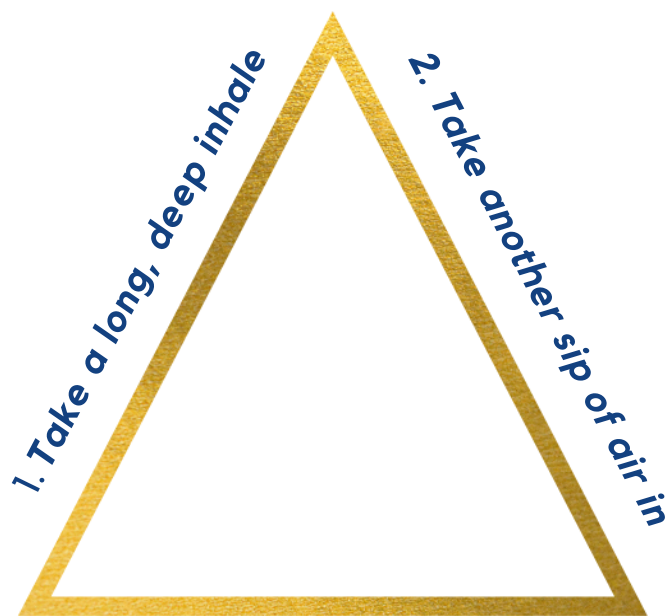


More tools

Just Breathe

Deep breathing through your diagram can help you to avoid the "fight-or-flight" response to stressful situations. The likelihood of spiraling into a panic attack or feeling anxious emotions can be reduced by becoming aware of your breathing and regulate its depth and rate.

Double Breath



4. Repeat at least three times. It takes 20-30 seconds to feel impact

You can find many more tools on our [website here](#).

More Tools: Grounding Exercise:

Once you find your breath, go through the following steps to help ground yourself:



1. Acknowledge FIVE things you see around you...
2. Acknowledge FOUR things you can touch around you. ...
3. Acknowledge THREE things you hear. ...
4. Acknowledge TWO things you can smell. ...
5. Acknowledge ONE thing you can taste.

 Things You Can See 

 Things You Can Feel 

 Things You Can Hear 

 Things You Can Smell 

 Thing You Can Taste 

You can find many more tools on our website [Here](#).





The mind is like
water. When it is
turbulent, it's difficult
to see. When it's calm,
everything becomes
clear.



-PRASAD MAHES

More Tools

Meditations

There are many types of ways in which you can achieve a mindful and present state.

- 1- Watch a guided mediation on YouTube
- 2- Draw/Color
- 3- Journal/Write
- 4- Attend a yoga class or find one online
- 5- Take a walk and look closely at nature
- 6- Practice gratitude, either mentally or write it down in a journal



Did you know?

Wishing other people happiness can create positive energy?

A new study from Iowa State University finds that when people mentally wish others well for just a brief period, they're considerably happier and less stressed than people engaging in other activities.

This practice takes only 10 seconds to do. At anytime, randomly wish for someone you know to be happy. You don't have to tell the person, say it in your head and set the positive energy. Try it on your commute, at the office, at the gym, or while you wait in line. For bonus points, If you find yourself annoyed or upset with someone, mentally wish them happiness instead. Try it on five people and see what happens.

The work was published in March 2019 issue in the *Journal of Happiness Studies*.



CHAPTER 05

Track Your Progress

How to Know if it is Working?

It is important to keep track of progress. There are a few ways to keep track:

1. Use the L & B Counseling app to measure your progress.
2. Give yourself a letter grade or a score each day.
3. Focus on gratitude and accomplishments.
4. Ask for feedback from trusted sources.
5. Get an accountability partner.



Just by trying to fight you are making progress.



The good news about anxiety

There are many different tools available to fight back against anxiety. Overtime, your brain can be "rewired" to overcome the fake news or false alarms that the anxious brain is incorrectly communicating.

- You can create self-awareness by noticing your thoughts
- Learn how to diagnosis worry from anxiety
- Know how to scale the emotional temperature (from 1-10, with 10 being the worst)
- Know how to use your tools if the emotional temperature gets too high.
- Have a list of those tools handy so you can act on them rather trying to remember them.
- Use tools that allow for reflection, creativity, physical action, mindfulness, curiosity, deep breathing, accountability, support from others and by tracking your progress.



Resources

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/9905-oppositional-defiant-disorder>

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/generalized-anxiety-disorder>

<https://www.additudemag.com/neuroscience-of-adhd-brain/>

<https://www.rethink.org/advice-and-information/about-mental-illness/learn-more-about-conditions/anxiety-disorders/>

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/anxiety/anxiety-disorders-and-anxiety-attacks.htm>

<https://www.thesaurus.com/browse/anxiety>

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/understanding-the-stress-response>

[Stopping the noise inside your head](#)

[Huberman Lab Podcast](#)

You can win the war on anxiety

We help people of all ages everyday win their own personal battles with anxiety. If you find you or a loved one needs additional support, please reach out to our counseling center today.

We invite you to explore our [website](#) to learn more about us, our unique approach to counseling and how we strive to break the stigma of counseling.

Let us help you find that growth you're looking for. Take the first step and make an appointment today. Call 704-247-7353 or click below.

[Make An Appointment](#)

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