

The Open Mind Guide to Learning How to Deal with your Anxiety

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Dealing with your Anxiety - Introduction

One of the most worrying things for many people is that they do not themselves, understand their anxiety. In many cases, anxiety appears to come from nowhere, and often appears to have no reason for being there. Sufferers of anxiety then develop secondary fears of a fear of an attack of anxiety. Sound like you?

Before you know it, we are anxious about being anxious, and then even more anxious that we are anxious about being anxious.....get my drift? It's like putting layers on your layers!

Whether you know or don't yet know which situations cause you anxiety, you will find many answers here. But first of all, we need to define exactly what our anxiety is.

So What is Anxiety?

In actual fact, after 6 years of listening to people many of whom have presented with anxiety, I have discovered that the term "anxiety" is a catchall term to describe feelings that we have censored. I often use the example of a pressure cooker: put a lot of pressure into the cooker ie: censored feelings, and very soon it will start to let out steam ie: anxiety. Let me elaborate in the following sections.

Fight/Flight Response

Let's take a look at the notion of the fight/flight instinct that behaviourists identified as a basic survival instinct many decades ago. In the face of a great threat, our biology will prepare us instinctively to either, fight an enemy, or flee an enemy. All energy is diverted away from the inner workings of the body, (the body prepares to evacuate all food stuffs one way or another!) blood moves to the muscles preparing the body to fight or flee, pupils dilate (to see more), breathing is shallow (ready to act) etc. This is a basic survival instinct wired into our collective unconscious, a desire to protect ourselves and survive.

Modern day living of course, has removed most of the threats to our basic survival so our instinct for self protection or protection of our 'tribe' is not triggered by the same kind of physical threats to our safety. However, for a whole raft of reasons stemming from our childhood and ongoing development, we have learned to 'perceive' threats in our social interactions around us; threats to our self esteem, threats to our sense of belonging, in fact, threats to any part of our fragile peace of mind. But we have learned to manage our wayward emotions in order to fit into society. And indeed, because so much of our socialization involves subduing our natural defences, we are in a chronic habit of smiling when we want to scream and laughing when we want to cry.

If we have been socialized effectively, we will manage threats to our self esteem assertively and confidently, discussing and agreeing on terms of engagement and standards of behaviour with people. In this way, we will dissipate feelings of anger or fear quite naturally by engaging with the problem in an effective way.

How Anxious People Manage Unacceptable Emotions

A lot of people with anxiety do not manage their emotions effectively. Expressions of anger are quite unacceptable to the chronically anxious, and the expression of fear deemed to be socially lame or weak. At times, it feels that the anxious person judges themselves almost as having no right to express anger, not even a healthy expression. As a result, there is no healthy opportunity to dissipate a build up of their unacceptable emotions.

Equally debilitating can be the fear of engagement. Fear of speaking, fear of looking foolish, fear of anything can start to build up. When we decide that it is absolutely ridiculous that we should be frightened of x or y or z, we add a layer of shame to our fear. Shame is an unacceptable emotion. Guilt is also unacceptable. So much becomes stacked up behind our fear that before you know it, we are terrified of x or y or z. It's like the anticipation alone of failing in company leaves us crippled with anxiety.

Put both a suppressed expression of anger together with a suppressed expression of fear and what do you get? Anxiety!! Especially if you get angry that you're so anxious!! You're on a hiding to nowhere.

With the pressure cooker bubbling away, all the forbidden feelings we daren't feel, are building up into an unavoidable expression of anxiety – steam! A generic fear of our own self expression, topped up with a layer of anger and shame, a fear of others' expression and a deep fear that we don't have the right to speak.

Some of the questions I ask myself when I meet people who are living with anxiety are:

- What is this person angry about?
- What is this person fearful of?
- What is happening now to cause a person to feel incapable of expressing themselves?
- How much is this person aware of what is happening to them?
- What kind of anxiety habit or cycle is this person engaging in?
- What will it take to break the negative feedback loop?
- How is past ie: childhood, and present conspiring to confirm false beliefs?
For example, and very simplistically, were you picked on as a child and now it feels like your boss is picking on you? So in your world, people pick on you. So are you thinking there must be something wrong with you....you're not good enough? etc.... We can convince ourselves of any number of false beliefs that create the very situation we don't want. I'll explain more about that later in Step 7 or your recovery programme.

Many people come wanting me to help 'whisk away' their anxiety. Can you hypnotise me to feel different? And so on. Well, I can help like that, but if you want to take control of your life, you need to change something about the way you live your life. It's almost like diet and exercise. You can follow a thousand fad diets, lose the weight and look great for a while, but unless you change your lifestyle, the weight ain't gonna stay off!

However, there may be many different reasons why people have censored themselves and I outline in this guide just a few of the ones I have clearly identified. They are pretty much the way I have come to conceptualise ‘anxiety’ when I meet someone and variations of the following ways will I think I can say, always, provide an explanation.

Anxiety as a Reaction to an Acute Event

No other history of abuse, neglect or anxiety a person experiences unknown feelings of panic and generalized anxiety.

Case study 1 - John

John was a highly successful merchant banker in a high pressured job. Happily married, with no apparent problems, a sad and traumatic family event started to exert unusual pressures him. Being super successful and super competent, John had, till that time, never really had to deal with any kind of personal tragedy or serious problem. However, unaware of any serious internal disturbance he managed to maintain his competent composure and continued to operate exactly as he had before the tragedy. Within a few months, John experienced a massive panic attack that left him feeling shaky and unwell. The attack had been so violent and unexpected that it led him to the doctor’s to have it investigated. What followed was a series of medical tests that lasted over a year as various physical symptoms arose throughout the body. Meanwhile, John’s unacceptable levels of anxiety rose even higher as he became anxious he may have another attack. Reluctant in the extreme to acknowledge any emotional disturbances, indeed, reporting none, John was eventually led to me to determine what he could

practically do to treat some of the physical symptoms that had baffled the medical field, but which had been suggested as being ‘stress related’ by various medics.

So you see, in cases where people are, not only not used to having to deal with upsetting episodes in their lives, but unaware that there might be such strong feelings that have been suppressed, anxiety can be a most unwelcome visitor and a visitor that does not even explain what they are doing there.

John had visited another counsellor who, whilst extremely sympathetic, had seemed to insist that his anxiety had something to do with his relationship with his father. To someone like John, the touchy-feely notion that he was suffering some kind of emotional neglect or abuse from his father, left him completely alienated and unable to engage with his counsellor. John felt no reason at all to dump his current health situation on his father.

John’s style was very matter of fact. So in a matter of fact kind of way, I showed him how his anxiety was feeding itself in a loop: suppress the unacceptable emotions, feel a disturbance, fear a reaction, suppress the reaction along with the original unacceptable emotions, feel more disturbance, fear a reaction, suppress it even more....get my drift? So working together, we broke the habitual cycle he had set up for himself in the previous year.

We looked at his thinking patterns, especially the ones he awoke with on a daily basis, and questioned how much his thinking habits were creating his anxiety. You

might want to break here and just make a note of your thinking habits on waking in the morning to see what your habits are.

In John's case, whether there was or wasn't a history from his childhood, was totally irrelevant to him. He wanted to understand what was going on in his body and what he could do to change it.

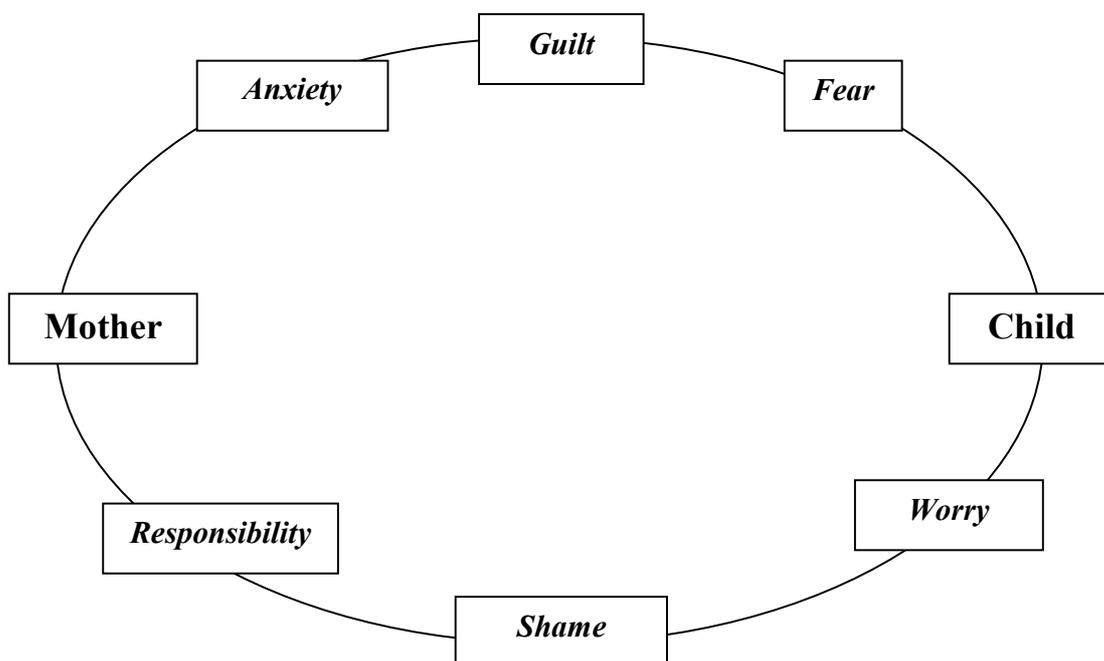
What I could see however was that his family of origin had extremely ambitious expectations of John and he had fulfilled every one of them, including many of his own. In his family of origin's style, they did not "do" emotions. Emotions did not come into John's success. So when his emotions were naturally triggered with the traumatic event in his early 30's, John had no idea what to do with his unacceptable emotions. Their expression was just not part of his emotional palette.

Listening to John he gave me all this information quite naturally in his general conversation. It is I who has chosen only to give him feedback that fits in with his own self image, and not corner him with my own diagnostic analysis that may inhibit his recovery.

The Anxiety Loop – Parent & Child

Meanwhile there are other ways in which people may be anxious. For example, did your mother worry incessantly and you feel you have 'inherited' it from her? In these cases, we have, what I call, an "anxiety loop" operating in the subtle energies that surround parents and children. Let me explain.

A mother worries incessantly about her child. Is she socializing properly? Is she eating the right foods? Is she being treated fairly by other children? What will other people think of the family if she were to leave her child alone? Etc. She is so focused on the welfare of the child that the child starts to feel somewhere inside an uncomfortable pressure to be careful for their mother. Yet no matter how careful a child is, nothing stops mother worrying about her. So the child starts to feel responsible that mother is worrying for her and starts to become uneasy with the weight of that responsibility. As the child becomes eager to help her mother feel less worried about her, mother becomes guilty to see child's concern for her and tries to mother the child. The child feels guilty now because she knows how worried her mother is about her.....See how it works? It is a terrible cycle of worry. And the whole cycle starts again. It looks something like this.



Looking at the above diagram, how is a child meant to feel good about themselves when they are caught up in this cycle of worry? Until the cycle can be broken by the adult, the child will be subject again and again to emotions it cannot control.

I have had so many parents bring their children to me with anxiety problems and the only time I can successfully treat the child, is if I can successfully treat the parent too! The child is faithfully reflecting the emotional state of the parent one way or another, in, I think I can say, all cases I have seen of extreme childhood anxiety.

For parents reading this for the first time, you will feel angry that I could blame you! I couldn't think of anything more futile than blame. My job is to identify the problem and resolve it. If we place the problem in the ether between you and me, and apply our joint resources to it, we stand a chance of being able to treat and resolve this issue. If however, you take a defensive position and dismiss my 'well meaning interference' we may miss a huge opportunity to discover something new.

However, you may feel anxious and guilty all over again if the cycle I am describing above, in any way, sounds like you. Hold fire with the guilt!! It's not necessary. Just keep on reading and I'll show you how to start to calm down.

Parent and Child working Together

A case in point is the following study of a mother and child and how the anxiety loop was functioning.

Case Study - Jade (8) and Hannah (Mum)

Recently I met Jade 8 years and her mum Hannah. Jade's cherub like features and tiny little voice were extremely sweet and endearing and I was told she was unusually quiet speaking to me. Jade had extreme anxiety about the rain. Whenever it threatened to rain she would go into a frenzy about the weather, panicking and worrying about the possibility of a storm and a downpour. That mum knew, there was no linking event that would have made her particularly sensitive to the rain.

As we continued to discuss things between mum and myself, it turned out that mum felt quite anxious that she had gone back to work 2 years previously and could actually track back the first occurrences of Jade's problem to shortly after that time. Without realizing it mum was constantly giving Jade the message that she was anxious 1, not only about leaving her with child care to go to work, but 2, anxious that if she had to stay off work for Jade, she would lose her job. As a result she would often put pressure on Jade to be good so that the whole family could enjoy the holidays that mum's extra money could buy them. Jade in return would feel the responsibility of needing to be good so her mum didn't feel anxious, but simply was not old enough to take that responsibility. So mum got anxious that Jade seemed so anxious!

The moment mum realized what she was doing, she fundamentally changed the way she did things, slowing down the morning routine, creating a more comfortable environment for her daughter, being mindful that she take the responsibility for her work, not her daughter. Along with a little bit of work I did with the child, the child could not help but respond to the new sense of stability in her relationship with her mum.

I have met children with all types of extreme fears from birds to spiders, to going to bed at night! If we can get mum to change her feelings we can generally get the child to respond.

Hannah was a pleasure to work with. She listened and absorbed how she might have been contributing to her daughter's distress. And she changed it. Many parents' sense of guilt is so great, that they cannot and will not entertain the idea that anything they are doing is causing their child any distress. Children are then referred to specialists to be treated, labeled and drugged so as the parents can maintain their own fragile sense of self. This is the greatest of tragedies when I find something that is wholly treatable, but cannot get to where the most impact will be made: to the parents. The fact is the more anxious the parent, the more likely the child will be anxious.

Going back to the pressure cooker analogy if you are storing up feelings of inadequacy, guilt, frustration, anger that have no other productive outlet you will create anxiety. The steam becomes our anxiety. We pass it behaviourally to our children.

The Anxiety Loop Elaborated

I was asked a few years ago to talk to a Community Mental Health Team about ‘raising self esteem levels in parents’. The talk was designed for social workers, care workers, case workers, etc. so that they could learn how to manage their case load better and could actually encourage better behaviour from the parents they looked after, towards their children. I talked about very simple open hearted techniques to encourage parents to talk about their own childhoods, to praise parents for small improvements, to offer structured advice to parents for the behaviour management of their children and so on.

The most important piece of advice I gave was for case workers to **STAY CALM!** To not take the parents’ successes or failures personally. To not get involved emotionally with their clients. To not fear that they are no good because their clients haven’t done a good job of the advice they gave them. But to just sit with their clients, to listen, to gently support, to understand that their stuff is no reflection on you. They have choices. You are giving them the opportunity to make new choices. If they don’t immediately take up those opportunities, it is not because you personally, have failed. It is very likely because, they haven’t heard it enough times. It takes many repetitions of the same message before we start to take something on.

The moment you decide to **not** take someone else’s stuff on, and to remain calm inside, they are free of the burden of your discomfort that they haven’t yet made new choices. They do not have to wrestle under the weight of any judgement, or blame, nor reprimand themselves that they have let you down. If you are as clear

water, then they have more opportunity to grow without worrying about the mud at the bottom of the pond.

And this was to health professionals guiding and tutoring the parents in their care. However, the talk stimulated as many questions from the workers about their own families as it did the parents they were looking after. And the work I had been doing with my own clients at that time, became relevant to almost every parent in the room.

I find it quite incredible that parents, and I am a parent too, suffer such incredible guilt about the welfare of their children. Guilt is toxic. Children hate it. While they hold you aloft as wonderful, you are busily putting yourself down and telling yourself you are not good enough. You children do not want you to feel that way – whatever you think you have done. Just as we feel our children’s pain as our own, they feel *ours* as theirs. We owe it to them to be guilt free.

Role of the Parent

Being a parent is a difficult job. There are no guide books as they say and we are bound to cause some suffering in the lives of our children. That is part of being human. But it is not our job to live our lives for our children. They are likely to resent you as much for overprotecting them as for neglecting them. Without the benefit of sorting out some of their own sufferings, children learn dependency and anxiety as they start to care and feel responsible for their parents fears or stifled frustration for them.

The best we can do as parents, is to work on our own fears and anxieties. This guide should help you do just that. If you have an anxious child, you owe it to them, and to yourself to reduce your anxiety. I always remember a beautiful quote from the Persian author, Kahlil Gibran, first published in 1923:

*“And a woman who held a babe against her bosom said,
Speak to us of Children.
And he said:
Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of Life’s longing for itself.
They come through you but not from you,
And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts,
For they have their own thoughts.
You may house their bodies but not their souls.
For their souls dwell in the house of to-morrow,
Which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.
You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.
For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.
You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.”*

This piece of prose has always felt for me incredibly freeing. Rest a while and contemplate your children’s freedom from your cares. Watch them in your mind as children being free to be themselves. Notice how you can start to let them be free to make their own mistakes, and how you can be their rock for them to return to for comfort and solace.

Position of The child

So you were the anxious child who is now grown up into an anxious adult. Or maybe it's not till reading this guide you've even realized how your worrying parents have impacted on your own life. You have learned to worry and to overthink instead of taking action to sort things out and to feel confident and ok about that.

However, there is probably something going on in your life right now, that is making you more anxious than usual: perhaps you have a difficult relationship with your husband, perhaps he is drinking too much, perhaps your wife is showing signs that she might be seeing someone else, or perhaps the career has become so big you can't cope with it: difficulties at your child's school, friction with neighbours etc. Perhaps it's even worse than that: perhaps you have a close family relative who is desperately ill, or perhaps a very close member of your family has just died. Whatever has happened recently to cause you to feel wretchedly anxious, we need to explore what is actually happening. In the latter cases, perhaps a level of grief is mixing with your fear and worry and is perfectly normal: perhaps not helpful, but perfectly normal.

In many cases, we have learned that, because our expression of anger or fear is unacceptable to ourselves or to our family of origin, we cannot express anything remotely resembling either one. And certainly never to the person directly concerned. So we learned some very elaborate ways of getting what we needed and looking after our sore emotions. We have perfected the art of getting what we need by never saying, "I would like...". Or we have learned that if we run, or pray,

or develop OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) or phobic style behaviours we can work off the undissipated energy that our forbidden feelings have generated. But when something comes along to overload the system, none of our coping strategies serve to let off the steam of our trapped emotions. Our anxiety levels rise, if we allow ourselves the feelings our fury at the world escalates, our helplessness intensifies, and we find ourselves in a state of chronic 'anxiety'.

Perhaps now, you're frightened of:

- Driving
- Going out alone
- Going to the shops
- Going into the garden
- What other people are thinking of you
- Of upsetting your family
- Of how your husband will cope
- Of how you'll hold down your job

And more irrationally:

- Of developing cancer
- Of being sick
- Of songs on the radio
- Of going to the toilet in public places
- Of getting pains in your head

None of this has anything to do with fact. Especially the last few on the above list where an incredible build up of forbidden feelings has caused you to obsess about irrational or unrealistic fears in your current context. This is a fiction that you have started to live, on the back of all your forbidden emotions. You believe the fiction that all the ‘niceness’ you are known for is about to evaporate in a red mist of fury, failure and disappointment as you sink into the underworld of forbidden feelings.

Calling all Christians

These fears can be particularly prevalent with people from a strict Christian background, and I’d like to spend a paragraph or two de-bunking this perspective. I have no desire to disprove God or the Christian faith but every desire to make sense of a person’s unique position within their faith. The anxiety problem seems to lie in the perceived duality of good versus evil.

Many who I have seen who are Christians, see that their forbidden feelings are in some way inhuman, certainly ungodly, and likely more, the workings of the devil. Ironically, at times, it is the fear that it is the work of the devil that maintains the forbidden feelings. I’ll elaborate more below. For now, there can be nothing intrinsically inhuman about having feelings of anger, resentment, fear or anxiety. They are part of our survival instinct.

The judgement that they are unacceptable causes us, however, great anxiety and stress. In fact, the judgement that they are unacceptable causes us to store them up tightly inside and try to avoid expressing them. However, even the most artful and clever of us cannot help but allow some of those feelings to seep out occasionally, confirming our worst fear that the devil is at work in us and we must pray to god to

purge ourselves of his influence. As we pray frantically, and realize that things aren't getting better, we gain a secondary anger with God himself as he isn't listening or won't show himself.

Case Study - Jayne's Story

Jayne was chronically anxious, so anxious that she cried all day long. Jayne had learned from her early years that anger and fear didn't get her anywhere. In fact, the family was also quite anxious, concerned with how they might appear to others, and how to bring up their children in a God fearing way. She came finding it impossible to manage her chronic anxiety. She would spend most of her day crying and wishing she was dead. She judged herself so harshly for having such negative thinking, saying it was against God's will, and that she was so ungrateful when some were fighting for their lives. That the fact she harbored a secret anger against various members of her extended family was so unacceptable to her because it was not Christian. That she could not cope with meeting people outside because all they would say to her in their Christian way was 'pray to God' or try and jolly her along. Neither worked but merely served to compound her forbidden anger and frustration at people who didn't seem to have any idea what it was like to be in her shoes.

Jayne was becoming her own judge and juror. God's role in her life was redundant. No matter how loudly he may have been shouting to her, she might as well have been putting her fingers in her ears and shouting out 'nah, nah, nah, nah, nah'! Jayne judged herself far worse than anything the Christian faith could possibly do. And she would have continued to judge herself until she had found a way to

dissipate calmly and reasonably, the forbidden feelings that were causing her to be so harsh with herself. As I often say to clients from this perspective, God does not want you to judge yourself: he wants you to be happy.

I personally am not a Christian. I find the duality of Christianity difficult to embrace but I have a crystal clear view of how some Christians are doing anxiety numbers on themselves that are totally unnecessary. Learning some very careful lessons in assertiveness and confidence will help express the unacceptable feelings that cause some Christians such anxiety. I will show a few below but it may well be worth considering a course or one of my further guides on Assertiveness and Confidence Building.

The Boarded Child

I need to add in here, and not necessarily in one of the later sections of this guide that describes abusive situations, quite a unique childhood position linked to children having being sent to boarding schools. At as young as 8 years of age, British society deems it character building for children to be boarded in private schools. If you're reading this document and have been to a private school and have not yet made the link I hope I'll show you it here.

Many who suffer anxiety who boarded as young as 8 report terrible longings and yearnings to be back at home with their mums. Some report that it went on for months as they secretly cried themselves to sleep at night wishing their mums would come and tuck them in. Many were stripped away from younger siblings, some were stripped away from siblings because they were boys and deemed more educable than girls, who stayed at home.

I always feel the deep sadness and loss of the child when I meet a person who suffers with anxiety as an adult who has had the most privileged of backgrounds. These children learned to nurse themselves. They learned in the dorms of their boarding schools that to show weakness was to invite bullying; to show disruptive behaviour was to disappoint their parents who paid a lot of money for their education. These children learned to nurse themselves long before they were emotionally mature enough to do so. And they learned that extremes of emotion were useless expressions in their worlds.

Case Study – Mike’s Story

Mike was a landscape gardener, with his own business, employing half a dozen employees and aiming to grow his business in the next few years. Mike’s anxiety and panic levels were extremely high to the extent that it interfered with his running the business. Not only that, he had chronic palpitations, took beta blockers, and was often extremely fatigued. He had tried CBT to manage the anxiety levels in his current life but nothing really helped.

Mike had been sent to boarding school aged 8. He had a particularly sad time when he went, missing his home and longing to be back there. His father had had higher aspirations for him than Mike was capable of so that he felt he had been a disappointment to his father. However, emotions weren’t discussed in their family of origin so it was really anybody’s guess how anyone felt.

Mike's stress levels running his business were sky high. He had terrible trouble managing his employees as he wanted them all to engage in the business in equal proportions of responsibility. In many ways, he feared taking the leadership role and risking lack of popularity. Trying to be kind and accommodating, Mike was working excessive hours to mop up after the mistakes that his employees were making. And on top of that, he was causing himself the frustration of not being clear about his demands on his workers. Now and again he feared blowing up in frustration but managed most of the time to keep the lid on it. Keeping the lid on it, however, incurred extremely high costs: his anxiety levels remained high and the over production of adrenalin was clearly causing his health to suffer.

Mike's early training had taught him that he was not reasonably allowed to say how he felt without incurring the humiliation of being bullied, rejected, or made to feel a failure. Coaching Mike to use better strategies in managing his business enabled him to step back and identify the behaviour that was causing him to be so stressed.

If you've been reading this section and identifying with it, you will realize that perhaps when you were evacuated during the war, you suffered similarly. Or perhaps you will realize that the time you spent several months away from your mother as a small child either through hospitalization or family separation, has caused you to develop anxiety now. Some of you will identify with the above for having tragically lost your mothers when you were small or for their being great distress when another loved one was lost.

I could go into the theory of mothers and children here as there is plenty of theoretical study that supports and identifies the unique role of a mother to her children's emotional wellbeing. One of them notably is Donald Winnicott whose famous work on evacuated children during WWII identified the importance of the mother child bond. Indeed, as mothers we hold the unique position of keeper of our children's hearts and the bond between mothers and children is fundamental to their emotional stability. Tap his name into Google and see what he has to say.

Free Floating Anxiety with no Apparent Cause

What about when any cause for anxiety is so far in the past that it seems to have no relevance to the here and now. So it seems like our anxiety is free floating, coming from nowhere.

Case Study – Justine's Story

Justine was 'happily married' to a man who she had very little in common with. They had one natural child together. She had subsequently had a few family traumas which had been quite physically and emotionally traumatizing, but that had been several years before. However, on the other side of that period of great stress, Justine developed crippling anxiety. She would wake up in the mornings shaking and feeling wretched. This would last for several hours. Slowly as the day wore on she would feel better. But she had had to give up her job as she knew there was no way she could function at work.

The anxiety appeared to her to come from nowhere. She could no sooner explain this to herself than fly to the moon. There were no conscious

thoughts that appeared to be causing it and no current worries that she had to concern herself with. Even without the job, they were well able to survive comfortably on his wage. The only other pressures she experienced were the usual ones of caring for her child. Nothing out of the ordinary or that would add any pressure to her usual days.

However every time I asked this lady what she felt, she gave me an ‘I think’ answer. When people can’t answer an enquiry about their feelings, with a direct response about how they feel, I tend to suspect they don’t ‘do’ feelings. And why should they? If things in life have run well all their lives without any reference to their feelings, why should they need to focus on them?

As we continued to explore Justine’s case, it became clear that she was quite discontented in her marriage. That there were lots of ways in which she felt unseen, unloved, unheard and had compounded her forbidden feelings by seeking affection outside of the marriage. And being a person who did not ‘do’ feelings, she didn’t know how to ask for what she needed, and to a large degree wasn’t even aware she could have what she needed. It would have been out of keeping with the rigidity of the relationship she had established with her husband.

Though this is a genuine case study, I could quite legitimately superimpose at least half a dozen names over this study and this would be true for each of them respectively.

Justine's crippling anxiety was the body's toxic overload of unexpressed emotions. The only acceptable expression her body could find for those emotions, was to have anxiety.

Another Kind of Anxiety – Linked to Childhood

There is another kind of anxiety, the saddest kind, that moves me to tears every time I hear it. The anxiety of neglect or abuse from childhood.

Some people have experienced extreme neglect or abuse from childhood.

Typically children have

- been locked in cupboards,
- whipped and beaten senseless,
- lined up with sisters so father could choose which of his daughters he wanted sex with,
- witnessed mother's infidelities and threatened
- been the carer to an alcoholic parent,
- protected mothers from violent fathers
- been hospitalized very young, or been separated from family
- been evacuated during the war
- had to live outside with the dogs
- threatened with death if they speak

Listening to the very human stories of the children of these events, I often have the feeling that the person sat in front of me has had part of their maturity arrested at the time of these terrible incidences.

Many who have received such treatment as children, have grown to be fine, upstanding and strong members of society. No credit to their upbringing but every credit to the strength of their survival instinct and a sign of their own humanity. Many people with these backgrounds, have a great depth of spirit and are great survivors of life.

However, the foundations of their lives are fragile. The edifice of their adult lives, rests on sandy foundations, the neglectful or abusive foundations of childhood. While they can withstand extreme pressures because they are accustomed to the pressures of childhood, when the straw lands on the camel's back, the whole edifice comes crumbling down, leaving these people vulnerable, anxious and back emotionally in the time where they were once powerless. The wracking vulnerability of this part of the anxiety continuum, needs careful and gentle support. There is no substitute for a lack of a childhood, but with careful listening, support, praise for improvements, patience for set backs, recovery will come.

Using the pressure cooker analogy here, what has been locked away in the pressure cooker is the terrible sense of fear and vulnerability that they once had to live as young children, which has been re activated by excessive trauma in adulthood.

Case study – Stuart’s Story

Stuart was so anxious he couldn’t leave his home. He spent all day crying locked away in a small flat, wearing a hoody to cover half his head and old jeans. He smoked endlessly and cried endlessly hating himself for being so weak.

Stuart was so vulnerable that he wanted nothing to do with psychiatry or social workers trusting only his GP and, at a stretch, the counsellor, myself, the GP had recommended.

Stuart looked rough. His eyes were sunken, he gave no eye contact, hunched over, shuffling around, head shaven, Stuart was a broken man.

Stuart told me he had been a very successful business man in the city of London. That he’d been through a separation and divorce, no children involved and because he could not evidence that he had paid for the mortgage on their joint home as the house was in her name, had lost everything. Maybe not an unfamiliar position.

However, subsequently, he was then made redundant from his job and had ended up in rented social housing in a remote part of the countryside. In addition his only child from a previous relationship had recently been critically ill but fortunately, had recovered.

Stuart had indeed lost everything; circumstances that would challenge the strongest of us. But Stuart's anxiety response was off the scale. He was powerless; a victim.....just as he was as a young boy when his father had repeatedly beat him so bad that he'd had broken bones and constant visits to casualty. His father had been a policeman. Not even the police could protect him from aggression in his family.

Stuart learned in his mid teens the art of kung fu and became a master. He became strong and worked his way up in London to become a successful man. But the foundations of his success were quite shaky. On his downfall, Stuart judged himself the useless, defenseless waif his father had caused him to feel when he was young. Like a wounded animal, he hid away, licking his wounds and lashing out if anyone came too close.

Stuart stopped crying after a couple of weeks. I managed to get him to see that he wasn't superhuman, but only human. He started to forgive himself his weaknesses and to rebuild his life. Slowly, he took a few steps out of the front door and started to get out again. Now he is back at work. He's not entirely well, yet, but all is going in the right direction.

Case study – Karin's Story

Karin came to me in a terribly anxious and depressed state. She was worried beyond belief about several operations she'd had lined up for her and was anxious that they, like the ones before, would fail to make her better.

Karin had had a very abusive childhood. From a family of 8 siblings, she was the eldest girl and had been charged with the responsibility of looking after her younger brothers and sisters from the youngest of ages. Mother had frequently beat her for example, for not washing the nappies properly and locked her in a cupboard. She had awoken on the floor in a pool of her own sick more times than she could remember. Or she had been locked naked in the shed in all weathers.

Karin had married and had two girls. She hadn't questioned her autonomy in the marriage and was curiously lacking in any expression of the self when talking about her children and her husband.

Sometimes she described behaviour to me from her husband that seemed unpleasant. But she excused him and blamed herself. She described herself almost in a child like way as she kept a low profile and tried not to upset anyone.

It is so obvious from this description here, that she had carried over her childlike behaviour in her family of origin into her marriage. She was lucky that the man she chose was actually a decent man, but lacking any genuine exchange of position with Karin, had unconsciously exploited his strong position with her. I often say in my classes, if you don't tell people what you need, they are not mindreaders, how can they know? They will take what you offer.

Karin's anxiety was directly linked to all of her forbidden feelings from her childhood. Neither anger nor fear was an acceptable expression in her family so

she learned to mask it; to pack it away so that it didn't disturb her regardless of how she was treated. Now in her adult life, with a lifetime of packed up fear, anger and anxiety, Karin was finding it impossible to maintain an equilibrium in her life. Her body was protesting with an array of baffling symptoms, from Hiatus Hernia to Carpel Tunnel Syndrome, to Rhinitus. Incidentally, after realizing what she was doing to herself, Karin has never had any of the operations that were lined up for her. Her physical symptoms evaporated along with her anxiety and sadness. Nowadays if Karin finds herself with a physical symptom that will not clear up with conventional treatment, she books herself in to see me to understand what unacceptable emotion she has stored up in the cells and tissues of her body.

Karin is a particularly receptive and sensitive client who understands that she will explore whatever it takes, to feel better both physically and mentally.

The Quick Fix Syndrome

I catch myself at times asking whether anyone will be interested in understanding what is going on in their bodies and minds when there are so many 'quick fix' treatment programmes out there, from CD's to Hypnotherapy to NLP. You can jump onto many websites that promise a radical change in thinking by listening to this CD or doing that tapping or this NLP practice etc. And I believe they have a lot of success....but I do wonder how many of us in reality, feel that if we didn't respond according to the testimonials that promoted the product, that we are either a failure, or the advertising isn't realistic. Either way, what I believe a lot of these quick fixes teach is ironically, dependency. The path to true freedom is to be able to find a method that you can repeat again and again in the privacy of your own

home that will give you the independence that you need to run your own life. That isn't to say you should never consult anyone again. Of course, not. But it is to say that you can choose to self medicate with your own treatment programme when that is appropriate. You can build into your own mental processes positive habits of looking for solutions not problems. And that independence is what I want to give you here.

In Summary

I have given you some examples of how and why anxiety may occur in your lives. You will identify with one or parts of all of the case studies above. Generally the feeling with anxiety is, that if you have packed away unacceptable emotions from another time, the likelihood is that you are masking them now in a valiant attempt to not have to deal with them.

Chapter 2

Action plan

The Action plan is simple. Now you have been able to identify with some of the examples above you probably have a pretty good idea as to what your anxiety is telling you. So now we need to find ways of implementing an action plan to deal with it.

Here are the steps you need to take to learn to conquer your anxiety.

Step 1 - An Inventory of Current Issues

I want you to write down all the things that could in reality be stressing you right now, even if they sound silly or unacceptable, write them down. You will need privacy to do this and you may need to do it bit by bit. If your anxiety habit is chronic, you may not be aware of everything that you find stressful at the moment. So don't stress to write it all down perfectly now. This is your document and it will take shape as you work your way through it.

I want you to consider the things that might be making you angry and the things you might be frightened of. Be as honest as possible with yourself. That is how you will get better. I often teach my trainee thereapists that if they aren't getting to the root of the problem with a client, it is because the client isn't being honest with themselves. You can use the back of this sheet to write on.

Step 2 – How these Pressures Developed

Now you have a list of things on paper, I want you to describe how those things developed.

- Have they recently developed from a life event that took place in the last year or 2?
- Or have they developed from a decision you made a long time ago, like, say, getting married, and you feel you cannot change that decision and are putting up with things?
- Or the same for a job?
- Or going back further have they developed from a chronic habit from childhood where you were forbidden one way or another to express healthy feelings of anger and fear?

Think carefully about each of these questions. There may be elements of all in there. Only you will find the links for yourself here. If there is something you have so censored and excluded from your current situation, chances are it is important. If you can't write it down clearly, allude to it. You need to start identifying the patterns.

Step 3 – What are your Beliefs about Yourself?

As a result of the above, what are the beliefs you hold about yourself? How alright is it for you to have difficult emotions. Write in the box below a list of 10 beliefs you think you hold: Eg: I am a happy person, I am an unlucky person, I feel unimportant etc.

It is important here to mention positive and negative. You may find they contradict each other but that doesn't matter. You just need to find out what you believe about yourself at a deeper level. For example, a lot of anxious people believe they are helpless, that nothing they do makes any difference....are you like that?

Though there may be examples on a daily basis where you do make a difference are there more subconscious drivers that tell you, you can't? Some people might deeply fear they are bad, or a fraud. These are common beliefs. Write them down.

Step 4 – Writing your Story

Track back over your recent past or to more distant times and see how these beliefs may have been communicated to you when you were young. It's really important with time not to blame our parents but merely to observe how you came to have these beliefs. If blame is where you're headed right now, get it out of your system. But in time, I expect these emotions will stabilize and you will see how your parents were as clueless as you when it comes to knowing the secrets of raising a family happily.

It may be quite normal for you now that you have started, to write reams and reams about your past and how you were affected by it. Write it. Let it flow. If it offends

you at a later date, burn it ceremoniously. If not, keep adding to it until you have it out of your system. Writing is a great healer. Getting your thoughts out on paper (or online if you have a “live journal”) is therapy in itself. Unravelling your histories and pulling out key memories and incidences that have contributed to your uniqueness today is compelling writing. Keep it going. If you have positive stories to write, write them down. This doesn’t have to be all negative. Maybe it will help you to move on if you can see the positives as well as negatives to your past. It may help you to understand the human-ness of your parents as you see them in perspective: they were also just human beings, not the most influential people in your life.

Step 5 – Off Track – Existential Questions

If you cannot really relate to the above because it all seems a bit of a mystery as to why you have anxiety I want you to ask yourself the following general questions:

Am I fulfilled in my life?

Am I happy?

What is it I am still yearning for?

What am I doing about it?

What do I need that I’m not getting?

What am I doing about it?

What are my beliefs about getting what I need?

(ie: things never go right for me, I don’t think I’m worth it etc)

You need to be so honest that it’s a little shocking!! If you continue to deny part of your experience and gloss over it, you will be grappling with the ghost in the closet. That is whatever it is, is so frightening that we keep it locked away. If you keep it

locked away and do not contemplate what might be in there, you will find yourself on an endless quest for someone else to fix your life for you. You are the only person who can genuinely take charge of your life. You need to have the courage to search for the answers that are already in your life somewhere.

Step 6 – Sit Quietly & Listen

Practice sitting quietly and feeling. Many people don't recognize the value of sitting quietly and asking yourself how you are feeling.... Don't put up with the first answer that comes. Ask "Why?" you might be feeling like that. And if you find yourself blaming someone else, ask yourself why again. And if you're still blaming someone else, ask yourself who else do I feel like that about? Who else do I blame in my life? How long have I blamed? Etc...And if you find yourself stopping at a superficial answer, expect superficial solutions. The more you ask yourself to reveal your feelings, the easier it will be for you to recover.

Don't forget, the chronically anxious have perfected the art of hiding or masking their feelings. Practice getting back in touch with them. Practice asking what these feelings are telling you. Are they warning feelings? Are they sad feelings? Feelings of loss? Feelings of hurt?

Step 7 – Positive Affirmations

Ask yourself how much your feelings conflict with your moral values... Do you get angry with your very kind hearted and well meaning friends or neighbours? Are you frightened of your husband's control but feel that he has given you everything? Do you feel ungrateful for things that have been given to you at great cost to others? Are you stifling all those feeling so as to conform to a set of moral values that restrict you?

Whatever negative emotions or beliefs (look at your list from Step 3 – The Beliefs about Yourself) you have about yourself we need to directly address in a detox plan. Your negative beliefs are toxic to your wellbeing. Whatever you consider to be normal for you in terms of your negative beliefs, we have to revolutionise. For example, the cry 'I'm just pathetic', or 'People always do this to me', or 'I never get anywhere in life' are all thought and belief systems that will continue to ensure that that is precisely how your life will be. Whatever you think about yourself you will make into your own waking hell. If you expect people to victimize you, well, they will. If you tell yourself you're not worth it, well, then you won't be. If you believe deeply that you deserve to be unwell, then you will be. A much quoted piece of philosophy, the origins of which escape me right now, is "we see the world as we are, not how it is". Take two people with similar experiences: one will thrive on the difficulty and another will fail because of the difficulty. Topical at the moment is Nelson Mandela's 90th birthday. What enabled him to endure through 25 years incarceration and yet others may have lost their spirit or their lives? It isn't the experience. It's the way we internalize that experience. It's the way we think about ourselves and the beliefs we hold. In Mandela's case, he held a set of

beliefs that supported his fight for justice. His passion for his fellow man, even his compassion for the humanity of his encarcerators gave him great breadth of vision.

I've come through my own trials and many who are reading this who know me personally or about me, will know that I could have been defeated by any one of those trials: from childbirth to schizophrenia to a whole range of other obstacles and trials. But I chose not to be defeated. It wasn't always a conscious choice. It was just a deeper connection with who I really am and what I'm really capable of. This is the kind of connection that will constantly remind you that you are not who you think you are. You are so much more than that.

You must see your anxiety as your mind's confusion about who's in charge. Your mind thinks it is in control and cannot understand why the emotions in your body will not behave themselves. It judges your emotions. It forbids their expression. It tells you you are bad for being human and that you should be superhuman. And whether you are aware of it or not, the body is telling you that it cannot hold onto those suppressed emotions any more.

So we are going to practice positive affirmations to detox the dislocation between your mind and your body to allow them both to communicate a little more harmoniously.

But first we need to learn the ***Rules of Engagement to Positive Affirmations:*** They must be entirely positive so NOT, "I am not going to be anxious now" BUT "I am feeling calm".

Yes, it feels and sounds phoney, but unless you practice detoxing your thoughts by choosing totally positive thoughts, your negatives will win out every time. And you will start to believe that your negative thoughts are who you are.

So if you suffer with feelings of worthiness, say:

“I deserve (to have, to be, to feel etc)

If you suffer with feelings of guilt, say:

“It’s ok to (for example: to express myself calmly but firmly)

If you suffer with feelings of frustration, say:

“I am calm and relaxed” (or a choice of your own words)

If you suffer with feelings of self hatred, say:

“I love who I am” or “I love what I have to offer” or “I like being me”

If you know you are lacking in skill or knowledge, and are feeling defeated, say:

“I am learning to (deal with my father’s anger/ become a computer programmer)

Another rule is: Do not put the word ‘will’ in meaning ‘in the future’ For example, do not say, “I will feel get better soon”.

You will postpone your ability to actualize those feelings by putting them into the future. You must state as though they are happening now. So “I feel better now”.

Yes, I know it doesn't sound true but that doesn't matter. If you don't tell yourself these things, there isn't much chance you will magically start to feel better.

Start with the negative beliefs. Write them down. Then re-write them and turn them into positives

Negatives	Positives

You should find that your negative wordiness dissolves into a succinct and accurate reversal in a positive affirmation.

Pin them on your fridge, your bathroom mirror, your bedroom door, put them in the photo window in your wallet, surround yourself with more positive reflections of yourself and repeat them over and over.

Step 8 – Body Posture and Exercise

Now, look at your Body Posture. You're probably stationery while reading this but notice how your shoulders are, where you're holding the tension. Is it across your neck, in your shoulders, in your tummy? Are you all clenched up waiting for something to happen? This is what we do when we're in fight flight mode. The body tenses up to prepare for either a fight or a flight response.

Now stand up. Drop your shoulders. Hold your head up. Throw your shoulders back opening up the chest area. Take long strides. Swing your arms purposefully by your sides. March around the house with this body posture. Force yourself to stand taller. How do you feel now? What is your immediate feeling? If you don't feel like doing it ask yourself, how is my feeling of anxiety benefiting me? What is it stopping me from doing that I'm grateful it has stopped? Are you holding onto your anxiety because you have a secondary gain? That is, that being anxious excludes you from facing difficult challenges?

Keep asking yourself these questions every time you find one of the exercises difficult. If you want to feel better, you have the answers within you. All I'm doing is showing you where you might find them. If you resent my interference, take a break. Put this book down. Come back to it in a few hours, a day, a few days. Give yourself time for the lessons to sink in. There is nothing so challenging

than taking responsibility for how you feel. For many it is a completely alien concept. “Surely, it’s the way someone else has been treating me that has made me anxious?” you say. Maybe. Maybe they’ve contributed to your feelings of anxiety. Maybe you’ve allowed them to treat you the way you have. People will do what you allow them to do. You can blame them as much as you like, but if you didn’t allow them to treat you badly, they couldn’t do it. The problem is, many of us have been treated badly as children at a time when we could not defend ourselves. Our vulnerability may have seeped deeply into our psyche. But it is that no-longer-useful-nor-appropriate defenselessness in our adult lives that causes us to suffer. Somewhere in our lives, we believe we are as helpless as we were when we were children, without ever realizing that, that was then, this is now.

However, whether you were treated badly or not, the two time periods are different and require different responses. And we have to learn new responses to new challenges. To do that, we have to become aware of the old responses we have had and change them. We have to be aware of what has driven us so subconsciously that we didn’t see our part in it. Because once we’ve seen how we are creating our feelings, we can change them.

While you are marching round the house, work up a sweat!! Exercise quite naturally raises our serotonin levels. You may not want to, or feel like it, but the question I keep coming back to is how strong is your desire to be well? If there is an equal desire to stay unwell because there are some gains to being there, you need to examine those thoughts or beliefs in Step 3.

Step 9 – The Role of Stimulants and Diet

Removing Caffeine from your diet will take out an immediate cause of subliminal irritation to the body. While on caffeine, the body is constantly being prepared for action. We take caffeine tablets to stay awake on night shifts, or notoriously as students, to cram for exams or essays through the night. And do not live under the illusion that tea is better than coffee. Tea has as much if not more caffeine than coffee in it. I used to work for a tea company in another life and remember stories of our tea tasters getting chronic headaches at weekends when they'd been tasting black teas all week. The headaches were the withdrawal symptoms of caffeine addiction, even though they never swallowed the teas they were tasting.

Be aware that chocolate has a stimulant in it too though not half so addictive as caffeine. The theobromine in chocolate is a stimulant but has a longer lasting slow effect on the body whereas caffeine is instantaneous.

One piece of research interestingly by NASA in the States established that spiders that have ingested caffeine are incapable of spinning a web of any functional integrity. Other types of psychotropic or psychoactive drugs still allowed spiders to spin a reasonable web.

<http://www.caffeineweb.com/?p=15>

And from the wikipedia site:

“Two infrequently diagnosed caffeine-induced disorders that are recognized by the [American Psychiatric Association](#) (APA) are *caffeine-induced sleep disorder* and *caffeine-induced anxiety disorder*, which can result from long-term excessive caffeine intake.

In the case of caffeine-induced [sleep disorder](#), an individual regularly ingests high doses of caffeine sufficient to induce a significant disturbance in his or

her sleep, sufficiently severe to warrant clinical attention.^[76] A study in the *British Journal of Addiction* concluded that caffeinism, although infrequently diagnosed, may afflict as many as one person in ten of the population.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caffeine#Anxiety_and_sleep_disorders

And if you have any of the following symptoms, think carefully about where you are exposed to caffeine.

..., [nervousness](#), excitement, insomnia, flushing of the face, [increased urination](#), [gastrointestinal](#) disturbance, [muscle twitching](#), a rambling flow of thought and speech, irritability, [irregular](#) or [rapid heart beat](#), and [psychomotor agitation](#).^[74] In cases of much larger overdoses [mania](#), [depression](#), lapses in judgment, [disorientation](#), loss of social inhibition, [delusions](#), [hallucinations](#), [psychosis](#), [rhabdomyolysis](#), and [death](#) may occur.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caffeine#Overuse>

From caffeine alone!!

At least for the period of time you are recovering from anxiety, consider where your caffeine habits are affecting you. If you decide to stop taking it for a while, while you recover, prepare for headaches if you are sensitive to caffeine. But after the headaches have passed you will feel your system gearing down.

You might then consider taking a food supplement such as Neways Maximol. I am an agent for this company and have regularly taken this supplement. It is a mineral and vitamin ‘soup’, minerals and vitamins dissolved in an organic liquid known as fulvic acid. The way the supplement is prepared makes it immediately bioavailable to the body, unlike tablets that often partially if not fully undigested. My personal experience when I first started taking it confirmed that it did lift my mood in difficult times. It seemed to give me some mental clarity that was invaluable at the time.

Additionally, using diet to raise our levels of serotonin from tryptophan, a stress busting natural component of some foods, will help. For example, foods such as almonds, pistachios, walnuts, avocados, skim milk, oatmeal, oranges, salmon, spinach and bananas. These are just a few of the foods that contain tryptophan which is readily transformed into the mood stabilizing neurotransmitter, serotonin. Stabilising your blood sugar by removing refined sugars and their imitators such as aspartame and saccharin will also stabilize your mood and reduce the stress on the immune system. Refined sugars are in anything from fizzy drinks, to biscuits and cakes even to baked beans. Refined sugars adulterate many of our processed food groups. Look out for sucrose, fructose, and syrups and return as much as possible to foods in their natural state.

Step 10 – Take Time out to Focus Yourself

Do an inventory of your day. Look for opportunities in your day when you can take time out to relax or focus on your positive affirmations. Make a commitment to yourself. Without a commitment to change the way you do things, you will not change them. If you are serious about wanting to be anxiety free, find the opportunity to practice relaxing and observing the nonsense that is running through your mind. Learn to laugh at the nonsense and the way the mind tries to convince you it is right. If your moral values conflict with your feelings, you'll have to spend some time, energy and thought as to how you can accommodate your feelings into your morality. It is more important that your feelings are released carefully and mindfully than stored under your stifling morality. I practice every morning according to my own faith, remembering who I am. If you have a faith that helps you, use it. If not, use the strategies I have outlined here in step 10.

Look for a regular slot in every day when you can practice relaxing. It need only be 10 minutes long.

Let all thoughts go. Give yourself permission to free your thinking, just for 10 minutes. For 10 minutes there is nothing to worry about, only calming and relaxing feelings to feel. Allow your mind to relax. As your mind relaxes notice how the tension drains away from your body. If you're lying down, allow the legs to relax and the feet to fall open. Let your shoulders relax. Notice your breathing and push your breath deep into your tummy. Be aware of your tummy rising and falling as you push the breath past your chest. As you do so you might realize how shallow you have allowed your breathing to become, and now you can make a self aware effort to bypass the shallow, anxious breathing of the chest, and breath deeply into the stomach. Notice the light through your eyelids if it is daytime. At night just feel protected and enveloped by the dark. Notice any sounds around you and let them pass into the world of pleasant sounds that are helping you fall even more deeply relaxed. Now imagine you can release all the emotions slowly but carefully in a controlled way...notice how on prizing the first one out, the body starts to feel freer still, lighter and easier. Now the second emotion, allowing it free passage through the body and away into the atmosphere around you. With the release of each emotion, notice how much easier it is to breath, how much more comfortable you can feel without the burden of those emotions. Notice how you start to feel a little more centred, a little more proud, or even indignant that you have allowed such trapped emotions to cause you so much distress. Notice even how relaxing into this feeling, you can find a deeper commitment to express yourself calmly and well, in the right measure, with the right person, at the right time. There is nothing you are feeling that is forbidden. All feelings can be

calmly expressed with the right person, in the right measure, at the right time. Now notice how excited you feel that you can now do just that. Express yourself calmly. Notice how liberating it feels to consider that you have as much right as anyone to your emotions, your natural physical reactions to life's events. And now determine calmly and poisedly to express yourself with clarity, compassion and wisdom.

When you have finished this exercise, I want you to look at your list of stresses from step 1 again. And I want you to consider what you will do about each of them. Make a note. Set up an action list. And be sure to carry out the smallest tasks first, building your confidence as you go. There should be no compromising your moral integrity if you learn your right to express yourself calmly and assuredly. And this you can do.

The “So What” – Principle

Now look at some of the smaller things that used to make you so anxious. Learn the art of saying, ‘So What!’ If you can start to strip the fact from the fiction, every time you go to replay your fiction, you can say to yourself ‘So What!’. So what if the cat's not has his dinner on time, so what if your child is late for school once, so what if you worry what your neighbours might think of your garden, so what, so what, so what. Say it out loud now! So What!!

WHO IS JUDGING YOU!!!

Give up your inner critic. Start expressing yourself carefully and honestly. Take some risks and take some action. Learn to say ‘So What!’. And use this guide as often as you need to take an inventory of the layers that might constitute your anxiety.

I hope you have found some answers in this guide that you can refer to again and again.

Jenny Lynn

www.theopenmindguide.com