

U N D E R S T A N D I N G

to be full to the point of break
to break open or apart suddenly

Anxiety

an uncomfortable feeling of ner
or might happen in the future

P R O B L E M S

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Help for Anxiety and Panic, Phobias, OCD and Depression

Understanding Anxiety Problems

Help for Anxiety and Panic, Phobias, OCD and Depression

The www.help-for.com website eBook

Published by Help-For
www.help-for.com

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ISBN 978-0-9558136-1-0

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It is strongly recommended that anyone who is thinking, feeling or behaving in a way that they don't understand, any way that is debilitating or is causing pain and unhappiness should consult a medical professional, and that a medical doctor should always be consulted for any persistent physical or bodily function problem to rule out physical causes before psychological reasons are explored.

And that, under no circumstances, should anybody stop taking prescribed medication without fully qualified medical supervision.

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Introduction

Anxiety Disorders (and depression) represent a life ruled by anxiety. An essential part of being human, anxiety is a survival mechanism that has evolved over millions of years. It involves a series of responses and reflexes that prepare us to avoid or deal with danger. This is why we have anxiety – to prevent us from getting hurt.

Most of the time it sits quietly in the background until we need it. But for some of us anxiety grows stronger for no apparent reason. It starts to appear more easily, more often and more intensely. It can become more powerful and, over time, unresolved anxiety can lead to more serious problems such as uncontrollable worrying and feelings of apprehension (GAD), panic attacks, obsessive thoughts and compulsive

behaviours (OCD), irrational fears and phobias (particularly social phobia) and even depression.

Long-term anxiety and panic, phobias, OCD and depression can leave us feeling helpless and that there is nothing that can be done or nothing we can do to be free of them. Years of searching, reading books and websites, finding what seem to be answers, trying ways to think, trying ways to behave, 'get-well quick' ideas, therapy, medication etc. can leave us exhausted, without hope and even more anxious about our problem.

And yet many people do successfully overcome these problems, usually after years and years of experience, research and experimenting with their problem. They find the answer. They don't suddenly wake up one day and their problem has gone; they grow, move forward and change. Their problem weakens and fades as they come to understand it, develop a new attitude towards it and start to think and behave differently.

Hopefully, this eBook can save you this time and help you to see these problems differently, see them for what they really are and how it is possible to overcome them.

It is not about specific anxiety disorders or depression (there are many excellent resources available about individual problems) it is about what underlies them all, how they work and how they can be weakened and stopped in the same way.

It is based on an understanding that these problems are not, at their heart, mental disease or illness but that they are

learned behaviours involving deep-seated survival instincts. Behaviours that develop predominantly from the ways we learn to cope with negative life experiences.

The vast majority of people with these problems are extremely intelligent, often more so than the average population, and are aware of the inappropriate thoughts, feelings and behaviours, yet feel powerless to stop them. It's the fact that we are dealing with deep-seated, instinctual behaviours that makes them so hard to deal with.

The advice is also based the premise that all anxiety disorders and depression are related and that they develop and grow in the same way. Every human being on the planet (indeed, every animal) is built in a way to develop an anxiety disorder given the right (or wrong) set of negative life experiences.

A recurring negative thought is a recurring negative thought whether it is associated with 'failing' in a phobic situation or 'failing' to control an obsession or compulsion. Anxiety that is associated with the frustration of helplessness in depression is the same as the anxiety associated with the feelings of frustration when avoiding a fearful situation. They are the same because our minds and bodies are the same and the processes involved are the same – it's only what we link these processes to that differ.

This eBook focuses on the cause (not just the symptoms) and the processes they set up within our mind and body that leads to these problems. For example, take perfectionism. This is a symptom not a cause and most people with anxiety

disorders and depression have a real need to be perfect, they are driven towards perfectionism. Generally, most attempts not to be perfect fail until we understand why we act like this. If we try and deal with the symptoms, the cause remains, but if we deal with the cause, there's no reason for the symptoms to be there.

The key to overcoming most anxiety disorders (and depression) involves understanding how they work. Like everything in life, when we know how and why something works we know how to stop it. To try and overcome these problems without this understanding is exceptionally difficult for whatever we may try, as soon as any symptoms occur, we think that it's not working, that it isn't the answer and we continue with our never-ending search for the 'real answer'.

To cure anxiety-related problems, we have to know how they work and, more importantly, how the way to stop them works. Only then will we have the knowledge and power to overcome the natural setbacks that occur.

Here you will find a different way to look at anxiety-related problems (including depression as such a problem) and what to do about them. It is divided into 4 main parts:

'The Problem' details the background to these problems and how they are all related and **'The Symptoms'** section shows how we come think, feel and behave in relation to these problems. In **'The Answer'** you'll discover what it takes to become free and **'It Can Be Done'** explains just that, how

and why it is possible to become free of anxiety disorders and depression.

To start to deal with these problems takes courage, for fear and self-doubt play a major part in them. And yet, if you have admitted to yourself that you have a problem, you have already taken one of the most courageous steps.

We all learn and grow through our experiences. In anxiety disorders and depression we learn and grow in a negative way. But this can be turned around whenever we choose and we can become stronger, wiser, better for the experience. Armed with the right knowledge it is possible to become free.

Chapter 1

The Problem

GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER and panic disorder, social phobia, OCD and depression...

These problems can overwhelm us and leave us feeling out of control. They feel as though we are driven to act like this, strengthen with every 'attack' and lead to constant searching for reasons and answers. Involving self-doubt, insecurity and fear, they can appear too powerful to deal with. However, it is possible to master these problems, no matter how powerful they may seem – for the power they have over us is the power we, ourselves give them.

*“Fear can, though it is not God, create something from nothing”
...Caspar de Aguilar*

In general, most anxiety-related problems reflect ways we learned to cope with our life experiences. They strengthen, grow and change as we do and when we understand and treat them as such – we can successfully deal with them.

You're running down the road, you are frightened, something is behind you. You can feel its presence bearing down on you. It is chasing you, it's overbearing and you know that if it catches you it will destroy you. Wherever you run it follows; down every street, down every alley it's still there right behind you. You run into a house and hide – still it comes. Managing to glance back you see it, it is in fact a ... giant grisly bear ... snarling ferociously and wanting to destroy you.

Tiredness is setting in, you've been running for so long and still the bear is right behind you. What can you do? How can you escape? You turn a corner and you see it, there in the distance: your salvation.

Twenty yards in front of you ... a flagpole ... you'll be safe up there, the bear won't be able to get you. You make it and climb to the top just as the bear reaches the bottom of the pole. Seeing the bear down below you breathe a sigh of relief, you are safe. Suddenly you feel scared, you realise that you

are thirty feet in the air, any wrong movement and you could fall; you must stay alert at all times to prevent this. So there you are ... at the top of the flagpole, unable to go down towards the bear, constantly alert lest you fall...

The above describes a dream, a dream that symbolises anxiety-related disorders and how we can live our lives – constantly alert, lest we fall (fail), always anxious to some degree. Today, many, many people live this way.

Anxiety-related problems can range from extreme shyness and low self-esteem through to severe disorders that take over our lives. Medically, a disorder is defined as “an illness that disrupts normal physical or mental functions” and anxiety disorders involve ‘self-damaging thoughts, feelings and behaviours with anxiety at their core’.

Currently there are five types of anxiety disorder classified, these are:-

1. Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

With a constant underlying anxiety, this problem involves long-lasting exaggerated and unrealistic worry over such things as: health and personal safety, the safety of family members, money problems, accidents happening etc. It is often accompanied by physical anxiety symptoms such as trembling, being on-edge and body aches.

2. Panic Disorder

This involves attacks of panic that appear to come on for no reason ('out of the blue'). The physical symptoms of panic include a racing heartbeat (palpitations), chest pain, sweating, trembling and shaking.

When such attacks happen, many people fear that they are having a heart attack or stroke, dying or going mad.

Over time, general anxiety increases due to the worry and fear over having another attack.

3. Phobias

These can be specific such as the fear of a certain thing (eg. dogs, spiders, snakes – known as simple phobias) or more generalized, where the fear involves situations.

Generalized phobias include:-

- *Agoraphobia*: the fear of outdoors or places where relief and/or escape from a panic attack would be difficult.
- *Social phobia* (social anxiety disorder) in which we fear situations where we have to do things in front of others and there is the possibility that they may judge or criticize or ridicule or reject us.

4. Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

This is characterised by the repetitive performing of rituals or routines known as *compulsions* (eg. hand washing) in order to relieve anxiety caused by obsessive thoughts (*obsessions*). One particularly common obsession is the fear of being contaminated or contaminating others.

5. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Here, traumatic events that have been experienced are often re-lived through flashbacks or nightmares. This can lead the avoidance of similar situations or places, emotional numbing and the physical symptoms of anxiety.

Although current beliefs about these problems limit them to the list above, **Depression** really should be included. Indeed the link between anxiety and depression problems is now so well established that medications for depression (antidepressants) are often prescribed for anxiety.

Eating Disorders should also be added to the list for anxiety drives problems ranging from comfort eating and constant dieting through to anorexia nervosa and bulimia.

Anxiety disorders that develop can vary as infinitely as individual life experiences that play a part in their cause. Yet

they all develop and grow in the same way, they've got to, for we are all human with the same evolved fears and drives, the same nervous systems and we all function in the same way.

Some people are shy some are not. Some people are more nervous than others. Indeed, there are many people who live lives plagued by nervousness and anxiety. It is when the anxiety starts to rule our life, when it becomes uncontrollable that more serious problems develop.

Let's take a closer look at anxiety, how it works and how it relates to the various anxiety disorders and depression.

Anxiety

Imagine you're lying on a beach. It's a beautiful day, the sun is shining and there is a gentle breeze wafting over your body. Sounds of nature fill the air as you chat and laugh with family and friends. You are surrounded by people that you love and respect and who love and respect you. You feel warm, contented and happy, totally relaxed, anxiety-free.

Now imagine a very different scene. It's the dead of night and you are alone, walking down a dimly lit alley. There are doorways on either side – who knows what's hiding in them waiting to pounce? You are scared and your senses are heightened. Your sight and hearing have become more sensitive, able to pinpoint the slightest movement or sound. Your breathing and heartbeat have become more rapid, you feel light-headed and dizzy, want to go to the toilet or throw up. Your limbs feel shaky and your whole body is now charged

with energy, full of anxiety, ready to fight or flee, possibly for your life.

These two scenes represent either end of the anxiety scale. In the first we feel warm, secure and safe, we are fully relaxed. In the second we are fully tense, in a state of preparedness, highly alert and scared.

Anxiety probably serves many functions, but two of the main ones are:

1. It helps prepare our body for action, making us more alert, ready to fight or flee from any imminent threat to our survival. This is related to the direct physical anxiety symptoms such as racing heartbeat, fast breathing, being jittery and on edge, trembling etc. We can also go from being totally relaxed to fully tense in an instant which forms the basis of panic.

Physical anxiety symptoms are due to the 'Fight or Flight' response. The body re-directing resources to the major muscle groups (legs, arms, chest) to provide them with an energy boost to prepare us for action (ultimately to fight or flee).

The Fight-or-Flight Response

- Our breathing becomes more rapid to get more oxygen for these muscles into the blood.
- Our heartbeat speeds up to get the blood to the muscles quickly.

- Blood is diverted away from parts of the brain (making us light-headed and dizzy) and the stomach (causing 'butterflies').
- Energy cannot be wasted processing any half-digested food in our system so we have to get rid of it quickly – either through the mouth (feelings of nausea) or the other end (wanting to go to the toilet).
- Other 'energy-wasting' systems (unnecessary in time of danger) are shut down. For example, saliva production, which results in a dry mouth and difficulty swallowing.

The same happens with panic, but here things are more intense and happen almost instantaneously for when panic occurs the danger is usually right on us.

2. Anxiety also causes us to plan ahead for any potential dangers and how we may deal with them. An excellent survival strategy (it's better to deal with any possible danger or avoid it before we get into the situation) but an unfortunate effect of this is that we can get nervous and anxious just thinking about situations.

A main ingredient in the cause of certain anxiety disorders this is related to symptoms of the mind such as persistent negative thoughts and excessive worrying. Here, anxiety builds up as we think about situations. For example:-

- Worry is the main symptom in generalized anxiety disorder (GAD).

- In social anxiety disorder/social phobia we worry about, or plan to avoid some feared social situation in the future.
- Worry and planning in OCD can be seen in the rituals and compulsions.

As with the fight-or-flight response, self-protection lies at the root of all such planning and worrying.

Millions of people worldwide experience anxiety problems. It is estimated that in America alone, around 20 million people suffer from some form of anxiety disorder. The most common being social anxiety disorder (or social phobia), affecting over 5 million people, closely followed by post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and general anxiety disorder (GAD). Around 1 in 30-50 people suffer from OCD and around 1 in 10 are reported to have a specific phobia.

This doesn't include extreme shyness, self-consciousness and other nervous conditions involving anxiety, which may work in the same way though not severe enough to be classed as disorders. For example, many people are shy enough to avoid certain situations, particularly where they feel nervous and uncomfortable in the presence of others.

These problems are part of the human condition, a part of how we work. This quote, over 300 years old, aptly describes them:

“The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven” ... John Milton (1608-1674)

Anxiety-related problems reflect the subconscious ways that humans have evolved to protect themselves. Almost everyone displays behaviours associated with many anxiety disorders at some time in their lives. Behaviours such as disturbing thoughts, checking, a need for perfection, anxiety, panic and despair are common place.

How many 'normal' people:-

- Say “touch wood” so as not to tempt fate?
- Repeatedly check doors, windows and switches?
- Take a drink before social functions?
- Avoid public speaking at all costs?

We may look at other people and think that they are more confident than us, but that is not always the case, confidence exists on different levels. Some people are very confident in some situations and not so confident in others.

“Those with a high level of confidence may have as many or more weaknesses than those with low self-esteem. The difference is this; instead of dwelling on their handicaps, they compensate for them by dwelling on their strengths” ...Alan Loy McGinnis

So how do these problems affect us? Does someone with depression feel the same as someone with social phobia or someone with OCD?

The next section explains how these problems are related and details physical, psychological and behavioural symptoms that are common to many disorders involving anxiety.

Chapter 2

The Symptoms

MANY PEOPLE WITH anxiety and depression problems suffer with low self-esteem and regard it as a symptom of these problems. Actually it is much more than this. Self-doubt over the way we think, look or act can play a large part in the development and growth of the increased anxiety symptoms seen in most anxiety and depression problems. Indeed, many of the anxiety disorder symptoms below reflect the way we feel about ourselves.

Disorders that can develop range from persistent worrying and feelings of apprehension (often increasing and 'spilling over' into anxiety and panic attacks) to phobias where the anxiety and panic becomes associated with objects or situations in which we feel vulnerable. They may also involve

obsessions and compulsions, forms of depression and even physical illness.

The following list is an example of some of the symptoms associated with anxiety and anxiety disorders. They can be numerous, encompassing our thoughts, feelings and actions, and may be related directly to anxiety at a given moment or generally to how we feel about ourselves.

Anxiety Symptoms

These are associated with avoiding and/or dealing with danger and involve our body, mind and behaviour.

Our Body:-

- Breathing becomes more rapid.
- Heart beat speeds up.
- We feel dizzy and light-headed.
- We get 'butterflies' in our stomach.
- We feel sick and/or need the toilet.
- Our mouth becomes dry and it feels difficult to swallow.
- We sweat more.
- We feel 'jittery' / 'jumpy' / 'on-edge'.

Our Thoughts:-

- We feel frightened.
- We may tell ourselves that we are physically ill, having a heart attack or a stroke or going mad.
- We think people are looking at us.
- We worry that we may lose control or make a fool of ourselves in front of others.
- We feel that we must escape and get to a safe place.

Our Behaviour:-

- We make excuses to avoid going out or doing things.
- We hurry out of places or situations where we feel anxious.
- Walk to avoid buses, cross the street to avoid people.
- We may have a drink or take a tablet before doing something we find stressful.

Anxiety Disorder Symptoms

These develop from the reasons we find to explain our anxiety/panic and the ways we try to deal with it. They can be expressed physically, psychologically and in our behaviour.

Physical. Can include:-

- Headaches.
- Digestion problems.
- Bowel problems.
- Allergy-type reactions.
- Fatigue.
- Constant colds.
- Skin problems.

Many of the above may be due, in part, to the suppression of the body's immune system by chemicals released into the bloodstream when anxious.

Behaviours. Some examples are:-

- **Extreme anxiety/panic around other people.**
Having to do things in front of others can cause us to become panic-stricken. (Social phobia).
- **Excessive Worrying.**
This involves persistent and uncontrollable worrying about people / events / situations. (Generalized Anxiety Disorder).
- **Avoidance Behaviour.**
Avoiding things and situations that make us feel afraid. (Phobias).

- **Obsessions and Compulsions.**
Here, anxiety takes the form of uncontrollable thoughts (obsessions). Compulsions are our attempts to control these thoughts by trying to prevent any threat or danger. Usually harmful to ourselves, compulsions do provide some sense of relief. (OCD).
- **Hypochondria.**
Constantly visiting the Doctor. Where every ache and pain becomes associated with being a serious illness.
- **Depression.**
This involves feelings of helplessness and hopelessness and the belief that events are beyond our control and everything we try to do will fail.
- **Sexual problems.**
Here, fears over losing control and being judged on our performance can maintain these problems.
- **Others include:-**
Aggression, sleep disorders and eating disorders.

Psychological. Many of these psychological symptoms can be present whichever disorder exists.

- **Perfectionism**
Involves things like always needing to be the strongest,

most beautiful or handsome, or the cleverest. To have the best body, to do the best, to be the best etc.

- **Constantly making comparisons**
Always comparing ourselves with other people and coming up short.
- **Self-consciousness**
Constantly watching our self.
- **Child-like behaviour**
Seeking the love and approval of parents and others.
- **Fantatising**
Common fantasies include: 'one day being rich and famous or being great, loved by all'.
- **Excessive Tidiness**
This represents attempts to bring form and order to our world, to gain a sense of being in control.
- **Symmetry**
Here, what is done by (happens to) one side of the body must be done by (happen to) the other side. This is also related to order and control.
- **Ending sentences with questions**
We do this to shift the attention away from us to the other person.

- **Mild paranoia**
Can involve constant feelings of 'being picked on' and feeling that 'others are treated better'.
- **Poor body image**
Believing our body, or parts of it, are 'not good enough'.
- **Bad posture**
Standing shoulders down, feet inwards and arms in front of body, trying to be small, almost apologetic for being there.
- **Others include:-**
Persistent negative thoughts and images, constantly looking back for reasons and answers and feelings of having no control over our mind or body.

A diagnosis of a particular anxiety disorder often refers to the main set of symptoms. Yet most people experience numerous symptoms associated with various anxiety disorders adding weight to the belief that these problems are all related and that they reflect behaviours common to us all that evolve under certain circumstances.

Similar ways of thinking, feeling and behaving are seen across the full range of anxiety disorders:-

All anxiety disorders involve a state of higher than average physiological arousal, a nervousness, greater alertness, shown

by heightened senses and a higher than normal resting heart rate.

GAD and OCD both involve self-perpetuating thoughts relating to attempts to cope and gain control.

Phobias and OCD entail panic when confronted by the feared object or thought.

Feelings of inability to cope with negative events occur with anxiety and depression, but people with depression feel responsible for the events while those with anxiety generally do not.

Panic disorder, phobias and PTSD all involve some form of avoidance. Ranging from that due to the overwhelming urge to escape in phobias (physical avoidance) to the cognitive avoidance strategies used in panic disorders (mental avoidance) and the emotional numbing seen in PTSD in order to avoid painful feelings (emotional avoidance). In both social phobia and agoraphobia the fear is increased in places where we feel trapped. Examples include: waiting in queues (eg. at the checkout) and in the hairdressers/dentists chair.

All disorders involve feelings of not being in control, particularly social phobia, panic disorder and agoraphobia where exaggerated fears of losing control are prominent.

Almost all anxiety disorders are preceded by a series of negative life experiences. From the short duration, high-intensity traumatic events associated with PTSD (eg. violence-related) to more prolonged long-term stressors involved in many disorders.

The most common symptom at the start of many disorders is usually a prolonged period of 'nervousness' with many

studies showing that the one thing many people remember about the start of their problem is “being too nervous for a long time”.

Whichever anxiety disorder is present, the number of symptoms, the extent to which they occur, the situations in which they appear and the way they interact with each other is as complex as the individual and the life events experienced.

They can support and confirm each other and strengthen until they become part of the make up of an individual. It's not surprising that we tend to use such phrases as: ***“It's just the way I am”*** and ***“It's a part of me”***.

But someone who is sad is also at times happy. A weak person can, on occasion, be strong. The scared can be brave and unconfident people can sometimes feel confident! What we need to do is reduce the bad feelings and increase the good ones. No matter how small they exist at the moment ... **THEY DO EXIST.**

“It takes but one positive thought when given a chance to survive and thrive to overpower an entire army of negative thoughts” ...Robert H. Schuller

Although you may not appreciate it at the moment, you do have special qualities that many people don't have, including some that could have only developed out of the struggle with feelings of self-doubt and anxiety symptoms. You have the

potential to become a much stronger, wiser person than one who hasn't experienced these problems

So is it really possible to become totally free from these problems? Yes it is. The next section gives us a brief insight into what it takes.

Chapter 3

The Answer

THESE PROBLEMS ALL involve heightened anxiety. In overcoming them, the goal is not to get rid of anxiety, for it is normal, an important part of being human. Anxiety helps ready us for action and is there for our survival. The aim is to understand why it has become so strong, change what it means to us and know how to reduce it and prevent it spiralling out of control.

It is possible to experience anxiety without it leading to panic, obsessions, compulsions or despair, to experience it and yet still be calm. In fact many people do experience anxiety like this frequently (eg. at job interviews, when dating, in performance situations, during sports and social occasions). They may feel shaky on the inside but relatively calm on the

outside, this is normal, this is part of anxiety, this is how it feels.

On a popular television quiz show, where the contestants answer questions and can double their winnings up to a million, the quizmaster has said to many contestants, words to the effect: “You look remarkably calm”.

In nearly every instance, the reply has been the same: “On the outside yes, but inside I’m shaking like a leaf”.

However, when we have an anxiety disorder or depression we believe that to have any anxiety is not right and associate the first sign of it with something being wrong with us ... this is what makes it so strong.

If ten thousand people say you are good and you feel bad about yourself ... you will believe you are bad. Conversely if ten thousand people say you are bad and you feel good about yourself ... you will believe that you are good.

Our reality is shaped by what we believe and what we feel.

And...

THE ANSWER LIES IN WHAT WE FEEL.

“A man found an eagle's egg and put it in a nest of a barnyard hen. The eaglet hatched with the brood of chicks and grew up with them. All his life the eagle did what the barnyard chicks did, thinking he was a barnyard chicken. He scratched the earth for worms and insects. He clucked and cackled and would thrash his wings and fly a few feet into the air. Years passed and the eagle grew very old.

One day he saw a magnificent bird above him in the cloudless sky. It glided in graceful majesty among the powerful wind currents, with scarcely a beat of its strong golden wings. The eagle looked up in awe. "Who's that?" he asked. "That's the eagle, the king of the birds", said his neighbour. "He belongs to the sky. We belong to the earth – we're chickens." So the eagle lived and died a chicken, for that's what he thought he was.”

... AWARENESS ... Anthony de Mello

To change beliefs, we have to understand how and why they developed. We have to understand our experiences, the people involved and more importantly, the conclusions we drew about our role in them. For it's not the experiences themselves that do the lasting damage, it's what we make of them. We have to understand how we learned to think and behave because of our experiences.

Various anxiety 'disorders' exist (personal make-up and experiences probably determine individual forms) however a number of factors exist which are common to them all.

Feelings of self-doubt, no control (and its related feelings of not being there) and self-imposed high, inflexible standards are just some of the things which need to be understood before we can loosen the grip of these problems.

Ranging from shyness and low self-esteem to anxiety disorders and depression, each anxiety problem is unique to the individual. Expressions of social phobia vary from person to person just as those of agoraphobia vary from panic disorder and GAD varies from OCD.

However, as unique to the individual these problems are and as different to each other they are, these problems develop for similar reasons and strengthen in a similar way, a manner that reflects the way our mind and body works.

Our individual personalities probably develop from a mixture of genetic make up, experiences and learning. As such, how we behave depends on the knowledge that we gain from past experience (derived from situational clues, knowledge at that time, assumptions and reasoning) and how and why we apply this to present situations.

Differences in, and complex interactions between, the above factors give rise to our individuality.

We are all different and yet, in one sense, we are all the same. We all have similar body structures, we all have similar mind structures, we all have the same five senses and we all

receive and process information through these senses and structures in a similar manner. Therefore, it is not surprising that we all tend to deal with certain situations in roughly the same way.

Problems involving anxiety and panic, obsessions, compulsions and despair work in basically the same way and reflect the ways that our mind and body have evolved in response to negative life experiences. Given your genetic make up, your past experiences, the knowledge you had in the past and the knowledge you have now ... your mind and body are working **perfectly**. However they are not working **appropriately**.

Our mind and body are so interlinked that in some ways it is difficult to distinguish between them, thoughts generate feelings and feelings generate thoughts. Anxiety leads to tension but also tension leads to anxiety.

Many people with long-term anxiety and depression problems exist in a higher than average state of tension. Their whole body can be tense to some degree for most of the time. It isn't surprising that various body aches and general fatigue can be associated with numerous anxiety disorders and depression.

A tense body is already making associations with anxiety, 'prepared' to spark off a worrying thought or image and start the ball rolling towards panic, phobia, OCD, despair.

A relaxed body equals a relaxed mind and vice versa.

The upper chest and shoulders are one area where many people with anxiety-related problems maintain tension in their body. They constantly have raised upper chest and shoulders. For two reasons:

Firstly, this is a defensive posture (I would raise my shoulders if somebody went to strike me).

Secondly, it stems from conditioning associated with the body's attempt to relieve tension naturally – sighing (letting out a deep breath) is a natural way to relieve tension.

Many people with these problems hold their breath a lot (especially before going to sleep) in order to sigh. This can lead to conditioning the body to have the chest and shoulders raised and also the development of breathing from the chest rather than the diaphragm.

Try this:-

Throughout the day notice how high your shoulders are and drop them down (as in Yoga, 'roll them over and back'). When your shoulders are lowered – do you feel ever so slightly more relaxed?

Do this a number of times throughout the day (4 or 5 times) and when you are in bed before you go to sleep.

Insight and understanding are essential to overcoming anxiety problems. However, from shyness to depression, there is something else that is equally important

... *changing behaviour.*

We can't just think our way out of these problems. To change behaviour we have to do the behaviour (it isn't possible to learn to ride a bike just by thinking about it!)

But changing behaviour alone will not help if we still feel bad about our self or still have unanswered questions about our problem. Any force over which we have little understanding and even less control will always hold power over us, for it is unpredictable and could harm us and as such remains frightening.

Therefore, successfully overcoming anxiety disorders (and depression) requires **both** insight and behaviour change.

We have to understand the problem (how it developed and why it affects us the way it does) to such an extent that the search for reasons and answers can be given up. Only then is it really possible to reduce the automatic negative thoughts, feelings and behaviours and develop more positive ones.

Courage is not the absence of fear. It is feeling afraid but keeping those feelings sufficiently under control to be able to act appropriately.

Once we begin to understand how anxiety disorders work much of the fear of them is removed. When we truly understand the problem we are on the road to recovery.

*“Fear cannot be banished, but it can be calm and without panic;
and it can be mitigated by reason and evaluation”
...Vannevar Bush (1890-1974)*

Excessive anxiety and panic, obsessions and compulsions, irrational fears, phobias and depression are very powerful. They can feel just too strong for us and that we cannot overcome them ... but when we understand what they really are and how they work it is possible to cure them completely.

Chapter 3

It Can Be Done

CHANGE CAN BE frightening ... the lack of control and apprehension it involves can be disorientating and anxiety provoking to almost everyone. We all need help and support from others at some times in our lives, usually when we are learning something new or changing our circumstances.

Actually, most things we learn in life are initially frightening; things such as learning to ride a bike, learning to drive a car and take, for example, learning to swim: Most children, and some adults, go from being petrified of venturing into open water, clinging desperately to the side (a perfectly logical reaction since at the beginning they have no control and could drown) to being able to jump and dive in the water, swim underwater, tread water and swim wherever they want.

Learning to swim involves learning what to do to be in control, and confidence grows as the feelings of control grow.

Given the right instruction, guidance and support we can learn to overcome our fears by mastering the various stages involved. And so it is with anxiety and panic, phobias, OCD and depression.

Once we understand why we believe and behave as we do there are many things we can do that help to:-

- **Change those beliefs and behaviours.**
- **Let go of the past and move forward.**
- **Develop more accurate, positive feelings about our self.**
- **Develop feelings of being in control and confidence.**

Once we accept that courage is not the absence of fear we are in a position to move forward. Guidance and support can help, but at times it can still be frightening. If we want to change (develop and grow would be better words!) we can't let fear hold us back.

We may feel that our problem is unique and requires specific help. For example, “I have OCD, how can help for social anxiety disorder help me?”

Yet similar experiences, reasons and learning lie at the heart of all these problems. They develop and grow in the same way and are weakened and stopped in the same way.

What drives someone to scrub the skin from his or her hands?

Or to avoid doing things in front of others at all costs?

What makes someone starve themselves?

Or harm themselves?

Or perform endless rituals?

How can a healthy person believe they are seriously ill when all medical tests prove otherwise?

Or a good person believe they are worthless?

How can a painfully thin girl with Anorexia Nervosa look in the mirror and see herself as fat? Even to the extent of pointing out which areas of her body are too fat?

How can someone see himself or herself as small / weak / ugly or stupid – when other people see them as just the opposite?

The content may differ, but aren't all the above thinking, feeling and behaving in a similar way?

There's nothing magical or mysterious about the way to successfully deal with problems involving anxiety, panic and despair. But it is easier said than done to face up to these problems and to do it requires the right knowledge. The right

knowledge can take away the 'fear of the unknown' element in these problems and give us the power to face them. We can earn this knowledge through years of living with our problem, searching and gathering information and experimenting with things to do ... or we can be given it.

The aim of this eBook is to provide insight into what these problems really are rather than merely classify them by symptoms. Hopefully it can go a small way to help you develop a new attitude towards your problem and the belief that a cure is possible.

You may feel that you don't have the ability or courage to start dealing with your problem but you have, for all our minds and bodies work in the same way and in the same manner that these problems develop and grow, they can be weakened and stopped.

Please don't let fear hold you back, for in this life there are three things of which we can all be certain:-

- Life waits for no one.
- Tomorrow never comes, and
- Nothing worth having or achieving in life comes easy.

With anxiety-related problems (from troublesome shyness or nervousness to chronic OCD or depression) the journey, the

action and the 'do-ing' don't just bring about change they are the change.

Of course change can be scary; if we stay as we are the dream stays intact. One day we will be good, great, loved by all. And the dream does offer us some feelings of control whilst change is new and frightening. But it is just an illusion, real change can only come through doing, not dreaming.

Children often have 'comfort toys' that they take everywhere as they undergo the constant changes in their lives. Something old and reliable and 'known' to fall back on. In a sense, it is less frightening to be something that we know than something we don't. Change equals unknown and is inherently scary.

But a better way is to see it not as scary but as a challenge, and life is all about challenge.

In this world of profit-driven, success-orientated goals of false materialistic happiness the incidence of feeling 'not being good enough', anxiety and depression can only increase and yet in, one sense, it is those people that have experienced these problems that reflect the truly good human qualities.

Soul-searching and introspection can lead to a great understanding of our own behaviour and that of others, acceptance of our own 'faults' and those of others and an appreciation of the effect of our behaviour on other people.

Without doubt, if the excessive anxiety, panic and despair could be reduced for sufferers of these problems society would benefit greatly.

More Help...

Excessive anxiety and panic attacks, phobias (particularly social phobia), OCD and depression... These problems involve insecurity and fear and can be very difficult to deal with. But it doesn't have to be like this.

There is a new answer for these problems. A totally new way to understand and deal with them that can cure them completely.

>> [More Details](#)

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