

Overcome Anxiety, Panic, Worry and Fear

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# 10 WAYS TO GET OUT OF YOUR HEAD

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And into your Present Life

LISA J. ROTELLA, LCSW

Has anyone ever told you that you were too much in your head? That you internalize things, creating anxiety and worry where this is none? Making up scenarios in your head of what "could" happen? All the while creating your own reality regardless of what is actually happening in the present.

Are you the type that tends to think unrealistic or exaggerated thoughts, always anticipating dread, waiting for the other shoe to drop? Are you the originator of these thoughts or do they seemingly pop into your head out of nowhere? Are you able to control them or do they seem to grow legs and take on a life of their own? What happens when you try to resist them, push them away, distract yourself or "will" them to get out of your head? It may work for awhile, but then they come back, don't they? Sometimes even more forcefully.

How do you know if anxiety and worry is too much? When it happens too often or too intensely. When it interferes with your daily functioning. When it affects your sleep, eating, lifestyle, relationship, job, physical condition etc...When it no longer serves you in a positive way. Chronic anxiety and worry doesn't alert you of current or potential danger. It exacerbates the problem or worsens your ability to solve a problem. In fact, it focuses on hypothetical future disasters and catastrophic scenarios.

The following pages give you 10 ways to Get Out of Your Head and reduce your anxiety. Some are easier said than done, but over time will work to change your Thoughts, Feelings and Behavior.

# 1. Just Breathe

## Diaphragmatic breathing or Belly breathing

This style of breathing is different than what you are accustomed to. The reason that this technique works is because it is incompatible with the shallow, chest breathing that you will see most people do when they are in fear or having a panic attack. This shallow breathing can cause the same sensations as hyperventilation which only worsens the symptoms of anxiety.

When you Belly Breathe correctly, your stomach will fill up with air on the inhale, much like a balloon. Try this exercise:

1. Put one hand on your belly and one hand on your chest. Your hands will tell you which muscles you are using to breathe.
2. Inhale slowly through the nose, while pushing your stomach out. Pause before exhaling.
3. Exhale through your mouth while pulling your stomach in. Practice this technique for several minutes. It may help to lie on your back at first.

## 2. Practice

# Mindfulness

The art of paying attention on purpose

The opposite of Mindfulness is Mindlessness - daydreaming if you will. Most of us go through life on auto-pilot, multi tasking our way through the day believing that we are getting a lot of things done when we are fragmenting our attention and not being fully present to what we are doing.

Mindfulness is paying attention in the present moment without judgment. The purpose is to stay curious and open to what you are experiencing in the moment. A mindful approach to life is generally associated with greater psychological health.

The most basic way to do a mindful exercise breathing is simply to focus your attention on your breath. It may help to focus on the rise and fall of your chest or the sensation through your nostrils. You may find that your mind wanders, or gets easily distracted. When this happens, gently bring your attention back to your breath.

# 3. Don't automatically go to the negative

You have approx 50K thoughts per day

You might as well make your thoughts count. For many people, negative thinking is their default. It's as if we have been programmed our whole lives to think negatively and this doesn't exactly serve us well.

What we believe about something will determine our attitudes, feelings and actions. It doesn't even matter if that something is true or not true. If we believe it is, then it is.

Most of your stress comes from the way you respond, not the way life is. And when you adjust your thinking to a positive outlook, you immediately see the world through a different lens.

# 4. Set aside "worry time"

## You cannot worry 24/7

While you may think that worrying over a situation is "problem solving" you actually are just ruminating over the same issue over and over again trying to prepare for every possible scenario. What starts out as a concern turns into an unproductive preoccupation.

If you identify a problem that you can take action on, then by all means, do it. If not, tell yourself that you're going to put your attention on something else until it's your scheduled worry time. If you contain your worry to designated periods, you are freeing up the mind for other activities. Try this:

- Schedule worry time each day for one week. Start by setting aside 15-30 minutes during the morning or afternoon. That will be your worry time.
- During that worry time, write down all of the worries you can think of. Try not to worry outside of your worry time!

# 5. Give up trying to control everything

Most of life is out of our control

The sooner we accept that fact the better off we will be. We want to believe that we have more control than we actually have. When something doesn't go as we expected, or people don't behave or respond as we would like, we feel angry, anxious or unsettled.

We don't understand why other people don't think or act like we do. We believe that everything is always about us, when in fact it rarely is. We waste our energy trying to plan, predict, and prevent things that we have no control over. Only we think that we do.

Consider this:

- Are your control issues rooted in fear?
- What are you afraid will happen if you give up control?
- Would letting go feel like freedom?

# 6. Feel the fear and do it anyway

## Do it scared/anxious

For many people symptoms of anxiety, fear and panic are not obvious to onlookers. We assume that everyone else in the room is comfortable, calm and confident and we are the only ones with anxiety. We get good at "wearing the mask" and faking it.

The point is to engage in life without restrictions and limitation imposed on us by our anxiety or fear. People don't like to feel the physical and mental discomfort of anxiety. We feel like we must get rid of it or reduce it by avoiding that which causes us anxiety.

This avoidance will never allow us to become desensitized to our fears. We must not dodge our obstacles or go around them. We must go through them, head on, experiencing all of the uncomfortable emotions as we go. Otherwise we will miss out on rich and valuable life experiences.

# 7. Separate the Observing brain from the Thinking brain

Only one of which  
we have control of

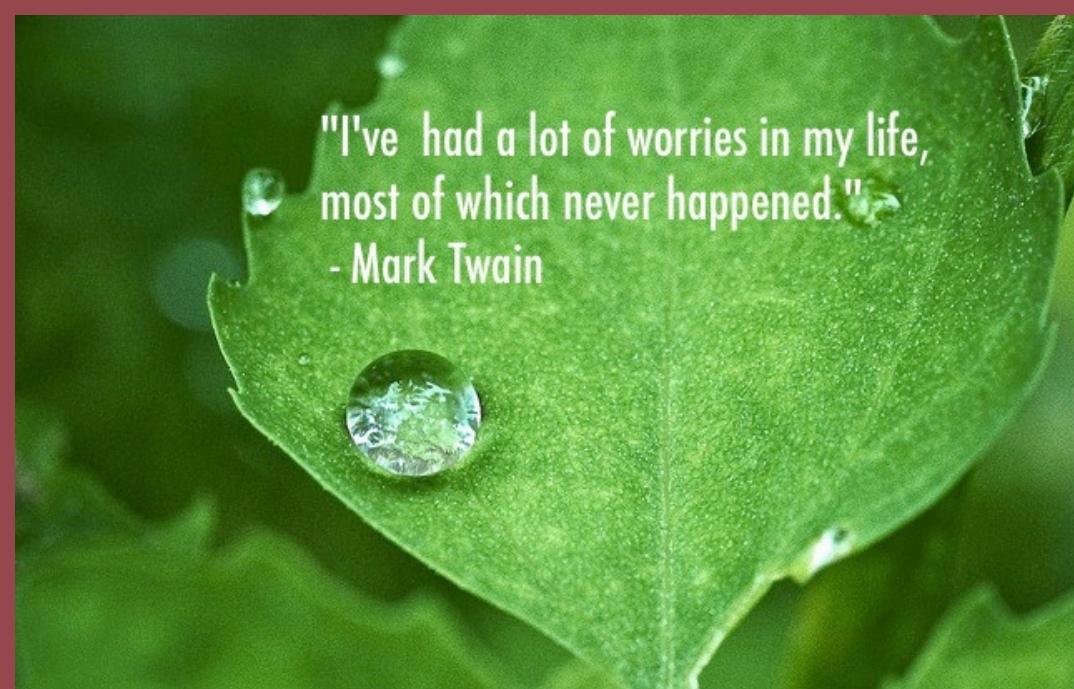
Thoughts just "pop" into our heads all the time, some of which are welcome and positive, and others are disturbing and unwanted. That is the Thinking brain. The brain that takes notice of what's in our head is the Observing brain.

The trick is to not identify with the thoughts that do not serve us. We don't have to fuse with them, identify with them, give them any attention at all. Your Observing brain can accept without judgment that the thoughts are present and then let it go.

Once you've differentiated your two minds, you can begin to evaluate your thoughts and feelings from an objective place and decide which ones are healthy and helpful and which ones aren't.

# 8. Stop creating "What If" scenarios

They rarely happen the  
way you imagine



Worry almost always stems from an overwhelming sense of vulnerability and powerlessness. By promoting connectedness in your life, you will increase your feeling of power and greatly reduce your sense of vulnerability.

You don't need to live in fear of what "might go wrong." Your mind will create infinite possibilities of negative scenarios. There's no guarantee that the worst case scenario "won't" happen, but chances are they won't happen to the degree that you imagined, AND you likely can deal with whatever DOES happen. You have the resources and the strength to handle whatever comes your way.

# 9. Change your relationship with worry and anxiety

Doubt and uncertainty doesn't equal danger

Anxiety over having anxiety or that next panic attack - This is your body's misguided way of trying to protect you from harm. Except anxiety and panic are not harmful. You are NOT in any real danger. You are just anticipating that something bad will happen because when anxiety hits, it can escalate rather quickly. Change your relationship with anxiety and worry:

1. Stop the What if's and Replace it with "So What?" Thoughts are just thoughts and they cannot harm you. This will help neutralize the fear.
2. Accept what you are feeling, know it is not harmful and will dissipate. Say to yourself, "I accept and allow this anxious feeling."
3. Move your attention to an engaging activity to prevent the anxiety feedback loop.

# 10. Stop resisting anxiety and fear

What we resist, persists

The surest way to perpetuate anxiety and worry is "Avoidance and Escape" behavior. Avoidance and Escape behavior is normal and understandable. It makes perfect sense to avoid situations, places and people who have previously been associated with fear, anxiety and panic.

But this will only perpetuate or exacerbate the anxiety because it is reinforcing the behavior. It is telling the brain that the only way to NOT feel anxiety and panic is to avoid the situation. You will never have learned that:

1. You ARE able tolerate the anxiety or fear.
2. As you expose yourself to the situation, you ARE eventually going to desensitize to it.
3. You are allowing and accepting the presence of anxiety by getting on with your life. You are NOT letting it restrict or limit your activities.

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[www.psychlifejax.com](http://www.psychlifejax.com)



3004 3rd St S  
Jacksonville Beach, FL 32250  
904-543-6055