# *The Panic Away Program*

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# Foreword

Every single person can eliminate anxiety by following the Panic Away Program. No exceptions! I can speak with authority on this because I've seen it eliminate anxiety for countless people who would have deemed themselves incurable. My conviction is strengthened by the fact that many of these people spent years searching for a cure from doctors, psychologists, and alternative practitioners. After completing the Panic Away Program, their emails always have the same sentiment:

> *I wish I'd found this earlier. I spent so many years approaching this the wrong way. Why had no one explained this to me before?*

The content you're about to read is highly unique. You won't find any of the repetitive "anxiety speak" so common on the Internet and in most of the published literature. I don't claim to have totally reinvented the wheel with this method, because I'm not the first to advocate for a different approach to anxiety. Many excellent doctors and writers have also put forward the same basic principles as the **only truly effective approach to permanently eliminating anxiety permanently**.

I put together this course several years ago based on what worked for me. From the continuous feedback I received over several years, I was able to fine-tune the method, making it the course it is today. It's true that I was fortunate to realize and develop the approach while I was working through my own anxiety, but I could never have made it into what it's become today were it not for constructive feedback from thousands of other anxiety sufferers. I would like you to therefore think of this method as a powerful piece of collective experience. I'm glad you've found your way here. You're about to learn how to kick-start an anxiety-free future.

Let's get cracking!
Joe Barry

# Introduction

Jane has just left work and is in the supermarket doing her weekly shopping. She's got a lot of things on her mind and is rushing around, throwing all the items she needs into the shopping cart. While checking the price on some soft drinks, she notices something strange. She can feel her heart beginning to beat hard—so hard, in fact, that her throat is pulsating. This startles her, and as she places the soft drink down, she notices how her left arm starts to tingle with a pins-and-needles sensation. This is the first time anything like this has ever happened to her. She's confused and starts to get really scared. "Something must be wrong," she thinks, and she begins to mentally list all the possible things it could be: "Is this the start of a heart attack? Is it an allergic reaction to something I ate?"

Jane's stomach and chest muscles feel really tense, and her breathing becomes faster and shallower. She glances around at the people near her, and as she does, she feels light-headed and dizzy. The confusion and fear she feels sends her into a panic. The sensations in her body intensify, and she's convinced something awful is about to happen. She feels a need to get outside, and she leaves her shopping cart full of goods behind as she walks slowly, with trepidation, toward the exit.

Soon Jane is outside in the cool air. She feels a slight sense of relief and greater control as the physical sensations lose momentum. Although she's calming down, she's still in shock and her body is shaking. It feels as if someone had just held a gun to her head. She's never felt so terrified and out of control in all her life. She calls her husband at work, tells him what happened, and asks him to meet her so they can go to the hospital together.

A few hours later, Jane is lying on the hospital bed, waiting for the results of medical tests. The doctor arrives and tells her that they cannot find anything

physically wrong with her, that it most likely was a panic attack. This is relieving and yet confusing at the same time. "A panic attack?" she thinks. She remembers an aunt who experienced panic attacks, but Jane never really understood what that meant—and she certainly never imagined it felt as scary as what she went through. Glad that nothing is physically wrong, she checks out of the hospital with her husband and goes home. Within minutes of lying on her bed, she's fast asleep.

On waking the following day, Jane immediately begins to go over the ordeal in her mind. It all seems like a surreal dream. By lunchtime, she's already second-guessing the medical tests. She convinces herself that something was missed and that this must involve something more serious than anxiety. Days pass, and she can't stop thinking about what happened in the supermarket. She still feels shaken by the experience and lives in fear that it might strike her again at any moment. For the first time in her life, she doesn't feel safe leaving her home.

At the law office where she works, she feels restless and can't concentrate. Even when talking to colleagues, she constantly thinks about her problem. She fears she might have a similar turn at work, and everyone would think she's cracking up. If that weren't enough, she starts imagining scary scenarios, like getting locked up in a psychiatric hospital or losing her children because she can't take care of them. Each time she thinks these thoughts, her stomach jolts with a fright. She knows she isn't helping matters by thinking these things, but she can't help herself. The anxious thoughts just keep coming, and the harder she tries to stop the thoughts, the faster they swirl around her mind.

Three weeks later, Jane still feels highly anxious. She's undergone more medical tests with a doctor her friend recommended, but nothing showed up. Secretly she was hoping for something to be wrong so she could start treating it—that would at least be something she could focus her energy on. The new doctor has prescribed some anti-anxiety medication that she has not taken yet, but she will if she ever feels another panic attack coming on.

Jane has now entered a phase called general anxiety or generalized anxiety disorder (GAD). This is a feeling of lingering anxiety accompanied by anxious thoughts. It's the type of anxiety that's there in the morning on waking, and it often lasts throughout the day. In Jane's case, it's a direct result of her obsessive worry over her condition. For her, the initial panic attack in the supermarket sparked fear and confusion, and this fear and confusion grew into general anxiety.

Jane's life has been altered dramatically since that first panic attack. She's already cancelled her European vacation with friends and has told her extended family she won't be entertaining them for Christmas this year. Her husband is trying his best to understand, but he's slowly getting impatient and just wishes she could pull herself together for the sake of the family. He's finding it hard to believe how the confident lawyer he married is suddenly, for no apparent reason, acting like a shadow of her former self.

For the next few months, Jane continues to move back and forth between panic attacks and general anxiety. She's become entrenched in a cycle of panic and anxiety. The good news is that Jane keeps searching for an answer to her problem, and she comes across a simple method that she can apply to end the anxiety. She quickly learns how to eliminate the panic attacks and gradually reduce the feelings of general anxiety. Her mind and body are given the necessary space to allow a full state of health to return. Her confidence comes back, and within a short period of time, she's her former self again.

The Panic Away Program is responsible for helping many thousands of people worldwide end their anxiety disorders. You may have a problem with panic attacks, general anxiety, or related phobias like agoraphobia or claustrophobia. Whether you've just recently started experiencing this problem or have suffered for many years, this method will work equally well for you.

The Panic Away Program is divided into three stages:

- **Stage 1: Trust** – This is the application of one specific technique (the One Move) to end panic attacks.

- **Stage 2: Accept** – This is a series of exercises that release calm, reducing the general anxiety to a minimal level and allowing anxious nerves to rest.

- **Stage 3: Persist** – This teaches how to ensure long-term success and seal the recovery.

For the moment, though, all you have to do is keep reading . . .

# What Causes an Anxiety Disorder?

There's been a lot of debate about what triggers an anxiety disorder and how it should best be treated. Some argue that it's chemical imbalance to be treated with medication, while others suggest it's the result of repressed emotions in the subconscious. I've worked with numerous people who experience various kinds of anxiety disorders, and it's my opinion that neither of these theories is correct. Rather, I believe that an anxiety disorder is a direct result of exhaustion—physical, mental, or emotional.

### Repressed Emotions

I do agree that there's a need to express our emotions and not have them build up, but I don't agree that this is the best path to a solution for an anxiety disorder. If every person you knew had therapy, I'm sure that almost every one of them would discover different repressed memories and emotions—but *not* every one of them suffers from anxiety. It's certainly true that a good therapist, who makes people aware of neglected or repressed feelings, plays a role in helping people move forward with their lives.

For example, people who suffer from anxiety are frequently "people pleasers" who fear conflict, and addressing that issue does help. However, I have yet to see such an approach make a real difference in ending an anxiety disorder for good. Once the cycle of anxiety has begun, certain practical steps need to be taken to end it. Standing up for yourself and not trying to please everyone can form part of that healing process, but it generally doesn't take the person the full way to recovery.

The one type of talking therapy that does get good results in trialed studies is cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). Here the focus is on the present, and people are taught to deal with anxiety in a practical manner. The problem with CBT is that the results are largely dependent on how well the person is guided by the psychologist.

## Chemical Imbalance

For many years, mental health professionals have used the term "chemical imbalance" to explain the need for medications to treat mental health conditions like depression and anxiety. This commonly used explanation suggests that anxiety is a medical problem and that it can be treated with medication. The "chemical imbalance" explanation also reflects the overall theme of treatment—identifying which neurotransmitters are involved and, with medication, attempting to return the neurotransmitter level back to the "normal" range. Two types of medications commonly recommended for anxiety are minor tranquilizers (e.g., Xanax, Ativan, Valium) and anti-depressants (e.g., Prozac, Paxil, Zoloft). Much like taking medication for any sort of physical problem, anti-anxiety medication is prescribed until the problem (hopefully) goes away.

It's important to point out that the chemical imbalance approach is a theory and not a fact. There's no test for chemical imbalance in the human brain. Much about the human brain is still a complete mystery, and there needs to be a lot more research into this area before anyone (including myself) can make absolute statements

about the cause of anxiety disorders. Regardless of the lack of evidence, many in the West are absolutely convinced that all anxiety is the result of a chemical imbalance.

This position doesn't make sense to me. Take the example of a fireman who suffers from panic attacks. He's able to work as a fireman, in situations of extreme stress, without experiencing any panic symptoms whatsoever. But when he has to sit in the barber's chair to get his hair cut, he always has a panic attack because he feels trapped and cannot escape. Are the chemicals in his brain causing him to panic? No, obviously not. It's a behavioral reaction to the situation in which he finds himself. What you see with almost all people who experience regular panic attacks is that they occur in certain situations, and they're dependent on a range of external and internal circumstances.

For example, if a train suddenly stops on the tracks between stations, anyone on board with a panic disorder might start to feel a bit anxious. The driver announces to everyone that they'll have to wait in their seats until the problem is fixed. Suddenly the anxious person feels very uncomfortable and may even start to panic. The additional anxiety comes from a mental evaluation of the situation:

Trapped on train = limited mobility = no escape = PANIC

Two minutes later, the driver says it was a false alarm and the journey can continue. Panic stops. This is just one example, but there are many different examples of how anxiety and panic are a result of people's thoughts rather than a chemical imbalance over which the person has no control.

My feeling is that those who seek to profit from the sale of prescription drugs are responsible for promoting the chemical imbalance theory so aggressively. It may be the case that other more serious mental health issues, such as manic depression or schizophrenia, really are the result of a chemical imbalance, but I don't believe it to be the case for anxiety disorders. Having said all that, I'm not totally against the

use of medication for treating anxiety. Medication can play a role for some individuals who find it very difficult to get started on the road to recovery (see the medication section).

## Physical, Mental, and Emotional Exhaustion

One of the world's foremost anxiety experts, the late Dr. Claire Weekes, described how almost all anxiety disorders start from a type of exhaustion—physical, mental, or emotional. When depleted in any one of these areas, the body and mind become very sensitized and susceptible to "nervous illness" (an old term she used for what's known today as an anxiety disorder). I believe Dr. Weekes's theory most accurately describes the true cause of an anxiety disorder.

Dr. Weekes described the sensitized state as a person who feels jittery and susceptible to any shock, be it internal (e.g., rapid heartbeat) or external (e.g., a door slamming). The more confused people become about the sensations they feel, the more they fear that something is seriously wrong with their minds or bodies. An anxious thought about a change in the rhythm of the body can send the body into a tailspin of anxiety, as is the case with panic attacks.

**A cycle of fear and confusion over the sensitized state gradually turns into an anxiety disorder.**

The disorder can last for weeks to years, depending on the kind of help the person gets. For the average person caught in a state of anxiety, the world appears out of sync. Thoughts don't seem to flow as they once did. Waking in the morning is usually followed by a sense of dread, and something as simple as shopping or having a conversation with someone becomes an ordeal.

Dr. Weekes pointed out how easy it is for people to form phobias when dealing with constant anxiety. For example, people may feel a bit uneasy while sitting in traffic,

when they suddenly become anxious because a thought has scared them into thinking that they're trapped in their car and have no means of escape. This can then translate, over time, into a fear of driving or being any situation where there's no easy exit. In more extreme cases, it gets to the point where people only feel safe in their own homes (agoraphobia).

## So How Does a Person End an Anxiety Disorder?

Recovery from anxiety happens by reversing the above-mentioned process. Anxious people must learn how to get their minds out of the way, to stop adding fear to fear. From there, it's a matter of desensitizing the body, allowing for a greater sense of peace and calm to return. In the same way a person might sow the anxious seeds of doubt, so too can a calm state be nurtured, which will buffer against feelings of stress and anxiety.

The Panic Away Program teaches a person how to achieve this in a very simple, yet powerful, way. The anxiety is broken down so that it doesn't have such a forceful impact. Then calm is released gradually through specific exercises. This process of creating a calm state is called *released calm*.

A natural healing of anxiety is often obstructed because fear stands in the way, making it difficult for the person to fully relax and heal. Understanding is needed to remove the fear and create a window of opportunity. Through this opening, calm can enter and help cause a natural change. When fear and confusion are removed, the body heals itself naturally within a relatively short period of time.

Stage 1 of the method teaches how to eliminate panic attacks by using the One Move technique. This is the first stage in removing fear. If you don't suffer from panic attacks, I would still encourage you to read through this stage, because it will assist you in your overall elimination of anxiety.

# Stage 1: Trust

## Eliminating Panic Attacks

Stage 1 is specifically designed to eliminate panic attacks. Here I'm going to teach you the One Move technique, which will tackle the very core of your panic attacks. It's one of the most powerful techniques I know. In fact, I have yet to come across any other approach that's as effective in complete panic attack elimination.

Before we begin, you need to fully understand how a panic attack functions. That way, you'll be better able to implement the technique. You may have already read a lot about the nature of anxiety, but I think you'll find this obvious statement interesting: **panic attacks are caused by high anxiety**.

Anxiety is probably the most basic of all emotions. While it is, by nature, an unpleasant sensation, it's not by any means dangerous.

One of the biggest myths surrounding anxiety is that it's harmful and can lead to a number of various life-threatening conditions.

### Definition of Anxiety

Anxiety is defined as a state of apprehension or fear resulting from the anticipation of a real or imagined threat, event, or situation. It's one of the most common human emotions experienced by people at some point in their lives. However, most people who have never experienced panic attacks, or extreme anxiety, fail to realize the terrifying nature of the experience. Extreme dizziness, blurred vision,

tingling, and feelings of breathlessness—and that's just the tip of the iceberg!

When these sensations occur and people don't understand why, they feel they've contracted an illness or serious mental condition. The threat of losing complete control seems very real and, naturally, very terrifying.

## Fight/Flight Response

I'm sure most of you have heard of the fight/flight response as an explanation for your condition. Have you made the connection between this response and the unusual sensations you experience during and after a panic attack?

Anxiety is a response to a danger or threat. It is so named because all of its effects are aimed toward either fighting or fleeing from the danger. Thus, the sole purpose of anxiety is to protect the individual from harm. It was vital in the daily survival of our ancient ancestors; when faced with some danger, an automatic response would take over that propelled them to take immediate action, such as to attack or run. Even in today's hectic world, this is a necessary mechanism. It comes in useful when you must respond to a real threat within a split second, like jumping out of the way of an on coming bus!

Anxiety is a built-in mechanism to protect us from danger. Interestingly, it's a **mechanism that protects but does not harm**—an important point that I'll elaborate upon later. Note that there's a third element to the fight/flight response that's not often mentioned—the freeze response. This is when the person is paralyzed by fear and stays very still. People who experience this describe that they feel rooted to the ground with fear and can't move until the anxiety abates.

# Physical Manifestations of a Panic Attack

## Nervousness and Chemical Effects

When confronted with danger, the brain sends signals to a section of the nervous system. This system is responsible for gearing up the body for action, and it also calms down the body and restores equilibrium. To carry out these two vital functions, the autonomic nervous system has two subsections: the *sympathetic nervous system* and the *parasympathetic nervous system.*

The sympathetic nervous system is the one we tend to know all too much about. It primes our body for action and readies us for the fight/flight response. The parasympathetic nervous system serves as our restoring system, which returns the body to its normal state.

When either of these systems is activated, it stimulates the whole body, which has an "all or nothing" effect. This explains why, when a panic attack occurs, the individual often feels a number of different sensations throughout the body.

The sympathetic system is responsible for releasing the adrenaline from the adrenal glands, small glands located just above the kidneys. Less known, however, is that the adrenal glands also release adrenaline, which functions as the body's chemical messengers to keep the activity going. When a panic attack begins, it doesn't switch off as easily as it's turned on. There's always a period of what would seem to be increased or continued anxiety as these messengers travel throughout the body.

After a period of time, the parasympathetic nervous system gets called into action. Its role is to return the body to normal functioning once the perceived danger is gone. The parasympathetic system is what we all know and love, because it returns us to a calm, relaxed state.

When we engage in a coping strategy that we've learned—for example, a relaxation

technique—we are, in fact, willing the parasympathetic nervous system into action. A good thing to remember is that this system is brought into action at some stage **whether we command it or not**. The body cannot continue in an ever-increasing spiral of anxiety. It reaches a point where it simply must kick in and relax. Don't fear that a panic attack will never end—it will. This is one of the many built-in protection systems the body has for survival.

You can do your best with worrying thoughts, keeping the sympathetic nervous system going, but it eventually stops. In time, it becomes a little smarter than us, and it realizes that there really is no danger. Our bodies are incredibly intelligent—modern science is always discovering amazing patterns of intelligence that run throughout its cells. Our body seems to have infinite ways of dealing with the most complicated array of functions that we take for granted. Rest assured that your body's primary goal is to keep you alive and well.

Not so convinced?

Try holding your breath for as long as you can. No matter how strong your mental will is, it can never override the will of the body. This is good news—no matter how hard you try to convince yourself that you're going to die from a panic attack, you won't. Your body will override that fear and search for a state of balance. There has never been a reported incident of someone dying from a panic attack.

Remember this the next time you have a panic attack. Your mind may make the sensations continue longer than your body intended, but eventually everything will return to a state of balance. In fact, our body continually strives for balance (homeostasis).

The interference, from your body's point of view, is nothing more than the sensations associated with doing rigorous exercise. Our body is not alarmed by these symptoms. Why should it be? It knows its own capabilities. It's our thinking minds that panic, which overreact and scream in sheer terror! We tend to fear the

worst and exaggerate our own sensations. A quickened heartbeat becomes a heart attack. An overactive mind seems like a close shave with schizophrenia. Is it our fault? Not really—we're simply diagnosing from poor information.

## Cardiovascular Effects

Activity in the sympathetic nervous system increases our heartbeat, speeds up the blood flow throughout the body, and ensures that all areas are well supplied with oxygen and that waste products are removed. This happens in order to prime the body for action.

A fascinating feature of the fight/flight mechanism is that tightened blood vessels channel blood away from areas where it's currently not needed to areas where it's urgently needed.

For example, should there be a physical attack, blood drains from the skin, fingers, and toes so that less blood is lost, and it's moved to "active areas," such as the thighs and biceps, to help the body prepare for action.

This is why many feel numbness and tingling during a panic attack, and it's often misinterpreted as some serious health risk, such as the precursor to a heart attack. Interestingly, most people who suffer from anxiety often feel they have heart problems. If you're really worried that such is the case, visit your doctor and have your heart checked. At least you can then put your mind at rest.

## Respiratory Effects

One of the scariest effects of a panic attack is the fear of suffocating or smothering. It's very common during a panic attack to feel tightness in the chest and throat. I'm sure everyone can relate to some fear of losing control of breathing. From personal experience, anxiety grows from the fear that your breathing itself would cease and you would be unable to recover. Can a panic attack stop your breathing? No.

A panic attack is associated with an increase in the speed and depth of breathing. This has obvious importance for the body's defense, since the tissues need to get more oxygen to prepare for action. The feelings produced by this increase in breathing, however, can include breathlessness, hyperventilation, sensations of choking or smothering, and even pains or tightness in the chest. The real problem is that these sensations are alien to us—they feel unnatural.

Having experienced extreme panic attacks myself, I remember that on many occasions, I would have this feeling that I couldn't trust my body to do the breathing for me. As a result, I would have to manually take over and tell myself when to breathe in and when to breathe out. Of course, this didn't suit my body's oxygen requirement, so the sensations would intensify—along with the anxiety. It was only when I employed the technique I'll describe for you later that I let the body continue doing what it does best—running the whole show.

Importantly, a side effect of increased breathing (especially if no actual activity occurs) is actually a decrease in the blood supply to the head. While such a decrease is only a small amount and isn't at all dangerous, it produces a variety of unpleasant but harmless symptoms that include dizziness, blurred vision, confusion, a sense of unreality, and hot flushes.

## Other Physical Effects of Panic Attacks

A number of other effects are produced by the activation of the sympathetic nervous system, none of which are in any way harmful. For example, the pupils widen to let in more light, which may result in blurred vision, or "seeing stars," etc. There's a decrease in salivation, resulting in dry mouth. There's decreased activity in the digestive system, which often produces nausea, a heavy feeling in the stomach, and even constipation. Finally, many of the muscle groups tense up in preparation for fight or flight. This results in subjective feelings of tension, sometimes extending to actual aches and pains as well as trembling and shaking.

Overall, the fight/flight response results in a general activation of the overall body metabolism. Thus, one often feels hot and flushed, and, because this process takes a lot of energy, the person generally feels tired and drained.

## Mental Manifestations

The body's goal of the fight/flight response is to make the individual aware of the potential danger that may be present. Therefore, when activated, the mind's priority is placed upon searching the surroundings for potential threats. In this state, one is highly strung, so to speak. It's very difficult to concentrate on any one activity, because the mind has been trained to seek all potential threats and not to give up until the threat has been identified. As soon as the panic hits, many people look for the quickest and easiest exit from their current surroundings, such as by simply leaving the bank line and walking outside. Sometimes the anxiety can heighten—for example, if we perceive that leaving will cause some sort of social embarrassment.

If you have a panic attack while at work, but you feel you must press on with whatever task you're doing, it's quite understandable for you to find it very hard to concentrate. It's common to become agitated and generally restless in such a situation. Many individuals I've worked with, who have suffered from panic attacks over the years, indicated that artificial light—such as from computer monitors and televisions screens—can often trigger or worsen a panic attack, particularly if the person is feeling tired or run-down. This is worth bearing in mind if you work for long periods of time on a computer.

In other situations, when an outside threat can't normally be found during a panic attack, the mind turns inward and begins to contemplate a possible illness of the body or mind. This ranges from thinking it might have been something you ate to considering the possibility of oncoming cardiac arrest.

**The burning question is this: why is the fight/flight response activated when there's apparently nothing to be frightened of?**

As mentioned previously, I believe the trigger for panic attacks and other forms of general anxiety are related to physical, mental, or emotional exhaustion.

- Physical exhaustion can be the result of overwork and lack of rest. Under this category, I also include bad eating habits and bodily changes such as low blood-sugar levels (hypoglycemia) and menopause.

- Mental exhaustion is often the result of habitual worry or mental stress, making the individual feel mentally drained.

- Emotional exhaustion is linked to matters of the heart. It may be relationship problems, bereavement, or conflict with loved ones.

There's almost always an overlap between these categories, making it difficult for the mind and body to find rest. Exhaustion leads to people feeling very sensitized or on edge. Any small shock can make them jump with more fear than normal. If a car backfires on the street, this person is the first to hit the floor. In a sensitized state, even small things, like forgetting to call back a friend, can cause unnecessary anxiety. I think most people can relate to this and have experienced this feeling at some point. Anyone who enjoys a few drinks too many will be familiar with this sensitized state when the hangover kicks in the following morning. It is common for anxiety to run in families. What is happening in those cases is that there is a genetic disposition to the sensitized state.

When people are exhausted and sensitized in this manner, they frequently report experiencing unusual sensations. We've discussed some of those sensations previously, but here's a quick summary:

- Trembling or shaking

- Palpitations, pounding heart, or accelerated heart rate
- Sweating
- Sensations of shortness of breath or smothering
- Feelings of choking
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Nausea or abdominal distress
- Feeling dizzy, unsteady, light-headed, or faint
- Feelings of "unreality" or being detached from oneself
- Fear of losing control or going crazy
- Numbness or tingling sensations

For a full explanation of the physical and mental manifestations of anxiety, please see Stage 3.

Experiencing any of the above sensations can be very unsettling, especially when they land out of the blue. Naturally, it goes without saying that all sensations that cause concern should be investigated with a medical doctor to rule out other possible causes. Doing so is not only important from a medical point of view, but it will help reduce anxious thoughts that something more serious might be wrong.

The deciding factor as to whether or not this experience turns into an anxiety disorder is how sensitive people are and how they react to the sensations they feel. In Jane's case, she became highly alarmed by the sensations she felt in the supermarket. That incident sent her into a period of confusion and fear. She was bewildered by what happened and couldn't stop worrying about it. At that very same moment, there may have been other people in the supermarket who experienced something similar—but because they weren't in a sensitized state, they didn't feel it to the same degree and they dismissed it as inconsequential.

So upon closer examination, it would appear that it's the level to which people are in a sensitized state that dictates the level of fear they feel and whether or not that develops into an anxiety disorder. The problem is that, because sensations are so

intense due to exhaustion, it's easy to become alarmed by them. Sensitized people are at a disadvantage because they can't help being worried about the sensations, and that in turn creates more anxious sensations. It's a catch-22. This is especially true of panic attacks in which the sensations are extremely intense.

There's a further development here worth noting. After a person has had a few out-of-the-blue panic attacks, it doesn't have to be a sensation alone that sparks the panic. It can turn into a fear of places or situations that the person associates with panic attacks. These are known as *situational* panic attacks, as opposed to *spontaneous* panic attacks. For example, people might have had spontaneous panic attacks while at a ball game with their friends. The people were feeling tired, and the sensations came hard and fast out of nowhere, which resulted in a full panic attack. A week later, they're sitting in a theater and recall that the last time they were sitting in a long row of seats, they had a panic attack. That anxious thought can be enough to trigger the bodily sensations of fight or flight—and once the sensations start, it's a confirmation that a panic attack is coming. This is the cycle of fear.

Here we see how a one-time spontaneous panic attack at a ball game has turned into a fear of panic attacks in a variety of different situations. People will say things like this:

> *I can't be anywhere that doesn't have an easy exit. As soon as I think I'm locked in, my heart starts pounding.*
>
> *I only go grocery shopping with a friend, because every time I start the check-out process, I think about the anxiety and want to drop everything and run.*
>
> *I'm okay with one-to-ones, but when I have to speak to more than one person, I get a really uncomfortable feeling and know I'm about to have a panic attack.*

The good news is that you don't have to try to cure your fear of the different situations. All you have to do is end your fear of the sensations. Stage 1 of the Panic Away Program teaches you a new and empowered way to respond to the sensations, and this leads to the end of fearful thinking and a complete elimination of panic attacks. What you're about to learn is called the One Move technique.

# The One Move Technique™

If you're reading this, I'm sure you're well aware of how terrifying a panic attack can feel. Our thoughts race with the possibility of a mind and body out of control. We put to use every coping mechanism we have, and when they fail, we feel vulnerable and alone with a myriad of confusing bodily sensations and terrifying thoughts.

The One Move technique is subtle, and yet I want you to give it careful consideration. It has not only completely eliminated panic attacks from my life, but also from the lives of many long-term sufferers. It differs from most other approaches that I've come across in that it tackles the very core of anxiety and panic attacks.

The traditional approach to dealing with panic attacks is flawed. People are continuously taught to cope in order to "beat" their anxiety. Coping techniques are numerous, and they're prescribed or taught like "weapons" to overcome the dangerous assailant, the panic attack. Even the term "panic attack" is suggestive of battle and conflict. Panic attacks are described as outside forces that want to see their sufferers defeated and left feeling isolated. The real truth of the matter is that there's no real attack or attacker. Panic attacks aren't threatening or dangerous; they're an overreaction to a series of heightened bodily sensations. But where does the true answer to a panic-free life lie? Does it lie in a continuous battle to thwart

the advance of anxiety, or must sufferers be resigned to live with a condition that will plague them their whole lives?

The answer was discovered by observing nature. Nature is a great teacher. Watch how it deals with opposing forces. The tree bends with the wind, the river flows around the rock, summer gives way to fall. Nature never struggles, never resists. Everything flows with an innate acceptance, and therein lies the key to dealing with panic attacks.

Our primordial instincts tell us to pull away and guard ourselves from fear. We either fight it with our best coping technique or simply close down and run to a safe refuge. All of these actions create an internal struggle. Like a tug-of-war, in the case of a panic attack, we pull and push against the oncoming anxiety with all the resistance we can muster as we try and cope with the situation. This struggle results in even further inner stress, fear, and conflict.

We think nervously, "What if I lose this fight?" "What will happen if anxiety wins over me? Will I be hospitalized—or worse, go insane?" As we wrestle with these thoughts, we tighten our mental grip and pull away from the threat by attempting to suppress the sensations. We may swallow relaxant medication, begin a series of coping exercises, or even drink some alcohol in order to suppress the terrifying feelings that are coursing through our body.

Sometimes, when we're lucky, we're in good fighting condition and the fear appears to subside. Other times, we lose outright and experience full-blown panic attacks as the fear engulfs our emotions and leaves us feeling vulnerable and terrified. Whichever way it transpires, we're always left with one lasting and recurring thought: "When will this strike again? When will I have to do battle with this terror again?"

As soon as we see the telltale signals of a panic attack—such as quickened breath or an increased heart rate—we immediately jump to try to curtail and control the

sensations in the hope of enforcing a state of relative tranquility. Those who suffer from regular panic attacks often mention that their predominant fear is losing control of their body or mind. We do our best to suppress the sensations, and by doing so, we don't allow our bodies to flow in the heightened state caused by the fight/flight response. We close down and tighten our muscles as though preparing for a psychological collision. This preparation for collision is similar to what our body does for a real-world physical collision, such as a car crash.

Using a simple car crash analogy, we perceive the imminent danger ahead on the road. Then we respond with automatic reflexes as adrenaline is released into the bloodstream, and we apply whichever evasive maneuvers we can to avoid the very real threat of a physical impact. The key difference with a panic attack is that there's no real threat. Instead of a quick burst of anxiety that would normally dissipate once the threat is over, a person suffering from panic attacks plays the perceived threat over and over in slow motion, leading to a prolonged state of heightened anxiety.

Before I introduce you to the One Move technique, it's important to understand that **there's never a damaging psychological or physical collision during a panic attack**. It may seem like there's a real and present threat, like the example of a car crash. Remind yourself of all the previous times you've emerged unscathed from panic attacks. Think of all the panic attacks you've experienced and how you've always come out on the other side—possibly petrified, but nevertheless alive and undamaged, with no harm done to your body except for possible fatigue. The real issue that causes most of the upset and understandable distress is the fear of damage that a panic attack is supposed to cause.

So where does this leave us? The first clue to successful recovery lies in our ability to move with a panic attack, to fully engage with the experience. To use a cliché, we need to "flow with it" by becoming the observer of fear and anxiety, not the victim.

The fear and panic experienced during high anxiety is a result of the individual reacting to the bodily sensations and identifying with the warning of an "attack," believing in a very real physical or psychological threat. **So the first key to understanding is this: there's no panic if there's no perceived threat.**

Do you realize that there's a big similarity between a panic attack and a roller coaster ride? Both are exhilarating experiences that excite our nervous system and increase our bodily awareness. The roller coaster, however, doesn't send the same level of panic through us, because we're fully aware that it's not life-threatening and will shortly come to a safe stop. This is the same attitude we need to adopt toward panic attacks. It's only our interpretation that differs, so we want to change our interpretation.

What does that mean in practical terms? It means that if you embrace the fear and let the emotions and sensations run freely through you, rather than close down in the face of an imminent panic attack, your fear subsides. The sensations that usually terrify you become exactly that—sensations, and nothing more (such as sweating palms, dizziness, palpitations, shortness of breath, etc.). Uncomfortable sensations you could do without, but the key difference with this approach is that the sensations don't lead to a state of panic.

It isn't that you'll never feel anxious at times; a certain level of anxiety is part of everyday living. What's different is that your occasional anxiety doesn't develop into a higher-anxiety experience. The occasional feeling of anxiety is fine and is experienced by everyone. Your new response puts you in sync with all those people who never get panic attacks because their feelings don't develop into an exaggerated sense of irrational fear.

So where do we begin? Because there's no danger, there's no real threat. This simple but true understanding, combined with the One Move technique outlined below, is the tool with which you'll learn to defuse panic attacks in seconds!

Let's look at the first step in defusing a panic attack.

## Observe

You are going to process the fear so that your emotions can run freely, rather than become locked in a cycle of recurring anxiety. So begin by observing the fear as it rises within you.  What we're looking for is a conscious recognition of panic attacks, and a new and empowered response to them when they arise. We want a response that will defuse the panic attack in its tracks and clear the pattern of recurring attacks.

Observe the familiar patterns that manifest during the initial moments of a panic attack. For many, it may simply be a feeling of unease in the stomach, shortness of breath, or increased heartbeats. The symptoms usually begin on a very subtle level, sometimes hours before the actual attack.

When you observe the initial sensations that usually accompany a panic attack, acknowledge to yourself that now is the time to apply your new learning. You're not setting the scene to have a tug of war with the anxiety as before. Instead, this time you're preparing a space to implement a new empowered approach, the One Move technique.

## Embrace

Embrace the fear as it rises within you. Mentally send it a short message telling it that you're glad it's come to visit and you're sending it a warm welcome. Invite this feeling into your body and mind, and treat it like an old friend. Welcome it closer, because you want to get to know it and observe it. It's not unusual to feel a little apprehensive at this point, because this new approach of inviting the anxiety closer may feel unusual. You're actually inviting and greeting the panic that normally upsets and terrifies you. Try to genuinely welcome and embrace the anxiety and sensations with open arms and make no effort to suppress what you are feeling.

Be firm. Just watch as the feeling of fear rises and draws nearer. If you're a visual type, you might want to give the anxiety a mental image, such as a troublesome child or ridiculous cartoon character with big feet.

Let the fear wash over you. Feel each and every sensation in detail. You're not trying to get away from the panic attack this time—in fact, you're actually trying fully to embrace it. By embracing the fear you start to process the sensations and your emotions begin to flow with the experience rather than against it. Flowing with the experience causes less resistance and less psychological friction within you.

Keep with the sensations, and keep watching them like you'd watch ocean waves as they fall and rise again throughout your body. The approximate time frame of each individual panic attack differs from person to person. For some it's about twenty minutes, and for others it can be longer.

There will come a point when you can observe and embrace the panic attack to an extent, and then it will overwhelm you. Then you'll want to either fight it or retreat to safety. This is understandable because the sensations can often be very uncomfortable. However, this is the vital point in the process. It signals the moment to use the technique that makes the vital difference and unlocks the cycle of panic—the One Move. At this key moment, when you feel all is lost and you could not continue observing and embracing the strong sensations, **demand more**.

MORE?

You're thinking, "You must be kidding! I can hardly stand this, let alone take an increased dosage."

## Demand More

Demand more! Scream out, if you must, but let your anxiety know you're making a

firm request that you want to experience the very worst it can throw at you! The request for more is the most empowering statement you make when in the midst of a full-blown panic attack. It sends a clear and strong statement that you are calling fear's bluff. You are allowing yourself to fully feel the experience as if it were a roller coaster ride. You are a fully paid-up and willing participant, **not a victim**. You're asking it to show you more of these unusual bodily sensations you're going through. Now you're consciously **moving 100% WITH the fear, not against it**. By fully moving in the same direction as the fearful experience, you end the internal conflict or tug of war. Demanding more places you in a new position of power. Before you felt like a victim always having to resist and pull against the fear but now that you are no longer resisting, the fear has no momentum to develop into a heightened state of anxiety and it is processed out through the body and the mind.

Here are some mantras you may use to fully process the fear:

> *I feel anxious and my heart is beating fast, but now show me how it feels to be more anxious, come on heart beat faster! Is that as fast as you can go?*
>
> *Show me what it's like if my throat and chest feel even tighter.*
>
> *I can feel a real knot in my stomach, but I wonder what it would be like if it were much tighter. Can't you make it tighter? Is that the most you can offer?*
>
> *I notice all kinds of fearful thoughts circling around my mind. Make them faster. Aren't there any scarier ones?*

This request for more is a request that fear cannot deliver. You voluntarily move in the same direction as the sensations, and you give no momentum to the fear to create the internal tug of war struggle. It is like throwing down the rope and saying, "Whatever anxiety, -do what you must, I am no longer playing this game of

fear". This knocks anxiety right on the head, because there's no longer any fuel to drive the campaign of terror. The fuse that was dangerously close to exploding into a full-blown panic attack is extinguished. What's more is that this action calls fear's bluff. The fear that drives the whole experience reveals the truth of the situation—there never really was anything to fear in the first place. The threat was a hoax. The panic attack was a dud; there never was a real, tangible threat.

It can help to demand more in an aggressive manner. If you are alone you can stamp your feet and call out to the anxiety. The sensations of anxiety, of course, are unpleasant; nobody's trying to pretend they're enjoyable. But that doesn't have to stop you from fully experiencing them. In fact, you've always fully experienced them, but this time you're a willing participant processing the experience not suppressing it. You're stating with confidence, to yourself and your body, that you're capable of experiencing the sensations and any amount of increased anxiety that may come your way, because you know the truth: there's nothing to fear.

Demand more.

Fear doesn't know how to handle this request. It's completely confused by this new response, and it has no option but to collapse on itself and dissipate. Fear feeds off fear; you're extinguishing the fuel by which a panic attack is driven. It now has no struggle to pull against, nothing to feed on. For extra measure (as the fear wanes), silently say to your fear, "Is that the best you can do?" Invite it to come back! "Stay! Have you nothing else to terrify me with?" As it leaves—which it will—wish it well, and again, keep the invitation open for its return. You need to invite the anxiety to return at any time in order to eliminate lingering thoughts of an unexpected return.

When done correctly, the results of this technique are instantaneous. You'll immediately feel the turning point and the parasympathetic nervous system, which I mentioned earlier, coming into action and restoring calm. It's as if you've walked out the other side of fear with a new confidence. There was no abyss, no cliff you

went tumbling off. All of it was nothing but a series of physical sensations which you were previously misinterpreting as a real danger.

You may notice the fear trying to make a comeback (i.e., something terrifying, like a fearful thought, crossing your mind). Don't worry. This is just the winding-down cycle of the anxiety. Don't let it engage you. Observe it as before, as if you were looking at a cloud passing overhead, and let it go. Remember, observe and experience, don't react. Remain firm, and continue to experience the sensations. Rest in the knowledge that, whatever comes your way, you can handle it. Let this be your daily mantra:

*I can handle any situation life throws my way.*

In the beginning, you'll probably find it hard to believe in yourself enough to demand more, because panic attacks may have eroded some of your self-confidence. This is only natural—you may find yourself asking for more and then immediately running with your hands in the air. **Don't let any setbacks worry you**. Practice and practice. If you don't get a result straight away, keep at it; the more you use this technique, the more you'll see how empowering it is. In time, you'll reach a point where you feel a panic attack approach and genuinely welcome it with all your mind and body. You'll truly understand that there's nothing to worry about. You'll mentally shout out to your anxiety to come in, but by then, it won't.

Have you ever noticed that when you're feeling relaxed, you can't make yourself have a panic attack, no matter how hard you try? Now you know the reason why. Moving <u>with</u> the fear, not against it, eliminates the source of its power.

You may think, "No way! I'm not asking for more panic sensations. Knowing my luck, that's exactly what I'll get, and it will finally push me over the edge and finish me off." You fear that if you do in fact ask for more fear and more anxiety, the request will create more problems for you.

## Trust

This is where you need to trust you are safe. Trust yourself. Trust in your own body's ability to handle the situation and all the unusual bodily sensations you might feel. Trust that you can process this fear and that the anxious thoughts you experience are not valid. Apply what you've read here, and practice it. It will be your most useful ally in your scariest moments.

Let's take an example and put this into practice.

**Scenario 1**

You're on a train, and you've just sat down. It's been a long day; you're tired and looking forward to sleeping on the journey. The whistle blows and the train doors slam shut with a loud bang. An anxious thought flashes through your mind:

> *What if I get a panic attack on this train? How will I cope? I won't be able to get off!*

It begins. Your chest suddenly feels tight, and you notice your heartbeat increasing. You quickly look around. Are there any friendly faces that might console you? None. The initial symptoms of a panic attack begin. So here we go. Let's look first at the way you may have dealt with this situation in the past.

As your heartbeat increases, you become edgy. You may have learned some breathing techniques, so you put them into effect. One of the problems with breathing techniques is that, although they're very useful for reducing general anxiety, the results never seem quick or apparent enough during a moment of panic. Because of that, they're rarely carried through and continued. Many people don't like to focus on their breathing during a panic attack because they feel this only causes a sense of smothering and increased anxiety.

So the breathing doesn't seem to be working. Most likely, your next move is to get up and walk around—into the bathroom, for example, where you can be alone. Standing up and walking around makes you feel less trapped. You close the toilet stall door and check to see how you feel.

This feels a little better. It's good to be alone—away from anyone who might witness you in distress and making a fool of yourself. The problem is that you're starting to feel trapped again, and you're running out of places to run. You reach inside your pocket and pull out your emergency relaxant for panic attacks. This doesn't necessarily have to be a prescription drug; it may be a small bottle of alcohol or even rosary beads. Whatever your last line of defense is, it had better work. If not, you'll have to use the ultimate coping strategy—pulling the emergency cord and jumping off the train. This situation, like most panic attacks, is an escalation of panic and an exhaustion of the coping techniques.

Now, let's try the same scenario with your new understanding.

**Scenario 2**

As you hear the train door slam, the fearful thoughts rise. This time, however, you don't react with terror, but with a simple observation—maybe even slight excitement—because you're going to be presented with a new opportunity to learn more about your panic attacks.

I'm not saying that you aren't going to experience fear—sometimes that's unavoidable. But the difference is that whatever you experience, you're going to throw yourself into it—head first. You're a survivor.

You observe that your heart is pounding faster now, and you notice that your breathing is becoming short and rapid. You decide to keep feeling and embracing all of this—100 percent. A thought creeps in and tells you to get up, move around, go to the bathroom. You decide not to. You tell yourself that if it gets really intense,

you might consider the bathroom as a last resort. But for the moment, you're going to ride it out where you are. Most people would never even notice you were in distress so you don't worry what they might think of you.

You're now in the moment of a panic attack. You're listening to your fearful thoughts and experiencing all the unusual bodily sensations. You're pleased with yourself. You realize you're riding the wave of anxiety, and you haven't even begun your first coping technique. Then it intensifies. You start to feel a deep fear in your stomach as your left arm tingles with pins and needles. You're approaching the climax of high anxiety, and you examine all your options—shout out, escape, or **demand more**.

So that's what you do—you demand more. You demand with firmness that the panic increases so that you can experience the full range of the emotion. A few seconds pass. The panic suddenly intensifies and you ask for it again—then nothing. In fact, things are starting to calm down. Your heart isn't racing like before, and your chest feels somewhat lighter. "It's coming to an end-great". Just as you think that thought, there is another burst of anxiety but this time it's weaker. Gradually over the next few minutes the anxiety fully dissipates and there is no sense of foreboding.

Now you can really feel confident! You not only got through a panic attack, but you also ran with it and experienced it all the way. You stood your ground, not in an overly aggressive manner, but as an explorer, looking to feel the full experience. There's no lingering fear of a returning panic attack on your train journey, because you're confident that, should one come, you'll ride it out like the last one. You close your eyes and relax confidently into your seat. What you're doing is befriending fear in a non-confrontational manner. You're inviting it into your life and making it yours. Owning it and processing it.

This is a complete U-turn from what we've been previously taught. We're normally told to cope using coping techniques and that, after a significant period of time, you

grow out of your anxiety. Bypass that disempowering approach. Go for the finish line. Try the complete reverse- move in the same direction as your fear and as you make that move observe how the fear no longer controls you. This is by no means a new approach. We can see from the past how this has been applied to many different areas of living a successful life.

The ancient Chinese martial arts, such as aikido, use this approach to self-defense. When faced with an attacker, students of these disciplines were taught that the greatest defense was never to engage in the first place. Simply observe and walk away. Should an attack ensue after trying the path of non-resistance, students were taught moves, such as hand blocks, to channel the aggressor's energy in a harmless way and flow with the bodily movements. Eventually, the aggressor (after finding himself or herself flat on the ground one too many times) backs off and retreats. The aggressor becomes harmless. The danger is disarmed.

I describe fear simplistically—like an external force, or an aggressor that you struggle with. The truth is that it's all our own creation—a tug of war we play with ourselves. The fear is driven by overreacting and then resisting anxious bodily sensations. I want to highlight the fact that the One Move technique is not just a process of simply observing anxiety or, to use a popular term, "floating" with the anxiety. The method of accepting and observing has been addressed in other cognitive approaches to dealing with anxiety. Observing and accepting make up only the first step of the One Move technique.

That in itself isn't nearly powerful enough to stop the panic attack in its tracks. Simply observing and accepting is like sitting immobile on the fence. It's the stance of neutrality, but you may have noticed in the past that being neutral toward the anxiety often isn't enough. To really eliminate panic attacks for good, you need an additional element. You need movement—movement that's internal and toward the anxiety and panic attack. Asking for more is one such movement.

Don't be confused by the academic jargon used in text book psychology to explain

your anxiety disorder. What psychologists and doctors don't explain to you is that the anxiety mechanism is not complex. Yes, the issues in your life or the chemical reactions in your body that bring about the anxiety may be complex, but being able to understand and then defuse the anxiety mechanism is not a complex process. You need only one step, one movement toward the core of the anxiety. That switch in thinking will get you the results you're looking for.

Anxiety isn't logical. Look at the fears that go through your mind—they have no basis in validity, nor do they follow reason or structure. Panic attacks are flat-out illogical; they don't make sense. There's no threat, and yet you still fear the sensations. What you need is a paradoxical solution. In this case, that means doing the opposite of what the logical mind has tried to do all along by fighting the anxiety. You need to implement the One Move technique. To summarize, here are the steps we've discussed so far:

1. *Observe*
   When panic arises, wherever you may be, simply start to **observe it**. Don't try to avoid or suppress your bodily sensations.

2. *Embrace*
   **Embrace** the experience, and feel all the sensations as they course through your body. Don't label the sensations as good or bad.

3. *Demand More*
   When you feel that the panic is going to run out of control, and when your confidence in your ability to observe the fear wanes, perform the One Move technique by inviting your body to experience more. **Demand more** of the unusual sensations.

4. *Trust*
   **Trust** that you're safe. Repeat the process, and keep moving toward the fear by asking for more. Trust that no harm will come to your mind or body.

The key difference between someone who is cured of panic attacks and those who are not cured is really very simple. **Those who are cured are no longer afraid of panic attacks.** They see their bodily sensations as merely sensations and not something to which they should overreact. I'm showing you how to be one of those people by teaching you a technique to process the sensations in the correct manner.

Here's another interesting way of looking at the One Move technique. The trick to ending panic and anxiety attacks is to *want* to have one. Then the wanting pushes it away. Again, can you have a panic attack in this very second? Try hard—I'll bet you can't.

You've heard the saying **"what you resist persists."** Well, that saying applies perfectly to fear. If you resist a situation or experience because of fear, then the fear around that issue will persist. How do you stop resisting? You move with the anxiety—and by doing so, it can't persist. In essence, this means that if you voluntarily seek out a panic attack on a daily basis, you can't have one. You may not realize it, but you've always decided to panic. You've made the choice by thinking, "This is beyond my control" or "Something terrible is about to happen to my body because I can feel X, Y, and Z."

To use a visual analogy, imagine that having a panic attack is like standing on a cliff's edge. It seems like the anxiety pushes you closer to falling off the edge. Each unusual sensation confirms that something terrible is about to happen, and you feel yourself being edged closer and closer to the abyss. There are two options open to you in this scenario.

You can turn around and fight your way back to safe ground with coping techniques and strategies you've learned previously. You might seek reassurance from a friend or take a dose of medication to help you feel safer. Basically, you fight it. Or . . .

You use the One Move technique—and you bravely jump!

To be really free of the fear, you must metaphorically jump. You must jump off the cliff that scares you so much, and jump into all the things that you fear most. How do you jump? You jump by inviting more of the fear.

Your guaranteed safety is the fact that a panic attack will never harm you physically. That's a medical fact. You're safe—the sensations are wild, but no harm will come to you. Your heart is racing, but no harm will come to you. The jump becomes nothing more than a two-foot drop! You have all the safety harnesses you need, because in reality, you've never had anything to fear in the first place. The abyss that lay before you was an illusion.

Trust that medical knowledge. Feel assured by it. Think of all the attacks you've had to date and you've still come out at the other end.

So now you're going to treat the anxious situation differently. You'll regularly seek out the panic attack like an adventure seeker. This process of seeking out the anxiety applies when you feel yourself bang in the middle of an anxiety episode, but it also helps to do it when you're feeling fine and relaxed.

Begin right now, and continue for the rest of the day. Go out while you're actually hoping for a panic attack! It sounds a bit mad, but try it. Feel how empowering this new thinking is for you. Until now, you've dreaded the arrival of an attack, but now you're dancing with the idea of it. The fear has nowhere to latch onto when you move in its direction.

Sometimes people write to me and say that they like the new approach, but they tried it and got no results. In fact, it made them feel a bit more anxious. These people want to know what they're doing wrong.

## Why Doesn't It Work for Some People?

When people can't get the One Move technique to work, it's inevitably an issue of trust. They go only halfway and then retreat. They try, but after a few attempts, the anxiety hasn't decreased as quickly as they would have liked—and with disappointment, they revert to old coping mechanisms to try to shut down the sensations of panic.

Remember, when using the One Move, you're NOT trying to shut down the sensations or the fear. Your first and foremost objective is to experience them in their entirety. Of course, that's not what you really want. Deep down, you really want it to end, but to get to that point, you have to move towards and go through the anxiety and out the other side. This is the paradox of ending panic attacks.

Stage 1 of the Panic Away Program is also known as the trust stage. Trust will carry you through the panic attack. Trust that you're safe, and trust that your body can handle it. When you ask for more anxiety, expect to get it—and when you get it, experience it and own it as your own. Don't demand more while at the same time hoping it doesn't materialize. Demand more with all your heart, expect the odd setback and keep moving forward with trust toward your goal.

## What If the Panic Never Stops?

The anxiety will not get increasingly worse to the point of no return. Anxiety can't continually increase. It will wane, and when it does, you're psychologically in a completely different place. You're now in a position of power. Before, it was a menacing storm surrounding you, and you tried to shelter yourself from it by bracing tightly. Each time the storm of panic passed, you felt lucky to have survived it. Now it's different, because the experience moves through you, and you process the storm of panic in seconds. This new position of power makes you feel more in control and more confident because you've actually encouraged the panic to do its worst—and nothing happened. You're alive and well.

The new confidence you get from the One Move enables you to win. When you stop fearing the sensations, the panic attacks end. Your life now opens up in front of you as you become more fearless. Bear in mind each individual is different. Some will eliminate their panic attacks faster then others. Do not get upset or disappointed with yourself if it is not happening as fast as you would like. In my experience the only people who do not reach their goal of eliminating the panic are the ones who give up too early.

# Examples of the One Move in Real-life Situations

I want to give you some examples of how the One Move can be applied to various real-life situations. You may have a specific situation that causes you panic, and you're unsure of how the technique can be applied appropriately. Hopefully, the examples will clarify such issues. If your specific situation isn't discussed, I'm sure you'll be able to get a good enough understanding to adopt for your particular problem area.

### Driving with Anxiety

One of the more common questions I'm asked is how to apply the One Move technique to cope with anxiety while driving. People have many different fears in this area, ranging from fear of being caught in traffic to crossing waterway bridges. Often the anxiety stems from a fear of being trapped in the vehicle in gridlock traffic or losing control of the vehicle and causing a collision.

Needless to say, even though they may have been battling a driving phobia for many years, almost all of the people I've consulted with have not actually had any

of these mishaps occur. Let's look at the primary fear: having an accident due to the distractions of an anxiety attack while driving.

Most people work themselves into a state of high anxiety even before they've pulled out of their driveways. They imagine scenes of causing ten-car collisions on the highway because they "freaked out" and hit another vehicle. If you have such concerns, the first thing to do is review your driving history. Have you been a reckless driver in the past? Do you have a history of bad driving? Most phobic drivers actually have clean driving records and have never even been in a minor road incident. Anxious drivers are not a deadly hazard on the road; in fact, they can be a lot more vigilant than many ordinary drivers who, after a long day in the office, are virtually asleep at the wheel.

As we discussed previously when looking at the biology of anxiety, by virtue of their conditions, anxious drivers have a high level of sensory alertness. This level of alertness keeps them aware of potential hazards and focused on the task of driving—not daydreaming, chatting, or rooting around in the glove compartment. This, of course, does not suggest that anxious driving is the ideal way to commute. But I believe it's important to make this point because so many chastise themselves for being anxious in their cars. If you're generally a good driver, then before you set out in your car, take confidence in that, and reaffirm that fact to yourself. Acknowledging and reaffirming that you're a capable driver will go some way toward alleviating this concern. That self-assurance, along with the "One Move technique for drivers" (below), will help you return to being the confident driver you once were.

The second major concern of most phobic drivers is the fear of being trapped in the car in some manner. By this, I mean being caught in traffic, on busy three-lane highways, on long bridges, or even stopped at red lights. When allowed to, your mind will run away with this fear and imagine all kinds of deadly scenarios where you feel cornered or trapped in your vehicle with no assistance available should you experience a major panic attack.

The important thing here is to curb these fears, before they take root, by offering yourself viable solutions to any of these scenarios and not letting your mind trick you into believing there's a trap ahead. Give it some thought. Are there really any situations, such as the ones described above, where you're truly trapped with no means of escape?

No, of course there aren't.

Eventually, traffic always moves; it doesn't remain gridlocked forever. There's flow, and there's always an exit. This may mean figuring out the exit for yourself, but never let these thoughts corner you into thinking that there's no escape. When you counteract these fears with logical solutions, you undermine the control that fear holds over you. You begin to see the bluff it's playing to keep you petrified of what could potentially happen out there in the traffic.

Your mind may rebel and come up with the worst possible scenario that you may get "stuck in"—but again, is this really the terrifying trap you imagined? Be careful not to let these thoughts trap your thinking. Every minute of the day, people's cars break down in traffic. These drivers have no option but to put on the hazard lights and leave the vehicle. It's not going anywhere. There you are, and there's an exit, albeit an extreme one; however, by using my technique, it never needs to come to that. In fact, you're going to learn how driving can actually be an enjoyable experience once again.

## The One Move for Drivers

I'm going to show you how to apply the One Move to driving scenarios. In this case, we'll look at defusing the panic attack while driving a car. It's exactly the same One Move procedure I described in the previous chapter, except an extra degree of caution is needed. I'll explain.

I suggest that you begin by taking your car out on practice run, possibly at night or on a Sunday when there's less traffic. Drive a route that you feel anxious about; perhaps go beyond your safety zone or drive over a bridge. If you feel very nervous, begin with a smaller test. The important thing, though, is to challenge yourself with a route that causes you at least some degree of concern. You won't be long into the journey before the anxiety starts to manifest itself. This anxiety may be low level, but if driving really is a problem, it will gradually manifest itself into feelings of panic.

As you feel that panic arise, begin by encouraging the sensations. Think about how anxious your body feels. Get interested in the unusual sensations, and begin to forcefully to encourage the attacks to increase in strength. You're now challenging the anxiety to reveal itself. Move into the anxiety as much as possible.

Your training is to take the car on a test run in the hope of having an anxiety attack. That's your goal. Even before you've left home, you're chasing the anxiety by purposefully setting out on the journey. This is a turn of events; because driving makes you feel anxious, you normally prefer not to even think about it.

The practice drives can be done with another person at first, but after more practice, I recommend doing it alone—that's where you find true independence and freedom from fear. If you always practice with another individual, then you may form an idea that it's your passenger who's letting you feel safe and not your newfound confidence.

You need to be cautious about certain things while practicing. Ensure you're driving at a safe speed, and continue to maintain focus on the road and other traffic. If you feel light-headed and faint, it's best to pull over and continue with the One Move in a parked position; otherwise, you're perfectly safe. You're safe because you're actually in a heightened state of awareness, and if you maintain a safe speed, you're no danger to yourself or other drivers. You're safe because the unusual sensations are nothing more than that—sensations; they'll cause you no harm. The

thoughts that terrify you in your mind are mere illusions.

When you return home after a successful drive, it can help to keep track of your performance in a diary; call it your driving diary. This reaffirms how well you're progressing, and should you have a bad day on the road, you'll be able to return to the diary and see that you are indeed making real progress. Try to affirm to yourself how well you've been doing. We can have one great week and then one bad day, and suddenly it's as if the other six good days never existed! So always try to focus on the success, and it will grow and expand in your life. This applies to all situations where you're trying to overcome your anxiety.

The One Move will give you the ability to move into the fear of any road situation. Moving toward the fear cancels out the force or impact of the anxiety. This takes a little practice—but, as I say, a few test runs during times of little traffic are best.

To finish, I want to give you some affirmations you can use while driving. Repeat these silently or out loud, and they'll help relax and center your mind, keeping you focused on driving well.

*I am a competent driver and always arrive at my destination safely.*

*I am calm, alert, and in full control while driving.*

## Case Study:

## Lindsey's Fear of Driving

My fear of driving was crippling my life. Driving on busy roads, especially highways, would frequently send me into panic attacks. It would begin with a niggling thought, usually about some road horror story I'd heard recently. Then my body would respond with rapid heartbeats, shallow breathing—the whole shooting match. The very fact that my body was getting nervous would then trigger the fear that I

was going to have one of my infamous panic attacks. It wasn't uncommon for me to have to call my husband at times to come rescue me!

Giving up driving wasn't possible. I have children to take to school every weekday, and there's really no other way to get them there but for me to drive. I'm sure they would have loved it if I turned around to them and said, "Sorry, kids, no school today. Your mother is too afraid to take you." But that, of course, was not an option. Every morning, I would do battle with this demon fear, and often it felt like I was losing ground. It was draining me and causing numerous sleepless nights as I thought about where I might have to drive the following day.

There are two ways to get to the school. One is on the highway—or there's the other, a much longer, roundabout route that's really a complete waste of time. Depending on how I was feeling, I would leave either extra early for the long route, if I was feeling a bit jittery—or around the normal time, as most other mothers in the neighborhood, if I was feeling brave. It even got to the point where my children were noticing.

"Long way today. Mummy mustn't be feeling great."

Something had to be done. I began researching on the Internet and came across the course. It took me a little while to fully grasp what was being taught by the One Move technique, and I really had no idea how I was going to apply it to my school runs. But after a few readings, something must have clicked. I think it began with me losing my temper with this fear. I actually, embarrassingly enough, yelled out, "Bring it on!" like they do in the movies. "If you're going to terrorize me for the rest of my driving life, then come on and do your worst."

That felt really scary and surprisingly invigorating, like I was getting a weight off my chest. I left the next morning with the same attitude. And for the first time in years, I found myself driving up the road with a sense of calm resignation. When I examine it now, it was resignation to the fact that if I had the "big bad" panic

attack I always feared, I would simply have it! "This thing is not going to kill me. So if you're not going to kill me, then, by heck, you'd better let me take the kids to school and let me get on with all the other things I have to do today." This train of thought later developed into "If this thing isn't going to kill me, then it damn well better be gone rather than my having to live under its thumb for the rest of my days."

Wow, what a turnabout! Something inside really had clicked. Yes, I felt the same tingles and the same strange palpitations for weeks after, but now I really didn't care. My attitude did a complete U-turn, from being terrified by the slightest sensation to not giving a breeze. It's almost like I got sick and tired of the tantrum of the panic attacks and was not going to tolerate the fears anymore. I'm not sure if this is the right interpretation of the One Move, but this is what I took from it, and it really works for me.

I now drive with confidence and with only a distant memory of being scared. I'm not going to say it's totally stress free—the noise, the traffic, etc.—but I guess that just means I'm back to the same level with every other driver out there on the road.

## Agoraphobia: Fear of Leaving Home

Agoraphobia is linked to the experience of panic attacks. This is the fear of open spaces or of being in crowded, public places like shopping markets. It's associated with leaving a safe zone, such as the home.

Because of feeling vulnerable, people who experience this fear often suffer from panic attacks in these "open" situations. It's true to say that many people who have regular panic attacks experience different degrees of agoraphobia. Some have a lingering background anxiety about being away from home should they experience a panic attack. Others are so immobilized by this fear that they find it very difficult

to leave their homes for even a short period.

The thinking behind agoraphobia usually follows the line that, were a panic attack to occur, who would look after the person, how would he or she get the needed assistance and reassurance? The vulnerability grows from the feeling that once agoraphobia victims are caught in the anxiety, they're suddenly unable to look after themselves and are therefore at the mercy of the place in which they find themselves and the strangers around them. In its extreme form, agoraphobia can lead to a situation where people become housebound for numerous years. Please note that this is by no means hopeless; I always need to reinforce the fact that something only becomes hopeless once the person really believes that to be the case. The One Move has taken many people out of extreme agoraphobia and into a full and active life again.

To begin with, the primary issue to address is believing in the safe zone. To clarify, when I talk about the "safe zone," I refer to the zone where the person believes panic attacks don't occur, or at least where they occur infrequently. Because comfort is found there, it's where the person tends to spend more and more time. The safe zone from anxiety is a myth sustained by the mind. The mind has developed a habit of thinking that dictates the safe zone is the only place to feel secure.

If agoraphobia is an issue for you, watch as your mind comes up with reasons why it believes only a certain area is safe and another is not. Those reasons range from being near the phone or people you trust to having familiar physical surroundings to reassure you.

The reality of anxiety is that there's no such thing as a safe zone. There's nothing life-threatening about a panic attack, and therefore sitting at home is the same as sitting under the stars on a desert island. Of course, your mind immediately rushes to tell you that a desert island is a ridiculous place to be because there are no hospitals, no tranquilizers, no doctors, NO SAFETY.

Review your previous experiences of panic attacks. Aren't you still here, alive and well, after all those attacks during which you were convinced you were going to die?

You may have, on occasion, been driven to the hospital, where they did medicate you to calm you down—but do you really believe that you wouldn't have survived were it not for the drugs? You would have. If the same bout of anxiety had occurred on this desert island, it too would have passed, even if you were all alone. Yes, when it comes to conditions that need medical attention—such as asthma, diabetes, and a whole litany of other conditions—then having medical aid nearby is a big asset. But no doctor in the world would tell someone with anxiety that there are only specific safe zones in which he or she can move.

I know more than anyone how terrifying it can feel to move out of your safe zone as the feeling of fear wells up inside, so I don't wish to sound harsh. This course is not about chastising people for their behaviors. It's a way of looking together at solutions and seeing through the myths that form prison walls. The goal is to enable you to return to a richer and more meaningful life. I also realize that people around you can't understand why a trip to the store would cause you such discomfort. You'll have to forgive them and try not to be upset by their lack of understanding of your problem.

If an individual such as a partner or family member hasn't had a similar anxiety issue, that person may often find it hard to understand and empathize with what you're going through. I'm sure you've been dragged out of the house numerous times against your will, kicking and screaming. This can then lead to tensions and arguments, and it's upsetting because it can make you feel less understood by those around you. People around agoraphobics often simply try what they feel is best. If you see that their intentions are well meaning (although often misguided), then you'll be able to relate to them better and help sooth any potential conflicts.

There's one thing I'm sure you'll agree with: the only person who will get you out of agoraphobic thinking is you. These are your thoughts, and only you can begin to change that pattern. This course teaches you how to do exactly that. Dealing with long-term agoraphobia is a slow process at first. But once the results start happening, it moves faster and faster until you reach a point where you find it hard to believe that going out was ever such a difficult task.

## Case Study:

## Sylvia's Agoraphobia

My use of the One Move was really quite simple. I see the technique as a move out of a life of restriction into one of freedom and confidence. I was housebound for five years. I could function to a certain level because I had a husband and children to do things for me, but inside I was really dying. I was angry with myself for not being brave, and I felt trapped by a phobia that would last to the end of my days. It's quite depressing, really, when you can't see a solution.

My problem stemmed from a general anxiety that spiraled into a fear of being caught outside by a panic attack. This meant that being anywhere outside home made me extremely anxious. Even walking to the end of the road could be a problem.

I'm not sure how this phobia got so bad, but it wasn't until I reached rock bottom that I decided I had to stop living this way. My marriage was suffering, and I'm not sure how much longer it would have lasted had I not tackled the agoraphobia myself. I needed a solution.

My husband had been very supportive, but I knew he mourned the loss of the confident woman he married years ago. When I look back now, I see I was living an empty shell of a life. I had made myself a prisoner—not of my house, but of my mind. My thoughts were the prison wardens threatening me that, were I to attempt

to break out, I would suffer the consequences. It turns out that after the breakout, the consequences were freedom!

It was anger more than anything that drove me to do the research and eventually get the course. I read the material and was initially not that excited. I think I was looking for a method that would not involve any work and one that would enable me to erase all memories of fears that I had—a magic pill. After reading it a few more times, I put it aside and didn't come back to it until I had really reached my wit's end.

The first time I decided to use the technique was on a shopping trip. I'd been planning to purchase curtains for some time and really wanted to pick them out myself. I arrived at the shopping mall with my husband, scared but also excited as today was going to be different. I could feel it. I began talking to the fear as was taught to me, not reacting to its scary voice, but simply observing and talking to it as if it were a five–year-old.

When the thought of an impending panic attack arose, I actually caught myself about to panic. I was about to tell myself, "I'm going to die if I don't get home." That was exactly the kind of thought that kept me prisoner all the time. What nonsense. I made a quick U-turn and said, "No, you come on! Come on, panic, let's have it. Let's have the best you got—and make it snappy, I've curtains to buy."

Nothing.

"Come on, then, with the panic and the dying, etc., etc. I haven't got all day."

A bubble burst there and then. I was now the schoolteacher keeping the unruly kids (my thoughts) under my control. This was empowering. I finished the trip without a problem, returned home, and celebrated with my husband over a glass of wine.

My complete recovery wasn't immediate. It took several more trips, along with

some major setbacks, before I really moved into my own stride. I would soon begin to wake in the morning and actually think about where I would like to go that day. Before long, I was traveling away from home on my own.

I hope I can inspire other readers, who may experience something similar, that the most important thing to remember is that there's hope. Don't let those thoughts trap you into a corner of your mind that says this is the only place you can exist in safety. That's not true. That's simply not true.

## Fear of Flying

Flying is often an anxious experience for the average person, so it's understandable that it poses a difficult challenge for a person with high anxiety and frequent panic attacks.

I'm going to demonstrate how to apply the One Move to conquer a fear of flying—so you'll feel confident and safe within yourself while flying both long and short distances.

Most people who suffer from panic attacks generally don't fear a mechanical failure in the aircraft, but rather a failure within themselves (i.e., an out-of-control episode of sheer panic while flying). This is because people who experience panic attacks feel like they're walking around with an internal bomb that could go off at any moment, sending them into a downward spiral of panic. If this "internal bomb" goes off in a safe place, such as the home, it's much easier to deal with because that environment is a safe zone in the person's mind. Being thirty thousand feet in the air creates the dilemma of not feeling safe and comfortable in the environment. An element of claustrophobia also often manifests itself with fear of flying. The person experiencing the anxiety frequently feels a need for more open space or somewhere to hide and be alone, away from other people.

If you're affected by a fear of flying, your initial attitude when you book your flight is important. Be excited that you have this opportunity. Remind yourself that while on the plane, you'll have new techniques on hand to help you overcome your fear and enable you to fly to far away destinations. Don't worry—you'll be perfectly safe on board.

Often a carefree flight begins the night before. Try to ensure that you get some good rest before your departure. Fatigue can cause excess stress. On the day of the flight, organize your schedule as best as possible, ensuring there's no hassle getting to the airport, passing through customs, etc. You can do this by giving yourself plenty of time. There's no point in adding more stress to an already nervous trip simply because you have to rush through the airport at the last minute.

As you board the plane, reaffirm the fact that should the anxiety manifest itself, it won't damage you. As you've always done in the past, you'll move through a period of anxiety unharmed, and being in an airplane doesn't mean that you're in a situation where these thoughts don't apply. So here's your *new* approach to flying.

**You board the plane, not in the hope that you'll feel relaxed and calm, but in the hope that you *will* experience the anxiety you fear.**

As always, the real trick to making the One Move fully effective is to completely throw yourself into the experience. If you hold a thought that all feelings or sensations of anxiety are bad, then that will only terrify you more and make you feel less positive about flying.

Board the plane, sit back in your seat, and if you're not feeling any of the familiar anxious sensations, ask them to make themselves felt. If they're there, you want them to reveal themselves. You can do this because you're not hiding or running away from them. You're not sitting in your seat praying that they don't appear. Remember how you reacted before when they started becoming apparent? Most

likely, you started to panic and then thought about how being on a plane was the last place in the world you wanted to be. Those thoughts grew in momentum until you scared yourself witless, and this was even before the main cabin door was closed.

If, however, you feel nothing alarming, that's fine. Begin to distract yourself with a magazine, a book, or music. But, to be sure, check your feelings regularly to see if there's anything anxious lingering in the background.

In hoping that you'll have a panic attack, you're willingly enticing the sensations of anxiety to be processed. It sounds like the last thing you should be doing on a plane, but remember that you're never retreating from the potential arrival of a panic attack. It's the voice inside us that, when alerted to a potential panic attack, screams one of two things:

> *Please, God, not now. I can't cope with this here. Red alert!*

. . . or the positive and empowering

> *There you are. I was expecting you to show up. Well, show me what you've got. I'm ready, waiting, and interested.*

So if you feel the beginnings of a panic attack, that's fine. You were never trying to run away from it; in fact, you were hoping it would emerge so you could move through it.

Because the whole situation is so alien to you and you fear a bad outcome, you do need to be a wholeheartedly brave to request more of the unusual sensations. But the more you really demand to have an attack during the flight, the more empowered and confident you'll feel in yourself. It can sometimes help to become a bit emotional or excited with the fear when you demand it to show itself, because this helps the emotions release and flow.

Most likely you will experience a rush of adrenaline on take off, notice that it has a wavelike effect. It courses through your body—and if you pay close attention, you'll feel it pass quickly, in twenty or thirty seconds. Nothing to fear here. After it passes, confidence returns—until the next wave comes, and the next, until eventually you notice the pattern. And, by not reacting, the effect on you is nothing more than bodily sensations minus the panic.

If you're not that close to the people with whom you're flying, it can help to not tell them about how anxious you're feeling; that can make you feel more uncomfortable around them. They get worried for you, and you may misinterpret their worry as proof that you really should be worried.

Say to yourself:

> *I will use my training—and if, at a later stage, I feel I really need to let them know, I will. For the moment, however, I'm going to ride out the experience myself.*

Finally, if you feel very anxious in the run-up to your flight and it's playing heavily on your mind, here are some extra helpful tips to make you more confident about the trip:

- If you're not taking any prescription relaxants, consider visiting your doctor and explaining your situation. Even if you never use it, a small prescription of Xanax, for example, is useful. In fact, I recommend simply having the tablets in your carry-on luggage. This way, you can reason with yourself that if you do experience uncomfortable sensations, you can always use the pills to help you calm down. Just knowing that you have a crutch in these situations goes a long way to quieting those anxious thoughts days before the flight.

- Drink plenty of fresh water and ensure that you have a bottle of water in the

plane. It's very easy to become dehydrated while flying long distances. Water also helps because you can swallow it during take-off and landing to equalize the air pressure in your ears.

- If you feel it will help ease the burden of flying, before take-off, tell the cabin crew that you're a nervous flyer. They're very experienced and familiar with this fear, and they'll always be able to assist should you need to talk with them. It's their training and part of their job to help nervous flyers. Some people find that telling the cabin crew helps them feel less alone as they fly. The reality is that you're not alone; there are probably plenty of other nervous flyers on the same flight as you.

## Case Study:

## Stephen's Fear of Flying

Until I experienced my first panic attack in 1999, I had flown for many years without any fear whatsoever. After that first panic attack—which, incidentally, happened while I was attending a church service—my attitude toward flying changed dramatically. Never mind being in an airplane crossing the Atlantic Ocean; for fear of a panic attack, I was now becoming concerned about simply being away from home. I noticed how I started to create excuses in order to avoid flying. I would convince my girlfriend that holidays at home were much more enjoyable, and there really was no need to have to fly off to foreign destinations.

In 2002, I changed jobs, and part of my new responsibilities entailed taking regular flights. This became a big source of stress for me. I would hardly sleep the night before a flight—and then, after managing to force myself on board, I would crack into the booze to help ease my nerves. I was arriving at my destinations slightly drunk, tired, and in no position to do a proper day's work. Something had to change.

I read about the course on a discussion forum and decided to see if it would help with what was now my chronic fear of flying. I had only a few days to go before flying again and was really looking for a mind miracle. The morning of the flight arrived, and I set off nervously for the airport, armed with my small carry-on luggage and the new panic survival skills in my head. The technique made sense to me on paper, but would it "fly" in a real-life situation?

I sat in my seat at the back of the plane and scanned internally to see how I was feeling. Yes, I was scared. That was fine. I was told to expect that. The plane taxied out on the runway, and, as usual, I felt a little more anxious. The funny thing is, I really know when a bout of panic is about to begin. My thoughts seem to get tighter, almost vicelike around my mind. My eyes start to dart around the plane, and every little movement or sound distracts me. I had a small bottle of alcohol, and I wasn't sure if I should down it in one gulp as usual or try the new technique.

I must have gotten that kind of excitement soldiers get before they leap over the trench into battle. I remember crying out (in my thoughts) to the anxiety to come and get me—"DO YOUR WORST." I sat upright in my seat and awaited the onslaught. I was abandoning myself to the fear in a courageous way. There was a rush of adrenaline, but it didn't feel out of control. Because I was the one who called out for this experience, rather than the waves of fear drowning me, I felt I was surfing them, riding above them and not suffocating under them. I continued to do this for several more minutes. As I had read, the fear was moving in wave formation throughout my body, but if that makes any sense, I felt I was somehow burning through it. After the rush was over, I felt exhilarated. I felt brave, a childlike bravery I haven't felt in many years.

That, and the flights that followed, went wonderfully to plan. After several more flights, I began not to worry so much about the flight the previous night. I started to trust that I would deal with any situation I came across. This is not to say I'm now a totally relaxed flyer—I must admit I still feel a little concerned as I board a plane or if we hit a spot of turbulence. The real difference for me, though, is that

I've passed the hurdle that made the flying experience so terrible. The hurdle was a fear of "losing it" while in an airplane. I realize now that the hurdle was an illusion. I had allowed my mind to believe that "losing it" was a very real possibility, and that very thought would send me into a spiral of panic.

Interestingly, once I tackled the fear of flying, the worry of having a panic attack while on solid ground disappeared. I believe this bonus happened because some part of me reasoned that if I could handle panic while flying without a problem, then a packed theater or a car journey would be a walk in the park.

## Fear of Public Speaking

I've often observed that many people's top-ranking fear is not death but having to speak in public. The joke is that these people would rather lie in a casket at their own funeral than give the eulogy. Public speaking for people who suffer from panic attacks or general anxiety often becomes a major source of worry, possibly weeks or even months before the speaking event is to occur.

These speaking engagements don't necessarily have to be the traditional "on a podium" events; they can be as simple as an office meeting where the individual is expected to express an opinion or give verbal feedback. In this case, the fear centers on having a panic attack while speaking. The individuals fear being incapacitated by the anxiety and hence unable to complete what they're saying. They imagine fleeing the spotlight and having to make all kinds of excuses later for their undignified departure out the office window . . .

This differs slightly from the majority of people who fear public speaking. With others, their fear tends to revolve around going blank while speaking or feeling uncomfortable under the spotlight of their peers. The jitters or nerves are, of course, a problem for this group as well—but they're unfamiliar with that debilitating threat, the panic attack, because they most likely haven't experienced

one before.

So how should a person with an anxiety issue tackle public speaking?

Stage 1 is accepting that all of these bizarre and, quite frankly, unnerving sensations aren't going to go away overnight. In fact, you're not even going to concern yourself with getting rid of them for your next talk. When they arrive during a speech or meeting, you're going to approach them in a new manner.

We need to build your confidence back to where it used to be before any of these sensations ever occurred. This time, you'll approach it in a unique, empowering manner, allowing you to feel your confidence again. Some say that most of the top speakers are riddled with anxiety before an event, but they somehow use this nervousness to enhance their speech. I'm going to show you exactly how to do this.

My first point is this, and it's important: the average healthy person can experience an extreme array of anxiety and very uncomfortable sensations while giving a speech and is in no danger of ever losing control, or even appearing slightly anxious to the audience. No matter how tough it gets, you'll always finish your piece—even if, at the outset, it feels very uncomfortable to go on. You won't become incapacitated in any way.

The real breakthrough happens when you fully believe that you're not in danger and that the sensations will pass. This, in essence, is what the One Move technique is meant to encourage. By asking for more, you're saying:

> *I realize that you [the anxiety] hold no threat over me.*

What keeps a panic attack coming again and again is the fear of the fear—the fear that the next one will really knock your socks off and the feeling that you were lucky to have made it past the last one unscathed. Because they were so unnerving and scary, it's your confidence that's been damaged by previous anxiety episodes.

Once you fully understand that you're not under any threat, then you can have a new response to the anxiety as it arises while speaking.

There's always a turning point when a person moves from general anxiety into a panic attack, and that happens with public speaking when you think to yourself:

> *I won't be able to handle this in front of these people.*

That split second of self-doubt leads to a rush of adrenaline, and the extreme anxiety arrives in a wavelike format. If, however, you feel the initial anxiety and react with confidence that this isn't a threat to you, you'll process the anxiety rapidly.

Using this new approach is a powerful ally because it means it's okay to feel scared and anxious when speaking. That's fine—you'll feel it, and you'll move with and through the sensations in your body and out the other side. Because people are often very anxious before the talk has begun, they may feel they've already let themselves down. Now you can relax on that point. It's perfectly natural to feel the anxiety.

Take, for example, the worst of the sensations you've ever experienced in this situation—be it general unease or loss of breath. You'll have an initial automatic reaction that says:

> *Danger—I'm going to have an episode of anxiety here, and I really can't afford for that to happen.*

At this point, most people react to that idea and confirm that it must be true because of all the unusual feelings they're experiencing. This is where your train of thought creates a cycle of anxiety that produces a negative impact on your overall presenting skills.

So let that initial "Oh dear, not now" thought pass by, and immediately follow it up with the attitude of:

> *There you are—I've been wondering when you would arrive. I've been expecting you to show up. By the way, I'm not in the least threatened by any of the strange sensations you're creating. I'm completely safe here.*

Instead of pushing the emotional energy and excitement down into your stomach, you're moving through it. Your body is in a slightly excited state, exactly as it should be while giving a speech—so release that energy in your self-expression. Push it out through your presentation, not down into your stomach. Push it out by expressing yourself more forcefully. In this way, you turn the anxiety to your advantage by using it to deliver a speech; you'll come across as more alive, energetic, and in the present moment.

When you notice the anxiety drop, as it does when you willingly move into it, fire off a quick thought when you get a momentary break (as I'm sure you have between pieces), and ask it for "more." You want more of its intense feelings because you're interested in them and absolutely not threatened by them.

It seems like a lot of things to be thinking about while talking to a group of people, but it really isn't. You'd be amazed at how many different, unrelated thoughts you can have while speaking. This approach is about adopting a new attitude of confidence about what you might have deemed a serious threat up until now.

If your predominant fear of speaking is driven by a feeling of being trapped, then I suggest factoring in some mental releases that can be prepared before the event. For example, some events allow you to turn the attention back to the room to get feedback, etc., from the audience. If possible, prepare such opportunities in your own mind before the engagements. This isn't to say that you have to use them, but people in this situation often remark that just having small opportunities where

attention can be diverted for the briefest moment makes the task seem less daunting. It may even be something as simple as having people introduce themselves or opening the floor to questions. I realize these diversions aren't always possible and depend on the situation, but anything you can factor in that makes you feel less trapped or under the spotlight is worth the effort.

### Case Study:

### Robert's Public Speaking

I'm the CEO of a software development company. I'm frequently invited to speak at conferences and showcase some of our products to audiences that can range from small groups to several hundred people. I had been doing this for many years without any problems, until I had what was later diagnosed by my doctor as a panic attack. My first panic attack occurred during a rather stressed week. I had a late night the previous evening at a corporate function and was slightly hung over the morning of my presentation.

I was about to begin my piece when I felt my heart go into a rapid succession of heartbeats, and my head started to spin. I felt tingles all down my arm and hot flushes. I was convinced I was having a heart attack. I walked over to the organizer and, under the excuse that my PowerPoint presentation was acting up, had him schedule me in at the end of the day.

This incident really scared me, and even though all medical checkups came back fine, I found it hard to believe it was just anxiety. I knew what anxiety was, but I had never experienced it like this before, never to this extreme. As other speaking engagements were scheduled for the rest of the year, I really needed to address this before I totally shied away from appearing in public. This was becoming a real problem in my mind because presenting is a crucial function of my position in the company.

It was my wife who did the research and bought the program for me. We were on a quiet vacation for one week, which allowed me to get some perspective on what was going on. In the evenings, I would make notes from the program and see if there was a way I could implement it fully to help me with this fear. The sensations I had felt were very unnerving, and I wasn't sure if anything other than pharmaceuticals would get me beyond them.

My next talk did not go perfectly to plan as I felt I've presented better, but the big difference was that I didn't fear the sensations that were causing me to panic previously. I thought drugs were needed to numb me to the feelings of fear, but what I learned from the course was that the feelings were fine. They were something my body was doing for whatever reason—rapid heartbeats, sweaty palms, tight chest and these sensations needed to be processed so they could flow away, not suppressed.

What was new, though, was my reaction to those alarming inner sensations. Previously, I had been overreacting to them and telling myself I was going to die. Now, I was moving with the sensations and even welcoming them for coming. I was observing and not labeling them as good or bad. They were simply what they were—sensations.

Time went on, and I got more and more comfortable with feeling a little out of control inside myself before a presentation. It was with this new attitude that the sensations disappeared quickly. During the last talk I did in November, I was more relaxed than ever before. I walked on stage with this deep feeling of confidence in my belly—the feeling was grounding me so totally in myself. It was an attitude of:

> *Well, here we go again. I'm too experienced and long in the tooth to be getting upset by these fearful thoughts and sensations. I'm going to get on with what I'm here to do, and if I drop dead on stage, then what the heck, I drop dead.*

This is the awakening I had from using the program. The One Move was the tool that allowed me to open up to the feeling of:

*Come what may, I am unmoved. I am rock solid inside myself.*

I personally believe we all spend too much time operating from the thoughts in our heads. Most of the people I work with are out of balance with stress. The One Move taught me to short-circuit the loop of fearful thinking that was causing the panic and move my attention back into my body. By processing the feelings without overreacting to them, I was no longer pushing them away and creating a buildup of internal pressure. Simply being there with these sensations was allowing them to be processed more effectively and thereby returning me faster to a sense of calm.

# Stage 2: Accept

## Eliminating General Anxiety

When confronted with panic attacks, the One Move technique explained in Stage 1 is the most powerful psychological tool you can use. Apply it any time you feel a panic attack surface, and it will defuse the situation for you. In Stage 1, we talked about developing a specific strategy of moving toward fear and processing it correctly in order to diminish its power and control. It's only when we struggle with, or run away from, our anxieties that they gain momentum. We're victims of fear only if we allow ourselves to be.

> *Do the thing you are afraid to do and the death of fear is certain.*
>
> *—Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Now, in Stage 2, we're going to tackle general anxiety. Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) is best described as a lingering background anxiety that often stays with a person throughout the day. It's associated with exaggerated worry and tension, even though at times nothing seems to provoke it. This disorder often means worrying excessively about health, money, family, or work—and it's also common for a person to be unable to describe exactly what the source of worry is. People who experience GAD often feel it worst upon waking in morning, and it can last throughout the day and disrupt sleep at night. As most doctors will tell you, there are two things that disturb sleep: physical pain and worry. It's therefore understandable that many people with GAD report frequent sleep disturbance as a major problem.

As explained in Stage 1, panic attacks can initiate a period of general anxiety. This

is understandable because the panic attack causes such confusion and fear, not just in the moment of panic, but also for days after it has passed. This state of confusion is ripe breeding ground for generalized anxiety disorder to develop. Note that some people who never experience panic attacks can still develop generalized anxiety from a prolonged period of exhaustion and sensitization.

Exhaustion = Sensitization = Panic Attacks/GAD

If we create a scale of anxiety from 1 to 10, a full-blown panic attack would register at 9 or 10 and total, blissful relaxation would be.




In a typical day, the average person in a metropolitan area might have a stress/anxiety rating of somewhere between 3 and 4. In comparison, people who experience GAD would be in the 5 to 8 range. When a panic attacks occurs, a person might shoot to the top of the scale (9 or 10) and return afterward to the GAD level of 5 to 8. The goal of Stage 2 is to get GAD and panic attack sufferers alike back down the scale to a normal, everyday stress level, somewhere in the 2 to 4 range. This is done through *released calm.*

People who find themselves floating around the high end of the scale deal with a continuous sense of unease. It's almost as if their bodies are stuck on a permanent

high setting of sensitization and anxiety. This constant anxiety makes them feel jumpy, irritable, and physically unwell. The body becomes tense and uncomfortable, and the mind becomes obsessed with anxious thoughts and sensations. This permanent tension in the mind and body leads to troublesome symptoms like these:

- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Exhaustion
- Vision problems
- Cramps
- Intrusive thoughts
- Feelings of unreality and depression
- Sleep disturbance
- Difficulty concentrating or mind going blank

See Stage 3 for a detailed discussion on anxiety symptoms.

If you've been diagnosed with general anxiety disorder, don't convince yourself that you have a clinical illness—you don't. This disorder doesn't mean that you have a physical or mental illness. Your brain is fine, and your body is fine. You're suffering from a sensitized state. If I had editorial authority over what was printed in textbook psychology, I would eliminate the use of the ominous term "disorder." I use it in my materials because most people are very familiar with it, but I find the term misleading. It conjures up ideas of chaos and a total breakdown of mental function. That's not the case. GAD is a behavioral condition and can be reversed easily by following a series of steps.

I'm going to show you the necessary steps to release a feeling of calm into your body and mind. I call this *released calm.* Released calm creates a small window of opportunity for you to rest and build a buffer zone between you and the anxiety. It allows a calm space for nerves to rest and recuperate. This release of calm happens

in small stages throughout the day as you carry out the exercises. It will give your nerves an opportunity to return to normal, ending the heightened, sensitized state they're in. It is very important for people who experience panic attacks to also use the exercises below. Feeling a greater sense of calm is vital for recovery from all anxiety related problems. Before I introduce the exercises, we need to first discuss a necessary change in attitude.

In order to fully move out of a state of general anxiety, your attitude is fundamental. Your ability to change your attitude will determine the speed and effectiveness of recovery. You need to adopt an attitude of complete acceptance.

Anxiety is like a bubble that surrounds you. When you're in that bubble of fear, your perception of things change and you feel your world getting smaller. This bubble might make you feel disconnected from the world around you as you look out at it through the bubble. The bubble of anxiety distorts everyday scenarios. To dissolve the bubble, you first have to fully accept it and own it. Accept everything this bubble of anxiety causes you to think and feel. Acknowledge that it's all created out of fear and that, for the present time, you're not going to fight it or try to hide from it.

You can start right now, as you read this, by simply sitting for a moment with your anxiety. Gather together all the anxious sensations you feel, and say to them:

*You're mine. I created you. We're in this together.*

When you fully own the experience, it settles better with you, and you become less agitated by it. This attitude is a fundamental first step. It's a bit like wearing a tight, uncomfortable coat—once you stop struggling with the tension, you can relax and calm down more easily.

For the entire journey of healing your anxiety, always maintain that baseline attitude of acceptance. Let it be the backbone of your healing. Give your anxiety

permission to manifest in whatever way it wishes. Allow your anxiety to move freely while, at the same time, you take full ownership and responsibility for it.

For example, some describe anxiety like a blanket that smothers them. If you've ever felt like that, embrace the anxiety and pull it close to you. Wrap yourself up in that blanket. Sit with it around you. This type of unconditional acceptance feels uncomfortable at first, but with practice, you'll quickly see how acceptance really makes a difference to your overall sense of control. You're waving a white flag and declaring a truce between you and your anxiety.

Before, you were tossing and turning with each and every sensation—but now, you're sitting in complete and absolute acceptance of it all, allowing the sensations to do what they will. The tension was a result of trying to control the sensations, but now that you have a greater understanding, you no longer need to struggle with it.

Here's another interesting way to imagine it. Your nerves are like a musical tuning fork. One day, out of the blue, that tuning fork gets a bang—and your whole system begins vibrating like crazy, creating wave after wave of nervous energy. This nervous vibration scares the living daylights out of you. You do everything in your power to stop the tuning fork from vibrating, but nothing works. What you don't realize is that each time you try to stop the vibrations, you actually give it another whack, causing even more vibrations. You can see how a permanent state of anxiety is caused by people continuously whacking the tuning fork (their nerves). Each whack might be a series of thoughts like:

*Am I losing my mind?*
*Why the heck won't this ever stop?*

Whack.

*This is getting out of control. I don't feel well at all. Maybe there really*

*is something wrong with me after all.*

Whack-whack

As a result of the thoughts, your adrenaline pumps and acts as the hammer that whacks your nerves again and again. You can clearly see how life becomes one constant state of nervous energy.

Stage 2 of the Panic Away Program is about learning a different approach. Here you're taught to fully accept the sensations and say, "Vibrate away all you like." Before, you got really alarmed by this nervous feeling—but now you know what it is, and you no longer try to shut it down. You fully accept the unusual vibrating sensations, and you get on with your day regardless. The more you accept and integrate the anxious sensations into your life, the faster they'll disappear. They disappear for one very simple reason: **you no longer react with fear to the sensations in your body**.

After fully accepting the anxious sensations, you notice your anxiety level come down a notch. Step by step, you see a real improvement. The driving force behind the recovery is your attitude of acceptance. [*]

By the way, an attitude of acceptance is not "I accept what's happening, and now that I accept it, PLEASE STOP RIGHT NOW."

Rather, it's this:

*I accept what I'm feeling today, and for all of today, I'm not going to get upset or worried about it. I know all of this is a series of sensations, and I'm not going to be drawn into a game of continually fearing it. If the sensations stay, so be it. If they go—well, even better.*

[*] The analogy of nervous energy vibrating is adopted from Dr. Weekes Hope and Help for Your Nerves.

I'm well aware that changing to an attitude of acceptance is easier said than done. If you've been suffering from general anxiety for a prolonged period of time, it may seem difficult to maintain an attitude of acceptance throughout the day, especially if the anxiety is quite intense. The following exercises will help you make the process easier. They're separated into **mental** and **physical** exercises and are designed to create moments of calm to relax your mind and body. The released calm that's generated reduces the sensitized feeling in your body, making it easier to maintain an attitude of acceptance.

You can think of the these exercises as a toolbox of solutions that allow you to make simple internal adjustments that will bring you back to feeling yourself again. The exercises can be done separately, but for the greatest benefit, it's best to implement them all.

The exercises for eliminating general anxiety are as follows:

**Mental Exercises**

- Morning Pages
- Eliminating anxious thinking/intrusive thoughts
- Gratitude

**Physical Exercises**

- Breathing
- Diet
- Exercise
- Thought Field Therapy (TFT)
- Distraction

# Mental Exercises:

A lot of people with generalized anxiety write to tell me how their anxiety makes them feel cut off or removed from the world around them. This sensation can be distressing, because people then fear that they'll never be able to feel normal again. This feeling is common and, in my experience, is caused by a cycle of anxious thinking. People with anxiety disorders spend much of their day mentally "checking in"—checking to see how their mind and body feel at any given moment:

*Am I feeling okay?*
*How are my thoughts?*
*Am I feeling secure or on edge right now?*

Regular "checking in" happens because anxiety has such a powerful effect on the mind and body. Often people report that they can deal with the anxious bodily sensations, but it's the anxious mind that causes them the most distress.

Anxiety can make people feel like a thick fog has surrounded their minds. Nothing really seems enjoyable as they look out at the world through this haze of anxious thoughts and feelings. The fog steals the joy out of life, and it can make people feel very cut off from everything.

The anxious thoughts act like a barrier to the world, and this sensation of separation then causes people to feel even more upset because they feel they're losing touch with everyday reality. The following exercises demonstrate how to end mental anxiety.

# The Morning Pages

The first exercise I want to discuss for alleviating mental anxiety is taken from the Artists Way by Julie Cameron. This hugely successfully book which has sold over two million copies worldwide, is designed to show people how to tap into their creative energies and become more creative in their daily life. Its philosophy is that everyone has an innate ability to become an artist but because of mental blocks, people miss the opportunity to express their creativity anywhere near its full potential. The course outlines a very simple exercise that is done each morning called the Morning Pages.

The Morning Pages exercise is designed to allow you to remove mental garbage that is circling your mind and to free your mental process up for the day ahead. Although the Artists Way course is specifically about creative expression, the Morning Pages exercise is very effective in removing mental blockages and hence can significantly reduce the anxious thoughts a person with general anxiety experiences daily. It is an excellent exercise to begin each day with.

You need to set aside 30 minutes of this exercise. Plan to wake a little earlier each morning so that you will not be disturbed and have time to complete the exercise. 30 minutes may initially seem like a big commitment but if getting up a bit earlier makes a considerable difference to how you feel, might it not be the most important 30 minutes of your day?

Find a table where you can sit alone with pen and paper. The paper can be sheets of paper, or it can be a spiral notebook.

Begin by writing the first thing that comes into your mind down on paper.

Your writing does not have to be grammatically correct and do not worry about style or presentation. The goal is allow yourself to flood these pages with whatever is on your mind. You will not be sharing this with anyone nor will you be reading it

again yourself so do concern yourself with the content.

You might begin with:

*I am not sure what I should write..ok here goes, I feel a little hungry. I wish I slept a little better last night. Have to go to work now. I wish I had spoken up at that meeting when I had the chance, etc....*

The goal of the exercise is to just keep writing until you have written three pages. As I said, if you cannot think of anything to write, simply write "I have nothing to write about". Once you are finished put the writing away somewhere private until the next morning. Note, this is not a diary, do not look over your writing or share the writing with anyone else. It is a space for you to freely write anything at all that is on your mind. It may be very insightful, poetic; it may be gibberish, that doesn't matter. The goal is not to analyse what you write but to simply create a flow of expression onto paper. When you allow this flow to happen you release blockages of mental energy and that will have a very positive effect on the rest of your day.

I suggest you do it with pen and paper rather than on a computer as it is more cathartic on paper and some people feel uncomfortable staring at a computer first thing in the morning. This exercise must be done daily for several weeks in order to fully appreciate the difference it makes in your life. You may soon reach a point where you notice days where you have forgotten to do it and how much better you actually feel when you do practise it. Think of it as a daily mind cleanse.

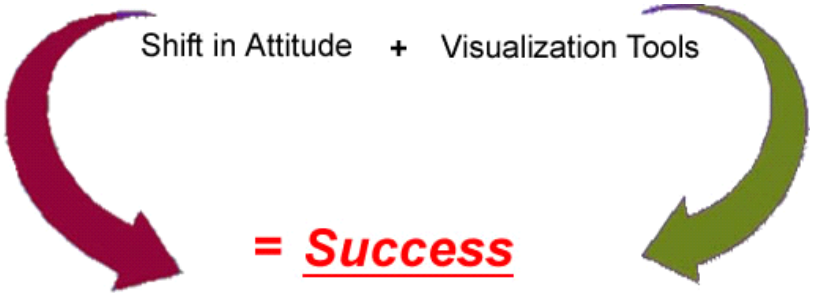
When you practise this exercise you will discover that you can begin each day with greater mental clarity. Your thoughts feel more organized and your ability to focus on the world around you and not what is happening in your own mind is strengthened. Regular practise will enable you to live more in the present and less in your own thoughts. This really is a very powerful tool and if you want to learn more about this approach and how to free up your creative energies, I highly recommend you read the book The Artists Way.

Make a firm commitment now to begin each day with the Morning Pages exercise. Think of it as building a solid foundation onto which you will be adding more exercises to fully eliminate the anxiety you feel.  Next we are going to look at ending unwanted anxious thoughts.

# Unwanted Anxious Thoughts

People who experience anxiety and panic attacks frequently have to deal with the negative side effects of unwanted anxious thoughts. These thoughts can range from worries about health, concern over loved ones, or even fears that don't make any rational sense at all but continue to linger in the mind. Sometimes, unwanted anxious thoughts come from previous experiences; other times, they're simply bizarre, leaving people worried as to why such strange thoughts occur. In all of these cases, people are upset because the anxious thoughts cause distress and worry. Over the next few pages, I'll guide you through a simple two-step process that's specifically tailored to deal with anxious thinking.

To effectively tackle anxious thinking, you need a two-pronged approach. To eliminate negative thoughts, you need a **shift in attitude** in combination with specific **visualization tools**.




### The Attitude of Acceptance

It’s not the anxious thought itself that causes you distress. It’s how you respond to that thought. It’s your reaction to the thought that enables the thought to have influence and power over you. To better understand how unwanted thoughts come about, it helps to paint a playful visual picture of how this happens. This example will help you better understand how to deal with the issue.

Imagine yourself standing on a street, and all around you, thoughts are lazily floating by. Some of the thoughts are your own, and other thoughts are from outside sources you access, such as newspapers, TV, magazines, etc. You notice that when you pay attention to a thought, it gravitates nearer. The thoughts you ignore float on by.

When you focus on and closely examine a thought, you notice how it connects to another similar thought, and you find yourself jumping from one thought to the next. Sometimes these are practical, day-to-day thoughts—such as bills, chores, etc.—or they can have themes of the past or be fantasies/daydreams.

In our imagined scenario, you unexpectedly notice a thought that hovers in front of you and scares you. This thought is called “Fear X.” X could be panic attacks, ill health, or something bizarre. In a sensitized state, you find it impossible not to look at the thought, and as you give it your full attention, this causes it to come closer and closer. When you examine the thought, you begin to react with fear because you don’t like what you see. You further notice how that initial scary thought is connected to more worrisome “what if” thoughts that you also examine in detail. The more you try to escape from the thought by pushing it away, the more it seems to follow you around as if it were stuck to you. You try to focus on more pleasant thoughts, but you find yourself continuously coming back to the fearful thought.

Have you ever heard the expression “thoughts sticking like glue”? The very act of reacting emotionally to the thought glues it to you all the more, and the more you

worry and obsess about the thought, the more that glue becomes hardened over time. The thought—and all of its associated thoughts—are there in the morning when you wake up and at night when you try to get some sleep. The thought becomes stuck to your psyche because your emotional reaction is its sticking power. Thoughts are a form of energy, and they're neither good nor bad. How we judge those thoughts determines how much impact they have on our lives. Thoughts first need to be fed by attention, but what they really love is a good, strong emotional reaction to make them stick!

People in sensitized states might literally jump at the very idea of a certain thought and chastise themselves over and over for ever having the thought in the first place. Have you ever noticed that when you're mentally exhausted, thoughts can almost grate away at you, how an annoying pop song won't leave your head or a silly concern changes from a minor niggle to an unbearable stress? Mental exhaustion is a major contributor to repetitive anxious thoughts, just like a CD track looping again and again.

Most anxious thoughts are attracted to us by the attention we pay them, and they then stick firmly in place by our level of emotional reaction to them. This is an important point. A thought can have an influence over you only if you allow it to. Your emotional reaction is a thought's energy source. What's interesting is that either a positive or a negative emotional reaction is fine for the thought. Energy and attention are what attracts it. Once you have an emotional reaction to a thought, you're regularly drawn to that thought until the emotional reaction has lost its energy and faded away.

For example, if someone you know pays you a very positive compliment, you may find yourself unintentionally drawn to that thought any time you have a spare moment. You probably find that it improves your overall level of confidence and mood throughout the day. Sadly, however, we tend to focus less on the positive and more on the negative. We seem to forget those positive compliments all too easily, and we're more frequently drawn to what might upset us. Take the opposite

example: if someone you know insults you, I'm sure that you find the emotional reaction to that thought much more intense and probably very long-lasting.

So the basic pattern of thinking is this. If you're not engaged in an activity or task, your mind tends to wander toward any thoughts to which you have a strong emotional reaction. In general, angry or fearful thoughts seem to surface quickly because they're the ones to which you probably react most strongly.

What I suggest is that the most effective way to eliminate unwanted thoughts is to stop trying to suppress them. Thought suppression studies have proven that the very act of trying to suppress a thought results only in a higher frequency of the unwanted thought occurring.[†] This has been termed the "rebound effect." Simply put, the more you try to suppress a thought, the more the unwanted thought keeps popping up (rebounding).

So how do we begin to tackle this problem of unwanted thoughts?

You need a change of attitude. By a change in attitude, I mean a change in the way you react to the thoughts. This goes back to the idea of acceptance mentioned earlier. An attitude of acceptance quickly disarms the emotional reaction you have to the fearful thoughts. Once the emotional reaction has been significantly reduced, the unwanted anxious thoughts dissipate. In the past, you've probably tried to rid yourself of the thoughts by attempting to struggle free of them. The trick, however, is not to try to be free of them, but to accept them as they run through your mind. **We can never fully control what goes through our minds, but we can control how we react to what goes on there.** That's the key difference between someone who gets caught up in fearful thinking and someone who does not.

The thoughts that terrify us aren't fueled by some unknown force; they are our

[†] Wegner, D. M., Schneider, D. J., Carter, S., III, & White, L. (1987). Paradoxical effects of thought suppression. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 58, 409–418.

own. We empower them and, equally, we dismiss them. When you have an uncomfortable thought you'd rather not be thinking, your first reaction is usually to tense up internally and say to yourself, "Oh no, I don't like that idea. I don't want that thought right now." The very act of trying to push the thought away, and then understandably getting upset when that doesn't work, causes the thought to become more stuck to your psyche.

It's like saying to your mind over and over again, "Whatever you do, don't think of pink elephants." Guess what? You can't get in a single thought that's not related to pink elephants.

As long as you struggle with the thought, your mind, like a bold child, keeps returning to it. This is not to say that your mind is maliciously working against you. It's better to compare the mind to a radar scanner that picks up on thoughts with high levels of emotional reaction connected to them.

To not react emotionally, learn to disempower the thought's "fear factor" by accepting it and gently moving your attention back to what you were doing. Don't hide from or push away the anxious thoughts.

So take this example. Let's say you have fear "X" going on in your mind. That fear can be virtually anything your mind might conceive. You know the thoughts aren't a realistic fear, and you want them to stop interrupting your life.

The next time the fearful thought comes to mind, don't push it away. This is important.

Tell yourself that that's fine, that the thought can continue to play in your mind if it wishes, but you're not going to give it much notice—and you're certainly not going to qualify it by reacting with fear. You know in your heart that the thought is very unlikely to happen. You have a deeper sense of trust, and you won't be emotionally tossed around all day by a thought. Say to yourself:

*Well, that thought/fear is a possibility, but it's very remote—so whatever. Today I'm trusting that all is well.*

**You allow the thought to have its moment of attention. You don't react to it, but simply move your attention back to where you really want to focus.**

What's of key importance is not to get upset by the thoughts and feelings as they arise. Here's a tip for how to do that:

- To avoid any fearful emotional reaction to the thought, give the fear some cartoon characteristics.

- Imagine, for example, it's Donald Duck telling you, "Something awful is going to happen. Aren't you scared?"

- Give the character a squeaky voice, and make it a totally ridiculous scene. How can you take an anxious duck with big feet seriously? This use of cartoon imagery reprograms your initial emotional reaction to the thought and eliminates any authority the thought may have over you.

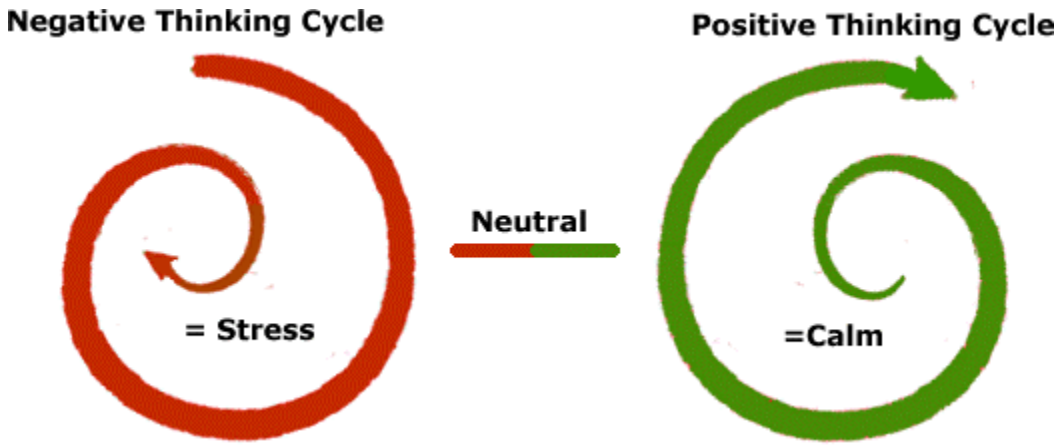
- As the thought rambles on about all the scary things it wants to share with you, watch it getting smaller and smaller until . . . "pop," it disappears. When that's done, move your attention back to whatever you were doing. Remember, you don't try to force the thought away because you don't like it. You simply accept it and then make it inconsequential as you turn your attention to other things.

This takes practice in the beginning, but what happens is that, during the day, you find yourself checking in on how you feel less and less. Because the anxious thought doesn't have a strong fearful emotion connected to it, your mind isn't drawn to it. To put it another way, the thought becomes unstuck and fades away

because the emotional reaction has been neutralized. In fact, that's the first step toward moving away from anxious thoughts—**neutrality**. Before, it was as if your mental energy were spinning in a negative cycle while you were caught in the anxious thoughts. Now, you are learning to stop the negative cycle and move into neutral (see the next illustration).

From this new position of neutrality, you experience a much greater sense of clarity because you're away from the confusion of an overanxious mind. Moving into this mindset of neutrality is your first step. Thoughts generally lead us in one direction or another, either in a positive cycle (peace, sense of control and order) or a negative cycle (anxiety, fear, disorder).

The next step is to adopt a relaxed, peaceful state of mind and move your energy into a positive cycle of thinking as shown below.




## Visualization Tool for Ending Anxious Thinking

Anxiety can cause an imbalance in your life whereby all of the mental worry creates a top-heavy sensation. Your entire focus is moved from the center of your body to your head.

Schools of meditation often demonstrate an example of this top-heavy imbalance

by showing how easily the body can lose its sense of center. A student is asked to come to the front of the group and stand with his legs apart. The teacher then asks him to focus on a personal worry or concern. Once the student is fixated on the worry, the teacher quietly moves to the student's side and tells him he's going to attempt to push over the student. The teacher pushes on the student's shoulder and topples the student with relative ease. The same student is then asked to forget the worry and focus his attention in his body. The teacher once again tries to topple the student, but he finds much more resistance than before. The student is grounded firmly in place. This demonstration shows how important it is to feel grounded and centered in the *present moment awareness* of your body and not be continuously caught in mental activity.

I'm going to teach you two simple visualizations. The purpose of the visualizations is to enable you to quickly clear mental stress and tension. Use them when you feel your mind is racing with anxious thoughts.

The visualization process, when practiced frequently, is very effective for eliminating deep-seated mental anxieties or intrusive thoughts. To gain maximum benefit, carry out the exercises for longer than ten minutes at a time, as anything shorter will not bring noticeable results. There's no right or wrong way to conduct the visualizations. Be intuitive, and don't feel that you're unable to do it if you're not very good at mental imagery. As long as your attention is on the exercise, you'll gain some benefit. It's best to do this in a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Then, when you're more practiced, you'll be able to get the same positive results in a busier environment, such as the workplace. You should notice a sensation of released calm in your mind and body after each visualization is complete.

Okay, let's begin.

**1st Visualization to end unwanted anxious thoughts**

Either sitting or standing, close your eyes and move your attention to your breath. To become aware of your breathing, place one hand on your upper chest and the other on your stomach. Take a breath, and let your stomach swell forward as you breathe in and fall back gently as you breathe out. (See the *breathing exercise* for a full understanding of this breathing technique.)

Continue the abdominal breathing for about five minutes.

Now move your attention to your feet. Try to really feel your feet. See if you can feel each toe. Picture the base of your feet, and visualize roots slowly growing out through your soles and down into the earth. The roots grow with a quickening pace and reach deep into the soil of the earth. You're now rooted firmly to the earth and feel stable, like a large oak or redwood tree. Imagine what it would feel like if this large tree were swaying gently in the wind. Stay with this feeling of grounded safety and security for a few moments.

Once you've created a strong feeling or impression of being grounded like a tree, visualize a cloud of bright light forming way above you. A bolt of lightning from the luminous cloud hits the crown of your head, and that ignites a band of bright white light that slowly descends from your head all the way down your body, over your legs, and out past your toes. As the band of light passes over you, feel it clearing your mental state. It illuminates your mind and clears any rubbish that you may have been thinking about. Repeat this image four or five times until you feel a sense of clearing and release through your feet.

In finishing, see yourself standing under a large, luminescent waterfall. The water is radiant and bubbling with vitality and life. As you stand under the waterfall, feel the water run over every inch of your body, soothing you and instilling within you a sense of deep calm. Try to taste the water. Open your mouth and let the water run in to refresh you. Hear the water as it bounces off the ground around you. The

water is life itself, and it's washing away stress and worry from your mind and body.

After a moment, open your eyes.

Try to use all of your senses when carrying out the visualization. To make the pictures in your mind as real as possible, use your senses of touch, taste, and hearing. Feel the water trickle down your body, hear the sound it makes as it splashes over you.

**2nd Visualization to end unwanted anxious thoughts**

This visualization is for unwanted thoughts that are particularly persistent and troublesome.

Begin by doing the abdominal breathing explained in the breathing exercise. Allow yourself a few minutes to get a deep sustained level of breathing going.

As you breathe out, imagine your out breath as a blue cloud shimmering with a positive radiant light. Repeat this visualization until you can picture this image well in your minds eye.

The anxious thought that is troubling you will soon float into your awareness. Imagine the anxious thought in your mind's eye like a ball of yellow energy about the size of a tennis ball. It comes in from the side floating two to three feet in front of you. As you become aware of the disturbing thought try not to examine or judge it but simply give it a label.  Say the label to yourself:

*Oh there is 'fear of going mad' 'fear of an illness' 'fear of hurting myself' , 'fear of hurting someone else'  'fear I might never feel normal again' etc.*

After giving the anxious thought a label, breathe out slowly and visualize your

breath enveloping the thought. The glowing cloud of positive radiant light now surrounds and engulfs the smaller yellow thought. As the thought becomes engulfed, internally say the words

"acceptance" and "peace."

The yellow ball is engulfed in a radiant positive energy. It now starts to defuse in the blue cloud and becomes harder to see. Keep breathing on the thought and watch as the blue cloud carries the small yellow ball further and further away. As it floats away the fear you had about the thought is also leaving you. Each time you breathe out towards the thought you say

"acceptance" and "peace"

Eventually after a few breaths the thought has completely disappeared. Keep your awareness on your breath. Continue to breathe deeply in and out.

The same fearful thought may soon return but this time it is much smaller and less impacting. You feel much less intimidated by the thought this time because you have already reduced your emotional reaction to it. You simply don't really care that much about it. You are disconnecting your emotions from the thought.

Continue this exercise for any number of other disturbing thoughts that arise, always breathing "acceptance" and "peace" on them as they float away from your awareness in the radiant blue cloud.

This is a good exercise to practise daily as it will strengthen your ability to disconnect from anxious or highly disturbing thoughts. Soon you will be able to quickly recognise and label a disturbing thought immediately and you will have no emotional reaction to it whatsoever. The thought will be nothing more then a split second flash on your awareness then it is gone as you move your attention to what you really want to focus on. This does take practise and depending on the severity

of the anxious thoughts, it will take time to fully release the emotional reaction to the anxious thoughts.  The more you practise, the better you will become at it.

The more realistic the imagined scenarios, the more benefit you'll gain. Many people report very beneficial and soothing results from frequently using these simple visualizations. The mind is much like a muscle; in order to relax, it needs to regularly release what it's holding. By visualizing the different situations, you allow your mind to release tension and restore calm. It's like sending a message to your brain that when you close your eyes and begin this process, it's time to let go of anything that it's been mentally holding onto.

I recommend that your daily visualization practice take place before going to bed, as that will enable you to sleep more soundly. Many people do these visualizations in some room other than the bedroom before going to bed. That way, when they enter the bedroom and close the door, they leave the mental stress behind them. Visualization, as a tool for dealing with mental stress and problems of exhaustion, is very effective. If you do the above visualizations on a regular basis, you'll experience more and more released calm.

That concludes the two-pronged approach to dealing with anxious thoughts. With practice you'll find that you go days without having those anxious thoughts interrupt your life—and, importantly, this significantly reduces the level of general anxiety you feel.

## Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

Here I go again with the labels. When a person is very mentally exhausted, anxious thoughts can develop into obsessions. This is known as obsessive compulsive disorder, or OCD. It has two components: persistent anxious thoughts and repetitive, unproductive behavior. This compulsion might be something like constant hand washing or other such similar repetitive behavior.

There are different levels to OCD. Some people have a very mild form, which might be a compulsion to have everything perfectly in its place. Or it might be more extreme forms, in which the person is very distraught most of the day, tormented by anxious thoughts, and performs elaborate rituals to help ease the anxiety. The rituals are a way for the person to feel in control. When the person carries out the ritual, he feels some sense of ease—however, it's a false sense of ease, because it isn't long before the ritual has to be carried out again. In the end, the person becomes a slave to the ritual and the anxious thoughts.

If you think you might have an OCD, it's important to understand that it's highly treatable and you can cure it. Accept that it's going to take some time. You can start to tackle compulsive behavior by slowly exposing yourself to the thing that causes the behavior while not engaging in the associated ritual. In the case of hand washing, you might allow a bit of dirt to stay on your hands without running immediately to wash it off. This is called exposure therapy, and it works well for some compulsive behavior. When the person is less sensitized, the process becomes much easier because the anxious thoughts have less impact on the person's psyche.

When there are persistent anxious thoughts, those thoughts can be of an extremely disturbing nature. Typical examples might be parents' fears that they would harm their children in some manner (this is common for mothers who have recently given birth). Thoughts like that would strike a bit of fear into a non-sensitized mind, but when the person is in a nervous, sensitized state, the disturbing thought hits with such severity that it rebounds hard and fast, causing great distress. I want to reassure you that the disturbing thoughts (regardless of the severity) are not something to worry about. They're the result of an active imagination coupled with sensitization and something you care deeply about. These thoughts persist because you react so strongly to them. If you didn't have a strong reaction, the thought would never bother you.

You need to follow the two-pronged approach to dealing with anxious thoughts, as

outlined above. Accept that this is not the sign of mental illness, but simply exhaustion. If you find your OCD too severe, seek the advice of a doctor and psychologist. Sometimes a short course of medication, in combination with therapy, can be the fastest route to get over what can feel like an insurmountable hurdle.

As a final point about OCD, don't be too quick to stick a label on yourself. Believing in a label like OCD can make a problem more solidified than it really is. Lots of people go through what would be clinically termed as an obsessive compulsive disorder without every really knowing they had it. To them, it was just a period they went through. Labels do help to communicate ideas more easily, but often these labels carry an unnecessary ominous weight. As mentioned, anxiety is almost always accompanied by a level of anxious, disturbing thoughts, so if you experience such thoughts, don't feel you automatically have OCD.

# Gratitude Exercise

When people are very caught up in anxious thoughts, they're "top-heavy," so to speak. The constant mental activity they're engaged in has caused an imbalance in which all of their focus is on their mental anxieties. In my experience, one of the fastest ways to move out of this anxious mental haze is to begin to move your attention from your head to your heart. With practice, if you simply make a deliberate shift of attention to your heart, you'll find that the anxious thoughts dissipate and the mental fog starts to clear.

Do this by practicing the *art of gratitude.*

I'm sure you've heard people speak about the art of gratitude and the benefits it can bring to you. It's been scientifically proven that regular mental practice of

gratitude can dramatically change your body's chemistry, giving way to a more peaceful body and mind.

The Heart Math Institute (www.heartmath.org) has fifteen years of scientific research proving that a simple tool like the art of gratitude can dramatically reduce stress and improve performance for individuals and organizations. Many Fortune 500 companies are starting to use this technique to reduce work-related stress.

I'm going to outline a gratitude exercise in a very straightforward manner so that you can start practicing right now. When you practice this technique, you'll feel a greater sense of perspective on the anxiety that's been troubling you. This activation of your heart's emotion will lift the heavy-fog sensation that anxious thoughts create. This is a very simple technique, but it's really powerful. You should notice a difference within minutes.

Are you ready? Here's the technique:

1. Close your eyes and move your attention to your heart area. Imagine a feeling of warmth emanating from the center of your chest. Place your right hand there. If you're around people or driving, etc., simply imagine your right hand resting on your heart area (and don't close your eyes if you're driving!). Imagine this area glowing warmly, and stay with that image for thirty to sixty seconds.

2. Now, begin to focus on something in your life for which you feel a genuine sense of appreciation. This can be one or more things that you really appreciate having in your life (e.g., family, health, friends, work, your home).

3. It's important to focus on things that spark a real sense of gratitude and appreciation. If you really appreciate the thing you're thinking about, you'll immediately feel a response—possibly a light, warm sensation in your heart

area or an involuntary smile. You may even feel this right now as you think about all the great things you have in your life. It doesn't really matter what you think about, as long as it evokes this feeling of warm appreciation from your heart area. Everyone has something for which they can be grateful. (Remember, the cemetery is full of people who would love to have your problems!)

4. Don't worry if you think of your partner or family and don't feel this. Some days it will be people close to you who spark the heart feeling, and other days it may just be gratitude for the parking space you found or the hand of cards you were dealt while playing poker the previous night! It depends on the mood you're in, so remember—it's only the feeling that you're after. The feeling is unmistakable; it's a positive change in your emotional state. It's really best to do this alone, because you want to stay with this feeling for as long as you like.

5. When you feel you've taken it as far as you can, open your eyes.

There's no time frame on this. It can take a minute to half an hour. Again, it's about establishing a heart-mind connection. Incorporate this exercise into your daily routine:

- Do it first thing in the morning to start the day on the right note.
- Do it when you're stuck in traffic.
- Do it sitting at your desk.
- Do it before you go to sleep at night.

Practice it again and again. Just like a muscle, your heart will get more accustomed to this state, and you'll be able to switch into it at a moment's notice. This is such a simple way to really feel more grounded and to lift the fog of anxious thoughts you may experience.

You can also use this exercise in the middle of any stressful situation, and you'll be surprised at the outcome in terms of your own stress levels and the change in reaction of others around you. For example, if you feel an outburst of anger, you can quickly turn around the explosive situation by doing a split-second version of this exercise.

Try it out, be creative with it, and make it your own daily ritual.

It's my experience that most people don't have the patience or time to make major lifestyle changes. By using this one exercise, you can very easily make a dramatic improvement to your life. The simplest exercises are often the most effective, and this is one of those gems. Don't pass it up.

# Physical Exercises:

## Breathing

Learning to breathe correctly is another profound way to bring about an immediate shift in your anxiety level. Most people develop a bad habit of breathing in a shallow manner. Shallow breathing can be a result of bad posture or, in some cases, a traumatic emotional experience or physical pain. Practicing to improve this takes only a few minutes a day, and it will result in a much better overall feeling of calm and tranquility.

To find out if you're a shallow breather, put your palms against your lower abdomen (your stomach) and breathe out all the air.

Now, take a few breaths. If your abdomen expands when you inhale and air seems to flow in deeply to the pit of your stomach, you're breathing in a correct manner. More typically, though, shallow breathers are likely to take a breath and pull in their

stomach, which pushes the diaphragm up and results in an upper-chest breath. Here, the chest moves more than the stomach. What you want is a nice, regular breath that expands the stomach more than the chest.

To achieve this, practice the following breathing exercise:

1. Imagine that the air when you inhale fills up your stomach area, and feel your stomach expand as you do so.

2. Allow your stomach muscles to expand. (This isn't a time worry about your waistline, so relax and let it all hang out!)

3. Breathe in through **your nose** to the count of four, **hold for four seconds**, and breathe out through **your mouth** to the count of seven.

4. Let out a loud sigh as you exhale. As you do so, imagine all the stress in your body floating away from you.

5. Repeat this breathing pattern for approximately five to ten minutes.

If you feel anxious, this breathing exercise may seem a little uncomfortable. If it does, you might want to slightly shorten the amount of time you breathe in and out. The trick is to make the "out" breath longer than the "in" breath. As you get more comfortable, you can lengthen that time.

Some imagine their body as a big, frozen block of ice. As they breathe in and out, the ice starts melting, and the evaporating steam is their mental stress and bodily tension drifting away. Try this and see for yourself how effective it is. Remember, it takes at least five good minutes before you feel a result. You'll get a result if you stick with it. You'll feel a very noticeable change as a sense of calm comes over you.

Try to practice this two or three times a day for periods of up to ten minutes. You can do it while sitting at your desk, while standing in line somewhere, or at home in bed. What you'll find is that regular practice dramatically reduces your anxiety level and trains your muscles to become more accustomed to abdominal breathing. The additional benefit of abdominal breathing is that it not only triggers a release of calm, but also helps ease nervous tension that you may hold in your abdominal area.

A small change in your breathing habits can have great health benefits. At any moment in the day, when you're not preoccupied with something, you have an opportunity to transform how you breathe and enhance your health and well-being. All it costs is a few minutes of your time!

# Diet

### Water

There's no quicker way to reduce general anxiety than good eating and drinking habits. One of the most easily implemented and effective additions to your diet is **fresh water**. Water is a great quencher of thirst, but, more importantly for this course, it's also a quencher of anxiety.

Nearly every function of the body is monitored and pegged to the efficient flow of water through our system. Water transports hormones, chemical messengers, and nutrients to vital organs of the body. When we don't keep the body well hydrated, it may react with a variety of signals, such as anxiety, which we would never think are related to poor drinking habits.

Here's some interesting information about water:

- Seventy-five percent of Americans are chronically dehydrated.
- In 37 percent of Americans, the thirst mechanism is so weak that it's often mistaken for hunger.
- Even MILD dehydration can slow down your metabolism as much as 3 percent.
- One glass of water shut down midnight hunger pangs for almost 100 percent of the dieters in a University of Washington study.
- Lack of water is the number-one trigger of daytime fatigue.

Regular fresh drinking water is a vital ingredient to your diet. The key to rebalancing a deficit of fluids is to drink eight glasses of fresh water daily.

Have you noticed the effects of dehydration on your emotions before? If you've ever suffered from a serious hangover from a night out on the tiles, you'll understand the feeling of dehydration all too well. Hangovers result from dehydration and an electrolyte imbalance. I'm sure many of you are familiar with the tendency to have what's become known as "the hangover fear." This is a heightened sensitization that results from the dehydration caused by a hangover. For someone who suffers from anxiety, the surest way to experience a panic attack is to drink excessive amounts of alcohol and wait for the hangover to set in the following day. On that same point, recreational drugs wreak havoc for anyone in a sensitized state, and they should be avoided at all costs.

Be aware that dehydration is a factor that contributes to anxiety. The good news is that it's easily remedied by drinking regular fluids. Personally, I've found that the regular intake of water not only wards off any subtle feelings of anxiety, but it's also incredibly effective for building stamina and avoiding fatigue.

# Diet

## Food

On average, most people have a very acidic diet, which results in a lower resistance to not only stress but also a variety of serious health problems. Your diet is something you can immediately control. As you master it, you not only improve your overall well-being but also build up a positive mental attitude that says, "I'm in control of my body."

If your internal environment is too acidic, this can exaggerate any anxiety you may experience. The body is in a greater state of health when it's balanced internally. What's needed is to bring the body's internal pH balance into acceptable parameters. Eliminating high anxiety isn't easy unless you maintain an alkaline balance in the food you eat. If your food is too acidic or you indulge in excessive amounts of foods, your body can't function at its best. It has difficulty eliminating toxins, and it's more prone to sensitization, which leaves you feeling vulnerable to anxious feelings.

Salt, sugar, and refined or processed products lower your body's resistance, whereas fruit and vegetables raise it. As you control your body's needs, you empower yourself and gradually build a body that doesn't feel threatened by an onslaught of high anxiety.

Acidic foods are proteins, nuts, grains, and dairy products (except yoghurt), along with alcohol, sugar, and salt. Fruit, vegetables, and juices are alkaline. For optimum balance, you need an 80 percent alkaline diet. This means concentrating on fruits and raw vegetables, using proteins in small quantities when you need energy. A person with a good diet needs only 50 grams of protein a day. This should consist of 7 ounces of animal protein (or a vegetarian equivalent) or 36 ounces of good yoghurt. The rest of your diet should be alkaline. (Note: if you have a very strenuous or physical occupation, you may need more than 50 grams of protein a

day.)

Below is a more comprehensive list of alkaline foods that help bring greater balance to your diet.

Almonds
Apples
Apricots
Avocados
Bananas
Beans, Dried
Beet Greens
Beets
Blackberries
Broccoli
Brussels Sprouts
Cabbage
Cantaloupe
Carrots
Cauliflower
Celery
Chard Leaves
Cucumbers
Dried Dates
Dried Figs
Grapes
Green Beans
Green Limas
Green Peas
Green Soybeans
Honeydew Melon
Lettuce
Limes
Millet
Molasses
Mushrooms
Muskmelon
Oranges
Parsnips
Peaches
Pears
Pineapple
Prunes
Radishes
Raisins
Raspberries
Raw Spinach
Rutabagas
Sauerkraut
Strawberries
Sweet Potatoes
Tangerines
Tomatoes
Watercress
Watermelons
White Potatoes

## Minerals

Mineral stores in your body have a buffering action on acid, and they tend to alkalize the acidity in the internal environment. Low or deficient mineral stores can lead to acidic bodily pH. The buffering action of mineral stores keeps the pH level toward the healthier and slightly alkaline side of the pH scale. This buffering system is delicately balanced and can get disrupted under mineral-deficient conditions. Both the acid and mineral residues are discarded through the urinary tract. Over

time, this depletes the mineral stores if they're not replaced. This is why we should ensure that we get adequate mineral levels in our diets. If we don't get enough through the fruits and vegetables we eat, then we need to use good-quality supplement minerals.

Nutrients that are paramount in helping the body cope with stress include B complex, raw adrenal concentrate, desiccated liver, flax seed oil, and colloidal minerals. A balanced B complex vitamin supplement is essential to normal pituitary and adrenal function. Without B complex vitamins, these glands won't produce adequate hormone levels.

Minerals are absolutely essential to normal bodily functions, including the autonomic nervous system. A good example of their importance is demonstrated by the role played by magnesium. Magnesium is instrumental in over 270 biochemical reactions in the body. It also helps regulate the pH (acid-base balance) of the human physiology. In her book *The Miracle of Magnesium* Dr. Carolyn Dean talks about treating anxiety as well as a wide range of other conditions using magnesium alone.

All the minerals we need are usually found naturally in the vegetables that we eat. However, the mineral content in vegetables has diminished over the years due to soil depletion. Therefore, it may be necessary to take mineral supplements. The truth is that it can be very difficult to maintain composure and confidence in your ability to handle all that life throws your way if your body is malnourished or deficient in vital foodstuffs. Look after your body's needs, and you'll strengthen your body's ability to handle not only GAD, but also all other forms of daily stress.

## Quick Diet Tips

Poor diet can speed up physical exhaustion and lead to increased sensitization. It's very important to do whatever you can to remedy this. Your diet could be the key thing that is holding you back from a fast recovery. If you're unsure about how to

get started on a better diet, I suggest you start with taking vitamin B12, which is very good for boosting your resistance to anxiety. Along with this, supplement your diet with Magnesium Citrate 3 times a day in powder form (you may need to consult your doctor). You should also take omega-3 oils. Omega-3 is not only good for helping ease anxiety, but also has many other reported health benefits, such as lowering blood pressure and possibly reducing the risk of coronary heart disease. **Remember, no alcohol or caffeine**—and I suggest replacing soft drinks with plenty of fresh water.

## What about Medication?

If you're on anti-anxiety medication for your anxiety disorder, well done for having gone out and sought medical advice. Many who experience anxiety fear that a visit to the doctor will only lead to being told that their condition is much worse than they'd imagined. There's nothing weak about using pharmaceuticals to help you get through an anxious period. Two types of medication commonly prescribed for anxiety are minor tranquilizers (e.g., Xanax, Ativan, Valium) and anti-depressants (e.g., Prozac, Paxil, Zoloft).

Medication for an anxiety disorder can be beneficial if, like everything else, it's not abused and used as a short-term tool to become less sensitized. There are thousands of people who wouldn't be able to hold down a job or regain any sense of a fulfilled life were it not for prescribed medications. In my mind, the danger with medication occurs when the user becomes overly dependent on it and the very thought of forgetting to take it triggers anxiety. Most good medical professionals advise a proper treatment plan, ensuring that once users start to feel more in control of their anxiety, they'll then gradually decrease the dosage. Under no circumstance should such a patient eliminate pharmaceuticals completely without consulting a doctor.

If you're on medication, apply the three stages of the Panic Away Program. When you feel you're making good improvements (as you'll do in a short period of time),

discuss the situation with your doctor. Talk about the approach you've been using and, when you feel ready, discuss what steps could be taken to reduce and eventually eliminate the medication.

When someone starts a course of medication, I feel it's very beneficial to also work on the problem's psychological side, by using this method or seeing a therapist. Using medication alone can give people the impression that the drug is somehow keeping them safe. That's not the case, because nothing is really threatening them. The sensations are a bluff. All the medication really does is numb the person to the experience of the sensations.

Seeing a therapist in a one-on-one session can be very beneficial, because the human touch is cathartic. This is especially useful in the case of OCD. If you have a desire to get therapy, then I encourage you to see someone who uses cognitive behavioral therapy; this one-on-one therapy gets the most effective results. Try to find a therapist who comes recommended in your area.

## What about Herbal Supplements?

When discussing medication, it's only right to examine natural or herbal methods, which have become increasingly popular in lessening the strength and frequency of anxiety. The argument for natural approaches is that they tend to be less addictive and have fewer side effects than conventional medicine. The first natural approach I want to mention briefly is Bach herbal remedies.

The late Edward Bach, MD, gave up his practice and research in 1930 to fully devote his time to finding remedies and perfecting his method of flower healing. He looked to the plant world for remedies that would restore vitality to the sick and ailing. He wanted sufferers to be able to overcome their worries, fears, or depression and assist in their own healing.

The remedies used in this treatment method are all prepared from the flowers of

wild plants, bushes, or trees. None are harmful or habit-forming. They're not prescribed directly for the physical complaint, but for the sufferer's state of mind, according to his moods of fear, worry, anger, or depression. According to Bach, "an inharmonious state of mind will not only hinder the recovery of health and retard convalescence, but it is the primary cause of sickness and disease." As an example, the remedy for terror or extreme fear, rock rose, is given when patients, or those near and dear to them, are seized with sheer terror (i.e., panic attacks).

Along with this, a mixture of five Bach flowers, aptly named "Rescue Remedy," is good for general day-to-day fear and anxiety. This remedy is commonly used for anxious moments (e.g., before exams, visits to the dentist, an important interview). Bach remedies are benign in their action; they don't produce an unpleasant reaction. They're usually taken as a number of drops in a glass of water.

Another supplement that is proving to be very useful in combating the effects of stress is **phosphatidylserine**. For more than 10 years, studies have shown that phosphatidylserine is able to cut elevated levels of mental and physical stress. I am quite encouraged by the reports on phosphatidylserine and studies so far conclude that phosphatidylserine helps dampen the effects of stress on the pituitary-adrenal axis, and may play a major role in reducing general anxiety disorder. Again you should discuss this or any other supplements with your doctor, especially if you are pregnant or taking any kind of medication.

## Hypoglycemia and Anxiety

In hypoglycemia, the pancreas sends out too much insulin, and the blood sugar plummets below the level necessary to maintain well-being. Since all of the body's cells, especially the brain cells, use glucose for fuel, a blood glucose level that's too low starves the cells of needed fuel, causing both physical and emotional symptoms. Adrenaline is released to increase blood sugar, often resulting in symptoms similar to a panic attack—dizziness, weakness, and disorientation.

Hypoglycemia is commonly associated with diabetes. However, a wide variety of conditions, many of them rare, can cause low blood sugar in people without diabetes. Just like someone who has a fever, hypoglycemia itself isn't a disease—it's an indicator of a health problem. The circumstances of hypoglycemia provide most of the clues to diagnosis. These circumstances include the patient's, time of day, time since last meal, etc. If your doctor has tested and found that you do suffer from hypoglycemia, you will get a lot of relief from your anxiety by focusing on your diet and managing your blood-sugar levels throughout the day.

## Aspartame

Before finishing the section on diet, I want to address concerns over the artificial sweetener aspartame. It's commonly used in diet soft drinks and sugar-free chewing gum, and it's frequently provided as a table condiment. There's a lot of information circulating on the Internet about its connection to anxiety as well as numerous other medical problems. Fueling this suspicion about aspartame is controversy regarding the circumstances of its approval by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the UK's Food Standards Agency.

I don't have an opinion as to whether this substance increases feelings of anxiety or not. I know that people do report feeling better when they cut all diet soft drinks from their diet, but whether this has anything to do with the sweetener is impossible for me to say. If you're concerned, you might want to examine your diet to see if you consume much aspartame. If you do consume it, experiment by leaving it out of your diet for a period of time, and record if you notice any difference in your anxiety level.

# Exercise

Exercise is a wonderful all-around practice for gaining the upper hand on feelings of general anxiety. Besides all of the well-documented benefits of regular exercise, it also greatly helps you increase confidence and belief in your body's ability.

During a panic attack, many of the symptoms are similar to those of a really good workout:

- Increased heart rate
- Sweating
- Increased bodily sensations
- Rapid breathing

Frequently, people with anxiety disorders feel uncomfortable when they start exercising because of the heightened bodily sensations, but this changes quickly. In fact, one of the greatest advantages of a healthy cardiovascular workout is that it teaches you to be comfortable with your body in a heightened state of exertion.

Vigorous exercise allows you the opportunity to safely exert your body to a heightened state of activity not dissimilar to the way it reacts during a panic attack. Exercise further pushes the boundaries of acceptable exertion, and it trains us to become more comfortable with physical sensations such as heavy breathing and a rapid heartbeat. If you give your body regular opportunities to move from an exerted state back to a relaxed one, you feel no threat if your heartbeat increases rapidly during a panic attack. You have the experience and confidence to say to yourself that your body is well able to handle such a state because it's done so many times before. You have the awareness that, in a short period of time, your body will return as always to a more relaxed state.

For many, the compounding fear factor of a panic attack comes from the anxiety

over unusual bodily reactions. Exercise is a healthy, self-imposed stress on the body. It helps you release pent-up tensions inside, and it can be a useful exhaust or vent for any emotions that you need to release.

To help build this innate confidence in your body's physical ability, you need a minimum of twenty to thirty minutes of cardiovascular exercise. This could be power walking, jogging, running, swimming—anything that gets you working up a good sweat. When beginning your exercise program, it's best to go easy and set modest goals. Choose an activity that's convenient and enjoyable so that you'll stick with it.

Get your body in a heightened state of exertion, where your heart beats rapidly and you breathe heavily. The best exercise is one where you work yourself to a peak for a few minutes, then slow down, rest, and build yourself up again. This helps push your body further each time, always moving upward, never stagnant. As you really get your body in shape, your overall confidence improves. I'm sure you've already experienced the natural lift exercise can give. It sends a clear message throughout your body that having your heart beat in quick succession and increasing your respiration are perfectly natural and well within your body's capability.

Recent research proves that exercise fuels the brain's stress buffers. Preliminary evidence suggests that physically active people have lower rates of anxiety and depression than sedentary people. Researchers are now looking at possible links between exercise and the brain chemicals associated with stress, anxiety, and depression. Research carried out by Mark Sothmann, PhD, of the Indiana University School of Medicine suggests that exercise seems to give the body a chance to practice dealing with stress biologically. It forces the body's physiological systems—all of which are involved in the stress response—to communicate much more closely than usual: the cardiovascular system communicates with the renal system, which then communicates with the muscular system.

All of these are controlled by the central and sympathetic nervous systems, which

also must communicate with each other. This workout of the body's communication system may be the true value of exercise.

There's no doubt about it—beginning and sticking with a proper exercise regime takes commitment. If you feel you don't have the time to invest in this, you may have missed a very important point. Exercising has tremendously positive benefits for your mental, emotional, and physical health. Your energy levels will soar, and your resistance to stress will increase, therefore reducing the general feelings of anxiety that we spoke about earlier. Your general outlook on life will improve as your confidence in your own body grows.

As a final point on exercise, be kind to yourself. Don't berate yourself if you feel you're out of shape because you can't jog around the block. Take it slowly at first, and be determined. If you can incorporate regular exercise into your life, the benefits will be profound.

Note: There are many books available at local bookstores and on the Internet regarding proper exercise implementation. Of course, should you have a health condition, as always, consult your doctor first.

# Thought Field Therapy (TFT)

I now want to introduce you to a natural treatment that I've received many reports about: Thought Field Therapy (TFT).

Tens of thousands of people use this technique to treat the psychological problems of anxiety, phobias, and negative emotions in general. TFT seems to prove itself a powerful tool in helping people overcome their fears. I include it here as an

additional exercise to help you eliminate general anxiety. What's nice about the technique is that it's completely safe and easy to apply. What's not so great is that it doesn't work for everyone, but nevertheless a sizable percentage of people tell me it works for them.

Thought Field Therapy is probably different from any other psychological treatment you've ever used or heard about. It's a system that accesses and resolves the essence and root cause of the problem—be it panic attacks, trauma, phobias, grief, etc.—simply by tapping specific points on the body. To fully understand the TFT approach, a short introduction to acupuncture is needed, because that's where its foundations lie.

Acupuncture uses the body's energy system. This ancient healing method, developed in China, is based on the premise that stimulating the flow of energy activates the body's own healing network. It's around this body energy that Thought Field Therapy applies its technique. TFT involves tapping the exact points where an acupuncture needle would traditionally be inserted to stimulate the energy, or Qi, and to dissolve blockages of energy patterns from the person's system.

Thought field therapists describe emotions as condensed information in energy form, bound in what's referred to as a "thought field." The treatment is based on influencing the body's bioenergy field by tapping your fingers on specific points of the body that are located along energy meridians. It's believed that counterproductive or "negative" emotions become blocked or stagnant in the energy field, and this results in the development of anxieties, irrational fears, etc. These negative emotions are then eliminated by tapping on a series of specific points.

I must admit I was skeptical of this therapy when first introduced to it, but the reports and feedback from people who have experimented with it are very encouraging.

In the TFT process, individuals are first encouraged to think about the problem (e.g., the anxiety and panic attacks) and then quantify, on a scale of 1 to 10, the intensity of the emotional upset they're feeling. Following that, the therapist performs a series of tapping exercises on specific parts of the body in a particular sequence. This eliminates imbalances in the body's energy system, and, in the process, eradicates the negative emotions and symptoms of psychological distress.

Can TFT really work for you? Well, the simplest way is to try it. The interesting thing about this technique is that results are almost instantaneous. Because it requires nothing more than simply tapping on the body, it's a completely simple and harmless therapy to experiment with. I've had some very positive feedback about this technique, particularly in its ability to completely dissolve the tight-knotted feeling in the stomach that's so often associated with high anxiety.

## TFT for Anxiety and Panic Attacks

Here is the sequence of tapping exercises used for treating anxiety and panic attacks. (TFT has different sequences for a wide range of negative emotions and phobias.)

### Step 1

Intentionally think about your anxiety and any panic attacks you may have experienced. Try to feel the distress that each situation causes you. Rate the distress you feel on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 indicates absolutely no distress at all, while 10 means total distress). This is called the subject units of distress (SUD) rating.

### Step 2

Using two fingers, tap under the eye about two centimeters below the bottom of

the eyeball, at the center of the bony orbit, high on the cheek. Tap solidly, but not nearly enough to hurt. About five taps will do (see Illustration 1). Note: It doesn't matter whether you tap on the left or right side of the body.

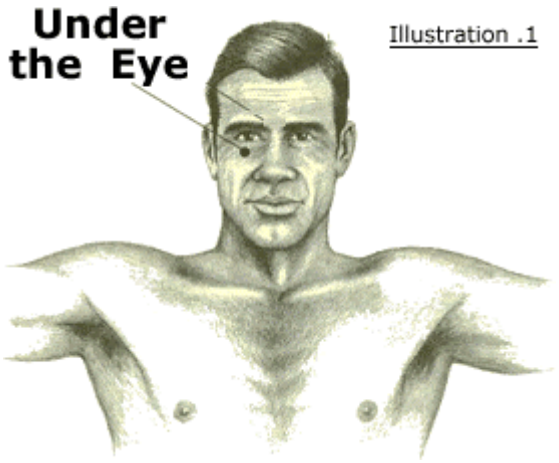



Illustration .1

**Step 3**

Tap solidly, five times, on the side of your chest, under your arm, about four inches directly below the armpit on the chest wall. This point is level with the nipple for males and about the center of the bra panel under the arm for females (see Illustration 2).

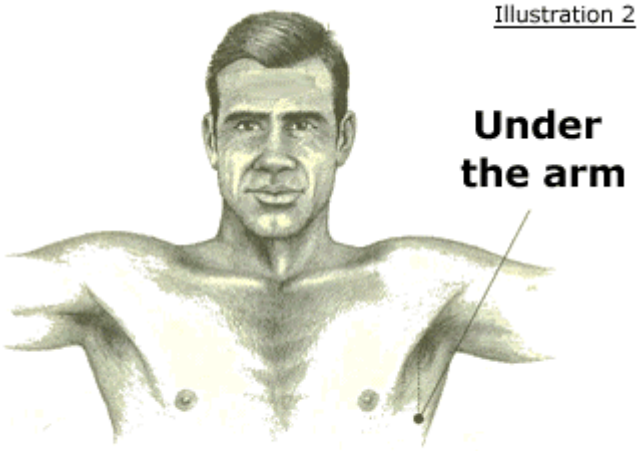
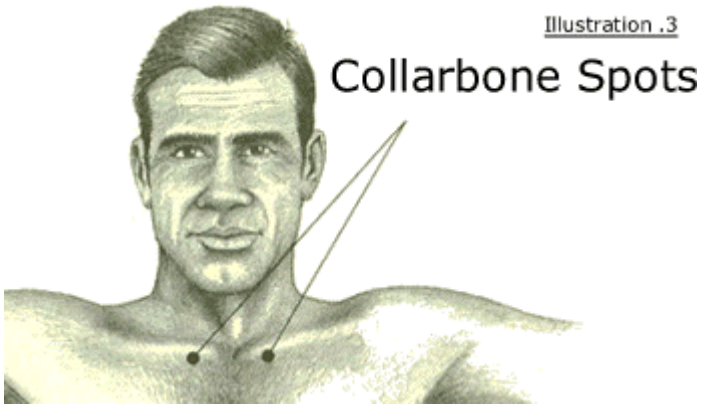



Illustration 2

**Step 4**

Find the "collarbone point": Take two fingers of either hand and run them down the center of the throat until you reach the top of the sternum (breastbone). From this point, go straight down three centimeters, then go to the right or left three centimeters. Tap this point five times (see Illustration 3).

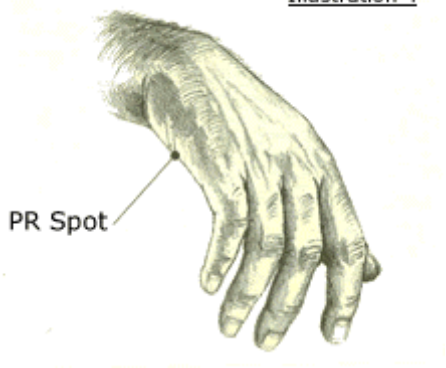



Stop and ask yourself how you're feeling. If you have a decrease of 2 or more points, continue to Step 6. **Go to Step 5 only if there's no change or a very small change in the way that you feel, otherwise go to Step 6.**

**Step 5**

Find the PR spot (see Illustration 4). This is located on the outside of your hand, about midway between your wrist and the base of your little finger. Tap this point five times with the fingers of the opposite hand, and **then return to Step 1**.

Illustration 4




**Step 6**

Okay, you've noticed some decrease in your anxiety or feelings toward your panic attacks. Next, find the gamut spot. This is located on the back of your hand—about an inch below the raised knuckle of your ring finger and your little finger when making a fist (see Illustration 5). Begin tapping the spot with two fingers of your opposite hand, about three times per second, and continue tapping while performing the series of steps below.

Illustration 5




1. Close your eyes
2. Open your eyes
3. Move your eyes down to one side, keeping your head still
4. Move your eyes down to the opposite side, keeping your head still
5. Roll your eyes in a circle in one direction

6. Roll your eyes in a circle in the opposite direction
7. Hum a few notes of a tune
8. Count from one to five out loud
9. Hum a few notes of a tune

The trick here is to keep tapping the gamut spot while simultaneously doing the above steps.

**Step 7**

Now take another SUD rating. In other words, how do you feel now about your anxiety, on a scale of 1 to 10?

If you feel you've achieved a rating of 1—that is, you have **no** lingering anxiety—then perform the final Step 8. If you feel your anxiety has decreased, but not significantly, return to Step 5 and **tap the PR spot as outlined in Step 5**. In this case, however, increase the number of times you tap the spot from five to fifteen.

Note: The PR spot is used for people who aren't getting maximum results. It stimulates a point where the energy may need additional stimulation to get it unblocked and moving freely.

**Step 8**

Use the floor-to-ceiling eye roll at the end of a successful series of treatments. If you report a 1 or 2 on the scale, this treatment consolidates a 1 or brings a 2 down to a 1. Tap the gamut spot (see Illustration 5) on the back of your hand while holding your head level (many people want to move their heads rather than their eyes, so try to keep your head straight). Now, while tapping the gamut spot, do the following:

1. Rotate your eyes **downward** to look at the floor.

2. Rotate your eyes **vertically** (taking about ten seconds) all the way up to look at the ceiling. Constantly tap the gamut spot while moving your eyes.

That's it!

This is a growing new field, and a wealth of information is available about it. I recommend the book *Thought Field Therapy* by Roger Callahan, PhD. This has information on the therapy's background and the studies that have been conducted on its effectiveness. I'd be interested to hear more feedback on this technique from you.

# Distraction

Finally; to fully move away from the mental and physical aspects of generalized anxiety you need to throw yourself 100 percent into whatever is at hand. It may be difficult to do this at first, especially if what you're occupied with are daily chores such as washing the dishes or grocery shopping, which tend to not be very engaging. What's needed is to engage regularly with an activity that stimulates you and holds your complete attention, something in which you can become completely immersed. The more physical the activity, the better.

Some possible activities are gardening, playing a musical instrument, participating in any kind of sport, or simply having a good conversation with a friend. The idea here is to find something that you can repeat on a regular basis that will take you out of your mental thoughts and into life.

Something that distracts you is a very valuable tool to take your attention away from the uncomfortable sensation of anxiety that may linger in your body. The more you become involved in one of these activities, the more you engage with life and the less stagnant and anxious you feel. One of the best distractions I could recommend for anybody who's unsure of an activity is to volunteer for a local

charity or cause. This could be anything from soup runs for the homeless to environmental conservation. If you can spare even one or two hours a week for such work, it will not only improve your self-esteem but fully shake off any lingering feelings of isolation or loneliness that are often accompanied by anxiety and panic attacks. One thing you can be certain of is that some organization near you is crying out for volunteers just like you to assist in their work.

The art of distraction has always been used to help people refocus and avoid concentrating on whatever physical or emotional discomfort they're going through. It may just be the caring friend who invites a recently heartbroken roommate out on the town to have some fun. Dentists and doctors frequently use distraction techniques to give patients something (usually the bill!) to focus on other than physical discomfort. The purpose of distraction for people who want to live anxiety free is to have new experiences that don't remind them of the anxiety disorder that's been affecting their lives.

If you imagine that all the fearful, anxious thoughts going through your mind are like a roll of film being run through a projector (your mind) and out into your life, then concentrating on some activity immediately cuts the film and brings you directly into the here and now. When you live in the moment, there's no room for any anxiety disorder whatsoever. Being more "present" buys both your body and mind much needed relaxation time to reduce the feelings of sensitization and release more calm.

## What about a Vacation?

When going about your daily routine, you can easily get caught up in habitual thoughts. A change of location to somewhere new is enough to snap you out of any anxious thought processes, because new experiences force you to be more present and aware of what's going on around you. Vacations can also be excellent opportunities to find rest. It doesn't have to be a long trip; it can be as short as a few days in someplace new and interesting. If you can't afford to take a vacation,

then use your free time to go somewhere new and engage in a new activity. Anything that forces you out of your mental preoccupations and into what's happening around you is beneficial.

In days gone, it was common for people to refer to entertainment as an amusing *distraction* or *diversion*. The distraction brings a welcome break from routine. What's implied by that expression is that the entertainment gave people a break from their thinking. Start making a list of all the things that grab your attention and distract you. It may be going to the cinema, talking with friends, listening to music, and so on. When you're very intensely caught up in your mental worries, pick something from that list and do it. It doesn't matter if the distraction isn't 100 percent; even a few minutes of diversion is enough to put a bit of space between you and your anxiety, and this allows for a better overall sense of perspective.

This concludes the exercises for releasing calm and ending feelings of general anxiety.

## How Long Will It Take to End the Feelings of Anxiety?

Desensitizing your body from an anxious state takes time. Don't rush it. Some people find that it happens within weeks, and others a couple of months. It depends on the person and the amount of time the problem has existed. Each person heals at a different pace, so don't feel that you're failing if it takes more time than you expected.

I'm frequently asked which of the exercises are most effective and in what order they should be preformed. The answer to this is that the most effective exercise is the one you do. Of course, it's great if you can do them all. However, I realize that you may be more drawn to one exercise over another.

# Starting the day

Mornings can be the most difficult time, so I'm going to outline a simple morning routine that everyone can use. If you do this each morning for two weeks, you'll see a real change in your anxiety level.

- On waking, step out of bed and begin to lightly stretch your arms and legs. Stretching sends a clear signal to your mind that it's time to become more alert. If possible, avoid mentally "checking in" to see what your anxiety level is.

- Instead of "checking in," begin the art of gratitude exercise. Do this exercise while stretching or after you shower. Allow this to dominate all your thinking as you slowly come out of your sleep state. It helps to do it in the morning because this is when people feel very vulnerable to anxious thoughts about the day ahead.

- After showering, sit in a chair and begin the Morning Pages exercise. You will need approximately 30 minutes of this exercise.

- Having completed the Morning Pages exercise it is an opportune time to do the breathing exercise. Just five minutes of good abdominal breathing in the morning releases more calm and makes you feel physically ready to face the day.

- Only now should you attend to the other things you need to organize before leaving the house, such as getting the kids ready for school, doing the laundry, feeding the dog, etc.

What I've outlined here takes a bit of time but it is time very well spent. Try to escape the mentality of rushing out the door like a headless chicken. Rushing only

makes you feel stressed and sends your body the message that you're under constant pressure. You can still do what needs to be done without this unnecessary pressure. I'm sure that the few minutes you save by rushing out the door never really makes a big difference in the end of the day.

If you feel you can't afford extra time in the morning, then set your alarm clock earlier. Make it your time, time for you alone. By creating this space, you release the necessary calm to buffer you against stress for the day ahead. This time in the morning may well be the most important part of your whole day, so be selfish and protect it.

# Getting to Sleep

Nighttime can be particularly difficult for people with anxiety issues. Not being able to sleep can actually be quite traumatic for many people. The first thing you need to understand about sleep is this: it's not the amount of sleep you get that's important, but rather the quality of the sleep. Quality over quantity.

There are different worries that keep people awake. It could be the worry of an upcoming event or the worry of not being able to sleep and how that will affect your performance the following day. It's a viscous cycle. If, when preparing for bed, you fear you'll toss and turn, trying hard to sleep, I'll show you how to rest easier. **To break the cycle, begin by not presuming you'll sleep!** That seems like the wrong attitude, but if you approach each night as just a possible opportunity to sleep, this helps remove the pressure and anxiety. In a way, some people have performance anxiety when they think about sleeping:

*Will I be able to make myself sleep?*

The answer is maybe yes, maybe no. If you're going through a period of

sleeplessness, a good night's sleep isn't guaranteed, for whatever reason, so you have to accept that for the moment. If you get one or two hours' sleep, that's well and good, and if you get nothing, then accept it and move on. Each night, as you retire, say to yourself:

> *I'm preparing for bed, but I won't try to force sleep. If it comes, it comes. If not, I won't beat myself up over it. This is a period I'm going through, but I'll soon return to normal sleep patterns.*

Every person goes through periods of sleeplessness from time to time. It's very natural. You may not be aware of why you experience sleeplessness, but at the very least, you can accept it.

Let me emphasize the importance of surrendering to your inability to sleep. Surrender to whatever may or may not happen during the course of a night, and you'll put your mind and ease the pressure. After a certain point, it's the anger and frustration that keep you awake most of the night.

If you wake in the middle of the night, don't leave your bed—try to stay there. Getting up and watching TV, etc., takes you further out of the sleep pattern. It's best if you stay in bed lying down, because that sends a message to your brain that it really is bedtime. If you're really very awake, then go to another room to sit and read for a while, but don't read lying down—that sends mixed messages to your brain. You mind thinks:

> *Are we trying to sleep or stay awake here?*

Naturally the best way to get a good night's sleep is a good physical workout each evening in the outdoors. This is very effective because the mind may try to keep you awake, but the sheer physical exhaustion brings on sleep quicker. Couple that with a willingness to accept sleeplessness, and you'll be nodding off in no time. Remember that alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine should be avoided several hours

before sleep. You may be the type who finds it initially hard to get to sleep as your mind races with anxious thoughts. Should you find your mind racing and you simply can't achieve sleep, keep a journal beside your bed. Sit upright and start to write down how you feel:

> *I'm feeling quite restless. I keep turning over and over, trying to sleep, but I have worries on my mind.*

Now write down all of your worries, for example:

> *Tomorrow I have to do X, and I'm afraid I won't be well rested, etc.*

Continue to write down your worries until the exercise actually becomes quite boring. Then your body and mind will slowly want to return to sleep. Writing like this is a simple tool for preparing your mind in a linear way to wind down and return to sleep (an advanced form of counting sheep).

Don't be afraid of writing pages and pages of nothing in particular. What you're doing is helping the conscious mind release whatever is keeping it awake so it can stop obsessing and return to sleep. You see, one of the reasons we can't fall asleep is that our mind feels these worries (whatever they are) are important to analyze over and over; they need urgent attention and therefore should be thought about all night long. The more worked up you get by the worries, the more your body gets stimulated and the harder sleep is to achieve. Writing down all your worries on paper has the effect of saying to your mind:

> *Okay, mind, you think these are important. I've written them all down in detail. They won't be forgotten, I promise. I can come back to them tomorrow and deal with them then—but RIGHT NOW, let's sleep.*

The mind can be like a small child who just needs reassurance that things will be dealt with and looked after. That's all it needs to let go of these mental worries. You

then discover, in the morning, that almost all of the worries or concerns aren't big issues. Many of our worries are the workings or an overactive imagination.

If you have lots of thoughts about not sleeping during the day, while at home or work, use this manta:

> *I'm a great sleeper. I love my bed. I love going to bed, and when I lay my head on the pillow, I'm relaxed, calm, and sleepy. When I go to bed, I'm going to enjoy a wonderful night's sleep.*

## Night Panic

People with anxiety disorders can sometimes be awakened at night by panic attacks. We know that most nighttime panic attacks aren't caused by dreams. Records of sleep polysomnographia show that most panic attacks take place during the early sleep phase (phase II), not during the REM phase associated with dreams. This is different from nightmares. Nightmares happen during the second half of the night, so we're often able to remember the content of these dreams.

If you wake with a panic attack, implement the One Move—that should help you significantly drop your anxiety level. It's important not to go to bed fearing you might have a panic attack. Go to bed confident that if one should arise, you'll successfully deal with it. That way, you don't put yourself under pressure to not have a panic attack. Many panic attacks are experienced at the very moment of falling asleep. Here's a description a woman gave of her experience:

> *Getting to sleep is a real problem. Just as I'm about to drop off to sleep, my body seems to jolt awake, like an electric shock, which then frightens me and keeps me awake for hours.*

This jolt is called a hypnic jerk, or hypnagogic massive jerk. A hypnic jerk usually occurs just as the person enters sleep. People often describe it as a falling

sensation or an electric shock, and it's a completely normal experience. It's most common when we're sleeping uncomfortably or overtired. There's been little research on the subject, but there are some theories as to why hypnic jerks occur. When we drift off into sleep, the body undergoes changes in temperature, breathing, and muscle relaxation. The hypnic jerk may be a result of the muscles relaxing. The brain misinterprets this as a sign of falling, and it signals our limbs to wake up, hence the jerking legs or arms.

People turn hypnic jerks into panic attacks because they already feel nervous about their condition and the jolt scares them into thinking something bad is happening. Again, it's a fearful reaction to a sensation. Usually when these people wake up, they gasp for air, and this can also turn into a fear of a breathing problem while sleeping. If you jolt awake with panic, then simply understanding the nature of a hypnic jerk can strip away the anxiety from the experience. Reassure yourself that you're safe and that the jerk isn't something to worry about. It doesn't disrupt your bodily functions, and it doesn't put you in any danger. As a side point, people who have a fear of flying often experience this jolt on long-haul flights, because they drift off to sleep in an uncomfortable position and then suddenly jolt awake. Jolting awake like this causes anxiety, which is then worsened by remembering they're on an airplane.

## People Keep Telling Me to "Just Snap Out of It"

You have to be patient with anyone who makes such a remark about your anxiety. They have no idea what it's like to experience a panic attack or general anxiety. If they experienced an anxiety disorder for even one day, they'd understand how troublesome it can feel and that it's not something you simply snap out of because someone tells you to. People who make such remarks generally have good intentions and are trying to help, but they don't know how to do so, and that makes them feel powerless. Bear that in mind the next time someone makes such a comment, and try your best not to get upset by it. Hum Joe South's "Walk a Mile in My Shoes" under your breath, and disregard the comment.

# Phobias

A phobia is an irrational and excessive fear of an object or situation. Phobias are generally treated differently from panic attacks or general anxiety. For example, a fear of spiders is best treated through a process of exposure therapy; people are gradually exposed to their fear until they no longer fear the spiders. Exposure therapy plays a small role in Stage 1, in which you're encouraged to engage in situations where you might experience panic. But **the exposure here is not to challenge the situation, but rather the sensations**.

For example, people might have a fear of driving on a highway. Exposure therapy might teach them to get over that one particular fear by flooding them with exposure to highway driving. But what happens when that person turns around a month later and says, "I'm not afraid of the highway anymore, but now I'm terrified of bridges." It's much more effective to focus on treating the anxiety in terms of the fear itself rather than each and every situation.

Phobias that are closely related to an anxiety disorder are agoraphobia and claustrophobia. These are connected because the fear isn't about one specific thing, but rather about the way situations make the person feel. For example, agoraphobic people frequently don't like to leave their homes. It's not that they're scared of something in the outside world, but rather they fear the sensations they feel when they leave their safe zones. The same applies to people who experience claustrophobia. They're not scared of elevators per se, but rather the idea of not being able to escape the elevator or other situation in which they find themselves. Both agoraphobia and claustrophobia are treated using the three stages of this method, because those bring the necessary relief from the sensations that drive the phobia.

## Social Phobias

*Trembling Hands*
*Blushing*
*Nervous Sweating*

Social interaction can cause many people to experience bodily reactions that make them feel highly uncomfortable around others. Common problems are blushing in public, sweating, and trembling hands. None of these are harmful in any way, but if people become overly conscious of these symptoms, it can lead to shying away from social contact, sometimes to the point of leaving their jobs. I'll describe the approach I teach people to help them end this problem. I'll use the example of a trembling hand, but the approach is the same for both blushing and sweating as well.

I've communicated with many people—from dental hygienists to professional athletes—who are desperately seeking a way to stop their hands from shaking when they're anxious or under pressure. In such situations, their careers were directly impacted. Other people may experience trembling hands with less frequency, such as situations in which they have to sign their names in front of others.

The trick to ending this problem (as you might have already guessed) is using the opposite approach from what they're already been trying. Take, for example, the dental hygienist who immediately starts to shake as soon as the patient sits in the chair. It only takes the memory of previous shakes to start her hand trembling. She gets upset by the shakes, and she desperately tries with all her will to make it stop by tensing her hand and arm muscles. All the effort and stress only causes her hand to shake further.

To end the problem, she should reverse her approach. Instead of forcing her hand to be still with all her mental power, she should allow it to shake. In fact, she should encourage it to shake even more. If she can fully accept the shakes and

encourage more of them, she ends the pressure she puts herself under, and with that, the shakes begin to fade away. The effort used in trying to stop the anxiety actually caused more of it. This same approach works for nervous sweating and blushing.

Note: if the hygienist didn't care what others thought of her shaking, then the problem would disappear overnight. None of these problems (blushing, sweating, trembling) are ever a problem if people are alone. The problem is directly related to how people feel they're being perceived in the eyes of others.

To ensure a complete recovery, train yourself to be less worried about the opinions of others. Tackling the social element of this problem is best done through visualizations. Each night, before going to bed, imagine yourself in a situation that would normally produce the reaction you're trying to stop. This time, however, see yourself responding in the new manner:

> *My hand is shaking, but I'm not getting upset or embarrassed.*
> *My face is red, but I'm completely composed.*
> *My brow might be wet from sweat, but it doesn't faze me.*

You fully accept whatever way your body behaves, and you don't get upset. You might even make light of it to those around you. The whole situation passes without any embarrassment.

This takes practice, but the goal is to override the idea of social embarrassment and replace it with acceptance and grace under pressure. Generally, people with social anxieties are too hard on themselves. In most cases, other people are never aware that there's a problem in the first place. The real issue is in your mind because you distort the reality of the situation. Follow the above exercise, and with some practice, you'll resolve the problem.

# Summary of Stage 2

The fundamental point of eliminating general anxiety is that you must adopt an attitude of acceptance toward the sensations in order to break the cycle of anxiety. The exercises in Stage 2, which are divided into mental and physical categories, are designed to allow more calm to flood into your body and mind. The released calm has a soothing effect on your nerves, enabling you to drop your level of sensitization and reduce your overall anxiety level. Now to the final stage of the method.

# Stage 3: Persist

## Sealing Recovery

When can people say that they've fully recovered from their anxiety disorder?

I believe people have reached the stage of full recovery when their confidence and feelings of success over anxiety outweigh their feelings of failure or despair. This is achieved for most people through continued practice and application of what's been taught. This is not to say they'll never experience anxiety again, but if they do, they'll move through it quickly with a strong sense of confidence. After several months, they'll begin to forget they ever had an anxiety disorder.

### Expect Setbacks

Ending an anxiety disorder is generally not something that happens immediately for most people, especially if the problem has been going on for years. The purpose of Stage 3 is to teach you how to seal your recovery and not get discouraged by setbacks which are often a part of the healing process. This is not to say that there are not people who reach their goal quickly; it is just that more often than not there are a few bumps along the road and these bumps can be bring strength, wisdom and experience. Being aware of this will help keep you motivated after you hit a bump or two. Stage 3 is designed to ensure you keep a continued focus on the end goal—being anxiety free.

**Why do people experience setbacks when they begin to tackle their anxiety?**

Setbacks happen because, as you face your anxiety and the situations that make you feel uncomfortable, the avoidant/protective side of your personality becomes active. When you decide to tackle your anxiety issue head on, the protective side of your personality would rather that you left well enough alone. Your protective side doesn't like taking risks and feels better when you don't put yourself in situations that make you feel anxious. It's the part of you that says:

*Let's stay in our comfort zone today. At least we're safe here.*

This part of your personality has your interests at heart, but you know deep down that a life cocooned from all adversity doesn't lead to happiness. When you begin on your healing journey, it's all new and it can feel like you're moving into unknown territory. You quickly master areas of your life that were causing you problems. Your protective side takes a back seat and watches with suspicion as you make this progress. Then, after a while, your protective side becomes more active for fear that, with all this progress, a great fall must be just around the corner.

As you move upward and onward, your protective side gets scared and tries to put on the brakes. This creates a conflict and fuels feelings of anxiety. The feelings can be very intense and might be similar to what you've experienced before—such as panic and general unease—or there may be new sensations never experienced before. You might have been doing really well for a week, but then your protective side pops its head up and says something like this:

*Okay, well done. We're not worried about dizzy spells anymore—fine. But what's that ringing in your ear?*

*That sounds like trouble to me . . . LET'S GET WORRIED.*

*No panic attacks in a week—great. But don't be fooled. That means a really BIG one is about to pounce!*

These thoughts undermine your confidence. Suddenly you're feeling vulnerable again, and the anxiety can return as your confidence dips—and you obsess again about the way you feel. This kind of response is natural in recovery, and if you've experienced a setback recently, I want to show you how to best deal with it.

The first thing to remember is that setbacks happen. Try to never let a setback convince you that you're not making progress. It doesn't mean that all your progress has been undone. In general, setbacks are inevitable, and you need to have an accepting attitude toward them.

Secondly, setbacks form part of your healing. To move beyond the anxiety, you need to work with the protective side of your personality and teach it that there really is nothing to fear. When setbacks occur, it's an indication that you now need to take your new understanding and work with your protective side, which is resisting the change. You might want to think of that protective side as a small child who doesn't want you (the parent) to take risks or do anything out of your comfort zone. Talk to this part yourself. Reassure it that all will be well and that it's necessary for you to work through the anxiety in order to experience more freedom and happiness.

Setbacks can feel like a big step backward, but they're generally followed by rapid progress on many levels if you engage fully with this protective side of yourself. There's an opportunity here for you to create a new working relationship with your protective self, and this will really seal your recovery. When you educate your protective self that you're really safe and encourage it to take the steps with you, you become fully empowered to end your anxiety problem. All of your internal energies go in the same direction, and there's no conflict.

**Persistence will carry you through all setbacks and ensure your success.**

Keep your confidence intact. Build it on the past, on each time you've succeeded.

Play those previous successes like a film in your head, again and again, each night as you go to sleep. All the panic attacks you've dealt with, all the sensations of anxiety you've felt and yet you still got on with it. General anxiety disorder and, especially, panic attacks are probably the most frightening experiences a person can go through. In most cases, you feel like you've had a brush with death itself. That's no small feat to deal with while on your lunch break!

Be proud of your experiences. You're not a cowardly victim, but a survivor of a terrifying experience—and what's more, you probably stayed at work or collected the kids from school. You continued living. Sure, there may be a few hairy anxiety memories in the past that you'd prefer to forget, but the underlying emotion to build upon is that you survived and you're here now, alive and living a new day.

Build a wealth of memories, and they'll be your resource from which to draw strength. Write them down, because that solidifies them and makes them more real in your mind. Read them to yourself regularly. Be sure to keep a diary as written proof of the progress you're making—the trips you take that weren't possible before, the special days when you completely forgot you ever had an anxiety problem. You need to keep a record of these achievements because it's easy for your protective side to negate the great strides you've made.

Confidence, just like fear, is contagious. Soon you'll find it spreading to all areas of your life, giving you a quality of life even beyond your pre-anxiety days. Always try to focus on the success you've achieved, and it will grow and expand in your life.

**Persist with it.** Turn a setback into an opportunity to solidify your real confidence. Regardless of what happens, you can handle it. Regardless of how your body feels, you'll move through the anxiety and come out the other side smiling. If you remain persistent, setbacks can be quickly turned to your advantage, and you'll be strengthened by the experience.

Setbacks are delicate periods to move through, so you also need to be kind to

yourself. Understand that they're the result of YOU just trying to protect YOU. Be your own best friend. When you take your protective self by the hand and teach it that there's nothing to fear, you'll quickly march toward a greater experience of freedom. Recovery is not a straight linear process. It will help if you try not to measure success on a day-to-day basis. Some days will be better than others—that's just the way it is, so don't get upset if you complete something successfully one day but fail the next. Keep your eyes on the end goal, and persistence will carry you there.

Finally, to complete Stage 3 and seal the recovery, it's important for me to fully explain all the sensations associated with anxiety disorders. The reassurance found here will give you a boost of confidence to shake off any doubt that may be lingering in your mind.

# Anxiety Sensations Explained:

### A Round-up of the Usual Suspects

I have placed this section at the end of the program because it helps to first have an understanding of the course material before discussing the various sensations connected to anxiety. It goes without saying that all sensations causing concern should be investigated by your doctor to rule out possible causes other than anxiety. Doing so is not only important from a medical point of view, but it will help reduce anxious thoughts that something more serious might be wrong.

### "Am I Going Crazy?"

It's understandable to fear you may be going crazy when you suffer from an anxiety disorder. There's so little real public awareness of mental disease, so people often jump to extreme conclusions. These conclusions are usually based on misinformation and an overactive imagination.

The most commonly known mental health issue is schizophrenia—the word itself strikes terror within the average person. Schizophrenia is a major disorder characterized by severe symptoms such as disjointed thoughts and speech, babbling, delusions or strange beliefs (for example, sufferers often claim they're receiving messages from an inner voice), and hallucinations. Furthermore, schizophrenia appears to have a largely inherited genetic component, so those with schizophrenic family members have a higher predisposition than those who do not.

Schizophrenia generally begins very gradually, not suddenly (such as during a panic attack). Additionally, because it runs in families, only a certain proportion of people can become schizophrenic; in other people, no amount of stress will cause the disorder. A third important point is that people who become schizophrenic have usually shown some mild symptoms (unusual thoughts, flowery speech, etc.) for most of their lives. Thus, if this hasn't been noticed yet in you, then chances are you won't become schizophrenic. This is especially true if you're over twenty-five, since schizophrenia generally first appears in the late teens to early twenties.

## Losing Control

During a panic attack, some people are prone to believe they're going to lose control. This feared loss of control can be physical (e.g., that all your vital organs will completely lose the run of themselves and descend into chaos) or emotional/mental (e.g., that you'll lose your grip on reality). Those who hate social embarrassment tend to suffer from this fear the most. The feared loss of control could range from screaming in public to picking up a knife and killing the nearest and dearest person to you (not that we all don't think of this from time to time!).

Put your mind at rest! As scary as those thoughts may be, you're not going to commit any of these acts. Relax. The reason you experience the thoughts is because your body feels out of control. Your mind thinks that if your body is out of control, it's next on the list.

You're not going to lose it. In fact, I'm sure that with all the panic attacks and heightened anxiety you've experienced in public places, nobody even noticed that you looked uncomfortable. We are, by nature, social animals, and we dread to be seen in some kind of embarrassing situation. The idea of jumping from your chair in a business meeting and screaming for an ambulance may go through your mind, but it's unlikely to happen. Most people find a way to politely excuse themselves. In the end, even if we do embarrass ourselves socially, does it really matter? We have to learn to be kind to ourselves. So what if we cause a scene and great embarrassment? Life is too short to keep up with appearances all the time. In fact, the more honest you are with your fears, the less pressure you subject yourself to.

## Unreality

I'd like to discuss a symptom not often mentioned in anxiety literature—the sensation of unreality. Psychologists call this depersonalization. Many people who experience panic attacks and general anxiety become distressed by this sensation and feel they may be losing their mind. They report feeling disconnected, as if their world has become nothing more than a projection of a film. This often leads to believing that some permanent damage has been done to their brain, which is causing these sensations.

A typical manifestation of this depersonalization (unreality) is when you're having a conversation with someone and you suddenly feel alarmingly isolated and removed from the situation. Once the sensation arises, it can be so impactful that it takes days to leave the eerie feeling behind and stop thinking about it.

The sensation is caused by delayed perception and mental preoccupation. While under constant stress or anxiety, the buildup of stress chemicals in your system causes a delayed response in sending information between neurotransmitter sites in your body. This slight delay between experience and thought can create a momentary sensation of unreality. The same effects are experienced under the

influence of marijuana, but people don't react with fear because they're aware that the drug is causing the sensation. It's when the sensation arrives while you're doing your tax return that things feel a little scary!

I mention depersonalization because the condition isn't often discussed, and I want to reassure those of you who may have experienced it that it's only a side effect of excessive anxiety—it will pass as soon as your anxiety level comes down. Once the mind and body return to a normal level of relaxation, your body then has the opportunity to dispel some excess chemicals, and the sensation of being disconnected from the world ends.

In combination with this buildup of stress in the body, people often become completely absorbed in mental activity, further fueling the feeling of separation from the world. It's very easy to start imagining all the terrible mental illnesses that this sensation could mean, but don't worry, you haven't caused any damage to yourself, and you'll return to the person you were before depersonalization crept in. You'll have to trust me on that.

The quickest way out of this disconnected feeling is to really accept it for the time being and have faith that it will pass shortly. Shrug your shoulders and relax into it, regardless of how strange it feels. You can adopt this relaxed attitude because you know that you'll return to normal when you remove anxiety from the equation. Remind yourself that this is a phase you're moving through, so be patient and kind to yourself while you're experiencing it.

What really moves people out of this sensation quickest is adopting an attitude that all is well. And it is. These unusual sensations of depersonalization are just a nuisance, but they'll pass. As I mentioned, not feeling connected to yourself in this manner is solely due to the anxiety in your system, and it's then reinforced when you constantly check in to see how you're feeling. Checking in means that you could be having a conversation with someone, but part of you continually checks to see if the eerie feeling is there or not. It's like you're overanalyzing yourself all the

time, and that can make you feel even stranger. I appreciate how uncomfortable it can be, but don't worry about it. It will leave, so don't let the thoughts sucker you into thinking you'll be stuck with this depersonalization feeling all your life. Those thoughts aren't valid.

The more you flow along with it and don't react, the more quickly you'll return to feeling more yourself. It takes a little practice, but that change in attitude makes a big difference in how you feel. You should also engage in physical activities like outdoor exercise when you feel this way. Activities such as walking, running, biking, swimming, etc., help to shift your attention from an overfocus on mental activity to the more physical experience of your body. Physical pursuits get you out of your mind, so to speak, and into your body. Note that exercising outdoors is preferred because fresh air improves mood and an overall sense of well-being.

## Disturbing Thoughts

Anxiety almost always comes with a level of disturbing thoughts. You might be driving with your children and then get a flash thought of losing control and driving into an oncoming car. Another example is looking down from a bridge and suddenly getting terrified by the idea that you might lose all control of your senses and jump.

If you experience such thoughts, I want to reassure you that, regardless of how extreme, don't worry about them. They're the result of an active imagination coupled with anxiety and, often, something or someone about which you care deeply. These thoughts persist because you react so strongly to them. If you didn't have a strong reaction, the thoughts would never bother you.

The scary thoughts are like a small five-year-old looking for attention and targeting something you care about to get a reaction from you. They occur to people who would never dream of doing what they think about. It's just the very fact of having the thoughts that shocks people and leads them to believe they're bad in some way.

The truth is that these thoughts are the by-product of an overactive imagination mixed with a good dollop of anxiety. It's the anxious reaction to the thoughts that keeps them going around and around, as if you're tense inside and the thoughts speed up. I've outlined this process in Stage 2, but here's a quick reminder.

Visually, it's like this. Thoughts float up in front of us all the time during our waking day. Normally, we ignore most thoughts and continue what we're doing. Other times, we really get stuck into the thought and examine it in detail, such as "what I have to do today" thoughts. When anxious thoughts enter, people generally whack them away and try to run from them. This never works, because the energy put into hitting away the thought instead powers it to rebound with even more force and intensity.

For the moment, your best way to deal with this is to accept the chain of thoughts as they happen. When "terrible idea X" enters your mind. you simply go:

> *There you are again! I'm getting totally bored by all this scare-mongering. It's not relevant to me or my life—but sure, go ahead and tell the awful idea again if it makes you feel better.*

Talk to the thoughts as if they're visitors that have no relationship to your real self and you're simply being polite by letting them run. Don't force them away—that creates the rebound effect—but don't feel you have to pay too much attention either. The goal is to move your attention to what you want to focus on without reacting to the scary thought. That way, your energy goes into what you want and not into what you don't want.

You know who you are and that these thoughts don't represent you, so don't worry—the very fact that you get so upset by the thoughts shows how different you are from the ideas that torment you. Another way to view the thoughts is as if they were school bullies trying to upset you by saying awful things about, for example,

people close to you. If you get scared, the bully continues to taunt even more. If you laugh and say, "Sure, whatever," then walk away, the bully loses interest.

Acceptance is key. Getting upset by the thoughts only fuels the inner tension further because you add more worry and stress to the problem. If you say to yourself that this is a period you're moving through and that it will work out fine, you'll move into that acceptance more easily.

"Switching off" the anxious thoughts is best achieved by saying, *"Oh, very scary! Are you done yet?"* Then continuously bring yourself back to the moment or task at hand without getting annoyed for having these thoughts. What you really need to adopt is an attitude that all is well. And it is. These fears are just a nuisance, but they'll pass.

## Depression

Depression is a very large subject. I will mention only how it ties in with anxiety, because that's the focus of this course. When someone has been feeling anxious for quite some time, the experience can become very frustrating and lead to feeling depressed. If you never suffered from depression before, but did so after your anxiety disorder began, then it's most likely the anxiety that's causing you to feel so down. Depression, in this context, is driven by thoughts of a future full of anxiety and restriction. A once carefree person feels bound. In addition to having to cope with new restrictions, an anxiety disorder often comes with health fears, which contribute to further feelings of despair.

If you tackle the anxiety, you'll see a marked improvement in your overall sense of well-being. As your anxiety problem clears, the depressed state turns to one of hope. Hope is the antidote to depression. It gives you a reason to keep pursuing your goal of an anxiety-free life. Persist with the Panic Away Program and your anxiety will lift. As it lifts, so too will feelings of despair and depression.

## Breathing Problems

It's common for people with anxiety to mention fears about their breathing. Some feel that their breathing is very labored and shallow. These fears are almost always accompanied by a tight sensation in the chest or throat area. A frequent complaint is worry that they're not getting enough oxygen or that they might stop breathing altogether and feel forced to take conscious control of their breathing.

The chest or throat tightness that causes uncomfortable or shallow breathing is very common. It's actually the chest and throat muscles that are tense, and this gives the false impression that you're not breathing right or maybe not getting enough air. This can lead to panic and light-headedness, which confirms your fears of not getting enough air. You can see how a cycle of anxiety begins as one fearful sensation feeds off the other.

Not being able to breath is a myth. The fear comes from feeling uncomfortable in that area and then having anxious thoughts about suffocating or fainting from lack of oxygen. Don't let it worry you. Believe me, you could spend every minute of the next ten years worrying that you'll stop breathing—and nothing would happen. What a waste of your time and energy.

Your body knows exactly what it needs, and even if you try with all your mental might to get in the way of it, your body will breathe. In fact, many people experience this muscle tension every day, but they don't panic because they don't have a high level of sensitization and background anxiety.

When you become overly conscious of your breathing, remind yourself that you won't stop breathing, no matter how many thoughts go through your head that say otherwise. It's when you get uptight about the tensions in your body that they persist and worry you even more, creating a cycle that's difficult to break.

Send the fear a message that it's fine for the muscle tension to be there. You're not

worried by it, and it can stay as long as it likes. It's not a problem, because you don't see any threat.

Say to that part of your body:

> *I understand you're tense. That's fine. The tension can stay there, and I'm going to continue to do what I'm doing.*

Don't get into a situation in which you try to get rid of the tension with your mind. Simply allow it to be present. Accept the uncomfortable sensation, and then shift your focus back to what you're doing. If you feel that your breathing is too shallow, then allow it to be shallow. Your body always compensates as it adjusts to expel excess carbon dioxide. The point to remember here is that your breathing is an unconscious process, and your body has always—and *will* always—look after that for you, regardless of how much your anxiety interferes. The more you can sit with the sensation and not react with fearful thoughts, the better. So to sum up, get comfortable with the sensations, and your fear about breathing will end. When the fear ends, the muscle tension releases, leaving you feeling much more comfortable.

If you find that you simply can't stop worrying about your breathing, then try to push against the fear more forcefully by demonstrating to yourself that there's no danger. You can do this by taking a deep breath and holding it for as long as possible.

Initially, you'll feel anxious trying this, because you're already concerned about your breathing. After holding your breath for a short while, you'll be forced to release quickly and breathe in. As you release and gasp for air, imagine you're also releasing your fear in the process. Allow your breathing to return to normal, and then, when comfortable, repeat the process. Each time, mentally imagine your fear leaving you as you exhale.

This exercise trains you to feel more confident in your body's ability to breathe. It

shows you that no matter how much you mentally interfere with your breathing, your body is always in charge and always looks after your breathing for you. This fear is a perfect example of how your mental activity can get in the way of a natural flow. When you learn to trust again in that natural flow of your body, you stop interfering and worrying—and a comfortable, natural rhythm returns to your body. Reestablishing this trust in your body's natural rhythm and ability to handle stress is the foundation on which all recovery from anxiety is built. Lastly, if you notice over time that you always breathe in a shallow manner, it's well worth taking steps to correct this. See the abdominal breathing exercise in Stage 2.

## Fainting/Passing Out

When someone experiences high anxiety or panic, it's very common to feel light-headed or dizzy. This sensation is alarming because it makes you feel very vulnerable. If you're alone, you might fear falling in unconsciousness with no one to look after you. Or if the sensation happens in public, it can lead to feelings of vulnerability surrounded by strangers.

The dizziness often felt during an episode of anxiety is caused by increased respiration. People tend to overbreathe, or hyperventilate, when they're anxious, which can lead to dizziness or light-headedness. Dizziness can also be triggered by pressure to perform in situations. For example, you may think this:

> *I don't know why, but any time my boss asks me a question, I freeze up and start to feel dizzy.*

Certain situations can also trigger anxious memories, like this:

> *I felt dizzy the last time I was in an elevator, and now, every time I get in one, I start to feel a bit woozy.*

It's very **uncommon** for a person to faint when feeling anxious or threatened. This

is because fainting is the result of low blood pressure. When we faint, the body falls to the ground; this allows blood to be easily supplied to the brain, a clever safety mechanism. When you feel anxious, your blood pressure goes up, not down. Hence, fainting is unlikely because your brain has plenty of blood supply.

You might remember old movies like *King Kong*, where Fay Wray faints in the arms of Kong. But this type of reaction has more to do with dramatic tension; it isn't how most people react to a threat. Panic results in a heightened sense of alertness, not fainting.

Think of situations where people are faced with imminent threats, such as a robbery or major catastrophe. People don't faint left, right, and center. They always respond with a heightened sense of alertness. They respond because their bodies have been primed to jump into action by adrenaline releasing into their system. Their hearts are beating faster, their breathing increases, and blood is flowing fast. This is a prehistoric response to threats that has been with us since early mankind.

Quite simply, fainting when anxious is highly uncommon due to the amount of blood that's being circulated. Your heart is usually beating fast, and there's little worry that the brain would be short of a fresh supply. Frequently, people who have fainted in the past tend to be particularly frightened by a dizzy spell because they feel that if it happened before, it's likely to happen again.

If you've fainted before and fear it might happen again, try to remember the circumstance you were in: Were you tired? Was the temperature very hot? Had you eaten correctly that day? Fainting can be the result of many different factors, but generally it has little to do with anxiety and is more frequently associated with energy levels, diet, or temperature.

Some people tell me that, regardless of the facts I've stated, they still can't shake off the fear of fainting when feeling anxious. If you struggle with this fear on an ongoing basis, you need to disempower the fear. The next time you feel light-

headed or dizzy and thoughts of fainting begin to trouble you, find a place to sit comfortably. Remind yourself of what I've written here, and then tell your body that if it wishes to faint, do so now. You give your body complete permission to faint if that's what's needed.

No one can faint on demand. What you'll find is that the fear evaporates quickly as you call its bluff. Sit there and say to your fear:

> *If you're going to make me faint, I'll give it a few more minutes. But if not, then I have to get on with my day.*

Do this, and you'll quickly feel more comfortable and confident to continue what you were doing. Challenge the fear of fainting in this manner, and you'll soon find that the idea of fainting doesn't bother you anymore.

## Choking Sensations/Tight Throat

Anxiety can create a sensation of a lump in your throat. The medical term for this is globus hystericus. It's caused by the throat muscles contracting due to anxiety or stress. Sometimes it feels like you can't swallow anything, and trying to only makes it worse. This is another example of a symptom that improves if you give it no credibility. It's totally harmless and won't cause you to stop breathing, eating, or drinking. It's just very unpleasant.

For people who experience this in association with eating, I find that it's the thought of forcing a swallow that causes them to feel anxious. If you feel very uncomfortable while eating, the best approach is to simply chew your food and make no attempt to swallow. Just keep chewing. You'll find that you can't stop the process of swallowing—it's a natural reflex. By not feeling that you have to force a swallow, the pressure is off. Swallowing happens as a natural reflex if you simply keep chewing. You can have fun experimenting with this. Try to eat anything at all and force yourself not to swallow. It's almost impossible. This is a great approach

for people who fear swallowing, because they don't have to put themselves under any pressure to swallow. When pressure is removed from the equation, the problem solves itself.

I believe a lot of people experience a lump in the throat due to a buildup of emotion. During emotional events, such as weddings and funerals, it's common to feel this sensation. And what's more interesting is that, when people express themselves (crying, laughing, talking), the swell of emotion dies down and the sensation ends.

So if you feel this sensation on a regular basis, I suggest that you start singing or humming. Singing or humming to yourself for several minutes, on a regular basis, releases the muscle tension in the throat area. For this to be most effective, focus on the singing, not on trying to see if the sensation has gone. Like many of the anxiety sensations, the less you preoccupy yourself with it, the faster the issue is resolved.

Some might associate this "lump in the throat" sensation with a disease. In practice, real lumps in the throat, such as a cancer, are not felt (this is one of the reasons that a tumor can get so big before it's discovered). Nevertheless, if you're concerned about your throat—or, in fact, any part of your body—always get a full medical examination. This is the fastest way to put anxious "what if" thoughts to rest.

## Nausea/Fear of Vomiting

Anxiety has a direct impact on the abdominal region. It can make people feel anything from a mild jittery sensation (butterflies in the stomach) to physically sick. Most people tend to get more anxious when they imagine they might vomit, and that worsens the sensation of anxiety, making it all the more likely to happen. The fear of getting sick makes the situation worse. This fear is driven by thoughts like this:

*What if I get sick right here and now? What would I do? What would people think of me?*

It's more common for people to fear vomiting in social settings rather than when they're home, because they think they don't have a safe place to retreat and feel exposed to social embarrassment.

If you feel sick in your stomach during an anxious period, it's important to not fight against the sensation or any fears you may have of projectile vomiting.

The solution is found in accepting the sensation in your stomach as it manifests and allowing it full permission to be present. Tell your stomach that it's fine to feel sick, and if it feels it's necessary to vomit, then it may do so, and you won't try to force it from happening. The reason this approach works well is because, as soon as you allow your stomach the space to feel uncomfortable, the abdominal muscles start to relax. You no longer resist the experience with fear, and your body can flow more freely and release the tension that causes your stomach to feel unwell.

In the early stages, while you're learning to apply this approach, you might carry a small paper bag with you (like the ones found on airplanes). The bag reassures you that if you get sick, you can do so in a discreet manner. This gives you more confidence to handle the situation. This approach takes a little practice, but with time, you'll become more confident in allowing the sensations to be present without resistance—and after a while, you'll feel no need to carry a paper bag around with you. (To relieve excess abdominal tension, see the breathing exercise in Stage 2.)

## Heart Attacks

Here's a typical scenario for getting anxious about your heart:

*While sitting at my desk, I was feeling edgy, and I could feel my pulse*

*rate increase. I kept working, and then I felt pins and needles going up my left arm. I immediately thought to myself, "I'm having a heart attack." Literally seconds later, my heart was racing. I then looked around to see if there was anyone at the office. I was by myself . . . I really thought I was having a heart attack or stroke. Knowing I was alone, with no one to help me, made me feel more desperate and scared. I ended up calling 911. After extensive tests at the hospital, they told me it was anxiety. Even though I know it's just anxiety related, I can't help worrying that they may have missed something, I've become paranoid and check my pulse all the time. I also get really frightened if my heart beats fast or skips a beat.*

Most people who have experienced panic attacks at some point fear for the health of their heart. It goes without saying that everyone should investigate any unusual symptoms in their chest or heart. Heart disease almost always produces major electrical changes in the heart, which are picked up very obviously by an EKG. In panic attacks, the only change that shows up on the EKG is a slight increase in heartbeat.

If you're worried about heart problems, treat yourself to a full examination, and put your mind to rest. If you've had a full medical examination and the doctor has cleared you, you can safely assume that you don't have heart problems.

Let's first look at the facts of heart disease and see how this differs from panic attacks. The major symptoms of heart disease are breathlessness and chest pain as well as occasional palpitations and fainting. Such symptoms are generally related to the amount of physical effort exerted—that is, the harder you exercise, the worse the symptoms, and the less you exercise, the better. The symptoms usually go away quickly if the individual rests. This is very different from the symptoms associated with panic attacks.

## Palpitations

Palpitations are short, abrupt periods in which the heart suddenly starts beating fast. If you're in a sensitive state, this can ring alarm bells because you fear a sudden heart attack. The more you panic, the faster the heart beats. It's therefore understandable why many people in this situation jump to conclusions and call for medical help. What you have to remember is that palpitations are perfectly natural and can often be caused by exhaustion or stimulants like caffeine. Your heart is an incredibly strong muscle, and it won't stop or explode simply because it's beating hard and fast. A healthy heart can beat fast all day long and not be in any danger.

## Missed Heartbeats

The medical term for missed heartbeats is extrasystoles. A missed heartbeat is usually an extra beat between two normal beats. Given the pause that follows this premature beat, it just seems as if one beat was missed. And because the heart's lower chambers fill with a greater-than-usual amount of blood during the pause, the next regular heartbeat can feel like a bit of a jolt. When you feel this sensation, you often freeze and wait in terror to see if your heart is in trouble.

Such missed beats are generally harmless. It can help to sit down when you feel this sensation, but if you wish to keep moving, do so. Exercise won't cause the situation to get worse, and don't convince yourself that going home to lie down is the only way to help the situation. If you retreat every time you feel an unusual sensation, that behavior can reinforce a negative idea that your home is the only safe place to be. Our hearts are not atomic clocks that always keep time; they speed up, slow down, or occasionally beat in an irregular fashion. People with anxiety are very keen observers of all bodily functions. From time to time, you may notice an irregular beat or two. This is nothing to get upset about.

Sometimes, individuals go through similar worries about their heart as they do with their breathing. People convince themselves that if they worry enough about their heart, or concentrate too much upon its actions, it may somehow get confused and

forget how to beat correctly. It's quite common for people who suffer from panic attacks to check in on their heart at regular intervals to make sure it's still beating away.

If you simply can't stop obsessing about your heart, here are some tips:

- Get a full medical examination. If you don't, your mind will always bring up the "what if something really is wrong" card. When you get a clean bill of health, trust in the results and don't second-guess them. If you really must, get a second opinion—but after that, stop doubting your good health.

- Remember that your body has incredible internal intelligence. Simply telling your heart, out of panic, that it might stop doesn't mean that it heeds your fears. Learn to become more comfortable with your heart, and let it do its job. Listen to it when you're relaxed and also when you're exercising. The more comfortable you are with the diversity and range of your heartbeats, the more confidence you'll have in it.

- Allow your heart to beat in whatever rhythm it sees fit. Don't try to control the natural rhythms of your body by always insisting on a calm heartbeat. The more you allow your body to flow in the manner it so chooses, the faster it will return to a state of rest.

Very often, your heart only wants to palpitate a bit, thump a few beats harder. Why? That's the heart's own business. It's your mind that interferes and panics, causing the adrenaline to kick off a longer cycle of rapid heartbeats. So from now on, make a verbal agreement with your heart that you're going to stop interfering and obsessing over its health and trust in it 100 percent. Then hand over the controls. Let go to whatever way your heart wishes to behave. By allowing the sensations to happen and simply getting on with your day, you release the anxiety that you hold around your heart as well as the cautious monitoring of every heartbeat.

## Headaches

If you experience high anxiety or stress, it's very likely that you also experience headaches, or even migraines. Some describe their headaches as dull pain or a tight band around their heads. A migraine is usually experienced in more severity, sometimes associated with sensitivity to light, sound, and movement.

The most common of all the various headache types is a tension headache. This is caused by a tightening of the muscles in the upper back, neck, and head. Many cite anxiety as a major trigger for this type of headache.

Researchers in Taiwan have found that the majority of people, particularly women, with chronic daily headaches have either anxiety or depressive disorders. Anxiety can make tension headaches worse by increasing muscle tension, flooding the body with stress chemicals (such as adrenaline), and reducing the amount of "relaxation" chemicals (such as endorphins) in the body.

It's beyond the scope of this course to discuss in detail possible cures for headaches, but I'll briefly summarize some short- and long-term solutions. Your doctor is best able to advise you on how to treat your particular headache.

### Short-term treatments

Short-term treatment options to provide pain relief include the following:

- Painkillers, such as aspirin or paracetamol (acetaminophen)
- Heat treatment, such as a long soak in a hot bath
- Ice packs to the face
- A scalp, neck, and shoulder massage
- Microcurrent (TENS) and magnetic therapy
- Stress-relieving activities, such as relaxation, meditation, or hypnosis
- Exercise

### Long-term treatments

If you feel your headache is directly related to stress and anxiety, then the best long-term strategy is to reduce the amount of anxiety you experience. Research has found that regular exercise can relieve muscle tension and help alleviate stress-related symptoms, such as tension headaches, and should also be included in your long-term strategy. Aerobic exercise—such as cycling, swimming, or walking—are good examples.

## Blurred Vision

When frightened or anxious, the pupils in the eye dilate quickly, and this can sometimes cause blurred vision. Blurred vision can also occur when looking quickly between near and far objects, because the pupils change dimension.

Blurred vision is also often caused by fatigue or when the eye muscles start to lose elasticity with age. Even though anxiety can frequently cause instances of blurred vision, it's important to visit your doctor for an eye checkup. For example, if the blurred vision occurs with a discharge, it may be conjunctivitis and need treatment. If something needs treatment, early detection can often result in correcting the problem.

## Weak Legs/Jelly Legs

Anxiety creates the sensation of weak or "jelly" legs. When anxious, adrenaline is released into your body. The adrenaline can make sensitive people feel very weak in their muscles—especially the leg muscles, because they're supporting the body. You often hear people say that when they have to stand up and speak, they go weak at the knees and fear they might topple over. It's important to note, however, that the jittery sensation you may feel in your legs is not a signal that your legs are any weaker—they're not. In fact, your legs are being primed for movement, so

don’t fear that they’ll go out from under you.

If you’re out walking, then continue to walk; if you’re standing in a line, then continue to stand. There’s no need to find a place to sit, and doing so often reinforces your anxiety about weak legs. If you train yourself to continue to do what you were doing, you’ll quickly learn that the sensation of weak legs is an illusion and your legs are strong and well capable of supporting your body. The more you challenge anxious sensations in this manner, the faster the sensation will disappear. Many of the anxiety symptoms are worsened by anxious thoughts about the sensation. For example, if you feel your legs go weak, you may jump to extreme conclusions:

> *Weak legs mean I’ll fall over—and that means I must be about to faint!*

When you think like this, the anxiety can then trick you into feeling dizzy, thereby creating an even greater cycle of anxiety. The answer, as you’re now well aware, lies in accepting the sensation and moving on. Don’t try to wish the sensation away or pretend that it doesn’t exist. Simply say this to your body:

> *Okay, legs, I understand you’re feeling a bit weak. But I really don’t feel it’s something serious, so I’m going to finish my walk regardless.*

By not retreating, you build up your confidence to the point where you’re not bothered by the sensation—which, in turn, creates less anxiety, resulting in fewer occurrences of weak legs.

## Tingling Sensations

When panic attacks begin, people often feel a tingling sensation in their body. The medical term for this is paresthesia. More generally known as the feeling of pins and needles, it’s a sensation of tingling, pricking, or numbness of the skin, and it has no apparent long-term physical effect. Paresthesia is most commonly felt in the

hands, arms, mouth, and feet. Don't be alarmed; this is perfectly natural to experience in connection with high anxiety.

## Toilet Phobia

There are a number of different phobias related to the toilet, but here I'm going to discuss one of the most common: the fear of not getting to the toilet on time. No one should feel ashamed of this problem; it's common and can be overcome. This fear is almost always connected to social embarrassment, and it rarely happens in situations where other people are not around.

Anxiety can give people the impression that they have a weak bladder. When anxious, they may need to use the toilet several times. In most cases, there's no physical problem, and the frequency of needing a toilet is purely psychological.

Toilet phobia is strongly connected to panic attacks because it's the thought "How do I escape this if I need a toilet?" that really triggers the anxiety. People often run scenarios through their minds of not being able to reach a toilet on time and the social embarrassment this would cause. If you experience this fear when you leave home, I'll outline steps you can take to minimize the anxiety.

The solution lies in rebuilding confidence in your own body and putting less focus on the fear of embarrassment or ridicule. Start by putting yourself in situations where you know there are toilets, but position yourself far enough away so that it causes your anxiety be activated.

Let's take a shopping mall as an example. As you enter and the fear escalates, find a place to sit down. As the fearful thoughts surface, don't try to suppress them. Simply say to the thoughts that you're not worried by that scenario because you know you have full confidence in controlling your body. You work through the anxiety while seated. When the anxiety lessens, you stand up, then walk slowly and calmly to the toilet. By the time you reach it, you might even find that you no

longer need to go.

The important point is to move toward the toilet only when you feel that *you*—not the anxiety—decides when to go. If you keep running to the toilet every time you feel the urge, you reinforce the idea that you have no control over the situation. By working through the anxiety and going only when you're ready, your confidence in the ability to control your body increases tenfold.

You might want to begin by setting up these opportunities when you're alone. When you're with friends, fear of embarrassment can make it more difficult. As you practice this, you'll reach a point where you feel more confident in controlling your body's need to use the toilet. This takes practice and time, but soon you'll be able to go anywhere without this worry dominating your thoughts. Practice is key here. To learn more about toilet phobia, visit www.phobics-society.org.uk/condition_toiletphobia.php.

## Colds/Flu and Anxiety

Sometimes people who are making good progress with their anxieties experience a setback when they come down with either a head cold or the flu. The reason for this is because, as the body wards off the cold or flu, it makes the people feel drained and vulnerable. To people with anxiety, this can feel unnerving because it may remind them of how they felt during an intense spell of anxiety. Colds and flu also come with an almost claustrophobia-like sensation of being congested up in your head. Try to remember that if you do experience additional anxiety when dealing with either a cold of flu, trust that the renewed anxiety will lift as soon as your body recovers.

# Conclusion

You've reached the end of the book. Your recovery now lies before you. Take it one day at time, and diligently apply what you've learned here—and I guarantee that you'll soon find yourself living a completely new, confident, fearless life. The method has been written for all individuals who suffer from anxiety disorders, and it's especially dedicated to those individuals who feel their lives will always be one of fear and anxiety.

Your future will be bright. How do I know this? Because you now have the tools that are changing the lives of so many people. You've made the first step by reading to the end of this course. Now follow through and apply the method. **Never for a moment believe that you don't have what it takes to be anxiety free**. Every single person can achieve this—regardless of age, background, or ability. All you have to do is make the decision to commit to your recovery. At this very moment, it may feel like you're in a very dark and anxious place, but know that where anxiety is concerned, it's always darkest before the dawn.

To your bright future,

Joe Barry

*If you wish to contact me please email me at joebarry@panicportal.com*
*(In your email please add the order number found on the email receipt that was emailed to you after making payment.)*