

A hand holding a large, bright yellow heart-shaped balloon against a clear blue sky. The balloon has the text "Anxiety, Goodbye!" written on it in a black, cursive font. Below the main text, the author's name "Elisabetta Reist" is written in a smaller, black, cursive font. The hand holding the balloon is visible at the bottom left, wearing a white sleeve.

*Anxiety, Goodbye!*

*by*

*Elisabetta Reist*

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# 1

## *Anxiety: A Real Enemy*

*“Our anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow,  
but only empties today of its strength”  
--- Charles Spurgeon*

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Congratulations for deciding to read this book!

As someone who went through periods of extreme anxiety, I understand that what you are going through is one of the most difficult things a person can experience.

Anxiety is an extremely unpleasant emotion, and it can come to you all of a sudden, or at a gradually growing intensity. More so, it seems invasive and all-consuming. From a purely private and personal problem, you soon find that it can spill over your relationships, your work and even your health. Pretty soon, it just feels well beyond your capability to control.

What makes anxiety even more difficult to handle is that it is a diffused and subjective experience; half the time, you cannot describe what is happening to you nor can you explain where the unease is coming from. How can you then make the people around you understand something that they don't see?!? How can you make others understand that which you have difficulty understanding yourself?!?

A casual observer may be disposed to judge you for overreacting, for being too emotional or weak—or worse, just lazy and looking for attention. They will accuse you that you are just inventing a problem; that it is all in your head and you are making it up. And when they do, you begin to wonder if something is wrong with you and maybe you *are* crazy or defective in some way.

You are not crazy, and nothing is wrong with you.

I want to begin this book by validating the reality of what you feel right now. Anxiety manifests itself in many different forms and many levels of intensity, but it is a fact. It affects a considerable number of people everyday all over the world. And yes, it can paralyze you and keep you from the life you deserve.

*"My whole life, I feel like I am a catastrophe waiting to happen. I have to gather the emotional strength to try out new things and pursue the things that I like doing. I cannot focus on my work for fear of failure. Every time I start on doing something that would express my skills, I feel like there's a huge boulder pressed against my heart. I couldn't breathe."*

---Benedict, 34

Debilitating anxiety is a real enemy.

### ***Defining Anxiety***

It might be best for us to begin by defining what anxiety is.

Anxiety is a universal emotion. Almost everyone has felt some degree of anxiety at one point or another in their life. Those who have never felt anxiety *ever* are extremely rare exceptions--- maybe they don't even exist!

While the signs and symptoms of anxiety differ from person to person, it is generally conceded that anxiety is a gamut of unpleasant emotions. The English word anxiety comes from the Latin *'anxietas'* and/or *'anxius'* whose roots mean *'to press tight'*, *'to strangle'* or *'to be weighed down in grief.'* It is a feeling of uneasiness and apprehension, usually about something that has yet to happen.

The effect of anxiety on a person can be felt in many areas. Your body can experience your anxiety through various pains and aches, stiffness of the muscles, nausea, vomiting, trembling, constricting of the chest, difficulty breathing and even tension headaches. Mentally, anxiety can be felt via confusion, difficulty concentrating, inability to remember, hypervigilance and obsessive thoughts. It may also come with emotions like anger, depression, irritation and fear of things like losing control or of dying.

Generally, anxiety is an unease regarding an unidentified threat; the feeling seems vague and indefinable. When the unease has a known target, the word fear is typically used instead of anxiety.

## ***Is it wrong to feel anxiety?***

If almost everyone feels anxiety, does that mean that all people are problematic?

The straight answer is 'no'.

Anxiety is amoral, it is neither right nor wrong. As you often do not choose to have anxiety---it just comes! ---- you cannot be accused of *full* (partial, maybe) responsibility for producing anxiety in your life. Anxiety does not come bidden, it is instinctual. There are things that we do, however, that maintains or intensifies anxiety in our lives.

In fact, anxiety may be considered as a normal reaction to potential danger. Anxiety is a signal that there is the possibility of harm ahead, and that we have to protect ourselves either by fighting (facing the problem head on) or by fleeing (avoiding the problem).

As an instinct, it is likely something had been passed to us socially and/or genetically by our ancestors. You can imagine then that certain fears and anxieties have helped our forefathers survive. An appropriate fear of wild animals had probably helped them live without getting eaten alive. An appropriate fear of getting separated from the family---what scientists now call as separation anxiety for babies--- kept young kids from going hungry when left to fend for themselves alone. These fears have kept the human race alive.

*"I am brave as a rule, a risk-taker. I am considered as the top expert in my field and have received honors to prove it. However, after my grandfather died of a heart condition, I have lived in constant fear of getting a serious illness and dying in my bed. I can't sleep; I am too afraid too. "*

---Brooke, 55

The same goes with us today. Imagine a situation where we are not afraid of dangerous things! We would just head on to high-risk situations with little regard for ourselves or the potential harm that may come to the ones around us.

A young girl not anxious about walking in a dangerous neighborhood in the middle of the night has a serious problem. So would an old man who does not get anxious about the health impact of too much of a fat intake---even when he is already feeling all the effects of a high blood pressure! If we do not have anxiety, we could die without warning!

The fact is, we need to be afraid of things that would not do us good or else we would not think twice about being plunged in consequences we do not appreciate. Viewed this way, not feeling anxiety

when danger is already staring at you in the face is actually the *abnormal* reaction.

When then can we consider anxiety as problematic? There are three primary ways: when the anxiety is inappropriate, when the anxiety is too much, and when the anxiety is chronic and recurring.

Let us take a look at each one a litter closer. The first sign that anxiety is problematic is when the anxiety is inappropriate. This means that a person feels uneasiness and apprehension even in situations where there is nothing to be afraid of, when there is no clear and pressing danger to self and others. It can also mean that while the fear is appropriate, its degree is grossly exaggerated.

Consider as an example anxiety that results from meeting new people. Some individuals are so afraid of introducing themselves to strangers, that they avoid all social occasions and they go into profuse sweating at just the thought of striking a conversation! When you think rationally about it, what is there to be afraid of when it comes to meeting new people? The reaction seems to be extreme compared to the trigger event.

*"I don't even know when it will hit me. I could just be talking casually to my co-workers when all of a sudden they would mention a word that would spark a negative memory. Once I hear the word I would start feeling self-conscious. And then I wouldn't be able to concentrate on anything for the whole day. "*

---Sandy, 21

The best gage of whether or not an anxiety is inappropriate is to see your fears compared to the general population. If the majority of the population feel minimal to no anxiety at all with what triggers you, then chances are the anxiety you feel is inappropriate and potentially problematic.

Inappropriate anxiety is more likely when the object of the fear is psychological rather than physical danger. Fear of losing credibility, fear of making a fool of one's self, fear of losing self-worth are all real, appropriate fears that can easily become exaggerated.

The second sign that signals that your anxiety is problematic is when the amount of the anxiety is too much. 'Too much' means that the strength of the anxiety exceeds your ability to cope with it. The anxiety then already affects your personal life, relationships and work life. It affects your productivity and your inner contentment.

When the anxiety is too much, there is usually obsession and paralysis. Obsession means that all you think about is the object of your anxiety and these thoughts just intrude on your day despite efforts not to think about them. Paralysis means that you have become frozen in your tasks and find yourself unable to perform as you should--in other words, the anxiety is debilitating. When this happens, the anxiety needs to be dealt with immediately.

The opposite of a debilitating anxiety is a facilitative anxiety; this is the kind of anxiety that helps rather than inhibits. For instance, some individuals function better when they are anxious. There are athletes, for example, who think that some amount of nervousness before a game gives them that extra adrenalin rush. Some businessmen find that anxiety before a big deal helps them perform better, that it motivates them to take that extra mile. If you have been able to channel your anxiety in ways that makes it more productive for you, then the anxiety is a functional rather than a dysfunctional thing.

Lastly, a sign that anxiety is already problematic is when it is chronic and/or recurring. If your anxiety has been around for a long time, chances are there is something unhelpful that you keep on doing maintaining this problem for you. Or perhaps there are new ways of coping that you need to learn. Usually, chronicity and pervasiveness are signals of seriousness.

Sometimes the object of the anxiety changes over the years; maybe when you were young you had a fear of public speaking but when you got older it became a fear of crowds in general. Usually this means that you are just transferring your fear to another object, but you have never really let go of the anxiety to begin with.

It would be good for you to do a little bit of self-assessment. Is your anxiety inappropriate? Is it too much? Is it chronic and recurring in nature? What about our anxiety makes it extra difficult to handle?

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**Poorly managed anxiety limits the free expression of life  
and the ability of a person to grow.**

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The worst part of anxiety is not that it is unpleasant. The worst part of anxiety is that it can keep you stagnant and stuck.

All of us are meant to grow in life. The way our bodies naturally develop as we get older, so should our emotional, mental and spiritual

life. This means that everyday is a learning experience. When we interact with the world and the people around us, we get feedback from life on what it is that we ought to do to reach our utmost potentials.

And we are meant to experience life as FUN! This everyday learning process is not designed to be constrictive and forced. Rather, it is meant to be an enjoyable journey. A liberating experience. The way we can learn and grow in life is by simply using our natural inclination to express ourselves freely--- without fear or inhibition! Life is not about suffering and hard work. Ancient wisdom tells us that we are born to enjoy life and not to worry.

Look at children as they develop. Toddlers learn about the world around them not from a book, or a particularly authoritative parent, rather from an innate curiosity to touch the world and figure out how things work. A young child would break a vase deliberately, just to see if it's breakable! He would vandalize the bedroom wall just to share what is in his head. He would speak out what is on his mind unmindful of judgment. As he navigates the world without fear, he learns what he has to offer the world and what the world has to offer him. He learns his limits also by exploration. And this is how his personality grows.

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**The more you think about anxiety,  
the more you get trapped into further anxiety.**

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Whatever you are thinking results in a fact.

Debilitating anxiety stops us from exploring and reaching out. What it does is make us focus of what we are feeling, rather than what we can achieve if we take the risk. Anxiety is your enemy because it robs you of what could be your quality life.

While suffering the stages of anxiety, your only concern is to get out of the situation. Ironically, the more you think about getting out of anxiety, the more anxious you get!

The more you avoid anxiety-provoking situations, the more they come to you. And when you fail at managing your anxiety, the bad feeling just multiplies a hundredfold. This can be specially alarming as it is mostly the case that aside from the anxiety itself, people also engage in dysfunctional coping to deal with the anxiety such as drinking, taking drugs and alcohol or being hopelessly dependent on others as a recourse.

I understand if some of you reading this book have, not just anxiety, but a little bit of frustration as well. You must have all tried

other methods of managing anxiety before and found that they do not work. This may be a problem you've had for a very long time. It is not unexpected that you may be a bit skeptical as well. That is alright.

I can tell you now point blank that there is a way out of the cycle of anxiety. But this solution would only come with a radical *change in your thinking*. You need to re-evaluate not just how you react to anxiety, but also how you approach life and how you approach anxiety as well.

While severe forms of anxiety accompanied by other mental and physical illnesses, and thus require the help of a health professional and maybe drugs, the milder forms can easily be overcome with the help of the many techniques which have been known for ages, but mostly have not been known by Westerners.

These methods have now been simplified for use by Westerners or more specifically by Americans. There are also methods developed by Europeans, Americans and other Westerners to help people who suffer from anxieties or other invalidating psychological diseases. Here we are going to explore several of these techniques.

Make it your own personal truth to overcome your anxiety. This seems to be difficult but you will see that it is a joyful journey.

And you will always be happy to have it undertaken

# 2

## *Real Answers:*

### *Nobody Needs to be Helpless and Hopeless*

*“Happiness is not a brilliant climax to years of grim struggle and anxiety. It is a long succession of little decisions simply to be happy at the moment.”*

*--- J. Donald Walters*

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You always have a choice.

It is easy to fall into the trap of hopelessness and helplessness when one is battling anxiety. Indeed, anxiety is like a voice in your head that would keep on playing; telling you that you are not good enough, that you are not competent enough, that it is better for you to stay within small boundaries rather than explore the world outside. But at the end of the day, these internal messages are nothing but noise. They do not define your totality as a person--- unless, of course, you let them!

It is easy to fall into the trap of insecurity, especially in our times. Modern living had thrust us in a world where, while we may have all the convenience of technology, we've lost our fundamental attachment to people and nature. It is ironic--- in a world where we supposedly are more connected and more grounded, we are actually more alone and more ambivalent.

While the world urbanized, became big cities and towns, we lose the social network we used to have when we lived in small communities. Life is now hurried and driven, with barely enough time to sit down and get to know our neighbors and friends. Most of us even live far from our families, our haven and source of solace. Worse, with the number of issues family life is facing nowadays, divorces happening left and right, it is not unusual that there are moments when we feel there is the absence of a natural support in our lives.

We've moved far from nature. Have you ever seen a baby calf being born? Most of us haven't. Do you dare to spend one whole afternoon under a tree, just enjoying the breeze? Probably not. But our communion with nature is a huge part of our innate ability to be de-stressed. Right now, living in the modern city, the world seems cold and automated. By leaving our natural environment, we have anaesthetized ourselves from everyday wonders. We became purely thinking creatures focused on what to do next.

No wonder then that we have developed to become such an anxiety-prone generation! We have no source of security these days, no support systems and no known ways to de-stress. And while all these seem to be happening outside of us, at the end of the day it contributes significantly to our inner wells of security. The more isolated the world becomes, the more insecure we feel.

### ***A new paradigm***

For us to be able to successfully navigate our way around anxiety, we need to expand our understanding and awareness of ourselves and the world around us.

Society, and probably our own upbringing, likely taught us that some things are more powerful than us in this life and that when faced with these more powerful things, our only choice is to surrender. Indeed, while we may not even be aware of it, we may be viewing our lives as nothing short of a power struggle--- a competition to be the best, a battle to survive. Faced with a new challenge, we find ourselves asking: how can I conquer this? How can I be more powerful against this new villain.

In the context of anxiety, when something makes us feel terrible and afraid, our first reaction is to immediately rebel against it. If, say, going back to school makes us anxious, our impulse is to either quash the anxiety or find ways to attack the idea of going back to school. Our parents are too mean in making us go, society is too strict in its

standards! But notice that the more you try to defend yourself, the more time, attention and focus you spend on the object of your anxiety. Soon, you find yourself trapped into fighting the bad feelings full time that you can barely think of anything else.

You need not view life as a powerful struggle. Here is why:

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### **The entire universe is energy**

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The world is not attacking you. The universe is not out to get you. The circumstances in your life are not in place to make you feel bad; it doesn't ---and cannot--- make decisions like that. The universe is a morally neutral entity. It moves but it does not make judgment.

Everything in the world is but energy; this includes the things that we see and even the things that we do not see. Our thoughts are energy, our body is energy, food is energy, our drinks are energy, and each piece of furniture is energy.

And get this: our anxieties are also nothing but energy.

Energy as such is neither good nor bad, neither positive nor negative. What it is, simply, is *what we think of it*. It is *our thoughts* that give energy a value.

This may be difficult to appreciate if this is the first time you've ever heard it, it is not a very popular idea. But take the time to reflect on it. Right now, think of your top three major objects of anxiety. What are the things that make you feel apprehensive and uncomfortable?

Having thought of them, make a list of the many ways you think about the object of your anxiety. What makes it terrifying? What is its effect on you? Make as many thoughts that you can about the object of your anxiety.

When you are done, go over your list and review them one by one. Chances are, you have come up with tons of negative things! For instance, if the object of your anxiety is dating again after a separation, maybe you've become anxious because you think you might get hurt again. Or maybe deep down you think you are not attractive and likeable. Possibly too, that you consider yourself as unprepared to go back into the singles market again.

Ask yourself now, *'do I really have to think of these things this way?'* Are these things really negative or am I making them negative based on my thought? Is there a way I can view them, if not positively, neutrally?

If we think of everything as energy, we know that we are in charge of changing its perception and therefore of how it will affect us. Do you choose to be affected in a positive or in a negative way? The logic would certainly tell us that to be affected in a positive way is more helpful and certainly closer to what Life is meant to be.

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### **Energy means vibes**

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Another important point to remember is that energy is never still and lifeless; it is always capable of influencing the things around it. Heat for example may just be confined in one section of a big room but left enough alone, it can heat up the entire house--- even burn it to the ground.

Energy can fill every space of the world, every corner of your home and every cell of your body as well as every thought you may think. Related to the concept of anxiety as energy, this means that the more you continue to worry about your anxiety, the more you create more anxiety.

This makes sense even in neurological research as they say that our thoughts are organized in networks grouped together by feelings. Thus, the more we think about anxiety or something that causes us anxiety, the more we trigger anxiety-provoking situations. We lose immediate access to happy and content thoughts when we entertain the anxiety-related thoughts regularly in our minds.

Energy cannot make distinctions as to whether it is wanted or not, it just is. Consequently, the mere fact that we hold a thought in our minds can trigger the persistence of what we think about in our minds. Our subconscious does not distinguish between things that we “do not

want” and things that we “do want”. Thus, even if you know that you do not want anxiety, anxiety will persist for as long as you think about it.

Reflect about this nature of energy and anxiety because, if understood correctly, this alone can already produce a significant change in your life. It already directs you on what you can do get rid, or at least manage, your anxiety.

The solution to getting rid of anxiety is a commitment to mental discipline. We need to practice mental hygiene---that conscious and deliberate process of monitoring what we think about and filtering the ‘dirt’ from our thoughts. We need to eliminate that which causes our bad feelings, and get rid of the bad feelings themselves.

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**The state of your life is nothing more than the state of your mind**  
---- **Dr. Wayne W. Dryer**

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Some of you may find what I am sharing a bit difficult to understand. Or maybe, some of you are even rebelling right now. You may be thinking: if it were easy to get rid of my debilitating thoughts, I would have done so a long time ago!

Fair enough. It is really difficult to clean your mind of obsessive thoughts---that’s why they are obsessive to begin with! And I have no intention of oversimplifying your struggles. But I realized from experience that the difficulty people experience in removing thoughts of anxiety and objects of anxiety in their minds does not lie in the process per se. Rather, I found that thought control is only difficult the first few tries because we are not used to practicing control of what we entertain in our minds. With enough conscious effort, this can become second nature to us. The thing is, most people already give up after just a few failed attempts.

Remember that monitoring and controlling what energy you use is a skill. It is like learning how to drive or learning how to sew. At first it may feel artificial and difficult; you would be so self-conscious you could barely follow the instructions. You might even make mistakes along the way.

*“I know that whenever I tell myself not to be afraid of heights, all I am doing is making my fear more powerful than it really is. My fear is just energy and it needs to be re-channeled ---not fed. I decided then to start telling myself everyday that I am more than capable of walking up a high ledge, and I will get better at it everyday. Now I am better able to look down from a high window without even batting an eyelash. ”*

---Megan, 33

Anxiety God

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But with persistent and continuous efforts, the results are simply amazing.

How do we start this process of cleaning up our thoughts? It starts quite simply with an awareness of what *exactly* triggers your anxiety. Temporarily, you need entertain thoughts of your anxiety causes just so you could get to know what stuff you need to throw out. After all, you cannot change what you do not know.

So ask yourself, what is it that makes you feel full of fear? What causes your heart to pound so hard you fear that somebody could hear it? Are there many causes or many situations which you think are “dangerous” or is there just one? Is there a general theme to your anxiety? Make a detailed list.

If this first step of the process is too difficult or if you think that, in any case, nothing could ever help you to get rid of your anxiety, just let it happen and watch it as if it were happening to somebody else. Always bear in mind that everything is energy and that we are attributing it the value we think it has.

Once you know what you are afraid of, it is time to practice some techniques to develop your mental discipline. The following are three of what I consider to be most effective:

### ***The Coué Mantra***

We’ve probably all experienced what is like to talk to ourselves. Even a little child, when he feels scared, assures himself: “Relax, calm down. Everything is okay.” Somehow, these little self-talks can help console us and mobilize us into more constructive action.

A French pharmacist and humanist by the name of Emile Coué decided to exploit the power of us affirming ourselves. But he decided to take it a little further than simply telling one’s self that it is okay. He developed a self-development technique called *conscious autosuggestion*. Also called ‘The Coué’s Method’ or ‘The Coué’s Mantra’, this method has been known to facilitate cure for many concerns and illnesses.

One of the basic principles of Coué’s technique is this: when you make a suggestion meant for your improvement, state it positively rather

than negatively. Coué speaks of what he terms as a conflict between willpower and the ideas that we hold in our minds; basically the more you try *not* to think of something, or even *not* to do something, the more the opposite occurs. This is because the mere act of thinking about an idea plants it firmly in our heads.

This makes sense. Notice that if I tell you: “don’t think about daisies!” you can’t help but do the exact opposite--- think about daisies! Our minds will form the image just because we’ve thought it. In a similar vein, the more we say to ourselves: “don’t be anxious,” the more we will feel anxious. In sum, Coué is basically saying:

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**Any idea exclusively occupying the mind turns to reality.**

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Thus, instead of thinking about the negative, or the problem situation, think about the positive---the solution or the cure. The best way to do it is in a relaxed way, not like you are willfully forcing information down your throat. The more a suggestion feels strange and foreign, the less likely will it take root. Coué suggests that the best way to internalize your suggestion is via a part of a regular ritual, e.g. repeating your key phrase every morning as you wake up, and ever night before you go to bed, and as many times you can in between.

Though you are free to make your own autosuggestion, Coué recommended that the best sentence to repeat every single day, many times within the day, is this:

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**“Everyday I am getting better and better and even better.  
Thank you.”**

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You have the option of saying the above phrase out loud, or writing it several times over. While you do so, repeat the phrase as well in your head. Think of it over and over. By doing so, it can sink deep into your subconscious mind and help you to overcome an attack or the thought of being attacked by fear, anxiety or also by stress. It is a way of making yourself mentally healthy, like you are infusing your mind with the

nutrients and vitamins it needs everyday until you get to the mental health that can fight off anxiety quite easily.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Relaxation Techniques***

Our mind and our bodies are inexplicably linked, so much so that we can actually tell our body to feel better and it will obey us. This is particularly important as we talk about letting go of our debilitating anxiety. As anxiety can be expressed in bodily ways, consequently, we also need to teach our bodies to let go of its anxiety. A relaxed body is a tantamount to a relaxed mind.

One great technique that can help our bodies to relax is called the Autogenic Training (“auto” means self). This method was invented by German psychiatrist Johannes H. Schultz. At present, it is used and found effective in a great variety of settings, including sports training, stress management and even spiritual formation.

In this technique, one is invited to conduct what Schultz calls as a *body scan*: mentally scanning our bodies for areas that are tense or not as relaxed as it should be. You may begin this by finding a position that you are most comfortable with, often it is sitting in a chair with your back resting against the backrest and both feet flat on the floor. It may also be done lying down.

You are invited to focus your attention on each part of you body one by one and “scan” it for tension, anxiety or even pain. You can go about it in any order that you want; you can start from your head, to your shoulders, arms, chest, stomach, legs and feet or vice-versa. Make a mental checklist of what parts of your body feels the most tension.

After your scan, you may begin inducing your body into relaxation. Mentally scan again your whole body, this time mentally tell the tense parts of your body to relax.

In Schultz method, you are not telling your entire body to relax all at once, rather you will be doing it one body part at a time. Do not move on to the next body part until you feel a significant change in the body part you are currently focused on.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about the Coué Mantra, you may refer to the book “Self Mastery through Conscious Autosuggestion (1922)” by Emile Coué. The book has been republished in 2005 by the Library for Higher Learning and Personal Development Institute and is available in e-book form online.

Autogenic Training works best with visualization---producing mental images of relaxation in your head e.g. a peaceful stream---- and breathing exercises which we will discuss a little bit more later in this e-book.

An example of an Autogenic Training Relaxation Script is something like this:

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**“Breathe easily and slowly. Become aware of your shoulders. Move them slightly. If there is a tightness that you feel in your shoulders, let them relax. Let them rest comfortably against the chair. Now, feel that relaxation spread through your upper back....”**

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The documented effects of these simple suggestions to your body is amazing; you would really feel replenished and ready to start a new day. If it is rest that you need, there are individuals who share that this technique helps them to fall asleep and wake up refreshed.

This is something that you can do everyday. It is estimated that regular training in this method for 8 to ten weeks can already produce significant changes in your well-being.

For a complete list of exercises that you can do within the Autogenic Training program, Dr. Schultz’s books<sup>2</sup> on the subject are available in local bookstores and online. You don’t have the time to go through the whole program; you can just go through some of the exercises mentioned in the book or just what I shared with you. If you find a trainer with whom you can learn the method, it’s even simpler and better, but you don’t risk anything if you just do it by yourself.

### ***Transcendental Meditation***

Transcendental Meditation is a technique brought to us by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, an Indian Teacher who came to the Western world and lived for a long time in the Netherlands where He passed away a few months ago. His technique is very simple to implement but must be shown to you by a licensed teacher.

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on Autogenic Training, you may refer to the books “Autogenic Therapy: Volume I” and “Autogenic Therapy: Volume II: Medical Applications” by Johannes and Luthe, Wolfgang Schultz.

The meditation involves a mantra, a holy word and sound that you have to repeat in your mind. This sound brings you deeper and deeper into a meditative state.

TM is extremely easy to do because you get a holy sound and then you sit in meditation for 20 minutes twice a day, preferably in the morning before breakfast and in the evening before dinner. At the beginning, and this happens to everybody, the mind starts wandering around and doesn't stick to the sound given to you, but whenever you start thinking something else, you go back to the sound and do that for twenty minutes.

At the beginning, your anxiety may pop up even more often or get stronger. Maharishi explains that this happens because the root of the anxiety is being touched and eventually will be expelled by your mind. This technique is very powerful and helps you in many ways. It also improves your physical health, your awareness and then, what we are aiming at, the calmness and the disappearance of anxieties.

This technique has scientifically been proven many times and there exist various reports and books about its efficiency and help for people suffering from anxieties and also from physical diseases.

I would highly recommend you go and see a teacher of TM. The organization has got centers everywhere in the world, especially in large towns where they also have so called "Enlightenment Palaces" You have to pay to get the initiation, but then everything is free and you can go for multiple consultations where you can check that you are meditating in the way Maharishi told us to do. And you will always be welcome if you want to talk to some teacher.

# 3

## *How to Boost Your Self-Esteem various Methods that are Infallible and very Simple at the Same Time*

*“Low self-esteem is like driving through life with your hand break on.”  
-- Maxwell Maltz*

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Anxiety may be triggered by so many things that are happening in the outside world, but at the end of the day, everything comes back to the self.

If you know that you are a whole person rather than a broken individual, then you know that nothing other people can do or say to you can destroy your personhood. In like manner, no amount of difficult situations can ever take away your wholeness.

If you have that certainty that you are loved and that you are loveable, then you have that inner security that helps you trust in yourself and see yourself as competent and capable. More so, you also have that trust in the world that gives you the courage to reach out and ask others for help. You are not afraid that you might fall apart because

you know that there are just so many people who can catch you if you end up feeling like you can't do it.

In this sense, anxiety is very much related to self-esteem. In fact, though they may not be aware of it, most people who suffer from anxiety suffer from low self-esteem.

Building self-esteem is not rocket science. If you want to strengthen your sense of self, there are simple but effective ways that you can do to boost your self-worth.

### ***Defining Self-Esteem***

The definition of self-esteem is very simply *self-perception*; it is in sum how you view and value who you are. It is a term used interchangeably with self-concept and self-worth. Family therapist Philip McGraw defines self-concept this way:

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**“Self-concept is the bundle of beliefs, facts, opinions and perceptions about yourself that you travel life with, every moment of every day.”**

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Some people perceive themselves negatively, e.g. they consider themselves as unworthy, undeserving and incapable---and thus the value they place on themselves is very low. Imagine a hypothetical auction block, where you are supposed to price yourself. People with low self-esteem are the people who would price themselves low—even free---because they think only 'low' is what they deserve.

Others view themselves positively, e.g. they consider themselves as beautiful, loveable and capable. People who view themselves positively do not allow life to short-change them; they do not bend over backwards just to please other people nor do they allow public opinion to define who they are. They tend to be resilient, able to bounce back from adversity.

*“All I ever heard from my father growing up is to take care of your little brother. My brother is always more special and more deserving of attention---all I am good for is to fetch for him. I felt like I have to be in competition for my father's love all the time. Now I am anxious of talking to my male bosses. I feel like when I am faced with an authority figure, it is prove-your-love time all over again.”*

---Esther, 28

The labels that we put on ourselves are often learned. Usually, it is the people who raise us or who we interact with on a daily basis that forms our self-concept. Individuals who grew up with parents who, from a very young age told them that ‘they

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are not good enough' or that 'they should be ashamed of themselves' often end up internalizing these messages in their life. Parents too who are intolerant of mistakes and failure tend to develop low self-esteem in children.

Ironically, it is not just parental cruelty and coldness that creates children with low self-esteem. Those who grew up with overprotective and overindulgent parents also fail to develop a positive self-concept because the implicit message that being 'spoilt' sends is that "I do not think that you can do anything without us." When you grow up in an environment when your needs are overly-anticipated, when you are not trusted to explore on your own and make mistakes, you do not get to practice your "life muscles."

Aside from immediate family, our self-esteem could be defined from significant experiences in our life. All of us have positive and negative peak experiences---those events in our life where in we are most happiest and most depressed. Intensely emotional experiences leave their marks on us. If we are not careful, a negative experience, such as a break up or a failure in school, can end up giving us a most negative opinion of ourselves.

The thing is, low self-esteem has no place in anyone's life. All people are born with value and worth, as well as an inherent dignity. We are all unique individuals with something new to offer the people around us. If you are a spiritual person, you know that you are loved by God by virtue of Him having created you. Our worth is innate---nobody can take it away from us.

And even though you have done things in this life that may be considered as shameful or a gross failure, your person is not defined by your shortcomings. All people can change, and what always matters are the choices you make today---not who you were in the past.

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**"Self-esteem is the fix that comes from the inside."**

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You have the right to a healthy self-esteem, and you should grab it.

### ***Producing New Self-Perceptions***

A simple way to raise your self-esteem is to make an inventory of your present self-perceptions. Often, we have no awareness of how we perceive ourselves. We may think that we have a high self-esteem but our actions contradict our belief. We may have to take a few quiet moments to sit down and really look at how we live and see if they reflect a healthy self-esteem.

List down as many answers as you can to the following questions:

1. Who am I?
2. What makes me tick?
3. What makes people like/ love me?
4. How do I cope with adversity?

Dr. Robert Hemfield, author of the book “Love is a Choice” , and company suggests that an indirect way of knowing your perception of yourself is to complete the following phrases with the first thing that comes to mind:

*“All women are...”*

*“All men are...”*

Usually, your list of what makes men and women what they are can reveal your hidden pockets of bitterness. When you know how positively or how negatively you look at your self, you are already one step closer to changing your inventory for perceptions. You can assess whether these images are real or whether you still want them. When you make a decision to let go of the things that drive you down, the easier time you will have out of anxiety.

After making a list of your possible self-concepts. It is time you make a list of all the positive things that you do have. There are said to be three core elements of self-esteem, and the following are some guide questions that you can use to unearth them:

### Confidence

What are the things that I am assured that I can do? Where does my self-assurance come from? Do I believe in my own potential; my capacity to overcome obstacles and achieve my goals?

### Competence

What are the things that I am good at? What are my talents and charisms? How have I used these things to make my life, work and relationships better?

### Control

What are the things that I have the capability to change? How do I battle helplessness?

### ***Changing Your Body-Image***

Some of the easiest ways you can do to raise your self-esteem can be done in front of a mirror. Individuals with poor self-images usually could not bear looking at their reflection in the mirror or pay too much attention to parts of themselves that they do not like.

The different parts of our bodies reflect different things about us. For instance, they say that our foreheads are the repositories of our worries---- the more wrinkles there are in your forehead, the more burdensome you feel your life is. Our stomachs are said to be the repository of our anxieties. Our laugh lines reflect how much humor we put in our lives.

Each part of our bodies are also said to have memories. Some memories are positive and some are negative. For example, our cheeks may be special to us because that is where our mothers used to kiss us goodnight. A scar in our leg may represent the momory of an accident. We need to acknowledge the negative---and use all the positives to distill our love for ourselves. If there are no positives, then that is the moment to promise ourselves that from them on we will replace the negative memories with positive ones.

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**Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful,  
we must carry it with us or we find it not.  
--- Ralph Waldo Emerson**

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Take a moment and look at yourself in front of a mirror. Find out which part of yourself you dislike/hate the most and which parts you like/ love the most. If you can, verbalize how much you appreciate each part of your body. For example, you can say "I appreciate my hands, they may be callused but they represent how much love I have devoted to my

work.” Affirm each part of your body because they are a huge part of who you are. Tell yourself that “you are beautiful.”

This process is specially difficult for people who have a history of physical and sexual abuse. Alongside with professional psychotherapy to help process trauma-related issues, recovering your love for your body is a significant way to reclaim your self-esteem.

### ***Gratitude and Forgiveness***

Two simple ways that can lift your self-esteem and make you feel better are gratitude and forgiveness.

The ability to be thankful can go a long way in reminding us that there are so many things in life that we should appreciate. While negative things may come, these negative things are far outweighed by the positive things. The problem with anxiety is that it focuses us on the things that we do not like, when we are actually blessed in so many ways. The mere fact that we are alive is already a thing to be thankful for.

People who are capable of gratitude are people who have developed the right perspective when it comes to challenges that come their way. There is truth to the cliché “It could be worse!”

Try to make a list everyday of at least ten things that you are grateful for ---the blessings that you have. Say thanks for the wonderful sunshine, say thanks for being alive, say also thanks for nasty things happening to you because they teach you something for your life. After a few days, you will start feeling better about life, about your thoughts because you get aware that negativity is no longer wanted.

More so, live everyday with a mind open for “opportunities to be thankful.” People who actively search for blessings are likely to find them even in the oddest and the littlest of things, such as a quiet chat with the cab driver.

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**Let us rise up and be thankful, for if we didn't learn a lot today, at least we learned a little, at least we didn't get sick, and if we got sick, at least we didn't die; so let us all be thankful.**

**--- Buddha**

More so, have a proactive approach to gratitude! Pass the joy around. Everyday, challenge yourself to create something you would be thankful for---and something *others* would be thankful for. A random act of kindness everyday just opens your mind up and leaves you no room for anxiety.

Secondly, practice proactive forgiveness. A person who holds on to so much resentment and even guilt are not powerful people---actually they are powerless people. They are actually saying that the negative feelings have much more control over themselves than they are, and that these feelings are too important to let go. The same logic applies to anxiety. If you cannot let go of your resentments and your guilt, how can you learn to let go of your anxiety,

Forgiveness is not a feeling; it is a decision. Some people think that they cannot forgive because the anger is still there. But it all starts with the mind. If you make a decision that you would already forgive someone---or forgive yourself!--- then that is the point when you can begin to let go of your anger. You can decide to let go of your anger slowly everyday until there is no more. The less resentment that you keep inside, the more calm you'd feel.

### ***Paul Scheele's Strategies***

A program that I recommend you to consider is that of Human Development Consultant Paul Scheele. Scheele is affiliated with Learning Strategies Inc. in Wayzata, Minneapolis and is a specialist on the functioning of the brain. He has developed various audio courses, accompanied by a manual, on a great variety of self-help topics.

Three of Scheele's life-changing courses that I recommend are:

a. "Ideal Mindset"

This course helps you get clarity about what you want in life. It also provides easy to implement steps on how to get calm and determined. I think it is a very good help on various occasions in life, especially where low self-esteem and anxiety play an important role.

b. "Natural Brilliance"

This course helps you find your purpose in life. We all are meant to have a purpose in order to live our life fully and full of joy. Living our life

with joy means getting rid of anxiety. The course offers many exercises which help you find your purpose and eliminate bad feelings.

c. “Abundance for Life”

Abundance is not only material abundance but it tells us that our life can be rich in any sense, such as loving ourselves, good relationships, good health, material wealth. Here we also come to a central problem: most of us lack of love for ourselves. However, once we discover that loving ourselves helps us overcome anxiety, we understand that loving ourselves means loving life, means loving who has given us our life.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Other Natural Techniques***

The following are other self-esteem enhancement techniques that you might consider for further research. These therapies are wonderful because they are completely natural, they use natural ingredients and the system will not be charged with toxins. In fact, your body will be freed from them.

#### ***Reiki***

Reiki is a technique that originated in Japan and was developed by Mikao Usui. Reiki is an energy technique. You can give energy to yourself or ask somebody to give it to you. The energy not only calms your anxieties but helps you heal in any part of your body which needs healing.

#### ***Bach Flower Remedies***

Among the many natural medicines that have the power to help your body and your mind are the Bach Flower Remedies. Available in most chemist’s and alternative medicine shops, the so called rescue remedy can be a source of instant relief during an unexpected anxiety attack.

You only need to take 3 drops directly on your tongue, and your heart starts beating at a normal rate, your breath is no longer painful, and you no longer have the feeling that your breath is going to stop,

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<sup>3</sup> There are many other courses available which have been developed by Paul Scheele whose purpose it is to help other people love life and be successful in every area of their lives. Go and check them out at [www.LearningStrategies.com](http://www.LearningStrategies.com)

and your mind starts getting clear. While you may not be totally healed immediately, the relief is incredible and it is also incredibly rapid.

The medicine is named after Richard Bach, a British physician who had observed how rural populations were able to obtain relief from the plants. Nowadays many imitations are on the market, but it's best to buy the bottles which show his name, so you can be assured of receiving the original drops.

### ***Color Therapies***

Another way of soothing if not completely getting rid of anxiety is by using colors together with energy. The therapy is known under the name of Color Therapy.

There are therapists who use this technique and apply colored stones on the patients. You may also buy a small torch and use colored papers or even colored bulbs in order to obtain the color which is necessary to help you sooth your disease. If the therapy is applied on a regular basis, your energy system will use the color to restore the flow of energy.

### ***Emotional Freedom Techniques***

Developed by Gary Craig, Emotional Freedom Techniques, also known as EFT, is a simple and powerful technique that can be applied by everyone.

EFT works with the energy blockages which cause the disease or in your case, the anxiety. It works through the meridians which are the energy highways in our body. These carry the energy across the body and these meridians are linked to our spine, or better to the channels in the back and front of our body. The energy flows through these channels and you can visualize it as transparent, white or colored. This is just to say that the main channels are located on the back and the front of the human body.

For the EFT-exercises we do not use the main channels but the points found on the hands, on the head, on the chest and under the arms. That is where the channels pass. And the blockages are located in the channels where the energy no longer flows as it should.

In order to help you with EFT, you use the fingers of one hand which tap the karate point of the other hand, located on the side of your hand. While doing this, you say: “although I suffer terrible anxiety attack, I love and accept myself completely and profoundly.” You repeat this exercise three times. Then you tap the top of your head repeating the first part of the sentence. You do that also for three times, then you tap the area above your eyebrows, then three times at the side of your eyes, then three times under your eyes, three times under your nose, three times under your lower lip, three times under the collar bone and three times under your arms.

When you start with the first tapping, you give your emotions a value which goes from 0 to 20. Now, by tapping, you will lower this value until you feel that the anxiety is no longer so strong and does no longer hurt so much. You can repeat this exercise as often as you like. Sometimes you will feel that the anxiety grows but if you do the exercise on a regular basis, the feeling of anxiety and its invalidating side effects will diminish and you will get overcome it completely.

The more you do the exercise, the better the results. You may change the first part of the sentence according to what you feel. The sentence or your expression may become stronger. If you do not like to say that you love and accept yourself, you may just say that you accept yourself just as you are. There are many people who, at the beginning, don't feel like saying that they love themselves. If you do not feel like saying it, you just use the second example, i.e. to accept yourself just as you are.

You can do this exercise with whatever you would like to change, but do not say that you no longer want to have the emotion of anxiety. Your subconscious mind does not distinguish between “no longer want” and “want”. The negation of a sentence is not taken into consideration, in other words, if you use a negation, you will get more of what you would rather not like to get. So, be careful.

EFT has been used successfully now for more than thirty years all over the globe and, although it is so simple, the results are very good. The method is powerful.

In order to learn it properly, you may download the manual written by Gary Craig<sup>4</sup>. It is free and it shows you every single step.

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<sup>4</sup> You may refer to Gary Craig's site [www.emofree.com](http://www.emofree.com)

# 4

## *The Relationship between Anxiety & Food*

*“He that takes medicine and neglects diet  
wastes the skill of the physician”  
--- Chinese Proverb*

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Scientists have long ago made the connection between food and our moods. Indeed, what we eat can affect how we feel that day—and vice versa.

A great deal of it lies in our brain chemistry, specifically in a neurotransmitter called *Serotonin*, which controls anger, aggression, mood, sleep and sexuality. It is also responsible in regulating our body temperature and metabolism. So a lack of serotonin not only affects our mental health, but our physical health as well.

Our bodies make serotonin from an amino acid called *Tryptophan*, which we do not naturally produce. Tryptophan normally comes from our diets, so it's important to find food rich in Tryptophan in order to keep our serotonin levels in check. People with tryptophan deficient diets are prone to have mood disorders, anxiety, and irritable bowel syndrome.

Fortunately, Tryptophan rich foods are relatively easy to find. In fact, you may even have some in your refrigerator, but were just not aware of it. Taking advantage of this knowledge will not only help you feel better, but will give you an energy boost, letting you have a natural high.

### ***How Food Affects Mood***

Knowing what to eat is just as important as when you eat them. But first, it is important to note how our behavior towards food plays a role in our eating habits.

Do you eat when you are anxious, regardless if you're hungry or not? How much do you eat when you do? And what do you eat?

Most of us have a habit of eating junk food when we are sad, or drinking one cup of coffee after another when we hit a slump in our day. We have food binges, thinking it will make us feel better, when in fact it makes us feel worse.

Often, it turns into a cycle: we feel bad, so we eat junk food. We feel worse, so we eat more junk food. When it doesn't work, we start getting feelings of anxiety or despair: why am I sad? Why can't I feel better? Is something wrong with me? Why won't anything work?

You feel trapped in your situation, helpless and hopeless in the fact that nothing makes you feel better. Your fear for your condition escalates to anxiety, which slowly sinks into depression. And since it's what you usually do, you reach for your nearest stash of junk food and binge to feel better, starting the cycle all over again.

Seems familiar? Good, because now you know that you are not alone.

Millions of people turn to food to rid themselves of their anxiety and depression. They use food as a crutch, and what's worse is that they use the *wrong* kind of food to do it.

### ***Breaking the Cycle***

Before you learn what to eat, you must first figure out *why* you're eating.

Most of us eat when we're sad, because that's what we've been conditioned to do.

Try this experiment. Open your television and surf through your favorite sitcom. Pay attention to where the characters usually go when they have a bad day. Nine out of ten, they head to the kitchen, pouring their hearts out over a tub of ice cream.

Why do we do this? The answer is pretty simple: *because it feels good.*

Eating when we're hungry gives us instant satisfaction, something which we hope to replicate when we're sad. Like children, we gravitate towards sugary treats because it tastes good. The accompanying sugar rush also reinforces that slight high that we get immediately after eating our stash.

What we do not expect is how that sugar high can cause our energies to slump at the end of the day, leaving us tired, depressed, and anxious because our session with food did not work.

So the next time you feel low, stop and evaluate before you head off to the kitchen. There are other ways when to make yourself feel better than other than breaking a bar of chocolate, such as exercise or meditation, either of which can leave you just as satisfied as having a full meal.

### ***Comfort Foods that Cause Discomfort***

In the event that you do find yourself in the general direction of the kitchen, it is important to know what foods to eat to make you feel better, and which to avoid.

One surprising discovery is that most of the things we considered comfort food can actually make us feel worse, rather than better!

### ***Chocolate and Everything Sweet***

Chocolate, cakes, ice cream and all other sugary treats in between lead the list of things we should stay away from when we're anxious or depressed. Since they taste good, we gravitate to sugary foods first to make us feel better, and the accompanying sugar rush gives us a

temporary high. Alas, it is also the same sugar rush that will have your body crash and burn a few hours later.

Most people who indulge at work usually feel listless and fatigued during the middle of the day, making it more difficult for them to focus on tasks. This, in turn leads to poor performance and low job satisfaction, leaving you frustrated with your work.

Those who indulge late in the evening, right before bed, find that they have difficulty sleeping. The sugar rush stays on long after you're ready to go to bed, robbing you of a few hours of rest.

Unfortunately, you don't have to give up chocolate altogether. Taken in moderation, chocolate can actually make you feel good. A quarter of a candy bar should be enough to flood your brain with endorphins, but not enough to give you that sugar rush.

#### Healthy Alternative:

If you feel like satisfying your sweet tooth, why not try eating fruit?

Fruits taste just as sweet without too much sugar content, preventing that sugar rush. The water content found in fruits aids in digestion and speeds up your metabolism, leaving you feeling light and energetic.

Craving for some ice cream? Have a sorbet instead! The lack of cream takes away that heavy feeling you get from eating ice cream, letting you have a cold and sweet treat without much sugar and calories.

### ***Coffee and Soda***

Let's face it, some of us aren't even human unless we've had that first cup of coffee in the morning. Others don't even start functioning until they're on their third cup, drinking more throughout the course of the day. If not coffee, others rely on soda to keep them perked up.

The main ingredient found in coffee and other fizzy drinks is a natural stimulant called caffeine, which can cause heart palpitations. The effect for some can be so bad, that people often confuse them with panic attacks. Couple this with the accompanying sugar rush, and it might just trigger an anxiety attack.

Since most people view caffeinated beverages as harmless, those who are prone to panic or anxiety attacks never make the connection. Coffee and soda are also regularly consumed during meetings or when faced with a late-night deadline, making an already stressful situation worse.

Caffeine, like cigarettes, is also addictive, so some feel angry and irritable when they don't have their fix. Giving up caffeine should be done gradually and in stages, as not to trigger withdrawal symptoms or mood swings.

In drinking caffeinated beverages, those prone to anxiety or panic attacks should pay close attention to when they have their symptoms. Increased heart rates, sweaty palms and ringing in your ears are reactions *after* drinking soda or coffee is the result of having too much caffeine, *not* an anxiety attack.

Still, hope is not lost for coffee lovers. The anti-oxidants in coffee have been found to prevent cancer, providing you drink it in moderation.

#### Healthy Alternative:

Instead of drinking coffee, why not try having some herbal teas or tonics instead?

A cup of cinnamon tea can spice up your day without any caffeine. Want something more exotic? Try boiling ginger in water for ten minutes, and drinking the infusion. Another popular product is teas or tonics with ginseng, which can boost your energy without sending your heart racing.

### **Alcohol**

Alcohol is a natural depressant. Although it can make you feel calm and sedate in the short term, it can also be dehydrating. That's the reason why drinking too much results in a hang-over. A hang-over is your brain's reaction to losing water, so if you don't keep yourself hydrated when you drink, you get a nasty headache a few hours later.

The dehydration caused by alcohol consumption can often exacerbate anxiety for those who are prone to having anxiety or panic attacks. The accompanying depression contributes to their feeling of helplessness, resulting in more feelings of frustration.

So next time in you're in a bar, keep the alcohol to a minimum, or none at all.

Healthy Alternative:

Drink lots of water! It may not seem as chic, but opting for club soda (or a Shirley Temple) and skipping on that second or third glass of margarita will make you feel better—and your head will thank you the day after.

Water not only cleanses your system, but regular hydration ups your metabolism. If you would like something with more pizzazz, there are several brands that now offer flavored water without any of the sugary guilt that go with it.

If you would like a drink to calm you down, drink milk. Tryptophan, which is found in milk, can help produce serotonin *and* the amino acid melatonin, which helps you sleep.

### ***Fast Food and Processed Food***

Make it a point to eat more natural things as possible.

For one, you never know what chemicals are found in processed food that might be contributing to your bad mood. Most processed foods are high on salt and preservatives, leaving you feeling heavy and bloated.

Likewise, greasy fast foods make you feel heavier and sluggish, which in turn makes you sleepy during your work day. This can lead to frustration over your inability to focus on your job, which can then lead to more stress.

Healthy Alternative:

Pack your lunch! Not only will you know what exactly goes into your food, but you'll be amazed at the amount of money you'll be able to save.

You can also control the amount of spices that go into your food, making it taste better. The better it tastes, the more satisfied you'll feel, leaving you to feel fuller. Thus, having you eat less, and not more.

### ***Wheat and Dairy***

Wheat and dairy are considered by some as hypoallergenic food, or food that normally cause allergic reactions in people.

Food like cheese or whole wheat bread and pasta sometimes provoke minor allergic reactions, which are largely associated to mood fluctuations.

The best way to test this is to observe your reactions to food containing wheat or dairy. Try going on a wheat and dairy free diet for 2-3 weeks, and then gradually re-introduce them. See if there is a marked difference in the way you feel, or if it triggers any food allergies that you were otherwise unaware of.

#### Healthy alternatives:

Non-wheat bread or pasta is now available in most health food stores, as well as soy cheese and soy milk, as a replacement for its dairy counterparts.

#### ***The Mind Meal: Foods to Improve your Mood***

It may seem like we've eliminated everything that's good, but once you've changed your diet, you'll find that you won't even miss them.

After all, most of the food stuffs that we've eliminated are junk food, which should be considered more of an indulgence than a diet. In short, eat them sporadically, *not* daily.

Besides the healthy alternatives, there are items we regularly eat that can help boost our energy levels, as well as up our serotonin levels. In fact, most of them are already in your cupboards!

#### **Good Moods Snacks**

##### ***Nuts***

Nuts are rich in omega-3 essential fatty acids, a type of fat allows mood-lifting neurotransmitters to function properly.

We have to remember that our brain is made mostly of fat, so avoiding fat altogether can be dangerous. In fact, diet low in Omega-3

essential fatty acids can lead to depression, anxiety, and a host of other mental problems.

So next time you're feeling blue, open a packet of walnuts, or have a peanut butter and jam sandwich to help boost your mood.

Other foods with Omega-3 essential fatty acids are:

Seeds and fish. Tuna, mackerel, and salmon are rich in Omega-3 essential fatty acids.

For a quick fix, you can also drink cod liver oil. Not only is it rich in Omega-3 essential fatty acids, but it also contains vitamins A and D. Cod liver oil is also available in pill form, so check out your local health food store for your options.

### ***Oatmeal***

Oatmeal is considered a good carbohydrate, which releases Tryptophan. It is a good carbohydrate because unlike other carbs, it is slow releasing and thus absorbs Tryptophan better, preventing that sugar crash associated with a sudden influx of carbs.

Since oatmeal is a slow releasing carbohydrate, it also releases energy evenly throughout the day, allowing you feel better longer. The lack of the sugar crash also takes away the anxiety and mood fluctuations associated with it, allowing you to focus on work with renewed energy and vigor.

Oatmeal, like fruit, is also a great alternative to having sugary treats. An oatmeal cookie not only gives you energy, but the high fiber content cleans out your digestive tract.

### ***Lentils and Spinach***

There's a reason why Popeye feels better when he has spinach!

Spinach and lentils are a natural resource of Vitamin B, which produces foliate, another acid that helps produce serotonin.

Foliate helps ease clinical depression, and lowers our anxiety levels, keeping us feeling sunny and healthy for the rest of the day.

A salad filled with lentils and spinach is a good end to a meal, because they are also water vegetables. Water vegetables help stimulate digestion, so eating a salad *after* a meal instead of before helps metabolize your meals better.

You can also try making lentil soup, which is light enough that there's not much to digest, and also adds to your water intake.

### ***A Diet that Makes You Feel Better***

Most people shudder at the thought of having a diet, worried on how they will accomplish eating less.

This diet is focuses about what you eat, and when, rather than how much. Our behavior towards food varies with our mood, more so on anxious people.

Some use food as a crutch, eating more to make them feel better, finding that sense of satisfaction that you can only get when you're full. Binge eating only results in gaining weight and eating the wrong foods, resulting in mood swings and weight fluctuations.

Others do not eat at all, thinking that limiting their meals will also limit their anxiety, giving them a sense of control. This robs your brain of vital nutrients that are necessary to help regulate your mood.

By knowing what you eat and how it affects you, you will begin to notice a change in your mood not possible in your old lifestyle. Not only will you feel more in control, but you will feel more optimistic about things.

Staying away from foods that can trigger your anxiety is just one step from breaking that cycle of hopelessness and depression.

# 5

## *What about Exercising?*

*“I think if you exercise, your state of mind- my state of mind- is usually more at ease, ready for mental challenges. Once I get the physical stuff out of the way it always seems like I have more calmness and better self-esteem.”*

*--- Stone Gossard*

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Have you ever seen the movie “Legally Blonde”? Interning law student Elle Woods came up with this unbelievable defense in a murder trial where the accused is a fitness instructor: *“Exercise gives your body endorphins. Endorphins make people happy. Happy people don’t kill their husbands!”*

While the logic is exaggerated for comedic effect, there is more than a grain of truth in Elle’s argument. Regular physical exercise has natural comforting properties. Exercise has been known not just to help with depression, but with anxiety as well.

### ***Exercise as a Natural Tension Reliever***

As mentioned, exercise gives your body endorphins--- the natural anti-depressant. Aside from endorphins, exercise also releases serotonin,

norepinephrine, and dopamine. These are neurotransmitters that influence the mood and help fight off diseases.

The results have been documented. A research conducted by Dr. Andreas Strohle, an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry from Charite-University Medicine Berlin, found that physical exercise has acute anti-panic effects. In fact, when the effects of a quiet rest versus a 30 minute aerobic treadmill exercise were compared, it was found that prior exercise results in significantly lower panic attacks.

The effect of exercise on a person is not just via endorphins. Aside from physical improvement, it gives mental benefit as well.

### ***Exercise as Bodily Meditation***

The mental hygiene principles that we discussed in the second chapter also apply to physical exercise.

Physical exercise forces your mind to focus: it is about getting the best performance that you possibly can despite tiredness or exhaustion. It's also about dedicated persistence.

Focus and persistence are important skills to learn when you are struggling with anxiety. Often, anxious people have difficulty following through a regular exercise regimen because of their fears and apprehension, similar to how difficult they may find experiencing anxiety. By learning focus and persistence to get to a goal in physical rather than mental threat, they develop the sense of achievement they can call on when they get an anxiety attack.

Also, some people have some difficulty meditating while they are just sitting or standing still. When you exercise, you can make your body movements as a focal point of meditation. In this sense, exercise is a way of transcendence. While you exercise, your mind and body are free temporarily from the usual demands placed upon them.

That physical exercise can be a form of meditation is something Oriental remedies have taken advantage of. Most Chinese and Japanese exercises, for example, are meditative in nature.

One of these methods is QiGong. QiGong is a traditional Chinese exercise that combines physical movements with regular breathing with the goal of focusing on particular energy centers in the body.

Traditional QiGong may be difficult for the typical Westerner to appreciate. For this reason, Westerner-friendly versions of these methods have been formulated. One of these versions is called the SpringForest QiGong. This method was developed by a Chinese Master residing in USA who understood that the Ancient QiGong methods which have been in use for thousands of years in China, are no good for people in the industrialized countries because they are too complicated and the Chinese mentality is not understood so easily. This Master is Chunyi Lin.

Chunyi Lin says that this method is based on love, forgiveness and kindness. These three concepts of life help live a good life. According to Chunyi Lin, and I invite you to prove it to yourself, that a smile relaxes the whole body. It really is very true. If you practice it daily, whenever you can, you will immediately get the benefit of a relaxed body. If your muscles are relaxed, anxiety has no chance.

If you are interested in learning SpringForest QiGong, there are courses, manuals, cassettes/ cds available in specialist centres in the state of Minnesota and through LearningStrategies.com and through the SpringForestQiGong online-shop.

### ***Exercise as Natural Detoxification***

Few people know that exercise is a good detoxification method. Even in the mere fact that you get to sweat, your body is already releasing toxic chemicals in your body. Susceptibility to anxiety can possibly be the effect of the many toxins that are in your system.

Exercise also stimulates our lymphatic system. This means that the more we move around, the better able our body can deliver oxygenated blood to the different organs in our body. When all our vital organs are functioning optimally, we are less likely to feel the tension in the different parts of our body.

### ***Simple Exercises That You Can Do at Home or At Work***

It is best that you have a regular time allotted to do exercise. But if you can't, there are many ways that you can incorporate physical exertion in your daily routine.

### **Walk**

If your office is near your workplace, opt to walk rather than drive a car or commute. Walking, alongside with jogging, is considered as the most popular and the most detoxifying exercise. A daily 15-minute walk can result in significant health improvement. Remember that it is better to walk outside in fresh air so opt for an outdoor exercise than an indoor one as much as you can.

### **Simple Stretches**

Walking is an aerobic exercise--- it is to help your heart and your lungs. But exercise is not just for aerobic purposes, they are also there to relax your muscles and increase your flexibility. Whenever you can, take the time to stretch your body. This is especially true if you work an office job that necessitates you sit down the entire day.

Some of the simple exercises that you can do at work or at home includes: stretching your arms high in the air as far as you can reach and then gradually setting it down to you back; bending down and reaching for your toes with your knees straight; squatting in your seat and standing up repeatedly.

### **Standing Up**

Yes, standing up! Researches reveal that you actually burn more calories standing up than sitting down. It helps therefore that you find ways to stand up as much as you can. If you work in an office, answer the phone standing up, pace if you can do so. Making this a habit can already help you a lot.

# 6

## Do You Really Want Your Health Back?

*“What do you first do when you first learn to swim? You make mistakes do you not? And what happens? You make other mistakes, and when you have made all the mistakes you possibly can without drowning –and some of them many times over--- what do you find? That you can swim? Well, life is just the same as learning to swim! Do no be afraid of making mistakes, for there is no other way of learning how to live! ”*

*--- Alfred Adler*

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A real choice is not a one time deal; it is a choice that you have to make over and over again.

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Living with anxiety can be difficult, but it doesn't have to be a curse, nor does it have to be forever. By making simple changes to your lifestyle, you are well on your way to regaining your health.

Still, the path to recovery is not easy. The exercises and tips outlined in this book are not miracle cures, but guidelines to help you on your journey back to health. Practicing them requires a lot of work and discipline, and there will be days when you will forget or make mistakes. That is not important. What is important is your *commitment* to saying goodbye to anxiety, and getting your life back on track.

So ask yourself: *do you really want your health back?*

If so, how much do you want it? The answer will determine how much you are willing to adapt these changes to your life, and how long you are willing to stick with it.

Instead of making a giant leap, take smaller steps to ease yourself into the new routine.

The following are a few suggestions on how to help you make that transition:

### ***Better Health Equals Better Menus***

Adopting a new diet may be the most difficult task of all, since it requires the biggest change of all: the way you eat.

One mistake people make when changing their diets is that they focus on subtracting, not adding to the list of things they already eat.

Instead of focusing on things you are trying to limit, try finding out ways on how to expand your menu.

Get on the internet and learn new salad recipes. Try looking for new restaurants, or even ordering other meals in your favorite ones. Find alternatives to the things you aren't allowed to eat.

Most people think that just because it's suggested they eat avocados, that they have to eat just the fruit. Or just peanuts, or spinach. Why not make guacamole, roasted peanuts, or fried spinach? Remember that you need to make a meal out of these things, so be creative and find out the ways to cook them.

### ***Taking the First Steps to Recovery...Literally***

A lot of people equate exercise as going to the gym. Although there's nothing with signing up for the gym, the commitment for some can be overwhelming—and an excuse not to exercise.

There are others ways to get your exercise *without* leaving your home, or even eat hours of your time.

Try walking the dog for half an hour, or taking the stairs instead of the elevator on your way up to work. If you're based at home, pick up a few cans of fruit and start doing shrugs. Search on the internet for running clubs in your area.

For higher impact and greater socialization, try picking up a new sport, or teaching one at your local Boys and Girls Club.

### ***Finding Yourself Through Meditation***

Taking a few minutes of each day for yourself is enough to clear your mind, but if you find it hard to concentrate, try meditating to music.

Some find that listening to the sounds of wave crashing or gentle rain falling soothes them. Others need more direction, so a track with a person guiding them to relax is ideal. There are CDs available for purchase at most music stores, or available to download off the internet.

What is important in meditating, is to be consistent. You must try to find the time to relax everyday. To break the monotony, try doing different exercises: listening to music one day, doing breathing exercises for another. It can even be as simple as taking a long, hot bath at the end of the day.

### ***Getting Your Health Back...in 21 Days***

They say habits can be formed in 21 days. This means that in three weeks, you can either develop new habits, or get rid of old ones.

Taking that first step towards change is always the most difficult one, so here are a few guidelines that can help you get on your way:

1. *Make a list of what you want to change.* Ask yourself why you are

undertaking this journey, and what for? By concretizing your goals, you not only make them more visible, but more achievable.

2. *Write down a battle plan.* Having a schedule can help you stay on course, and make the next few days a lot less overwhelming. Plan your meals for the next 3 weeks, and detail what exercises you will be doing and when. Reserve certain times of the day for meditation, and inform your family ahead of time to limit unnecessary interruptions.
3. *Keep a journal.* It may seem like you're doing an awful lot of writing, but it is important to note what triggers your feelings of anxiety and when. Knowing what causes these episodes not only helps in eliminating them, but it will make you feel more in control of your life, something which you haven't felt in a long time.
4. *Have an accountability partner.* The first few days of making the transition will be difficult, so you may need to talk to someone who is aware of what you're going through. It can be someone from your family, a friend, or a counselor. These people will also serve as your "living reminders", helping you focus on changing your lifestyle and staying on track.

Even if you get through the three weeks smoothly, there may be some times when you might slip back to your old habits. That's okay; just ease back into your new routine. Stumbling is part of the process.

Always remember that these first three weeks are just a building block to your way to recovery, one that is naturally healthy, and anxiety free!

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*Acknowledgment:*

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