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Foreword

My grandparents, who emigrated directly from Sweden, used to tell me, “Worry gives a small thing a big shadow.” Many habits of the mind are transferred to us through this kind of transgenerational learning. Some learnings help us to cope with life, while others—including fears, anxieties, and phobias—tend to be destructive.

Alfred Adler explained that anxiety has a purpose: it is a safeguarding mechanism that causes us to frighten ourselves out of doing things. We could simply decide not to do these things, but then we might have to face our complexes and admit to having them. With anxiety as a mechanism, we claim we are too afraid to try (Carlson, Watts, and Maniaci 2006). These patterns frequently arise without our direct awareness or conscious intent.

Anxiety affects one-third of the population at one time or another. A web search turns up nearly 60 million entries for anxiety alone. The various listings describe the many strategies purported to provide relief. These range from drugs to biblical passages to diets to folk cures.

This best-selling book stands out in that it offers strategies that have been researched and proven effective. They do not promise a quick fix but rather teach us how to take responsibility for our own lives. Too many people blame others for their personal challenges. As Bill Knaus states, “Blame, like the air, is everywhere.” This book provides three basic prescriptions to help conquer the problem of anxiety:

1. Educate your reason to oppose parasitic thinking and reacting. (Change your thoughts.)
2. Learn to build emotional tolerance. (Strengthen your emotions.)

3. Behaviorally engage the fear and desensitize yourself to it. (Take action.)

The fact that these interventions integrate thinking, feeling, and acting modalities allows readers to utilize their unique strengths and preferences.

The quickest way to clear anxiety out of your body is to take a few deep belly breaths. Chest breathing seems to be wired into anxiety production, while belly breathing is connected to anxiety reduction. If you are anxious, you can wait until you are not anxious, and your breathing will slow down. But if you are in a hurry to clear out the anxiety, you can consciously slow down your breathing and watch the anxiety go away.

By concentrating on our breathing, we create a sense of serenity. We can learn to accept the fact of fear, learn to feel fear fully, and learn to thrive by acting in a manner that prevents fear from interfering with life choices. As David Richo (2008, 21–22) states, “We all feel afraid sometimes. This is an appropriate feeling and can be a signal of real danger and threat. At the same time, we sometimes feel afraid without reason. Our guesses and fantasies about what might happen keep us afraid of events and experiences that may never befall us. It is useless to attempt to eliminate fear altogether, whether it be ritualistic or imagined.”

This revised book adds to the original impressive collection of techniques that can be used to provide the courage necessary to face anxieties and fears. Dr. Knaus also offers thirty-two “quick tips” contributed by today’s leading anxiety experts. All of the strategies have their roots in the work of the great psychologists Alfred Adler, Aaron Beck, Albert Ellis, and Arnold Lazarus and have withstood the test of time. They can change transgenerational learning patterns by helping readers develop courage and self-control.

The profession of psychology has advanced in the short time since the original edition of this book appeared. The completely revised book remains a most valuable resource for therapists and their clients who wish to learn cutting-edge methods of anxiety treatment. This new edition is more than a self-help book for

anxiety. Readers will learn to not only eliminate anxieties and fears but also prevent their return. Additionally, the book provides a program for developing the self-efficacy, serenity, confidence, and control needed for living a satisfying life overall.

As I read through this exceptional resource book, I am reminded of the power of the mind. Bill Knaus has clearly presented many effective strategies that will allow readers to solve their own problems. This type of solution will lead to the greater psychological hardiness and self-efficacy of the population. It is now possible to go beyond our many self-imposed prisons. Eleanor Roosevelt said it best: "You must do the things you think you cannot do."

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Introduction

Do you sometimes feel overwhelmed by your anxieties and fears? Does one misery follow another? Do you hold to lofty ideals and feel anxious about falling short? Do you actively avoid whatever you fear even when you know the fear is silly?

Few go through life without having their share of irrational anxieties and fears; some have more than their fair share. Some of these anxieties are like reoccurring storms. But unlike weather patterns that you can't change, you can do many things to change the intensity, duration, and course of your anxieties and fears.

You are not crazy for having anxieties. You may have a sensitive fear signaling system and startle easily. You may feel anxious or fearful about having sensations such as an increased heart rate, sweating, and tension headaches. The issue isn't whether you have fears or anxieties; the issue is, what can you do to liberate yourself from needless fears and anxieties? Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) methods are effective for curbing both.

Here's the idea. Your cognitions (thoughts, mental images, memories), emotions, and behaviors blend together. Changes in one of these areas affect the others. Thus, if you no longer see a situation as threatening, your anxiety drops. You may approach what you formerly feared. That's the anxiety solution. The cognitive behavioral changes that you make are relatively durable (Gloster et al. 2013).

Here is a question you should be asking yourself: Where's the evidence that CBT is effective against anxiety?

CBT Research

Over the past forty years, CBT has amassed strong evidence to show effectiveness for reducing and ending disturbing conditions, such as anxiety and depression (Öst 2008).

- Meta-analyses affirm CBT's general effectiveness (Butler et al. 2006) and specifically for combatting anxiety (Olatunji, Cisler, and Deacon 2010).
- A survey of 269 CBT meta-analyses shows that the system is effective for people suffering from a broad range of problems, such as substance abuse, depression, and anxiety. The results point to CBT as a consistently strong method for reducing anxiety (Hofmann et al. 2012).
- Specific studies demonstrate that you can use CBT for decreasing anxious ruminations (Reinecke et al. 2013), for reducing panic (Rayburn and Otto 2003), for overcoming social anxieties (Furukawa et al. 2013), and for toning down those parts of your brain's artificial anxiety and fear generating network (Kircher et al. 2013).
- CBT is a brain training method. Healthy brain function and brain structural changes are observed after CBT (Collerton 2013).
- The CBT system is a strong alternative to the anxiolytic and hypnotic drugs used to medically treat anxiety. This class of drugs is addictive and associated with increased mortality (Weich et al. 2014).
- CBT is viewed as the gold standard for treating anxiety (Otte 2011).

Throughout this book you'll find references to articles and research studies. They are illustrative, not exhaustive, which means you could have long lists of studies for most referenced topics. They help answer the question, "Where's the evidence?"

Healing Through Reading

Can a CBT bibliotherapy approach (healing through reading) work? A self-help book that relies on evidence-based CBT methods can help you decrease your anxieties (Hirai and Clum 2006). Highly rated psychology self-help books are written by doctoral level mental health professionals and deal with specific problems (Redding et al. 2008). Books that show how to cope with conditions that commonly occur with anxiety, such as self-image problems and fear of the feeling of fear, may be the wave of the future (Craske 2012).

The future is now. What you learn through your self-help efforts can produce favorable results. But know your limitations. You don't have to travel this road alone. When appropriate, enlist the help of a CBT therapist or compassionate and helpful friend.

Plan to move at a pace that is reasonable for you. Don't expect overnight success. Rapid changes do occur, but this is more the exception than the rule.

"Skill to do comes of doing; knowledge comes by eyes always open and working hands; and there is no knowledge that is not power"(Emerson 1870, 287). In part, the effectiveness of a psychological self-help approach lies in deepening your self-knowledge by taking action to solve your problems.

Overcoming Multiple Problems Simultaneously

Most people who suffer from recurring anxieties and fears find themselves challenged by other distressful conditions (Gadermann et al. 2012). Some have connecting links. Look closely at your anxiety patterns. Do you think you are powerless to cope? Such *powerlessness thinking* is involved in anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic shock. By acting to overcome powerlessness thinking, you can ease multiple conditions that are connected to this belief that you are powerless to cope.

Likewise, you can use relaxation to address anxiety. With a calmer body, you also may find yourself worrying less. By reducing your tendency to worry, you will feel less anxious too.

In other words, you often can address multiple emotional problems simultaneously by taking what is technically called a *transdiagnostic approach*, when an intervention helps to address more than just one condition.

The issue, of course, is to determine which interventions can bring about changes in multiple areas. The research on transdiagnostic approaches, while still in its infancy, is promising.

Cognitive behavioral therapy is a transdiagnostic approach that you can confidently use for anxiety. For example, CBT techniques for addressing one form of anxiety can simultaneously quiet other forms of anxiety (McEvoy et al. 2013). Certain techniques for alleviating anxiety can quell a co-occurring depression (Beck and Dozois 2011). You commonly find a combination of perfectionism, anxiety, and eating disorders (Fairburn et al. 2009), and addressing perfectionism can have a transdiagnostic effect on the other issues. Threat sensitivity can spread over many forms of anxiety (Bar-Haim et al. 2007), and teaching yourself to be less stress sensitive can decrease feelings of anxiety.

Achieving multiple benefits from a few productive interventions is appealing. But what happens if you overcome one problem anxiety, but others remain? For example, if you no longer fear small animals, but you retain a public-speaking anxiety?

Psychologist Albert Ellis's ABCDE method for changing negative thinking and taking positive action is an original transdiagnostic method that applies to practically every self-defeating cognitive, emotive, and behavioral condition (see chapter 11). If you successfully use it to overcome one anxiety, you can apply what you learned to another. As you improve in the use of this method, you may use it less often, because you will have fewer anxiety problems to address.

Psychological Homework Assignments

Psychological homework assignments are a central part of Ellis's (2000) rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT)

foundation system for CBT. Psychological homework is a standard CBT practice—a transdiagnostic technique that may be especially useful when it comes to combatting your anxieties and fears. For example, if you suffer from panic and agoraphobia, doing homework assignments to face what you fear frequently reduces both conditions (Cammin-Nowak et al. 2013). Following through on psychological homework assignments correlates with self-improvement (Lebeau et al. 2013).

If you set weekly goals and give yourself assignments for meeting these goals, and you make a good-faith effort to follow through, the odds are that you'll get better results and improve more quickly than if you simply stay on the sidelines wringing your hands.

Where This Book Will Take You

The Cognitive Behavioral Workbook for Anxiety (second edition) delivers step-by-step guidance for addressing parasitic anxieties and fears. You'll find multiple ideas along with multiple exercises for addressing them. More specifically, you'll find the following:

- A well-referenced book that draws from both classical and recent thinking on how to overcome anxieties and fears. The major sources for this book are cited at the end, where there is also a list of suggested reading material.
- Interventions that I've used with my clients that they found to be effective. Over the past forty-five years, I've developed numerous interventions and have selected others from the literature. By having multiple choices available, you can configure a program that works best for you.
- Learn to apply CBT self-improvement methods in different contexts (generalization) to debunk false anxiety assumptions, build tolerance for tension, and

gain mastery over yourself. You'll find basic techniques that apply to different problems and multiple techniques that apply to a specific anxiety. If you miss a key idea in one chapter, you are likely to see a related use later.

- Special tips from anxiety experts. I invited a group of top anxiety experts to contribute their favorite tips. Their tips throughout the book give you different perspectives on what you might do to overcome your anxieties and fears.
- Written exercises for self-improvement. Journaling and writing can be used for developing perspective, regulating emotions, and improving your psychological outlook (Stockdale 2011). Writing out problems is a therapeutic intervention that can help reduce needless tension (Van Emmerik, Kamphuis, and Emmelkamp 2008). Writing in the first person is associated with higher levels of self-improvement (Seih, Chung, and Pennebaker 2011).

I divided this workbook into four parts. Part I introduces the world of anxieties and fears. It will show you how to separate real from imagined fears and how to use basic cognitive, emotive, and behavioral ways to overcome these conditions. It will show you how to break a vicious cycle of anxiety using objective self-observation skills, how to stop escalating your anxieties, how to make progress using a self-management approach, and how to get past procrastination barriers that can interfere with positive change.

Part II shows how to use nature scenes to achieve serenity, how to relax your body, how to regulate emotions that are triggered by cognitions, how to use a classic ABCDE model to combat anxiety, and how to use key behavioral methods for overcoming fear.

Part III explores how to break patterns of worry, manage anxiety over uncertainty, calm unpleasant physical sensations, overcome panic, combat phobias, and mount a multimodal attack against anxiety and fear.

Part IV looks at how to defuse anxiety-evoking expectations, defeat harmful inhibitions, overcome anxieties you may have about yourself, earn freedom from painful social anxieties, and overcome mixed anxiety and depression. The final chapter will help you learn how to preserve the gains you've made.

How fast can you proceed with your anxiety solution program? Your pace will depend in part on where you are on this healing path. You may have already started to address your anxieties. It also will depend on your network of complications (we all have them); these networks sprout from core issues, such as a vulnerability to anxiety that is reflected in negative thinking and worry. Your pace will also depend on whether you tend to procrastinate. For example, you may wait for motivation to come out of the blue. If so, you'll be waiting a long time.

Luckily, even the most complex and painfully recurring anxieties and fears have simple and manageable features. Start with what you can manage. Build from there. But don't put off starting.

Exercise: What Is Your Most Pressing Anxiety?

The Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu sagely said, "The journey of a thousand miles starts from beneath your feet." As a first step in moving from stillness to action, write down your most pressing anxiety in the space provided here.

There is no one psychological antianxiety intervention that works for all people under all conditions. As you go through this program, you'll find many ways to address anxiety problems. Choose and use the best approaches for you to develop self-mastery, which can be the biggest payoff.

PART I

BASIC TECHNIQUES TO DEFEAT ANXIETY AND FEAR

- Take a test and discover your anxiety hot spots (and where to go to get solutions).
- Learn to separate real anxieties and fears from the fictional or exaggerated kind.
- See how to manage a combined real-and-imagined threat situation.
- Start yourself on a cognitive, emotive, and behavioral path to calm your anxieties.
- Break anxiety cycles before they get out of hand.
- Substitute positive self-observant skills for catastrophic thinking.
- Discover how to build confident composure.
- Take seven steps to stop emotionally troubling yourself.
- Follow a six-phase approach for getting control over your anxieties and fears.
- Evaluate your progress with a simple three-step method.
- Use procrastination technology to follow through on overcoming your anxieties and fears.
- Free yourself from needless anxieties by resolving a tricky double-agenda dilemma.

Chapter 1

Welcome to the World of Anxieties and Fears

When fear causes you to escape a life-threatening danger, it is your friend. But some fears have this sordid tale to tell.

I am fear. I make your mind spin out of control. I wind your body tight as a drum. You try to hide from me. I will find you. Look over your shoulder. I am behind you. Look forward. My shadow crosses your path. Look into a mirror and you see me sneering back at you.

Your exaggerated anxieties and fears drain your time and resources and offer nothing of positive value in return, which is why this book refers to them as *parasitic*. As Mark Twain once said, “I am an old man and have known a great many troubles, but most of them never happened.”

When you suffer from fear and anxiety, it can be hard to imagine a different way of being. But eliminating fear and anxiety is something you can progressively do. It may help to start this journey through the eyes of some people who turned their own anxieties and fears into fading memories.

You Are Not Alone

You are not unique when it comes to having anxieties and fears.

- Over a lifetime, 28.8 percent of those who live in the United States will suffer from one serious form of anxiety or another (Kessler et al. 2005). The numbers of people who suffer from anxieties and fears are also significant in other parts of the Westernized world

(Baumeister and Härter 2007).

- Anxiety is a common worldwide debility that cuts across national, racial, and economic boundaries. Studies of people with anxiety from Qatar, Turkey, Nepal, Chili, sub-Saharan Africa, Morocco, China, and other nations contribute to this conclusion. Indeed, every continent has anxiety hot spots. The Arkhangelsk region of Russia, for example, is a high-stress location. Sixty-nine percent of the women living there and 32.3 percent of the men report high levels of anxiety, depression, and sleep problems (Averina et al. 2005).
- If you are female, you are at a greater risk for anxiety than if you are male (McLean et al. 2011).
- Being young is no buffer against anxiety. Anxiety is common among preadolescent children (Perou et al. 2013) and adolescents (Kessler et al. 2012). Anxiety increases in the middle years of life (Scott et al. 2008). Rosy numbers on lower levels of debilitating anxiety among the elderly may be a myth (Wolitzky-Taylor et al. 2010).

Putting a Face on Anxieties and Fears

You can profit from what others have learned while working on their anxiety problems in a group setting. Here's what John, Elaine, Larry, Joy, and Tom have been doing to conquer their anxieties and fears.

John's Panic

John was a frequent panicked visitor to his local hospital emergency room. Whenever he gasped for air and felt chest pains, he dialed 911. He believed that he was having a heart attack and was about to die. After more than twenty visits to the ER, and on

the recommendation of his primary care physician, John joined a psychological treatment group. After three group sessions, John came to see his breathing difficulties and chest pains as symptoms of panic. He felt relieved to learn that most people with panic who learn to use exposure, relaxation, deep breathing, and other cognitive and behavioral methods make meaningful and durable progress (Sánchez-Meca et al. 2010). John aimed to join that club.

Elaine's Silence

Elaine was the group's silent member. She felt petrified at the thought of saying something foolish. After eight weeks of saying very little, she confessed that if the group leader and members really knew her, they'd kick her out of the group. The question, "Where is the evidence for that conclusion?" started Elaine thinking differently. She calmed down when she learned that her fear of rejection reflected her self-doubts and not the views of the other group members. Based on group feedback, she figured out that what she'd thought others were thinking about her could not possibly be true. The group did not necessarily have the same impressions of her that she had about herself.

Larry's Stress

Larry told the group that he became stressed easily. Like John, he had moments of panic where he had trouble breathing, he felt dizzy, and his heart beat like crazy. He said that this panic occurred when he was "stuck in one place with a lot of people in a small area." Larry went on to say that he had bad headaches. He was afraid that he might have a brain tumor.

Larry wanted to deal with his problems, but as soon as he would begin to address one anxiety or fear, he would move on to another problem without resolving the first one. He was in a revolving-door pattern of procrastination. Because his problems kept returning, he felt overwhelmed. He said, "This is too much for me to handle." His *too much* was part of an internal

monologue in which he exaggerated the fearsomeness of his tensions. At the same time, Larry minimized his abilities to cope. Once he began to deal with one fear at a time, however, he found he was able to whittle down the number of his anxieties and fears. He began to feel like an emotionally freer human being.

Joy's Apprehension

Joy felt anything but joyful. She told the group that she was a dimwit in a brightly lit world of intelligent people. She argued that she made many mistakes. She dreaded the thought that people would catch on to her and discover that she was a fake.

Joy was finishing her second year of graduate school. She reported that she compulsively studied until she thought she'd have a reasonable chance of succeeding. She said, "It takes me three times as long as anyone else to pass the courses." She went silent when John asked, "How do you know how much time others spend studying? Did you take a survey?"

Although Joy received praise from her professors for the quality of her work, she claimed that she had fooled them all. The question "How can someone who sees herself as a dimwit fool others whom she sees as bright lights?" stumped her. Then Elaine pointed out that the main reason Joy felt like a dimwit was because she held a dimmer switch and turned down her own light. Joy said, "I never thought that way before." With a changing self-view, she was in a better position to celebrate her achievements. She no longer felt like a fraud.

Tom's Complacency

Tom believed that he was productive only because his fears drove him to perform. Without them, he'd be complacent. Tom feared complacency.

Tom hated being driven by his fears, but if he eased up, he believed that he would fail, and he couldn't stand failing. Tom's all-or-nothing thinking about the driving force of fear meant that

he was controlled by either fear or complacency. He began to rethink this position when he was asked, “What lies in between the extremes?”

John, Elaine, Larry, Joy, and Tom participated in a supportive group where they felt free to explore their thinking, feelings, behaviors, and relationships with each other. This atmosphere promoted conditions for positive change. The following section will help you explore how to take a similarly supportive approach with yourself.

Taking a No-Blame Approach

We live in a blame culture where we’ve gone overboard with blaming and defending ourselves against blame. Daily you’ll see many examples of denial, rationalizations, and defensive finger pointing—all to mitigate blame. Indeed, blame is so much a part of your anxiety that you may take it for granted and ignore it. That’s a mistake. Anxiety over blame cuts across most forms of needless human distress, but this huge transdiagnostic factor is rarely addressed.

By taking a no-blame approach, you may feel more inclined to experiment with new ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. Conversely, focusing on blaming yourself will get you nowhere.

How Blame Functions

Technically, blame is a means of assigning accountability. By being accountable, or taking responsibility for correcting your anxiety problems, you are more likely to experiment with solutions. However, as you might suspect, blame is typically bloated with negative meaning, which can make it counterproductive.

More specifically, blame often comes in the form of blame *excesses* (complaining, nit-picking, faultfinding), blame *extensions* (downing and damning), and blame *exonerations* (denials, excuses, and shifting the blame), all of which are problematic. Of these, extensions of blame are especially