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REWIRE YOUR Anxious Brain



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3 Mindful Ways to Calm an Anxious Mind

Stress and anxiety are a part of life, especially during these times of uncertainty. But we don't need to be enslaved by our anxiety, we can strengthen our mindful skills to ease our anxious minds. **By Elisha Goldstein**

Stress and anxiety are a part of life, especially during these times of uncertainty. However, we don't need to be enslaved by our anxiety and instead can strengthen our mindful skills to ease our anxious minds, come into our lives and grow in confidence.

- 1. Release the critic.** Not only is anxiety painful enough, but we often get hit with a second round of self-critical thoughts. A simple question: Do the judgments make you more or less anxious? The answer is almost always, more. When you notice the self-critic, see if you can interrupt it by dropping into your heart and saying, "May I learn to be kinder to myself."
- 2. Practice 3x3.** In moments of moderate to intense anxiety the 3x3 practice can come in handy. Drop into three of your senses and name three things that you notice about them. In other words, name three things you're seeing, smelling, tasting, feeling,

or hearing. This can help interrupt the automatic catastrophic thinking that's fueling the anxiety.

- 3. Channel your anxious energy.** Not all anxiety is bad. Like most mental events, anxiety lies on a spectrum. When you're feeling a lot of anxious energy that could be stress or courage building up. Either way we need to release that. If your anxiety isn't severe, you can actually channel that energy into something productive. If you're nervously waiting to hear some news, get active—go for a brisk walk, clean, organize, or garden instead.

Here's a short video to guide you through the exercise in anxiety:



ELISHA GOLDSTEIN

Elisha Goldstein, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist and conducts a private practice in West Los Angeles. He is creator of the 6-month online program A Course in Mindful Living, author of *Uncovering Happiness: Overcoming Depression with Mindfulness and Self-Compassion* (Atria Books, 2015), *The Now Effect* (Atria Books, 2012), *Mindfulness Meditations for the Anxious Traveler* (Atria Books, 2013), and co-author of *A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook* (New Harbinger, 2010).

Remedies for Your Anxious Mind

Elisha and Stefanie Goldstein offer 11 ways to slow down and stay steady when anxiety trips you up. **By Elisha Goldstein**

On a bad day —and those can come one after another—every little thing can drive us to distraction. We're itchy, antsy, pulling our hair out, too jumpy to even meditate. Next time your brain gets knotted up, consider these suggestions.

1. FIRST, SLOW DOWN

When we are anxious EVERYTHING speeds up—our thoughts race, our heart pounds, our breathing accelerates. This makes it difficult to think clearly and make healthy decisions. At the first sign of things speeding up, move a little slower and see what else you can do to intentionally slow things down.

2. COME TO YOUR SENSES

Anxiety lives in our minds and often manifests in the body. When we're

anxious we're not connected to where we are. Take a few moments to connect with your five senses. It will help bring you back into the moment.

3. BE MINDFUL OF A SIMPLE TASK

Life is full of simple tasks: walking, eating, answering emails, gardening, drinking water, cooking. When we're anxious, we feel out of control. Being mindful of a simple task helps remind us we're in control of our choices. Choose a task and imagine it's your first time doing it. Dip into the richness of your life.

4. DO A REALITY CHECK

Anxiety often stems from fear about events that haven't taken place. Our minds are very creative and powerful and often tell stories that aren't true. When you have a catastrophic thought, ask yourself, "Is this thought absolutely true?" Chances are your worst fears are just that—fears, not facts, not the reality of what is happening.

5. RELEASE THE CRITIC

Not only is anxiety painful enough, but we often get hit with a second round of self-critical thoughts. A simple question: Do the judgments make you more or less anxious? The answer is almost always, more. When you notice the self-critic, see if you can interrupt it by dropping into your heart and saying, "May I learn to be kinder to myself."

6. CHANNEL YOUR ANXIOUS ENERGY

Not all anxiety is bad. Like most mental events, anxiety lies on a spectrum. If your anxiety isn't severe, you can actually channel that energy into something productive. If you're nervously waiting to hear some news, get active—go for a brisk walk, clean, organize, or garden instead.

7. LIE DOWN AND LOOK UP.

This is an age-old trick...a natural experience of mindful awareness sets in when we just lie down, look up at the sky, and watch the clouds. Experience the nature of how all things naturally come and go.

8. LISTEN

As an experiment, take the day and set an intention to listen. Listen to the sounds of leaves in the wind, of kids playing, or someone speaking to you. When we pause and listen, we can get back in touch with the simplicity of life, and anxious thoughts begin to simmer down.

9. PRACTICE 5×5

In moments of moderate to intense anxiety the 5×5 practice can come in handy. Go through each of your senses and name five things that you notice about them. In other words, name five things you're seeing, smelling, tasting, feeling, and hearing. This can help interrupt the automatic catastrophic thinking that's fueling the anxiety.

10. KNOW YOUR TRIGGERS

What makes you anxious? Being late? Performing for a crowd? Social situations? If you know your triggers, you can prepare soothing practices better. When the mind feels prepared, it's more at ease.

11. NURTURE PATIENCE

Impatience is to anxiety as patience is to calm and ease. If you want to create mastery around patience, you need to be on the lookout for impatience and get curious about it. How does it manifest in the body? Can you let it be? Patience isn't only a virtue. It's a pathway to emotional freedom.

DISCOVER YOUR NATURAL BALANCE

The mountain meditation is a wonderful way to give yourself the experience of balancing in the midst of the mind's ever-changing nature.

1. Sit in a comfortable position, close your eyes, and take a few deep breaths. Allow the breaths to be an anchor to this moment.
2. Imagine yourself as a mountain, with the forest covering the mountain and all its foliage. Do your best to get in touch with this visualization.
3. Experience the different seasons, of summer, fall, winter, and spring unfolding. The fall brings beautiful colors, the winter all the snow, ice and storms, spring brings its newfound flowers, and summer brings heat and potentially fire.
4. Now ask yourself, "Has the mountain itself actually changed?" The mountain remains the same: solid, stable, and grounded.
5. In the midst of anxiety say to yourself, "Breathing in, I imagine myself as the mountain, breathing out, I am grounded and solid." Feel the natural balance that's there.

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Healthy Mind, Healthy Life

Discover practical ways to find calm in times of stress,
let go of your inner critic, and reconnect with your best self.



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