

# Overcome Fear and Anxiety with These 4 Mindset Shifts

Learning how to overcome fear and anxiety may take some time, but these 4 mindset shifts will point you in the right direction.

It's your first day on the job. You're at a meeting of 40+ colleagues.

'Listen up every one, here's our newest team member!'

All eyes turn to you.

'Why don't you introduce yourself and tell us all an interesting fact about you?'

Instant panic.

Adrenaline levels? 11/10.

All words gone, replaced by sub-Saharan dry mouth.

Blushing, trembling or total amnesia...Sound familiar?

You're not alone. In fact, you're in the majority.

This is just one of the many common types of anxiety we can experience. Whether it's social gatherings you've talked yourself out of, holding back at work in fear of judgement, or catastrophizing situations before they happen, anxiety can manifest itself in different ways for all of us.

If this is a daily battle for you — an exhausting and defeating inner battle that's preventing you from truly living authentically and being in the moment — then you should be applauded. You're already ahead of the pack because you've made that conscious decision to find out what anxiety is and how to overcome it.

Rest assured, you're going to find out.

## What You Need to Know About Anxiety

Did you know that nearly 300 million people<sup>[1]</sup> suffer from anxiety in some form? These feelings of worry, nervousness, or unease that arise in reaction to (or in anticipation of) something painful or uncertain are, sadly, 'normal' feelings to experience.

It may be normal because many people experience it, but it's not something you were born with (although there are some genetic tendencies that can mean you're more prone to it). It's actually something your brain has learned how to do.

Have you ever seen an anxious or self-conscious baby? Coming out of the womb worrying if they sound weird or look funny? So you see, anxiety is something that we've learned to do. It's 'normal' because a lot of us have learned it.

How? Glad you asked...

## **The Subconscious Mind: A Friend or Foe?**

To understand how anxiety can be 'learned,' it's crucial to understand that anxiety isn't something that happens on a conscious level. It begins in the subconscious mind. It's the reason you can't just switch the anxiety off (as much as you want to!) because it's not a conscious process.

The distinction between the conscious and subconscious was effectively illustrated by Sigmund Freud's<sup>[2]</sup> iceberg analogy. He likened the tip of the iceberg – the bit that sits above the water – to the conscious mind. It's the bit we can 'see,' and it's the smaller of the two. It's the least informed and it helps you talk, think, move, and act in daily interactions.

For example, if you're hungry or if you trip and hurt yourself, your conscious mind sends the signal to get food or find painkillers.

Then there's the rest of the iceberg, the part that's submerged underwater – seemingly invisible – and crucial to the structure as a whole. This, Freud said, represents the subconscious mind. It holds your memories, feelings, and habits and controls your emotions. It can learn things like how to create anxious feelings because it's malleable, meaning it can change and be influenced by our life experiences. Scientists call this phenomenon neuroplasticity<sup>[3]</sup>.

'The idea that the brain can change its own structure and function through thought and activity is, I believe, the most important alteration in our view of the brain since we first sketched out its basic anatomy and the workings of its basic component, the neuron.'<sup>[4]</sup>

From the time you were born to the age you are now, your mind has been changing and forming new neurological patterns. Whether they are good or bad depends on what you've been through. Panic attacks, depression, and suicide are all things that happen when your subconscious has taken on some pretty destructive thought patterns, telling you that you're not good enough, you don't deserve to be here, or you can never be 'fixed.'

This is because, as human beings, our subconscious minds<sup>[5]</sup> are programmed to lead us away from pain and toward pleasure. It's human instinct, and it likes what's familiar to it. Moments of impact in our life cause us to make new patterns or break old ones, but ultimately the longer you do or think something, the more it just feels natural and begins to happen automatically.

## **How Did I Learn Anxiety?**

When it comes to anxiety, your subconscious mind learned to cause feelings of worry, unease, and stress when a specific trigger was pulled. It's different for all of us, but if your trigger is public speaking, for example, your automatic reaction after being told about it could be a knotted stomach, dread, and images of you failing or looking nervous. And those images are played over and over again.

Take a moment and think back to a time in your life — your first ever memory of feeling anxious, scared, or judged in some way. You might struggle to think of this consciously if it's a particularly painful memory. That's something the conscious mind has the power to do (not the subconscious). It can prevent the immediate recall of painful memories so that you don't have to feel that pain again.

However, sometimes we need to address them, but it's more effective to do so in a trance-like state during meditation or hypnosis, so you can really remove those conscious limitations...because your subconscious remembers everything. It remembers being bullied at school. It remembers when you struggled to make friends. It remembers that traumatic car accident. Whatever it might be, your subconscious filed that memory along with the pain associated with it, and it'll do anything it can to stop you from feeling that pain again.

How does it do that? It makes you feel anxious, of course! The more anxious you feel, the more likely you'll refrain from facing that pain again. Anxiety is actually trying to help you, but if you're still reading, then chances are anxiety is not doing anything good for you now.

It's preventing you from living a happy and free life where you can make friends easily, or get up and speak confidently, or feel relaxed in everyday situations, etc. Knowing all you know now, you're well on the road to overcoming fear and anxiety. The next step is putting it all in action.

## **Mindset Shifts to Overcome Anxiety**

First, to learn how to overcome fear and anxiety, you need to reflect on some situations that might have led your subconscious mind to form this understanding – everyone's different, and your brain has created this reaction for you solely because of something it heard, saw, or felt in the past.

If you really struggle with this part, therapists (particularly hypnotherapists who specialize in communicating with the subconscious mind), can lend a hand here. Then, in order to change the pattern, you need to change it at a subconscious level – by shifting your mindset – and there are few ways you can do this.

### **1. Hypnosis**

One of the most effective ways to reprogram your subconscious mind is through hypnosis. It's a trance-like state, similar to meditation, where you can dialogue with your subconscious mind and give it positive suggestions.

During hypnosis, your brain waves shift from beta to alpha, meaning your subconscious mind is open and willing to listen to new thoughts and ideas. Hypnosis is not scary, and it's not mind-control. It's a direct way to talk to the subconscious, and it's something you can do with a certified hypnotherapist or RTT therapist, or you can simply find the hundreds of free downloadable resources on the internet that can help you shift your mindset.

### **2. Creative Visualization**

Start meditating. Ultimately, the more you practice calming yourself down, the better you'll be at it. Visualize yourself in the state in which you'd like to be. See yourself living calmly, happily and confidently – see it in great detail. Spend some time every day doing this with a good soundtrack and you'll see that your thoughts and your mindset will begin to change.

### 3. Change Your Language

Stop identifying with anxiety and fear. If you've ever said, 'my anxiety,' 'I'm an anxious person,' or 'it's just the way I am,' then you're owning it. Anxiety and fear are NOT who you are – it's just something you do, and that's ok. Soon it'll be something you used to do (i.e. say 'I feel anxious sometimes' instead of 'I'm an anxious person' or 'I have anxiety').

### 4. Self-Talk

Did you know that your mind will believe to be true anything you continually say to it? If you tell yourself every day that you're bad at public speaking or you always get anxious at work, then guess what? That's exactly what's going to happen.

Whether you write it down or say it aloud every day, list out the attributes of the person you want to be and tell yourself every day, for as long as it takes, that you're that person. You'll see just how effective this is.

When you identify the cause of anxiety and fear, it's important to say thank you. Speak to the anxiety:

*'I understand why you came into my life, but I know now that I attached the wrong meaning to [event], and I no longer need to believe that I'm [not good enough/different/a bad communicator]. Today I'm deciding that I don't need it anymore. Anxiety no longer serves me.'*

## Final Thoughts

These are genuine, proven methods that not only reduce anxiety but will help you overcome it for good. Your brain is malleable, and it can change. You just need to tell it how you want it and be gentle with yourself. You're only human!

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