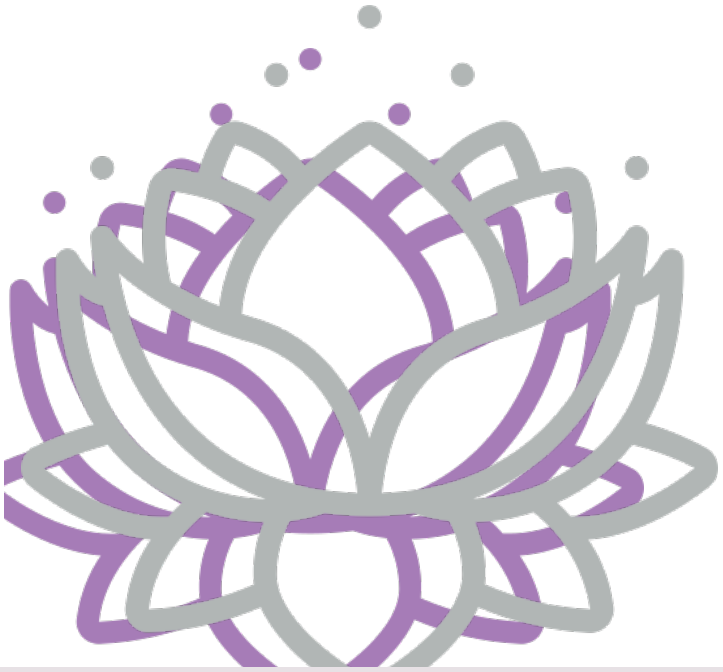
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL

COURSES FOR REAL LIFE

THE ANXIETY E-BOOK



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HELLO!

My name is Thais Gibson, and I want to begin by congratulating you on taking your first steps towards knowing yourself, and towards bettering yourself.

This condensed E-Book contains information on the root causes of anxiety, and how to begin addressing them. By understanding how yours or your partner's perceptions are created, you will be able to work on expressing yourselves and supporting each other in the ways that you need. It is designed to give you helpful information on anxiety, and can be further supplemented by courses in the Personal Development School.

Thank you for taking the time to read this book, and I hope that find great value in it!

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CHAPTER ONE

THE ROOTS OF ANXIETY

Anxiety is a highly misunderstood emotional response. Although everyone experiences anxiety in different ways due to different triggers, it is often perceived as something that is uncontrollable. However, consider what it is: an emotional ***response***. This means that anxiety can be used as a feedback mechanism to help identify the underlying issue that is causing it. It is your mind telling you that there is something that is not right, or that you perceive something is not right. Therefore, in many cases, with the right tools - perceptions can be shifted, and your anxiety overcame.

Consider this analogy: as a child, you believe there is a monster under your bed. It causes you distress, and makes you fearful of what is to come. However, once you actually look under your bed and find that nothing is there, there is a huge sense of relief. This analogy isn't to say that you're not anxious over something that is truly in existence - it is being used to communicate that often what we fear often doesn't come to fruition. In fact, about 85-90% of what the average person fears, doesn't actually happen. However, you must first understand what anxiety is, and where it comes from to truly move out of a space of helplessness.

Anxiety is ultimately the result of the unresolved buildup of problems in your subconscious mind. Your brain is biologically wired to "complete scenarios", meaning automatically imagine the end result of certain situations. However, your subconscious is programmed to be survival-oriented. Therefore, many people ultimately end up imagining the worst case scenario as, essentially, a means of self-preservation. However, this can generate immense

levels of stress if gone unchecked.

So - where does anxiety come from? When this thought process occurs frequently on a daily basis without you actively monitoring yourself, anxiety ensues. For example: consider passing negative thoughts that occur daily such as being late to work and wondering what your boss thought about you, or whether or not people are saying negative things about you. These passing thoughts are stored in your subconscious mind. They essentially leave bits of negative emotional residue in your mind every time they occur on a passing basis. Then, your subconscious tries to bring those unanswered questions or unresolved problems to the surface of your conscious mind to be answered since it is self-preservation oriented. This is why many people feel anxious, and believe it is over "nothing" - because the subconscious has stored every negative emotional story that has passed through your conscious mind, and is trying to force you to begin to strategize and form solutions. To make matters worse, **your subconscious mind responds to these stories as if they are the absolute truth.**

To help illustrate this, imagine you had a passing conscious thought that you weren't a good parent because you were busy with work this week. Even if you are a wonderful parent, your subconscious stored that belief and perceived it as the absolute truth. Unless it that thought is consciously acknowledged by you and proved to be wrong through various mental examples of where you were a good parent, your subconscious will emotionally respond as if it is 100% true. Now, you will be living in a reality where your mind, on a subconscious level, believes you are actually a bad parent. Further, consider that the brain has between 60,000-80,000 thoughts per day. If you were to have such

thoughts on multiple occasions without uprooting them, think of the anxiety it will create over time!

From a physiological standpoint, this causes the brain to release hormones that make you feel anxious. This includes neurochemicals such as cortisol, norepinephrine, and other stress-inducing chemicals. Thus, physical responses like sweating, a quickened heart rate, and other bodily reactions occur.

Summatively, anxiety is an emotional response to the negatively stored subconscious beliefs that you have accumulated over time. Since the conscious mind completes stories, and the subconscious needs solutions to those stories, anxiety exists as a mechanism to force you to address these worst case scenario "stories". Now that you understand what it is and where it comes from, you can follow the next chapter to learn more about why you need to address anxiety at the subconscious level.

CHAPTER TWO

ADRESSING ANXIETY SUBCONSCIOUSLY

Now that you understand what anxiety is and where it comes from, we can dive further into why anxiety needs to be addressed at the subconscious level. It is important to note that the subconscious dictates between 95-97% of what actions, beliefs, and perceptions you project into your daily life. This means that the conscious mind is in control of as little as 3% of what happens in your daily life. Therefore, by addressing anxiety at a subconscious level, you will begin to create real change in your life.

So - how is your subconscious programmed? It is taught to believe certain things and retain specific information through repetition + emotion. This means the associations that are the most deeply ingrained in your subconscious have either occurred: (1) frequently with little emotion, (2) occurred less frequently with more emotion, or (3) occurred frequently with a lot of emotional ties. For the former, the repeated experience of friends making you feel inadequate, for example, may begin to program your subconscious to believe that you are “not good enough”. In the case of infrequent occurrence and stronger ties, someone may have experienced one highly traumatic experience such as a serious accident, which has taught their subconscious that life is “unsafe”. Lastly, the latter could include an instance of someone who experienced abuse over a prolonged period of time, which could teach their subconscious that “vulnerability in relationships results in pain”.

All three forms of experiences that include repetition + emotion are what most profoundly impact your subconscious mind, and teach it to believe certain things associated with those scenarios.

Therefore, when considering how to reprogram your subconscious, it is essential to engage the emotion associated with stored beliefs, and to target those beliefs in a repetitive manner. Moreover, you will have to review what cognitive distortions may exist that are further perpetuating the beliefs that your subconscious is harbouring. These two components of anxiety will be explored in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

As mentioned in the previous Chapter, the subsconscious must be targeted to reprogram your anxiety because it is responsible for roughly 95-97% of brain activity. To further exacerbate matters, our brain naturally partakes in *cognitive distortions*, which is the process of distorting subconsciously rooted beliefs. There are three ways that your mind does this, which worsens anxiety. These cognitive distortions include: **catastrophizing**, **"should haves" and "shouldn't haves"**, and **black and white thinking.**

Recall that when we are feeling anxious, the brain is essentially trying to surface unresolved problems that have created negative emotional residue in our subconscious. Since the brain is wired to "complete" life experiences and solve these perceived challenges as a means of survival, anxiety acts as a feedback mechanism that tells us we are not addressing our subconscious beliefs. Moreover, these "beliefs" are always perceived as being the absolute truth by our subconscious, which also elicits a physiological response. To review what this means in more detail, refer to Chapter 1.

Keeping this in mind, let's look at what the cognitive distortion of **catastrophizing** is: it is the act of looking a situation and imagining the worst possible outcome. For example: imagine you are late to work. Instead of thinking: "Oh no, I'm going to be a few minutes late to work", this cognitive distortion would lead you to think: "Oh no, I'm going to be a few minutes late to work - everyone is going to judge me, my boss is going to fire me, and I'm going to be homeless". Essentially, your brain spirals downwards into a worst

case scenario. Catastrophizing is a very common trait amongst those who suffer from anxiety - however, it can be fixed.

First, let's look at what happens when you catastrophize. Then, we can look at how we can move through it. When your brain catastrophizes, it essentially creates a "movie" in your mind. You see the characters, you see the situation playing out, and it becomes an immersive experience. However, when your brain imagines something like this, it actually has an incredibly difficult time telling apart what is real and what is fictional. From a physiological standpoint, your brain will react to these things as if the reality of the situation and the imagined component of the movie are both equally real. If you are a chronic catastrophizer, then you are constantly putting your mind and body through a traumatic thought process which will also trigger a physiological response.

Therefore, in the moment that you are catastrophizing, you must witness that you are partaking in a cognitive distortion and remove yourself from the situation. Then, ask yourself: "does this make sense? Is it likely to happen at all?" If you have a difficult time discerning the probability of an outcome from those questions, try rating the probability from a scale of 1 to 10. Then, put your energy into trying to solve that problem, rather than feeding to trajectory of catastrophizing. Since you can't be in the "movie" and invest your energy into finding a solution simultaneously, it is essential to witness what you are doing and actively look for a solution. In the case of running late, it can be as simple as calling your boss and apologizing. Ultimately, shifting yourself out of a state of catastrophizing and looking for an active solution will help to alleviate your anxiety in that moment.

Next, let's look at the second cognitive distortion that can occur: **"shouldn't haves" and "should haves"**. It occurs when you think: "I shouldn't have done this" or "I should have done that". However - you are essentially fighting with the past when you experience this cognitive distortion. This will always be a losing battle because in that moment, you have no control over what has already happened. What you ***do*** have control over, however, is finding a solution to what has already happened.

In the case of this type of cognitive distortion, there are three subcategories that exist: **(1) This shouldn't/should have happened, (2) They should/shouldn't have, and (3) I should/shouldn't have.** We will look at each example in order.

1. This Should/Shouldn't Have Happened

To help illustrate what this means, let's imagine that you were to get a flat tire. The moment you realize you have a flat tire, it is in the past - although it is the immediate past, it is still the past. As soon as you begin to think: "this shouldn't have happened, this is so unfair,'' you are in problem-feeding mode. You are arguing with something that has already happened, and are losing control of the situation. As soon as you realize you are thinking "this shouldn't have" or "should have" happened, you must realize you are in a cognitively distorting mode, and that you are essentially robbing yourself of the autonomy to remove your suffering and find a solution.

So - once you realize you are in this space, you must look for a solution to solve this problem. This will return your autonomy, and put you into a significantly less anxious mindset. Then, you are able to find a way to learn or grow from this experience when you are faced with something similar in the future.

Conclusively, you must first accept that you are in the situation that you are in rather than being at war with the past, then you look for a solution to help ease your anxiety, and then you look for the lesson learned in the situation so that you are better equipped for future challenges.

2. They Should/Shouldn't Have

In this instance, you are essentially fitting someone into a box of what you expect from them, without making any room for what their own personal perceptions or programming may be. Judgement is essentially a projection of our own ignorance, and when we're thinking these negative thoughts about someone else, it is first happening to us. What is meant by this, is that all of these negative judgements about what someone else shouldn't have done is eliciting negative emotional responses in our mind. If someone else's actions cause anger or frustration, it is *our* anger, *our* frustration. We are the ones suffering. These emotions are what ultimately cause our anxiety in this s ituation, and keeps us an anxious or activated emotional state.

So, instead: try to understand *what your need was* in that situation, and express that. Anxiety is often telling us about unmet needs that we have, and rather than arguing with yourself and the past about what someone should or shouldn't have done, express what need was unmet in that situation. This will help you to move out of an emotionally activated state, and begin to ease your anxiety surrounding the situation.

3. I Should/Shouldn't Have

When you feel as if you should or shouldn't have done something, and you repeatedly agonize over doing it or not doing it, you lock yourself to the guilt and regret associated to that situation. Again, you are giving your mind's

energy away to negative beliefs. When you do this, you essentially lock yourself in a place where you cannot be solution-oriented.

Your solution with this cognitive distortion is to first make amends. This can be with yourself or someone else. Then, look for a solution, and humanize yourself. Remember that you are a human being and that you're going to make mistakes. This is essential to our healing at the subconscious level. You should also look at yourself in that situation: maybe you didn't have enough information, maybe you were feeling afraid. In this instance, you need to remove yourself from a cognitively distorted mindset, make amends with yourself, find a solution to the problem, and humanize yourself.

The last type of cognitive distortion that can occur is called **black and white thinking**. Black and white thinking is when an issue arises and rather than slowly making amends, you shift to the polar opposite form of response. For example, if you quit drinking for a month and then drink on day 14, you would think: "oh, well I might as well just drink again since I have lost my steak of sobriety." This also often occurs with people to attempt to eat healthily - for example, if they ate a muffin at breakfast and then decided to eat unhealthily all day. In a sense, this form of cognitive distortion is almost self-punishing.

Ultimately, this creates a buildup of issues in the subconscious, and perpetuates anxiety over certain matters. It additionally tends to create feelings of helplessness that further exacerbate anxious responses. Now, black and white thinking can occur within ourselves, or in response to other people. For example, if someone you love were to make a mistake, black and white thinking could result in you ending the relationship because you expect them to always make that mistake. This form of cognitive distortion in particular will

result in many people anxiously pushing others away, or result in the suppression of our emotions. When we are in this state of mind, we are in fight or flight mode and this is a tremendous cause of anxiety.

So - when you catch yourself doing this, begin by witnessing what you are doing. Ask yourself: “in what areas of life am I exhibiting black and white thinking”? The seven areas of life you may be experiencing this behaviour could be: career, financial, mental, emotional, spiritual, physical, and relationships (friends/family/romantic partnerships). Chronic black and white thinking ultimately embeds negative associations in these areas of your life, and will make you feel constantly helpless and anxious.

Once you notice where you are exhibiting this cognitive disorder, question the validity of these beliefs. For example: “just because I’ve been reckless in the past with my finances, does it truly mean I can’t get a handle on my spending moving forward?” Or: “just because I was passed over for that promotion that I wanted, am I really destined to fail at my job?” As you can see, black and white thinking can lead to elaborate assumptions that can produce a lot of pain. These assumptions, just like anxiety, are essentially fearful, worst-case scenario outcomes.

Once you have questioned the stories that your subconscious is perpetuating, and found that they likely aren’t true, be gentle towards yourself. If it is: “I just broke my clean eating and now I will eat badly for the rest of the weekend”, be gentle with yourself - rather than giving up on yourself, correct your behaviour for the rest of the day. Ultimately, the choice to constantly forgive yourself and try to fix the problem now will result in a cumulatively better outcome than just “starting again on Monday”. In conclusion, there are three primary forms of

cognitive distortions, and each have their own treatments. By taking the steps described in this chapter, you can begin to alleviate some of the pain associated with these forms of thinking. However, as previously mentioned, anxiety often has a deeper subconscious root - in the next Chapter, we will reveal just how to address it.

CHAPTER FOUR

REPROGRAM YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS ANXIETY

Since the subconscious mind is programmed through repetition + emotion, it can be reprogrammed. Begin by trying to observe where your anxiety occurs, and what may trigger it. If you have been experiencing anxiety for a long time, it may be a bit unclear as to what your specific trigger are - that is okay. It just means that there has been a buildup in your subconscious, and that you may only be able to witness your anxiety at its peak state rather than the thoughts that lead up to it. The following steps will help you to reprogram your subconscious mind to begin to heal your anxiety, regardless of the duration or severity that you have or will experience.

STEP 1: Review the Seven Areas of Life

As mentioned in the previous Chapter, the seven areas of life are: career, financial, mental, emotional, spiritual, physical, and relationships (friends/ family/romantic partnerships). Go through these areas and ask yourself: "what problems do I feel lingering in these areas that are not currently resolved?" Although this may feel uncomfortable, it is important to note that the more repressed an issue is in your subconscious, the more anxiety you will feel when addressing it - this means that it is essential to begin with this step so that you can truly access where your root causes of anxiety lie.

STEP 2: Question These Problems

Earlier in this book it was revealed that the majority of the issues that we

imagine do not arise, or that often we cognitively distorite issues and make them seem worse than they can be. Therefore, the second step is to review some of the fears that we have outlined in the previous step, and ask yourself: “can I be absolutely sure that this is true or will happen?” Often we will find that the worst case scenario isn’t actually likely to happen. However, sometimes it is a possibility - in these instances, look for a strategy.

STEP 3: Look for Strategies to These Problems

Once you have examined the seven areas of your life, and found valid or potentially valid problems, look for strategies to these problems. Keep in mind that it doesn’t have to be an immediate solution - but, when your brain has context and strategies, it will feel immediate relief. Although this E-book will not go into specific detail about what strategies exist since they are highly dependent on the problem that you are facing, even just finding strategies that contribute to a solution will provide you with relief. For example, if you are a parent who works 3 jobs and cannot find time to spend with your kids, think outside of the box - perhaps you can spend high quality time with them that is uninterrupted when you can’t spend a high quantity of time with them. It is also important to note that although anxiety is largely related to the subconscious residue that you are holding, it also has to do with the meaning that you are giving to a situation. For example, if you are feeling anxious about not spending a lot of time with your kids, when you make it mean that you are a bad mother or a bad person, it immediately becomes more painful and will make you more anxious. Instead, create a strategy for that meaning - ask yourself: “what can I do to be a better parent?” By sourcing the problems in your subconscious and then looking for strategies, you will begin to transform your anxious thinking.

In conclusion, this E-book will have helped you to understand what anxiety is, where it comes from, the cognitive distortions that can exacerbate it, and some tricks to help begin transforming your anxious thoughts. This information will help you to begin you anxiety transformation journey, but will require ongoing work and diligence in your thought observation. My intention was to help give you some insight into where you are now, and to help you to begin to identify and understand your anxious patterns.

To access more tips, tools and in-depth techniques that will help you to overcome your anxiety for good, visit: **www.university.personaldevelopmentschool.com** and begin your course in Beating Anxiety!