

EBOOK

Unwinding Anxiety



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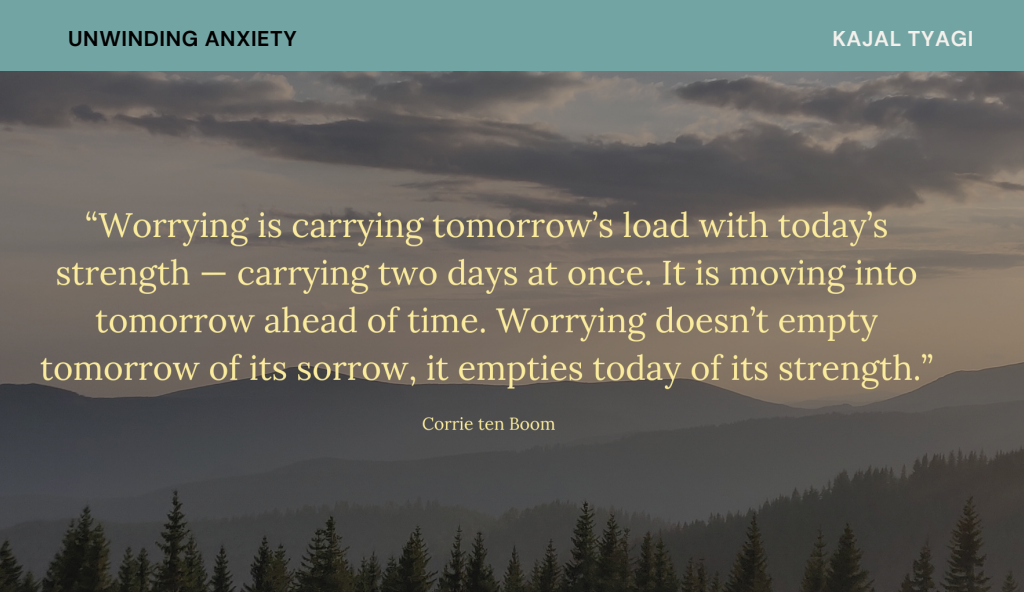
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Hello, I'm Kajal Tyagi

I'm a trauma-informed psychotherapist, and I work with adults online offering therapeutic support. Working as a therapist came to me like a calling since I have always found myself very fascinated by the experience of being human, suffering, and healing. I am deeply passionate about helping people unwind from what holds them back and from experiencing the side of being human. One that encapsulates joy, curiosity, creativity, courage, clarity, calm, confidence, connectedness, and compassion.





“Worrying is carrying tomorrow’s load with today’s strength — carrying two days at once. It is moving into tomorrow ahead of time. Worrying doesn’t empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength.”

Corrie ten Boom

Anxiety, in its various forms, is an inherent part of the human experience. It is a universal emotion. Everyone experiences it at some point in their lives. It also has an evolutionary purpose since it helps us recognise and respond to potential threats.

However, anxiety exists on a spectrum and varies from mild unease to severe panic, which is why it becomes difficult but necessary to understand whether it is a normal response or needs deeper attention and support.

As a psychotherapist, I often come across people who struggle to understand, cope and recover from anxiety. Through this ebook, it is my intention that you find more clarity and feel more supported on your healing journey.

- Kajal Tyagi

Understanding Anxiety

Suffering from anxiety generally involves worry, fear, and rumination about the future.

Occasional anxiety is a part of life, it helps us respond accurately to stressors and protect from threats. While anxiety may serve a useful purpose (e.g., alerting us to dangers), too much anxiety impairs functioning and performance in certain activities.

Anxiety may be terrifying, causing physiological, cognitive, and emotional symptoms. Those experiencing panic attacks often end up in the emergency room, believing they are dying. It is also common for anxiety to occur together with other mental health issues such as depression.

According to the WHO, anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness globally, affecting 1 in 13 people worldwide and only about 37% of individuals suffering from anxiety disorders receive treatment because of lack of awareness, stigma, and limited access to mental health services.

A major step prior to understanding and coping with anxiety is accepting it without shame.

DON'T FORGET you are not alone in this experience, and it does not signify that you are weak.

Trauma and Anxiety

Anxiety occurs when we overestimate a threat and its ability to cause harm and underestimate our ability to cope with it.

This can happen due to many different reasons, such as, due to an unexpected stressor, but also due to past trauma.

It is important to understand that anxiety can be intricately linked to trauma responses.

Our nervous system can get deeply impacted due to harsh experiences, and it can continue to stay dysregulated over the course of time. Anxiety then could be a sign of chronic nervous system dysregulation which may need a different treatment approach. Many clients I work with feel shame when they experience anxiety when there is no actual threat or present cause for their anxiety.

In these situations, **Trauma- Informed Therapy** utilising **Mind-body interventions** are extremely beneficial.

Anxiety is our body sending us a message. Whether it is occasional or chronic, or occurring due to an actual or perceived threat, it is a sign for more attention and care.

Coping with Anxiety

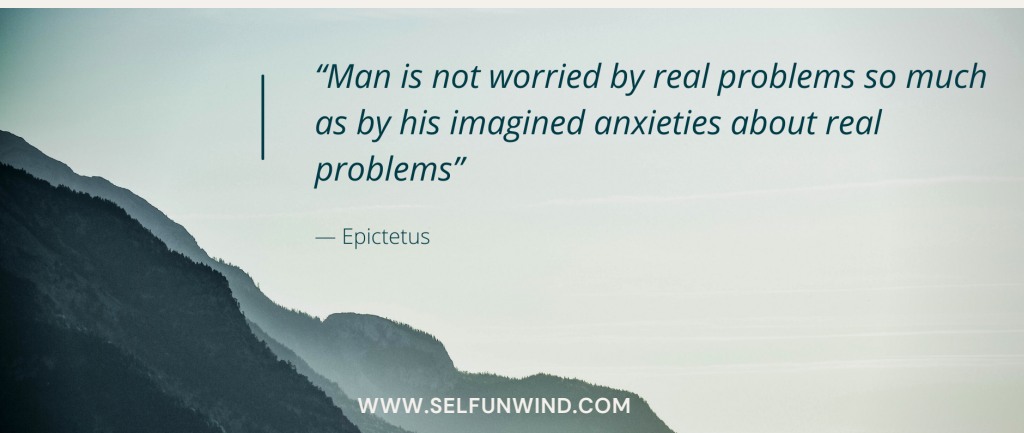
Anxiety interventions need to be individualised based on several factors, however, these few are evidence based interventions and are effective for many people.

Cognitive- Behavioural Approach

CBT includes exposure, social skills training, cognitive restructuring, problem solving training, self monitoring , and relaxation.

CBT often uses a **5 step approach** to change the way we think and act:

1. Make a list of thought patterns you need to target
2. Record unproductive thoughts
3. Make a list of replacement thoughts
4. Read your list often
5. Notice the old thought and replace it with the new

A misty mountain landscape with a quote overlay. The mountains are dark and silhouetted against a light, hazy sky. The quote is in a teal color and is positioned on the right side of the image.

"Man is not worried by real problems so much as by his imagined anxieties about real problems"

— Epictetus

Journal Prompts for Anxiety

- What makes me anxious ?
- How does anxiety feel in my body? Where does it show up the most?
- Make a list of thoughts closely related to feeling anxious, and label them as either opinion or fact.
- What is the best and the worst case scenario for this situation? What is the probability for both?
- Is there anything you can do to prepare for the worst case scenario? Make a list of those things.
- If a friend was in a similar situation, what advice/ words of affirmation/ suggestion would you give to them? Write it out.
- Make a list of your nervous system anchors (that which feels safe and comforting) & lean onto them when anxious - People, places, activities, things, exercises.
- Think of the last time you were feeling anxious. What helped? What did you learn from that experience?
- Is your anxiety helping you in any way? If yes, is it worth the discomfort?

Journal Prompts for Anxiety

- In this moment what can you:

control_____

influence_____

accept_____

let go of_____

- Make a list of 4 affirmations that can help soothe your anxiety.

Examples:

“I trust my resilience and ability to deal with circumstances I am
now connecting with the present moment.”

“ My thoughts are not facts.”

“ I don't always need to be in control. I can let go and allow things
to unfold.”

Coping with Anxiety

Mindfulness

Research has repeatedly proven the effectiveness of mindfulness based interventions such as meditation for anxiety.

Mindfulness is an awareness practice focused on being present in the moment intentionally and without judgment. Mindfulness benefits anxiety in many ways such as reducing stress, promoting emotional regulation, and enhancing overall well-being.

Mindfulness influences two different stress pathways in the brain, changing brain structures and activity in regions associated with attention and emotion regulation.

Here are a few ways to incorporate mindfulness in daily life:

- **Mindful Breathing**– there are many breathing exercises to anchor oneself in the present moment, such as, box breathing, 4-7-8 breathing.

If you want to conquer the anxiety
of life, live in the moment, live in
the breath.

— Amit Ray,

- **Body Scan Meditation**– systematically focusing attention on different parts of the body can help become more aware of physical sensations and relax tense muscles. Start at your toes and progressively move upward, paying attention to any tension or sensations in each part of your body. Imagine breathing into and relaxing each area.
- **Mindful Observation:** Observing thoughts and emotions without judgment or attachment, allowing them to pass helps with the overwhelm.

Grounding

Grounding exercises aim to connect us with our immediate surroundings, helping us feel more present and less overwhelmed by anxiety. Here are a few to begin with:

- **5-4-3-2-1 Method:** Name 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.
- **Sensory Awareness:** Focus on the sensation of your feet touching the ground or the feeling of your hands touching different textures.

Breathwork

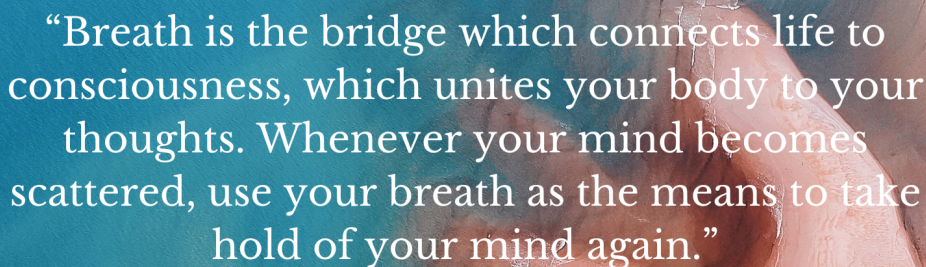
Breath work refers to deep, diaphragmatic breathing or belly breathing, which helps in triggering relaxation responses in the body.

Coping with Anxiety

Lifestyle Changes

Our lifestyle plays a significant role in managing anxiety. Here are some impactful lifestyle adjustments that can help alleviate anxiety symptoms:

- **Regular Exercise:** Physical activity releases endorphins, which can improve mood and reduce stress. Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week.
- **Healthy Diet:** Consume a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats. Avoid excessive caffeine, sugar, and processed foods that can exacerbate anxiety.
- **Quality Sleep:** Establish a consistent sleep routine, aiming for 7–9 hours of quality sleep each night. Avoid screens before bedtime and create a relaxing pre-sleep routine.



“Breath is the bridge which connects life to consciousness, which unites your body to your thoughts. Whenever your mind becomes scattered, use your breath as the means to take hold of your mind again.”

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Coping with Anxiety

Lifestyle Changes

- **Limit Stimulants: Caffeine and Alcohol:** Reduce intake of stimulants like caffeine and limit alcohol consumption, as they can trigger or worsen anxiety symptoms.
- **Time Management: Organize and Prioritize:** Create schedules or to-do lists to manage tasks effectively, reducing feelings of being overwhelmed.
- **Social Support: Connect with Others:** We are wired for connection, our system Maintain strong social connections, as having a supportive network can help alleviate anxiety.
- **Limit News and Information: Media Consumption:** Limit exposure to distressing news or information that might heighten anxiety levels. Consider setting boundaries on media consumption.
- **Hobbies and Relaxation: Creative Outlets:** Engage in hobbies or activities that bring joy and relaxation, whether it's reading, painting, gardening, or any other enjoyable pastime. Learn to rest without guilt or regret.

Coping with Anxiety

Vagus Nerve Stimulation

Vagus nerve is the longest nerve in our body, connecting our brain with many organs (vagus means 'wanderer' in Latin, which fits as the nerve wanders around our body).

The vagus nerve does many things, one of which is triggering a relaxation response in the body and increases something called vagal tone; slowing our heart rate and our breathing and calming our nervous system down.

There are many ways for stimulating this cranial nerve. Some of which are breathing deep, vagus nerve exercise, making the "voo" sound, connecting with others, cold water immersion, and humming to name a few.

Professional Support

Seeking therapeutic support can be immensely reparative and beneficial if you have been struggling with anxiety. Getting personalised support from a therapist can help uncover the root cause of the anxiety, help learn effective coping skills, somatic tools and continued guidance.

"We don't have to do all of it alone. We were never meant to."

-Brené Brown

Healing is a gradual process and it is not linear, remember to remember that and allow yourself to seek support that could be available.

Thank you for allowing me to be a part of your journey. If you found this ebook helpful, please share it with others who may benefit. Wishing you a future filled with peace, resilience, and abundant well-being.

To work with me, you can reach out at
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Stay connected via my website **www.selfunwind.com**

With warmth and support,

Kajal