

A Simple 10-minute Practice That Undercuts the Root of Anxiety

There is a simple 10-minute practice that undercuts the root of anxiety. Brene Brown, the world-famous shame and vulnerability guru, described it very well in [Oprah Winfrey's show](#) when speaking of the inner workings of shame:

“To grow exponentially, shame absolutely needs three things: secrecy, silence, and judgment. Shame cannot survive two things: being spoken and being met with empathy.”

Destructive emotions feed on secrecy, silence, and judgment. Reversing this pattern involves:

1. Breaking the secrecy.
2. Speaking up.
3. Getting empathy from someone who will not judge you.

A workable solution for anxiety is surprisingly counterintuitive

After struggling with anxiety for about 30 years, I finally found something that works. As of today, I have not been anxious for over a year — which is surprising, given the circumstances I have been through.

My first anxiety attack came at 21 when I was a senior in college — many years ago. It came totally out of the blue — it must have been triggered by a train of thought that I totally didn't notice. And it felt so bad, I had to excuse myself and go out to breathe it away.

Since then I would get it every once in a while — and always out of the blue. Trying to “figure it out” never helped. In fact, it made it worse. I couldn't trace it to any external cause.

Of course, I did a bunch of things to get rid of it — consulted psychologists, exercised, memorized the Bible, read tons of books on self-help, philosophy, and religion. It helped... sort of...until the next time.

Little did I know that [the solution is totally non-rational](#).

A simple practice to alleviate anxiety that has nothing to do with thinking

About a year ago, I made friends with a few guys who were doing a simple 10-minute practice as part of their recovery program (in AA). The goal of the practice was to relieve 4 basic human emotions — selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear.

When I heard the word “fear,” I cringed. A simple practice to alleviate fear? It sounded too good to be true.

You see, I had been studying philosophy, religion, and psychology for 30 years. I had been a voracious reader of anything from Dante to Melody Beattie, and you are telling me I will find a solution in a few simple steps?

A year into it, I have no skepticism left. It works. The surprising lesson is that overcoming anxiety is not a matter of thinking. You cannot “think yourself out of any problem.” Since anxiety is not rational, the solution for anxiety is also not rational. It lies above and beyond thinking.

We have never been reasoned into anxiety

“It is useless to attempt to reason a man out of a thing he was never reasoned into.”

Jonathan Swift

Our anxious states are not a result of reasoning. None of us have developed an anxious mind by consciously thinking about reasons to be anxious. The anxious mind is formed as a result of a certain way of living. As Richard Rohr put it:

“We do not think ourselves into new ways of living, we live ourselves into new ways of thinking.”

Just as our wounds come in a non-rational way — through a certain way of living — so also recovery comes non-rationally, through a certain way of living. We start “doing things” in a new way, and gradually our old way of thinking gives way to a new one.

I grew up with active alcoholism in my family, and my mom left when I was in my first year of college. By that time, my anxious mind was full-fledged with this hidden message: “You are on your own. There’s no one you can trust.”

This subconscious message was fertile ground for anxiety. When I was able to conjure up a belief that I was God, fully controlling my little universe, I felt great. When something threatened my faith in my omnipotence, I would panic.

What must have been happening in my mind

It is not so easy to realize that anxiety is non-rational. Whatever is the message that feeds it, it's entirely subconscious. I don't see it, and I am not aware of it. It plays in my mind again and again, but it always flies under my conscious radar.

Turns out, it **needs secrecy** to survive. When I start seeing it, it loosens its grip. The more conscious I become of my unconsciousness, the less power anxiety has over me.

There is nothing to "understand." All I need to do is to repeat a few simple steps as best I can.

4 steps for reducing anxiety

There's nothing magical about them. It's a simple 10-minute practice that undercuts the root of anxiety. The only purpose of this practice is to [shine the light of consciousness](#) on the dark areas of the mind.

Light is the most powerful thing in the universe. The way out of darkness is to turn on the light. These 4 steps help you to become aware of the mental records that run your life.

That's all. You don't fight anything, you don't resist anything. What you resist, persists. The goal is to see.

1. *Ask yourself the following questions: "Right here, right now is there any selfishness in me?" "Right here, right now is there any dishonesty in me?" "Right here, right now is there any resentment in me?" "Right here, right now is there any fear in me?"*
 2. *Pause for 10 seconds after each question, listening carefully to what is going on inside you.*
 3. *Ask whatever Higher Power you have to remove the feeling.*
 4. *Share how you feel with at least one trusted friend (a SAFE person in your life).*
-

How the non-anxious brain is formed

Anxiety was planted into my subconscious by a [certain way of living](#). There is a **hidden destructive message** running in my mind like a broken record. But I don't see this message.

When I break the secrecy and speak up about how I feel, I slowly become aware of this hidden record. My record says: "You are on your own. You must control everything. You must be god."

When I become conscious of this hidden message, I gradually realize that it's false. No, I am not omnipotent. No, I don't wield absolute power in my little world. There's a [Higher Power greater than me](#). I can let go of my need to control.

The only way out of unconsciousness is to grow in consciousness. Unconsciousness cannot survive the light.

"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light."

Jesus