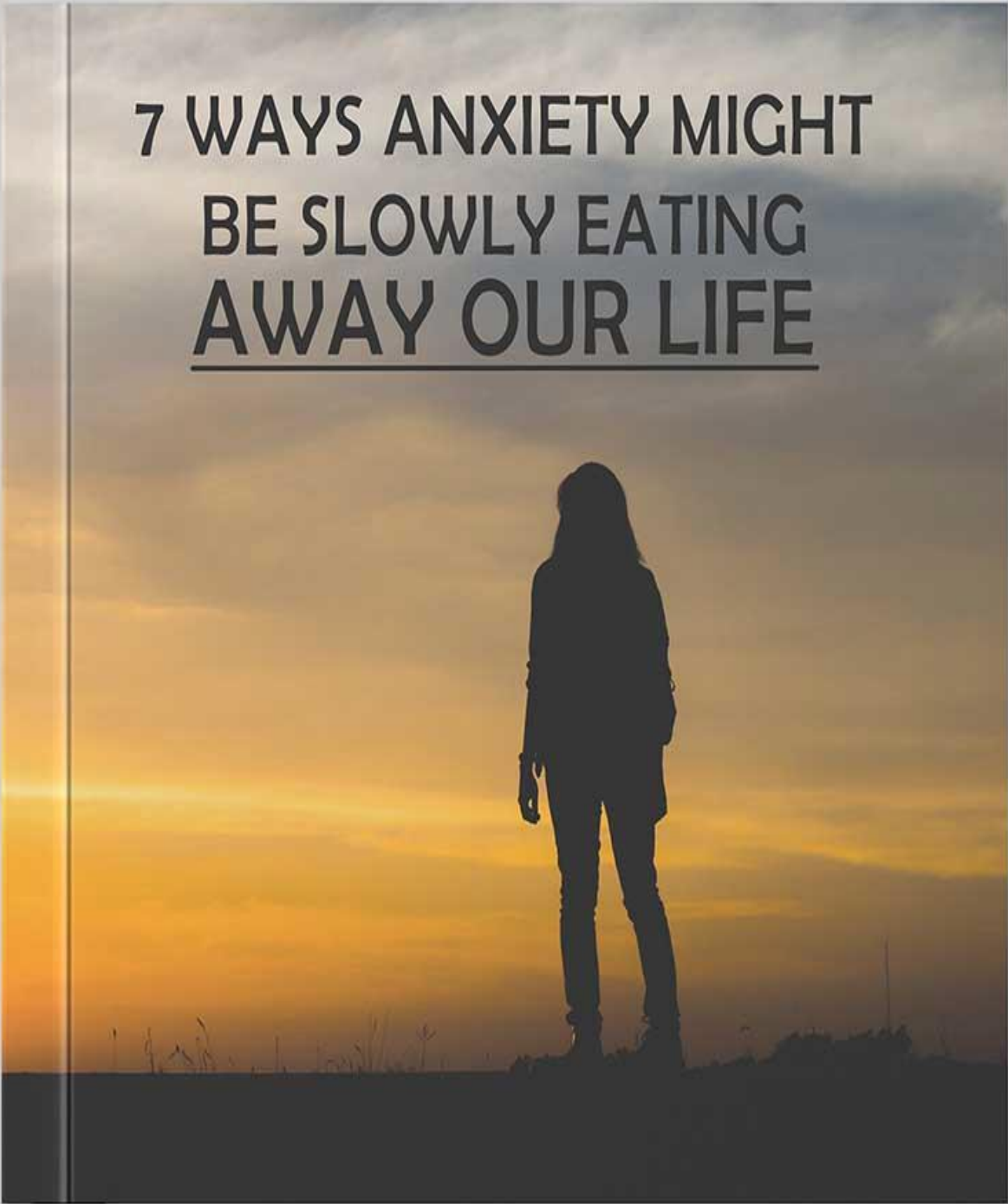


7 WAYS ANXIETY MIGHT BE SLOWLY EATING AWAY OUR LIFE



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Introduction

It Is Natural to Feel Anxious

There's a good chance that we've all experienced feelings of anxiety in response to real or perceived threats at one time or another. For most people, these feelings are normal as the brain is hard-wired to caution you at times of danger, change and the unknown.

In fact, in many situations, experiencing a certain level of anxiety and stress can help boost your performance in specific tasks. For instance, a person might experience a heightened level of anxiety the days leading up to a public event and that's a completely normal reaction.

Psychologists believe that anxiety is your body's natural response to stress and that this stress triggers a system in the brain that accentuates your performance. So, a little anxiety now and then is okay and might be your body's way of preparing for an impending change.

That Said, Not Every Anxious Feeling Is Normal

For some, these feelings can be all-consuming, impairing the individual's ability to enjoy life as they'd otherwise like to. For some, anxiety might treat their everyday events as life-or-death situations. It can become a disorder and that isn't a good place to be in. Fortunately, in most cases, there is always a way out. And one of the first steps to finding that way out is to dive into your mind and listen to what it might be trying to tell you.

It's About Accepting Your Anxiety, Embracing and Understanding It Too

There is no shame in being anxious. And we would prefer not to have put this obvious point across (because it's obvious and should ideally not need any re-affirmation). But sadly, because of how this feeling can be trivialized and/or stigmatized, it's important to let all those who experience anxiety know that they are not alone and by accepting it they'll also be overcoming it.

Likewise, it's important to let others know that they shouldn't be underestimating the pain of those with anxiety disorders. Worse, that they shouldn't be stigmatizing anxious people by saying

things like, 'you're overacting', or 'you're so OCD,' when they might not know enough or when that's not what they mean.

This book is an attempt to throw some light on the much relevant topic. We've kept it short and brief because we don't want to overload you with information but want to ease you into the expansive subject one book at a time.

With this book, we attempt to show you how anxiety might be taking over your lives without you even realizing it. We show you the mirror alright, but we also show you ways to become the best version of yourself because we believe it's something you're meant to be.

In this book, we talk about 7 ways anxiety might be slowly eating away your lives. We discuss:

- Overthinking and obsessive thoughts
- Lack of self-assurance and fear of judgment
- Phobias and traumas
- Workplace anxiety
- Social anxiety
- Eating disorder
- Insomnia
- And finding your journey towards the solution

On that note, we warmly welcome you to our book titled, '*7 Ways Anxiety Might Be Slowly Eating Away Your Life.*' We've had an enriching experience putting together this meaningful book and hope you feel benefited by it.

Chapter 1 - Overthinking and Obsessive Thoughts

When was the last you had a passing, somewhat intrusive thought that appeared to come out of nowhere, from way outside your immediate realm of collective thoughts?

If you're like most people, then the answer might be closer than you initially realized.

Now, we all get wound up between fleeting and excessive thoughts sometimes and that becomes the new normal (unless you mindfully train yourself to think less and drop the thoughts). You see, now and then (more frequently than we might like it to be actually), we all have passing thoughts that might seem out of our control.

When they begin to consume you, they can pose a serious chronic problem. Because overthinking activates the same parts of the brain that are involved in fear and anxiety, psychologists believe

people with a history of anxiety disorder are more vulnerable to this state of mind.

How Our Brains Respond to Anxiety

Our thoughts can manifest as physical reactions in our bodies. Our bodies, in response to the flight-or-fight response, trigger stress hormones into the bloodstream the moment they're subjected to any type of anxiety. These stress hormones, if not put to rest in quick time, can manifest in responses such as accelerated heartbeat, headaches, nausea, sweating, muscle tension, stammering, and trembling. Worse, over time and due to negligence, they can also weaken the immune system and leave us vulnerable to a host of ailments.

For some, intrusive thoughts might be an everyday routine, making it the trigger for periods of panic and intense anxiety. They might also be the result of anxiety itself and can add a layer of fear and stress to what the person is already experiencing.

These types of intrusive thoughts can be overwhelming, forcing the person thinking them to obsess about them. For instance, you have a task in front of you. It's simple and straightforward.

You've probably even done it before. But the thoughts in your head might overload you with endless information and possibilities, most of which might be unnecessary and unwanted. "What if something unknown crops up, what might those unknown things be, and will I be able to handle it?" "What if I can't, what if I fail, will I be judged?" "What if I get a panic attack when I'm doing this task?"

These thoughts are very real and put the person experiencing them into a frenzy, sometimes even forcing them to opt out of the task.

Negative and Unwanted Thoughts

Sometimes, these thoughts might seem outside of our character too. The content may feel unknown, unlikely, bizarre and perhaps even hostile too. And because they seem so radical in nature, they can come back to haunt us time and again, triggering feelings of guilt, disgust, anguish, despair, and helplessness.

If experiencing these thoughts aren't stressful enough, the person might have to constantly live in the fear of enacting them

out. This lethal combination of guilt and fear can make one feel less worthy, forcing them to be withdrawn and secretive of their condition.

The more you try and avoid them, the stronger they return. The more you try and reason out with them, the more vehement they become. It can look like a vicious cycle with no escape route. Only there is. Not one, but several doors to a calmer and more peaceful mind space.

Here are some effective ways to help silence those thoughts:

- Accept that these thoughts are automatic and might come and go at their will. Don't avoid them.
- Remind yourself that they are unimportant, intrusive thoughts that do not define or become you.
- Believe that this time too will pass. Give yourself time.
- Expect the thoughts to come back again.
- Remind yourself that you are above it and will be prepared to address it when it does come back.
- Continue with your tasks, focus on doing them well. Be aware of the anxiety, but don't engage with or attach to it. The tasks might help you achieve this.

Chapter 2 - Lack of Self-Esteem and Fear of Rejection

There is nothing more uncomfortable than not being comfortable in your own skin and with the structures that function with you. Somewhere deep down, you know you needn't feel this way, that you shouldn't, and that there isn't any reason or truth in your feeling. And yet, in spite of it all, you do.

“I feel sick to my stomach all the time and spend a lot of time crying, hiding, and alone. Sometimes, I feel my chest tighten. It messes with my breathing and makes me nauseous too. The anxiety is always there. Panic attacks come and go. And when they do, I feel lightheaded and dizzy. My muscles hurt. At its worse, my mind disassociates from all the physical symptoms I might be experiencing.

I feel the pain and it is very real. But my mind feels numb and I have no control over my physical pain. When it's all over, I feel exhausted and shamed. I know I went through something, but I

can't really tell because I don't remember it all. Did I make it obvious? What will people think of me? I'm hopeless."

As elaborate as the gamut of expressions might be, they do not even scrape the surface of trauma and emotional turmoil a person experiencing anxiety goes through. It therefore comes as no surprise that people who struggle with Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) experience heightened levels of low self-esteem. The fact that they are often overpowered by their thoughts and emotions makes them more vulnerable to it.

Self-Esteem and The Fear of Rejection

Sadly, as much as we'd like to deny it, we live in a world that is judgmental where people believe only what they want to believe as opposed to what the truth might be. People like to perceive, assume, judge, and compartmentalize others quickly, mostly based on their first experiences and so-called "gut-feelings."

So, if you happen to impress people within the first few minutes of your interaction, they judge you as being relevant and hence worthy of their company, and if you don't, then they're quick to brand you as irrelevant and worthless.

Again, as much as we'd like to deny, as a society, we knowingly or unknowingly endorse this culture and even subscribe to it. We all want to feel included, want to be loved, appreciated, and accepted. Instead of looking for qualities from inside us, we seek it from outside, from society. These feelings can be magnified for people who have anxiety problems.



Feeling confident and safe to be able to express your thoughts and act at your will can be hard for anyone, more so for people struggling with anxiety issues. Because the brain is caught up in a stress-respond mode, people with anxiety can feel overwhelmed and uneasy by the mere effort of trying to be what they don't feel.

This can catapult their stress levels and escalate their lack of self-worth and assurance. Because of all that is going inside and around them, they might feel forced to retrieve into a shell. They might isolate themselves from all the chatter and noise to silence the chaos inside.

If you're experiencing these feelings, then we want to know that you are not alone. Fortunately, there's a way out of this situation.

The key is to establish a strong communication with yourself first and then with the outside world

“Nerves and butterflies are fine — they're a physical sign that you're mentally ready and eager. You have to get the butterflies to fly in formation, that's the trick.” - Steve Bull

- Talk to yourself. Reflect on all that you are going through. Why do you think, feel, and experience all that you do? Is there a lesson that you are missing? Journal your emotions. Work on the answers.
- Face your inner demons, the unheard narrative from an outsider's perspective. What is it telling you? Is there anything you can do to help address it? How do you want to see yourself five years from now?
- What's stopping you from getting there? Work on them.

- Use verbal affirmations to remind yourself of how wonderful you are.
- Establish communication with the outside world, with your dear ones at first. Create a loving environment. You'll do great with their love and support.
- Talk to the people who are close to you and tell them what you go through. Seek help and assistance when you feel low. Express yourself freely without worrying about being judged or ridiculed. There are a lot of people who want to understand and help. You just need to ask and let them in.
- Reward yourself by congratulating yourself on your journey. You are closer to being the best version of yourself.

Chapter 3 - Phobias and Traumas

Picture these situations as vividly as you can, as we speak. Take your time and don't rush into them. You can also do them at different times and write down your experiences with each manifested situation.

Situation 1: You're about to go on stage and deliver your first public speech to an audience of 500 people. You knew this was going to happen and have been preparing for over a week now. You have this. Or do you?

Situation 2: You're having a conversation with friends, the usual stuff. You're sipping on your coffee and are enjoying your time with them. Then suddenly, someone touches a topic that's sensitive to you. It jogs back memories from your past, memories that you don't want to re-visit and ones that you've hidden from others. Wait, you thought you were over them. Or are you?

Situation 3: You're taking the elevator to the 22nd floor of this high-rise glass building. The elevator is all fancy. It's made of

glass and lets you look at everything around and beneath you. Only, you don't want to look.

Check your palms. Are they sweaty? Did you skip a beat during any of the situations? What about your breath? Are you breathing faster than before the visualization?

Most of us become anxious when we are forced to face situations that are outside our comfort zone. Now, these situations might be anything, from the ones we've listed above to something that might be more personal and only known to you. But most of us are vulnerable to triggers that bring back unwanted thoughts; fears, traumas, and phobias included.

These memories can bring back pent-up emotions that have been suppressed for long. They can consume you for no immediate and logical reason. These triggers are enough to let anxiety take over.

If something as random as a simple conversation or an everyday routine can fill up the tank of anxiety in you, then it shouldn't be ignored any more. If anxiety is taking over your life, then the only way you can truly start healing is to turn around and confront your demons.

Before you start looking for treatments (and we don't mean to undermine the effect of medications on anxiety), take a moment to pause. Pause and look at the situation that is causing the anxiety. Is it a fear, trauma, or phobia you didn't realize you had or have left unaddressed for long?

Anxiety Doesn't Exist in Isolation

While it is tempting to think of it this way and distance it, it simply isn't true. There is always a bigger picture, several perhaps, and there are all connected.

Take time to reflect on the issues that are floating around and inside your subconscious mind.

Tug at the issues and see what comes of it. You might be surprised to unravel a host of emotions and pent-up memories that might ultimately lead you to the peace you've been wanting.

Re-visit and visualize the very situations that act as triggers.

Observe yourself and your reactions towards the situation. Make peace from the fact that whatever the fear, this time it isn't happening for real. Think of this as a chance to re-write those situations to give it the ending you'd like it to have.

Your anxiety has a voice. Listen to it.

Chapter 4 - Workplace Anxiety

Too Much, Too Soon

Anxiety and stress go together and can have a far-reaching impact on a person's life. According to a recent journal, panic disorder is the result of anxiety and stress and is characterized by the occurrence of repeated panic attacks.

The feeling of intense terror and fear that crops up when triggers strike (and usually out of the blue) makes a person go through heart-attack-like symptoms that their body didn't see coming and isn't prepared for. These experiences are very real for the person experiencing them and can happen at any place and at any time.

The Workplace is no Exception

Many of us will admit that the current working environment is extremely competitive, forcing people to perform under constant judgment and stress. In a world where time is money, every second counts, resulting in extreme pressure, overtime, and the fear of always being side-lined for someone better and more competitive.

This pressure to live up to the expectations, in addition to the financial responsibilities that come with it can force an individual to work beyond his/her thresholds, almost pushing them to the point of breakdown.

Deadlines are packed so close to each other that it gives the individuals no breathing space to re-group their thoughts. Competition is so high that individuals are willing to risk their mental and physical wellness to retain their job, pay their bills, and maintain the standard of living that is accepted by society.

While this has become the new normal of our lifestyles, sometimes things can get a little out of hand. And when that happens, when you put yourself through periods of continued stress and anxiety, the feeling takes over and starts interfering with your ability to perform your job or manage your personal

life. Your mental and physical health takes a toll and things begin to get out of control.

The key element to the psychotherapy of anxiety, stress and panic disorder (and they get entangled with each other) is exposure to the feared triggers. So, instead of avoiding the stimuli or situation, psychologists suggest you confront it. They believe learning not to avoid is crucial and most often the first step to healing and treatment.

First, Accept Anxiety. Then Identify its Trigger Patterns.

What might start as a thought about something completely benign, an email you sent, a conversation you had, an upcoming event, a minor worry, can trigger responses that are unexpected and hostile. Anxiety can tell you, “you can’t do this, drop out, you failed,” and hammer those feelings repeatedly with intensity that makes you believe and become the thought.

Your mind senses a trigger and its fight-or-flight response forces it to go into overdrive. It thinks it’s trying to help you survive and doesn’t realize it isn’t being helpful.

Coping with Anxiety at Work

While anxiety can happen anywhere and at any time, it is more susceptible to happen at work, simply because of the heightened levels of competition and pressure that comes with it. Fortunately, there is a way to turn things around.

Let your mind know that you've got it. Try verbal affirmations.

Verbal confirmations, also known as affirmations, are words you willfully use, and by that, I mean you think, speak, and believe in order to flesh out the reality you seek.

Your mind constantly reaches out to power words to reinstate all that it plans to practice. In fact, there're probably several of these "power words" running through your head, just as we speak.

Use absolute positive statements to bring life to all your dreams and aspirations. Use statements such as:

- I love myself and am at ease with my mind.
- I can and will overcome this trouble quickly.
- I believe I can make this happen.
- I can do this.
- I am good at what I do.

Work at Creating a Work-Life Balance

Take time off work to make room for things you love; spending time with your loved ones, engaging in your favorite sport. Spend time doing the things you love with the people you love during your time off and on weekends. You'll be pleasantly surprised at how rejuvenated you are likely to feel.

Chapter 5 - Social Anxiety

One of the most detrimental effects of anxiety is its ability to isolate you; triggering feelings that make you feel fearful and unworthy of company. People with social anxiety might notice their anxiety increase during social interactions, even during times that are enjoyable and positive. Worse still, feeling immobilized and powerless against their feelings, they suffer in silence and avoid situations that bring them in contact with people.

Social anxiety (or social phobia as it is sometimes called) is more than being awkward or shy. It is a type of complex phobia that can impair an individual's confidence, mental stability, lifestyle, emotional wellbeing and relationships, to say the least.

The symptoms might be subtle but can be picked out over time and by observation.

People with a social anxiety disorder (SAD) generally experience heightened emotional distress in the presence of people,

irrespective of whether they are strangers or loved ones. They can become particularly anxious and stressed out while:

- Being introduced to other people
- Being engaged in conversation, are criticized or judged
- Driving communication
- Being evaluated
- Meeting people of rank
- Meeting strangers
- Engaging in romantic relationships

This list is certainly not the entire list, but it does touch the most common and obvious ones. If you find yourself reserved and anxious in social gatherings (speaking in front of a group, interacting with new people, engaging conversation, eating in public) and if you find that your anxiety levels increase at the mere thought and in anticipation of these situations, then you may be dealing with social anxiety.

Fortunately, despite being complex, social anxiety is a surmountable disorder. By making lifestyle changes, you can, in time, learn of ways to manage your anxiety. You can also learn ways to approach social events with confidence while allowing any perceived flaws to go by without prejudice or judgment.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and its Role on SAD

Cognitive behavioral therapists (CBT) are now in a position where they can offer a drug-free approach to dealing with these issues. There is now enough evidence that CBT is a reliable and effective remedy for dealing with problems of anxiety and mental health. The therapy allows you to address your fears and take a microscopic view of your reactions towards it. It focusses on addressing the root of the problem with no filters. Not only does it allow you to get to the source of your anxiety, but it also helps you to keep it away.

Here are some ways to overcome social anxiety:

- Gradually approach social situations that challenge your anxiety and practice staying in these surroundings for as long as you can. This will allow you to realize that your fears are a result of your mind going into overdrive and nothing else. Once you stay in these situations and realize nothing bad can come out of it, your anxiety will gradually settle.
- Practice doing the things that can challenge your anxiety.
Once you realize that isn't going to turn out all that bad, make efforts to repeatedly put yourself in these situations.

With time and practice, you'll begin to overcome your fears and will be able to work from a calmer space.

- Pause and reflect on your journey now and then. Pause and reward yourself for the wonderful progress you've made.
- Anxious people tend to be their biggest critics. They also tend to analyze the before and after of every situation, adding to their anxiety. Replace these traits with self-assuring habits such as rewarding and congratulating. The more you talk to yourself and tell yourself that you are doing well, the more comfortable in your skin you are likely to become.
- Practice socializing. Reach out to your loved ones. Let them know about your concerns and lean on them for support. Socializing has had a direct link to lower rates of anxiety and depression and can do you a world of good.

Chapter 6 - Eating Disorder

It is common for people to generalize the contributing factor(s) that lead a person to develop an eating disorder. Their reasoning is often misinterpreted and one-dimensional. Many people are quick to assume that eating disorders are a result of people wanting to chase after the so-called “ideal” or size-zero bodies. While this can be a contributing factor and needs to be addressed for its detrimental implications, it isn’t the only one.

Eating disorders can have many causes. It, much like any other mental health issue, can develop due to a gamut of biological and social factors. According to the National Eating Disorders Association, eating disorders can develop through a combination of genetic disposition, types of personalities, and environmental factors.

Research indicates that some people are born with a higher risk of developing an eating disorder at a later age in their life. Now, when this predisposed vulnerability is combined with environmental factors such as anxiety caused by a traumatic experience and/or uncongenial social environment, an

individual can rapidly be pushed to a state where he struggles to have a healthy relationship with food.

Anxiety, low self-esteem and poor mental health remain the leading reasons for people to develop an eating disorder. The desire to fit into the ideal body-type comes much later.

To the untrained eye, it can be difficult to know if someone is struggling with their eating habits.

In a society that has a somewhat distorted definition of health and doesn't speak openly about mental health struggles, the signs that there might be something deeper to a person's eating habits is often dismissed and, even at times, praised. For instance:

- A person obsessed with exercise and calorie counting is often appreciated for their dedication and willpower.
- A picky eater is dismissed as being someone who has a finer taste for food.

And so, in a way, society appreciates and even shifts the concept of picky eating and calorie counting. This is where we have it completely wrong. Eating disorders hold the highest mortality rate of any other mental illness. That is why early detection and intervention is the key to helping someone recover and thrive.

Here are some warning signs that might suggest that someone could be struggling with disordered eating:

- You find yourself consumed by or completely disinterested in food. Both are extremes and both are equally damaging to your health.
- You adhere to a strict diet and/or exercise plan and don't leave any room for cheat days.
- You're obsessed with your weight and size and a slight change in it can send you into an anxiety attack.

While these are some of the more obvious signs, they certainly aren't the only ones. If you think your anxiety is taking over your ability to have a healthy relationship with food, then its time you sit back and address these issues.

The Role of Nutrition in Controlling Symptoms of Anxiety

When it comes to controlling the symptoms of anxiety, what you eat can ultimately determine how your day is likely to go. Incorporating healthy eating habits can mean the difference

between experiencing the worst of your nightmares and a sense of calm. In general, experts suggest:

- Consuming smaller but regular meals
- Choosing whole grains and good carbohydrates instead of processed grains and complex carbohydrates
- Avoiding refined or artificial sugar as well as canned or packaged foods
- Consuming herbal tea instead of caffeine-rich drinks
- Avoiding alcohol
- Getting your daily dose of multi-vitamins
- Consuming foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids such as nuts, seeds and cold-water fish
- Consuming probiotics and fermented foods
- Staying well hydrated

Exercise as an Anti-Anxiety Treatment

Exercising regularly can help alleviate triggers of anxiety. If you suffer from anxiety and haven't already engaged in regular exercise, then it's time you consider incorporating physical activity into your daily routine.

Yoga in combination with breathing and meditation techniques decreases anxiety-driven symptoms while allowing you to be mindful of your thoughts and feelings. Likewise, Tai Chi can reduce stress and blood pressure while improving self-esteem and mood. Additionally, general aerobic exercises such as walking, running, cycling and swimming work wonders at controlling overall anxiety-driven symptoms. Your best bet is to find a routine that suits your interests and convenience.

Chapter 7 - Anxiety and its Ill-Effects on Sleep

Anxiety and disturbed sleep patterns are closely linked. People with insomnia, for instance, are at a much higher risk of becoming anxious than those who get a good night's sleep.

Likewise, with people who experience chronic anxiety, poor sleep over a continuous period can mess with a person's mind space and emotions. Anxiety itself is associated with sleep disturbances such as reducing the quantity of restorative slow-wave sleep the individual gets each night.

Sadly, this lethal combination is more common than you think it is.

Forty-three percent of Americans say anxiety and stress have radically altered their relationship with sleep. As a result, they say they lie awake at night at least once a month. One of the most

common problems with falling asleep is that people just can't switch off their minds.

So, despite being tired and sluggish all day, your mind goes on a rant and doesn't stop the moment you lay in bed and hope to sleep. Suddenly, the overactive mind starts pulling up memories from the past, your pain triggers are pressed, and the next thing you know, your tank of angst is full to the brim.

If you're experiencing anxiety in any form, depression, financial worries, panic attacks, trauma, phobia, emotional and/or physical turmoil, there's a good chance you might be experiencing disturbed sleep patterns.

Here are some warning signs that can tell you if your anxiety is interfering with your nighttime sleep patterns:

- You have trouble falling or staying asleep
- You feel tired during the day
- Have physical discomfort such as muscle and joint pain, breathing difficulties, restlessness, sweaty palms, tightened chest, and/or numbness while trying to sleep
- Have difficulty paying attention, feel sleepy, but can't sleep, and are easily irritable

If these situations sound familiar to you, then you'll be happy to know that there are ways to soothe your mind and fall asleep.

Create a nighttime routine that encourages positive distractions.

Focusing all your attention on how you can't get to sleep will only make the problem look and feel bigger. Instead, create a nighttime imagery routine that engages and distracts your senses.

For instance, close your eyes and picture a nice warm day at the age. Think about water. See them. Touch them. Can you taste the salt from it?

These kinds of imagery can help transfer your mind into a place of calm. When the mind becomes calm, it becomes happy and will gradually reduce its rant and let you sleep in peace.

Practice Nighttime Mindfulness

Anxiety is the mind's defense mechanism to a short-term emergency crisis. Insomnia and poor sleep come with the territory. The stress you feel might stem from insecurities of being judged, ridiculed or isolated even more.

As negative as these feelings might be, your mind is more than capable of handling the situation when you train it to be mindful of its thoughts. Now, we understand that this might not be easy for many of us. However, in time and with practice, you can train your mind to do as you wish. Practicing meditation can help you achieve exactly that.

Focus on Your Breath

You define your life by the choices you make, every single hour of your life. If you can slow the flow of your thoughts and utilize the time in between to rationalize your choices, you'll realize that nothing in life is worth stressing about.

The key is to shift your mind towards a state of "mindfulness" so that you bring it back to the present every time it slips away.

Staying mindful of your breathing patterns will help you find a way to settle your thoughts and overcome all that might be stressing you out presently. As a result, you'll be able to zone out of situations that breed negativity and distress. And consequently, you'll also be able to get plenty of good sleep.

Conclusion

Now that you've gained insight on ways anxiety might be slowly eating away your life, we urge you to make the efforts to incorporate the changes. The choices you embrace can help you achieve a greater sense of self and calm. Simply put, they can help you be a better version of yourself.

Remember that there's always a way out of any anxiety-driven thought and feeling that you might be experiencing. Most importantly, remember that you are not alone. The whole world is waiting to discover and befriend you. All you need to do is meet them half-way.

The Benefits of E-Books

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