

A GUIDE FOR **SENSITIVE PEOPLE**
WHO CAN'T KEEP DOING IT ALL

The



Anxiety
Solution

SUSAN RENEE GIBSON

The Anxiety Solution

A Guide for Sensitive People Who Can't Keep Doing It All

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Difference Press

Washington, DC, USA

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Published 2022

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*This book is dedicated to my younger self, who held the magical truth of our true essence
and lived it every day.*

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Chapter 1: Anxiety Overload

“Anxiety keeps me awake at night. It keeps me as a prisoner in my home. Anxiety makes me feel like a failure; has taken away my self-worth. It makes me feel uncomfortable and nervous.

Anxiety has taken away friends, family, opportunities, my life.”

— Anonymous contributor to The Mighty

Janice is a thirty-six-year-old work-at-home mother of two girls. She lives with her husband, John, in a suburban upscale neighborhood where the lawns are neatly manicured, and the houses are beautifully landscaped and tastefully decorated. She rarely sees her neighbors, except when she’s strolling the neighborhood in the evenings. Generally, her neighbors are working during the daytime hours. The kids play in each other’s backyards, so she doesn’t see them often either. Gone are the days of neighborhood kick-the-can games and flashlight tag. Playdates are arranged to keep the children busy.

As a successful entrepreneur, she runs her accounting business out of her home so that she can focus on raising her girls. Janice juggles everything in the household. Homework, soccer practices, and doctors and dentist appointments are under her purview. She oversees home repairs or handiwork and ensures the house is always neat and clean. She prides herself in keeping things in working order and under control. Her calendar helps keep her sane. If she ever lost it, she would be in serious trouble. Her whole life is on those pages.

Sometimes, Janice can only work when everyone is asleep. She frequently makes do with less rest than she needs. She manages that for a while. But because of not caring for herself, she gets sick. When it’s tax time, a busy season for her, life gets even more stressful.

Trying to manage everything — the kids sporting events and practices, running the household, her business, and making time for her husband — has Janice on tilt. At times, Janice

feels that she's failing at everything. She's overwhelmed, and she doesn't have a lot of support. Her husband works insane hours, and her family doesn't live close by, so she feels she has to do everything herself. When she's working, she feels guilty that she's not fully present with her children. When she's with the kids, she worries that she isn't doing enough for her clients. She's always thinking about what else she has to do. Janice has a massive to-do list, which she has divided into two parts — one for business and one for home — and it seems to be growing by the hour.

Then there's her relationship with her husband, John. He's not a bad guy. He works hard to provide for the family, but he's never really there. He's already left for work when Janice wakes up in the morning, and when he comes home, after 6:00 p.m., he's tired from dealing with people.

All he wants is to have dinner and chill for a bit. Janice can feel them drifting apart, and she is feeling resentful. She feels like a single mom, doing everything herself. It seems like they are living separate lives. She wonders, Is that just what it's like during child-rearing years? She holds on to the belief that the problem is temporary, and she tells herself the situation will be different when the kids are grown. She tried to tell John how overwhelmed she was. "You simply need a vacation," he told her. When John booked a weeklong vacation for the two of them, Janice felt even more stressed. She thought, Now I have to find a babysitter, get meals prepared for the time we'll be away, prepare the schedule, move appointments, and notify clients. She became more annoyed, and she then realized that she needed some help.

As she sat in my office relaying what was happening in her life, she began to sob.

Her words escaped in a torrent, and she rambled, "What the heck is wrong with me?" she asked. "I have been blessed in so many ways. People think I have everything, so why am I so sad? Am I just a miserable person? Is there something wrong with me? How do other women manage all this? I've been losing my temper with the kids, I'm behind schedule with my clients, and I feel like I'm losing my mind. I haven't been able to focus, and I'm not sleeping well. I've been doing everything I can to hold it together, but I don't know how much longer I can do that. There are days when I want to get into my car and drive away from everything. I would never do that to my girls, but sometimes."

I told her to take a deep breath. Then another. And one more for good measure. A little calmer, Janice continued, "I'm scared. The other day I could feel my heart beating out of my chest. I was worried I was having a heart attack. I'm wound up so tight, my muscles are sore. Sometimes

I forget to breathe. I know that sounds weird, but sometimes I realize I haven't taken a breath in a while, and then I'm gasping for air. I finally went to the doctor, and he gave me a prescription that he said would help. But I don't really like taking anything unless absolutely necessary. My friend Lisa takes meds for anxiety. She said she feels nauseous and has headaches from the prescriptions."

Janice continued, "Lisa also takes meds for depression. She says those meds leave her feeling emotionally flatlined. I'd like to think I'm smart enough to figure out the cause of my anxiety, and I'd like to fix it without taking meds." Medication feels like a slippery slope to me. I don't want to lose control. I know I can figure this out and fix it, but I don't know where to start. I spoke with my friend Anne about my issues, and she told me I should come to see you. She said that after her sessions she felt relaxed and calmer. So that is why I am here. I don't know much about energy healing, but I figured it can't hurt. Can you help?"

Helping people with anxiety is my specialty, and I know I can help her. I've helped hundreds of women and men who have been suffering, just as she was. Anxiety can feel like a hopeless place to be. You can Google how to fix it and try the recommendations, but the worry remains. Supplements, essential oils, meditation, and praying help a little but not significantly. Perhaps you even blame yourself because those things didn't fix your anxiety — were you not doing it right, not taking the correct dose, not being prayerful enough? Some of my clients have even said they felt this was karma for something they did earlier in life.

You don't want to take medication because you fear they'll make you feel flatlined like a zombie. You're at a point where you are willing to try anything, but you're tired of being disappointed. Something has to give and soon.

While there are times that medications are your best option, I also understand wanting to live a more holistic life. With each new Big Pharma drug, there comes a long list of side effects. Advertisers hire announcers who can speak incredibly fast to list them all! My clients often complain that when they're prescribed a drug for a particular symptom, they're prescribed another drug to manage the side effects of the first one. Any Big Pharma drug you take is a synthetic of a natural ingredient, a chemical. Companies are not able to patent plants that appear in nature. Therefore, to make money they have to derive one that is chemically based. Not one person on this planet ever died from not having enough chemicals in their body. Just sayin'.

The methods I'm sharing with you, which I teach my clients, work by getting to the root of your anxiety. These methods are helpful whether you choose to use medication or not. I recommend following your intuition, or your gut, in deciding what is best for you.



Chapter 2: There Is Hope

“I am not what happened to me, I am what I choose to become.”

— *Carl Gustav Jung*

I have always been a high-achieving, type-A personality. I taught myself how to read at just four years old. I spent hours every day sitting with a book and sounding words out by myself. When I came to a word I didn't know, I'd run to my mother, who was busy elsewhere, to ask for her help. This self-directed learning meant that when I attended kindergarten, I was further ahead of my classmates and completely bored. The secretary, whose desk was right outside my classroom, would pull me out of class when they were doing their reading lessons and give me one-on-one tutoring.

My first memory of being anxious was when I was six years old. In first grade I was sent home from school with stomachaches at least once a week. I reverted to sucking my thumb to comfort myself. The other kids would make fun of me and call me a baby, so I would put my hands around my mouth so no one could see what I was doing. My parents took me to the pediatrician to see if there was a physical reason for my upset stomach, but the doctor couldn't find anything wrong, so he referred us to a child psychologist. There they discovered that my teacher yelled a lot, and as I was a sensitive child, it affected me physically. Additionally, my younger twin brothers were born just before the school year started. My baby-of-the-family status was gone. I was now the middle child! I felt lost in the shuffle.

Over the years, I excelled in school, getting top grades consistently. I was very competitive and did my best in everything. Some of that I attribute to my parents and their expectations, but most of it was self-driven. I had to be the best in this area of my life; getting even an A- would cause me to melt down. But what made me into the perfectionist that *needed* that perpetual feedback? What I didn't realize back then (but do now) is that perfectionism is one of the signs of high-functioning anxiety.

When I was finishing seventh grade, my parents decided that they wanted to move farther out into the suburbs. The neighborhood was *changing*, and they didn't like the attention that my brother and I were receiving from our black classmates. My parents were doing what they thought was right to protect us, but I can also see that they were conditioned through their upbringing to have certain beliefs. The school that I transferred to was 98 percent white, and I felt like a fish out of water. My new classmates grew up with each other, so it was difficult making friends. I didn't wear the right clothes or have the right hairstyle. Preppy was in, and disco was out. My button-down polyester, silky shirts made me stick out from everyone else. It was like I had moved to a completely different world. I learned what was "acceptable" and what wasn't. I became a chameleon, changing to fit in and make friends, losing parts of myself that I really enjoyed in the process.

In ninth grade, I started restricting my food to lose weight. My figure was blossoming, but skinny was "in." And I was tired of boys giving me *titty-twisters* as I walked down the hallway. I tried limiting myself to four hundred calories a day, and I exercised for hours each day. I'd become so hungry that I'd binge. Then I'd feel guilty and ashamed that I couldn't control myself. I tried vomiting, but I wasn't very good at that, even after ingesting ipecac syrup. I took laxatives, hoping to erase my mistake that way. I attempted to hide my excessive dieting, but my mom figured out what was going on because I was passing out at school from lack of nutrition. She threatened to take me to a doctor if I didn't start eating. She thought I was anorexic. I realized I was trying to find some control in my chaotic world, and food was what I was controlling. Throughout high school, I took all advanced placement classes and even tested out of half of my freshman year in college. My mom told me that just because I was a woman, I didn't have to be a nurse or a teacher, I could be anything I wanted — like an engineer, doctor, or lawyer. I wasn't interested in going to school for ten years, so I chose engineering. But three and a half years into the five-year degree, I decided it wasn't for me and switched to hotel management. I thrived at helping people.

While working at the front desk at a major downtown hotel, I met my first husband, Kent. We had to hide our relationship because he was my boss's boss. Eventually, because of that conflict of interest, I moved to another hotel. We were engaged six months later and married six months after that.

Kent was loud, charming, and sophisticated. He was also eight years older than me. He was worldly and knowledgeable and taught me about the finer things in life. We spent hours talking about everything under the sun. I felt heard, important, and loved. Kent's larger stature and gruffness made me feel safe. After all, he had been captain of the wrestling team when he was in college at Ohio State.

On my wedding night, I wondered if I had made a mistake. That night it was all about the party and counting the money we received as gifts. It was not about our first night as man and wife. I think every woman wants to have that magical first night. But the honeymoon was even worse. He took his golf clubs with him. Did I mention that I don't golf? I was stuck in the room reading romance novels while he golfed. Yes, we did fun things together, too, like a champagne balloon ride over Napa Valley, but the trip seemed less about us and more about him and what he wanted.

We had three moves over the next eighteen months, from Cincinnati, Ohio, to Massachusetts, Connecticut, and then to New Jersey. Kent was quite successful at his job, and his employers sent him to different hotels to turn them around. Every time we moved, Kent felt he had to work harder and longer hours to prove himself. He forgot our first anniversary and my birthday, which came the day before. Most of the time, I felt like an afterthought, and my unhappiness grew. Before I could decide what to do about the marriage, my mom died. She was only forty-seven years old. I was in an untenable situation. I felt stuck with no way out. Like so many other things in my life, I made the best of my situation and continued moving forward. I am nothing if not resilient. I know how to endure.

Over the next five years, we moved four more times — to Cincinnati, Reno, Baltimore, and back to Cincinnati again, all because of Kent's job. Our son Bobby was born when we lived in Reno, and our second son, Lucas, was born in Baltimore.

I decided to make my own window treatments for our first house in Baltimore. I didn't like what was affordable, and I couldn't afford the treatments I liked. I figured if I could read a blueprint, I could figure out a pattern! As we made friends and entertained, people would comment on the beautiful curtains. When I explained that I'd made them myself, many friends wanted me to make window treatments for them, too. Soon, a business was born! I was raising the kids, running my business, and volunteering at the children's school. I didn't have time to dwell on what

wasn't working in my life. My hectic schedule made keeping my equilibrium possible. Life was busy, to say the least.

We were the typical family. We had a Friday night tradition. We ordered pizza and bought beer and wine, as well as soda for the boys. We played cards. Sometimes it was Euchre, other times Spades, and finally we taught our sons double-deck-pinochle. We laughed and played, and the boys tried to make me pee my pants with their outrageous humor. We went to church every Sunday, vacationed at the beach with the in-laws, and had the usual ups and downs in our marriage — all fairly normal stuff.

I still had anxiety and bouts of depression. I don't remember people talking much about anxiety at that time, but folks spoke of being stressed. For me, stress looked like worry and fear. I worried I wasn't doing or saying things right. I dissected every conversation, wondering if I said something wrong. Part of me believed that people only tolerated me and didn't really like me. And I was afraid that my marriage would end, and I wouldn't be able to support myself. The worry and fear showed up as overwhelming thoughts and feelings. There were many nights I quietly cried myself to sleep. Other nights I'd fall asleep just fine, but I'd wake up in the middle of the night having nightmares and then couldn't get back to sleep because of my racing thoughts.

I never recognized my depression when I was in the midst of it. I only realized, when looking back, that there were times when things were really hard. Case in point, we had a huge Christmas party at our house every year. Between eighty and one hundred people would filter in, over the course of six hours. Believe me when I tell you, our house was not big enough for that many people! I cooked everything for that party, from twenty-five dozen cookies, two cheesecakes, and two carrot cakes to a plethora of hors d'oeuvres. It took me a week to prepare the food at the busiest time of year for my business. Often, I was just hopping in the shower moments before the first guest arrived. Some years these parties were not a problem; I breezed right through them. Other years, the party seemed like the hardest thing I'd ever done.

I spent my life building the *perfect* life, the one that made me acceptable and lovable. My boys excelled in academics and sports, I was president of the PTA at one school and VP at the other (I even won an award for how much I volunteered at the schools), and my home was beautifully maintained and decorated. I was holding it all together, but I lost myself in the process. I gained a significant amount of weight and was drinking a bottle of wine more nights than not to

numb the pain and anxiety. I was surrounded by people and yet I was lonely. No one really knew the truth of who I was. They only saw what I allowed them to see.

Then one day, as I was driving to install window treatments for a client, I started to feel like I was having a heart attack. My chest was pounding, and it was difficult to breathe. It scared me because of my mom's history. Thankfully, I was able to hang the two-story curtains and then drive straight to the doctor. They hooked me up to an EKG machine, but the doctor didn't see evidence of a heart attack. He thought it was probably a panic attack and gave me a pamphlet about anxiety and a prescription to take. I knew I was stressed and unhappy, but I truly didn't think I had anxiety. I thought the doctor had made a mistake with the diagnosis, that perhaps he didn't use the EKG machine properly. I was so disconnected from myself, my body, and my emotions that I had no idea why I would have anxiety.

My friend Paddy had given me a book the previous year. She told me that I wasn't ready for it yet, but she wanted me to have it for when I was. I began reading it and diligently doing the exercises at the end of each chapter. Doing that work brought up so many things that I considered just part of my childhood. I'd always believed that I had a wonderful childhood, and mostly that is still true. But nothing is all good or all bad in life. I also had memories of hiding under my bed at the age of three or four, terrified that my parents would punish me for something I did wrong. I can still remember lying on that hardwood floor, my heart pounding in my ears, trying not to make a sound, so my parents wouldn't find me. Punishment was the wooden spoon from my mom or the belt from my dad. As a young child, I learned to be good and nice to make others happy.

It brought back memories of my junior-high years. I recalled our family's move and my bout with anorexia. That was just the tip of the iceberg of the events I was trying so hard to forget and put behind me. When I was sixteen, my boyfriend raped me. I kept telling him no, that I didn't want to have sex, but he didn't listen. I was raised in a very religious household and believed that I needed to be a virgin when I got married. With that one act I felt I lost my entire worth. I didn't realize, at the time, that it was rape. I thought I hadn't fought hard enough and it was my fault.

Then I was in a situation where I was being groomed by a male boss. I was seventeen years old. He was charming, manipulative, and controlling. I finally told his wife, and I never went back to that job. I never told my parents what happened.

When I was eighteen and away at college, studying civil engineering at the University of Cincinnati, my friend Swati set me up with one of her friends on a blind date. It was Halloween,

and we went to a haunted house. He put something in my drink, drove me back to his mother's house, and raped me. He did this in front of his friend who was with us. This time I pressed charges, and he pled down to gross sexual imposition. Everyone in my dorm knew, and they shunned me. For the first time in my life, my grades plummeted.

All of those events made me feel damaged and unlovable. I pushed those memories down as hard as I could, for most of my life, trying to leave them all behind. I discovered that suppressing painful memories is similar to trying to hold a beach ball underwater: it takes a lot of energy and eventually it is going to pop back up again. Nothing stays down forever. I was done avoiding all of that. I was ready to do the work, and I didn't want to numb it further with medication. The traumatic events that I wanted to subdue and forget came up, and I realized that they were the source of my anxiety.

While doing the exercises throughout the book I got to a place where I felt stuck and couldn't progress. I didn't know what to do next. My cousin-in-law Kristen told me about her friend, Jen, who is an energy healer. At that point, I didn't know what an energy healer was or if I believed in it, but I was desperate to find the next step. During the healing, I could feel things leaving my body. She tapped into anger and rage I didn't know was there. It had been hiding deep in my belly. After it was released, I felt a peace that I hadn't known in a very long time, if ever. This one session is where my healing journey truly began.

Jen referred me to a therapist who specialized in trauma. I continued to see both of them regularly over the next five months, bringing up difficult memories in therapy and then clearing that energy in sessions with Jen. This helped me clear difficult emotions quickly.

Things began shifting in my life as I prioritized my health and well-being. I began saying no and putting boundaries in place. I felt stronger and more empowered. As I healed, I made many changes in my life. I began learning energy healing through many levels of Healing Touch™. I wanted to help others as much as Jen helped me. It was fascinating that something so gentle was also so powerful. It helped me shift gears and move forward. I wondered what else was out there that I didn't know about. I remembered how much I loved dancing as a teen and began taking dance lessons. I spent more time out in nature, walking and feeling its healing powers. With each thing I let go of, I brought something in that aligned more with me. My heart felt more open every single day. But the more I shifted, the more Kent disliked it because he couldn't control me anymore.

My husband and I used to have the same fights over and over again, about every six months. The arguments would end with him saying, “This isn’t working; I’m not happy. If something doesn’t change, I’m out of here!” I would insist that I didn’t want our marriage to end and that we should get therapy. He agreed to therapy twice, but after that, he wouldn’t go back. After those fights, he wouldn’t speak to me much for a week.

We had our final fights in October of that year. We were outside raking leaves, and I was quiet, not really speaking. He asked me what was wrong, and I told him we needed to talk. I said we should probably talk inside, not on our front lawn. As difficult as it was to get the words out, I told him that I was thinking about our fight the night before. I had decided that he was right. We were done. He sputtered, shocked at what I said, and asked if we could go to therapy. I told him that I’d been going for the last six months, and he needed therapy himself before we could go to couples’ therapy.

Therapy opened my eyes to the fact that I had married someone with narcissistic tendencies. Kent’s own therapist, who he began seeing when we were trying to save the marriage, told him he was a narcissist, and it pissed him off. He just couldn’t see it. I learned about codependent relationships and the cost of staying in them. This applies not only to marital relationships but to other relationships, as well. The next five months were like a roller coaster. Kent would try really hard to do what he thought I needed, but he could only keep it up for so long. Each time I would call him out, and things would get better again. He wanted to *do* things — to help me with household chores and buy me things. He even said he wanted to buy me a new wedding ring. He totally missed that wanted him to *be* more. I wanted intimacy, closeness, and love. He didn’t understand what I was asking for.

After many months of back and forth, I realized I could continue doing the same thing again and again for the rest of my life, or I could choose something different. In May of that year, I moved out of the house, and our marriage ended.

I went back to school for four years to become an energy healer, training at the Barbara Brennan School of Healing, where I earned a BS after more than seven thousand hours of training. The program combined energy techniques with personal process work, somatic exercises, and much more. This training led to a better understanding and knowledge of why I did the things I did and felt the way I felt. I no longer carried the anxiety and depression that had been so debilitating. I had been so busy holding my life together; trying not to let it fall apart. But the

process was killing me inside. Once I let my life, as I knew it, fall apart, I was able to begin rebuilding a more authentic, centered, and peaceful life. I learned to love and respect myself, making myself a priority in my life.

It's been twelve years since then, and my life is completely different now. I'm genuinely happy and like myself. I spent a lot of time by myself and learned to enjoy my own company. I realized that I'm quite funny, a fact I remind my husband, Matt, of every day. I have three wonderful grandsons I get to see often. I'm blessed to live my soul's purpose in helping others find more peace in their lives every day.

I've alchemized the things I've learned over the years to create for my clients this process for identifying the root causes of their anxiety. I changed my life, my mental and emotional states, and my physical and spiritual states. The process, this method for attaining self-awareness, has worked for me. It can work for anyone. It can work for you.

There are too many people suffering from anxiety. Because you are reading this, I know you are suffering as well. It doesn't have to continue this way. You can have the life without anxiety that you desire, and it is possible to achieve it holistically.



Chapter 3: Where You Begin

Before we begin, I want to thank you for selecting this book. I believe that when you are ready to make a change the right person, book, or experience will come into your life. It will resonate with your inner wisdom. You chose this particular book for a reason, and from this point forward, we are taking this journey together.

Change is never easy. It disrupts the status quo; the way things have always been. It takes courage to do something new. People around you have gotten comfortable, and they probably are fine with how things are. But the fact is, you are not OK with your life right now, and that discomfort is showing up in your life as anxiety.

You can't change what you can't acknowledge, and in purchasing this book you are acknowledging that something is not working for you. Congratulations! Awareness is one of the most important steps! Now the healing journey begins.

What You Need to Know

Throughout the chapters there will be recommendations. There will be tips and tools for you to use so that you can support yourself exquisitely. While you could read straight through quickly, I recommend that you take the time before heading on to the next chapter to actually try those recommendations. Each will bring you more knowledge, more tools, and more clarity about what's happening in your body and how to heal. Consistency is more important than perfection.

Get yourself a journal, if you don't have one already, so you can make notes and keep track of any *aha* moments, inspiration, or thoughts during the process. Anything you don't want to forget can be written here. If you are thinking that you have so much to do and don't have time to do this work, it's an indication you need this even more!

Also, I don't want to be just that next person in your life who is telling you what to do. Take what I share and try it out for yourself to see what resonates with you. Gift yourself with the experience of actually trying it and decide from there.

Your hard work will bring you the result you want. You'll learn to release and heal your anxiety without drugs. Stress and chaos will always try to find a path to your life, but you will have the tools needed to side-step them with grace and ease.

Here Is an Outline of How We Will Progress

This book contains the simple nine-step process that I use with my clients, called The Gibson Reconnection Process™. The steps include four tenants for making changes — Acknowledge, Release, Explore, and take Action (or AREA for short). This is apt because you're making space, or area, in your life for something new.

Step 1: Acknowledging Anxiety

This step is foundational for the rest of the steps you will learn, because you can't move forward until you create safety. This chapter will explain what anxiety is and who it affects. It will explore coping mechanisms. It will provide tools to help you in the moment of an anxiety attack as well as tools to help proactively.

The first step in changing anything that isn't working for you is acknowledging what's actually there. Take an inventory of how anxiety is showing up in your life. Notice your physical symptoms. Become aware of how you are feeling emotionally, spiritually, and mentally. This will help you know *exactly* what you're dealing with. Anxiety is a symptom that happens when you are out of balance, stressed, or in chaos. It's a symptom of *too much* — too many things to do and to remember, too many feelings, thoughts, and tasks. You'll learn why it's happening, and you'll have the tools you can use to relieve it in the moment.

I know that what you want most right now is relief from your anxiety, and this is going to give you a few simple and effective grounding techniques to get that relief quickly. It's like fast-acting insulin for a diabetic in the moment — it gets you back to where you can function.

Step 2: Release What Drains You

After you know what is happening in your body and why, Chapter 5 will explore the process of releasing the clutter in your life that overwhelms you. This includes physical clutter as

well as the emotional, mental, and spiritual clutter. The key is evaluating *what* to release to make more space. What is sapping your energy? Are things, people, thoughts, or beliefs stealing your peace? And what do you want to let go of moving forward? I'll help you identify and release the *too-muchness* that happens in your life.

Step 3: Reduce Your Anxiety with Boundaries

After you identify and begin to release what is not working for you, the next step is not allowing more chaos to come in to fill the space that you've made for yourself, and that requires boundaries. Chapter 6 will explore the boundaries in your life. How do you know when you need to set a boundary, how do you go about doing that, and why are you reluctant to do so? What support system can help you in reaching your goals?

Step 4: Handle Conflict without Losing Yourself or Your Relationships

As you set boundaries, you will notice that some people will be cool with it, but others won't be. In Chapter 7, you'll learn what conflict really is and why it may be difficult for you. We'll explore what happens in your body when you have strife and talk about the relational aspects of conflict. Finally, I'll teach you about conflict traps and how to negotiate around them

Step 5: Discover What Caused Your Anxiety

In Chapter 8, we will dive more deeply into the pain aspect of anxiety and how this *disease* process shows up energetically. You'll learn to connect to your body at a deeper level. You'll learn how to listen to what it is trying to tell you. Every experience and every memory lives in each cell of your body and has a story to tell. Learn to find space for your feelings so you no longer have to ignore them and discover how going through the pain instead of around it is the key to releasing your anxiety once and for all.

Step 6: Connect to Your Truth and Trust Yourself

Chapter 9 is all about connecting to your truth and trusting yourself. Your truth is inside of you, and always has been, but when you have anxiety it's easy to disconnect from that truth and from your intuition. Reconnecting is a simple process that requires building trust with yourself again through radical self-honesty, kindness, keeping promises, spending time with yourself, removing pain words, and keeping an intuition journal. All the ways you show others you love them is how you will show yourself that you are important too.

Step 7: Create Balance and Flow

This process brings more balance and flow in your life, where it's difficult for anxiety to exist. In Chapter 10, you'll learn to recognize negative inputs and stop them in their tracks and increase the number of positive inputs. In doing so you will stay in this place of balance and flow with more joy in your life than ever seemed possible.

Step 8: Create Your Life with Intention and Essence

When you have anxiety it's easy to forget how powerful you actually are because it pulls you down. In Chapter 11, we'll explore how by connecting to your intention (which includes your power, purpose and passion, and connection to Source) you tap back into the true strength of who you are and all of the beautiful Core qualities that you possess.

Step 9: When Life Gives You Lemons

In Chapter 12, we cover what to do if you have a big event that catapults you out of balance and flow. Talking about the *what if* takes its power away. Everything you learn here you can use moving forward if anxiety rears its ugly head again. Additionally, I'll be teaching you an easy healing technique that I use in my practice that you can also use to support yourself in difficult times.

I'm so happy you are here and taking that next step forward. Let's begin!



Chapter 4: Symptoms and Quick Relief

“Anxiety is like having new tabs opening very quickly [on your computer] one after another and not being able to close them or stop new ones from opening — but in your head. It happens while working, taking care of kids, driving, answering questions, and a million other things that people do in a day.”

— Anxiety sufferer, posted on The Mighty

Anxiety 411

Anxiety Statistics

I like to begin with looking at facts and statistics because it gives you the structure and grounds you in the reality of what anxiety is and who it affects. Knowing how prevalent it is can help you stop judging yourself harshly for your experiences and give yourself some self-compassion.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), anxiety disorders affect some forty million people in the United States. That’s almost 20 percent of the population. Lifetime rates are even higher at 31.1 percent, according to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH).

If you look at the breakdown according to age, teens suffer the most. Between ages thirteen and eighteen the rate varies from 31.4 to 32.3 percent. For adults between eighteen and twenty-nine, the number drops to 22.3 percent, and for those thirty and forty-four it’s 22.7 percent. After age forty-five, it drops to 20.6 percent.

More women suffer from anxiety than men (23.4 percent as compared to 14.3 percent). It affects all races, but generally White Americans have a higher rate than Black Americans, Asian Americans, or Hispanic Americans with regard to social anxiety disorder, generalized anxiety

disorder, and panic disorder. With PTSD Black Americans were more likely to suffer than the others (White, Asian, or Hispanic)

Depression is closely linked to anxiety, as over 61 percent of people who experience generalized anxiety disorder have also experienced a major depressive disorder during their lives. Interestingly, anxiety disorders and substance abuse can occur together, as almost 43 percent of people with generalized anxiety disorder will also experience a substance-use disorder during their lives.

People are having a hard time right now; you are far from being alone. Anxiety affects a large cross-section of the population, and everyone is doing whatever they can to get through it.

What Is Anxiety

Simply put, anxiety is the state of being overwhelmed. It's a symptom of *too muchness*. It's too much pressure, fear, perfectionism, and needing to find control. It's too much stuff, too many emotions, and too many things to do. Anxiety is like a powder keg that's waiting to blow. It can be situational (acute), or it can be chronic (long term). It can be caused by myriad things: stressful situations at home or work, difficult relationships, money problems, abuse or trauma, death of a loved one, health issues, moves, or job changes. Often, it's a combination of some of the above. The higher the stress level, the higher the anxiety.

How sensitive a person is will also play into the level of anxiety. We know there are some people who thrive on stress. Those who suffer more tend to be the empaths, caregivers, introverted, highly sensitive, and peacemakers. When you feel things more deeply, stress will affect you more proportionately.

You just read in these statistics that people with anxiety are also prone to depression and substance abuse. Depression is also a symptom of *too much*, but instead of an outward explosion, there's an implosion within. It results from pushing down all the unwanted feelings. Substance use and abuse is just one of the ways that those with anxiety will try to compensate for or numb those feelings. Everyone has a favorite way of numbing. You will explore yours later in the chapter. The subconscious goal is to get some relief and turn off the brain.

Why Anxiety Is Elevated

Anxiety is the number-one reason that so many of my clients come to me for help. If their level of anxiety was a four before the pandemic, it was now at level seven. If it was already a

seven, it was elevated to nine. My clients have cited uncertainty and discord as being the biggest reasons their anxiety has increased. No matter how they rated their anxiety before the pandemic, it has increased significantly since.

The pandemic brought up so many issues with safety. There was so much unknown at first. We didn't know how COVID-19 spread, how contagious it was, how to combat it, or how to protect ourselves. People were dying in large numbers and often dying alone. Because of quarantines, visitors were not able to be with loved ones in the hospitals and nursing homes. We lost physical connection with people, isolating for long periods of time. There was job insecurity for so many people wondering how they would afford necessities. Essential supplies dwindled, and panic buying ensued. It was a hot mess!

Then we had all the political discourse. It seemed everyone had an opinion or a stance: antivax versus vaccinated, Republican versus Democrat, guns versus gun reform, Black Lives Matter protests. When families were able to finally get together, often they were torn apart because of their arguments. People were digging in their heels, and there was no room for varying opinions. You either believed as they did, or you were wrong, which equaled *bad*. More recently we had the dismantling of *Roe v. Wade*. The discourse continues.

All of this chaos, fighting, and uncertainty amplified the anxiety that people were already trying to manage. It became unmanageable.

The Energy Premise

As an energy healer, I am fascinated with the energetic aspect of anxiety, not from a super *woo-woo* perspective (but trust me, I can totally go there, too!), but from a scientific one. We are energetic beings, after all.

- **Your body has energy.** You have an electrical system called a nervous system. There is movement throughout your body, from your organs and systems to your muscles, tendons, and fascia. Energy is required for movement. We know this scientifically as Einstein's theory of relativity, $E=mc^2$.
- **Your emotions have energy.** For example, joy and happiness possess a bright energy. Anger has a heavy, sharp energy. Sadness has a smothering energy.

- **Your thoughts have energy.** People sometimes keep busy these days so they don't have time to think. Thoughts can race through your head, keeping you awake at night. We can have circular thinking that starts and doesn't seem to have an end. Once you start thinking about something, you begin to feel, and then the whole dam breaks! What we think affects how we feel, which influences what we do, say, and believe. We become what we think.
- **Your words have energy.** If you've ever been on the receiving end of an insult or an insensitive comment, you know the energy that words carry. Think back to the last time you got a compliment and how that shifted your energy. Our words have power, whether spoken to others or ourselves.
- **Your actions have energy.** Your actions can move you forward, but a lack of action will hold you back and keep you stuck.
- **Your intention has energy.** Intention is the energy that brings your thoughts, words, and actions together to move you towards your purpose or your goal. The cumulative energy of all these is what makes intention powerful.

When you understand that energy is in everything, you can see the need to explore your feelings of anxiety holistically, or as a whole.

In this Western world of medicine, we tend to separate the physical from the rest of us. If you have a physical issue, you visit your primary care physician. For an emotional issue you see a therapist. For a spiritual issue you might seek guidance from a priest, pastor, rabbi, or other spiritual leader. But the truth is they cannot be separated. Every physical ailment has an emotional and spiritual component, and treating only one part does not bring complete healing. You have to treat the whole.

Anxiety as a Dis-ease

Pain, or dis-ease, is your body's way of getting your attention, and it lets you know that something is wrong and needs to change. If you are unfamiliar with that hyphenation of *disease*, it speaks to the lack of ease experienced in times of pain. That lack of ease can appear as physical symptoms (pain or discomfort), emotional angst, or spiritual disconnection. A funny thing happens when you have pain — it tends to get ignored until you can't ignore it any longer. It's easy to minimize or ignore, say, a headache. Pop a pill and power through! When your body can't get your attention that way, the pain has to intensify. Maybe that headache becomes a migraine that can't

be ignored. Or maybe the next pain that appears is anxiety. Do you pay attention then? Probably. But often, it has to progress to something that will stop you in your tracks. This is when your soul is shaking you and saying, “I’m not messing around! You need to look at this now!” That might look like panic attacks or even something like fibromyalgia, cancer, divorce, or even death.

Please know that, in getting your attention in this manner, your body is doing *exactly* what it’s supposed to do; it’s communicating with you. If you can accept this, it also means there is nothing actually wrong with you; you just didn’t have the information you needed to decode what your body is trying to tell you. I know over the time you’ve suffered from anxiety you’ve asked yourself what is wrong with you. You’ve wanted to just get rid of the anxiety; to go back to who you were without it. Perhaps you don’t even remember who you were without anxiety because you’ve had it much of your life. Please hear me when I say this — you are not broken. You don’t need to be fixed. You just need a way to decipher why this anxiety is here right now.

This universal progression of dis-ease happens for everyone. Where are you on that progression? If you are either close to or at that breaking point when you will finally do whatever it takes to figure it out, I’ve got you. If you’re not quite there, you may not finish this book because the pain hasn’t become great enough. That’s OK. Keep the book for when you are really ready. But if you ARE at that breaking point, I can help you find the answers you’ve been looking for.

Understanding the Symptoms of Anxiety

Remember that anxiety is a symptom of *too-muchness* and being *overwhelmed*. When you are in that state of fear and worry, you become ungrounded. Being grounded is a function of the root chakra, which is located at the base of your spine and is all about safety and trust. When you don’t feel safe and you don’t know who or what to trust, your world gets rocked.

Also, when examining anxiety holistically, as a whole of what is happening, we cannot separate the physical body from the rest. There is a reason we talk about the body/ mind/ spirit connection — it’s like a three-legged stool. If one of the legs fails, the rest won’t hold you up. They are intrinsically connected.

Your Body

When you are anxious, your sympathetic nervous system automatically is activated and goes into fight/ flight/ freeze/ fawn. This part of your nervous system helps you escape danger by

shutting down unnecessary functions (like digestion or bathroom functions) in that moment to focus the energy you do have to escape danger, and it is a trauma response. It activates secretions of adrenaline and noradrenaline, acting on the cardiovascular system to prime your body for action, especially in situations that threaten your survival. Your body cannot recognize the difference in dangers. Is it a bear that's chasing you or a previous trauma that's been triggered? You can't choose how you react to that danger. Your body automatically does it.

I have found that once that has been activated in your body, no matter how old you were the first time, your body tends to have that same reaction each time the sympathetic nervous system is activated. Notice how that shows up for you. If you tend to want to leave the situation, that's flight. Freeze is when you almost feel paralyzed and stuck. If your first reaction is to yell, kick, and scream, that's fight. Fawn is the most recent addition and can also be termed *appease*, meaning you have a tendency to smooth things over and make it all better.

It can be helpful to follow the energy of this process to understand it better. You can feel the energy rising in your body. It can even feel like panic. You may feel sick to your stomach. You may have thoughts about what is happening at that moment. You can try to calm yourself, but it doesn't often work. Willing yourself to *fix it* doesn't work. Distraction can help for a bit but then the anxiety starts again.

Often, we talk about anxiety as something we *have*, as in, *I have anxiety*. We take ownership of it. It becomes part of who we are. But what if anxiety is actually a symptom, not a diagnosis? When you have anxiety, you feel unsafe. What you have actually done is pulled your energy up from the earth. The subconscious thought is, "I don't feel safe on this planet. I'm getting out!" It is a *symptom* of not feeling safe. What's not feeling safe for you? What is overwhelming you?

The Law of Thermodynamics says that energy is neither created nor destroyed. So, what happens to that energy when you pull it away from the earth? It has to go somewhere. It can show up in your stomach area as constipation, diarrhea, IBS symptoms, or upset stomach. It could show up in the area of your heart with heart racing, palpitations, or the sense that your heart is beating out of your chest. Or it could show up in your head area with symptoms of circular thinking, *monkey mind*, where you can't focus, and there are thoughts you can't let go of. It makes it difficult to either fall asleep or stay asleep. It could also show up in any combination of any of the three.

When you are ungrounded you are not tethered to the earth. It becomes easy to dissociate or feel like your energy is moving up and out of your body. Here's what this looks like: You may spend a lot of time in your head. You may have a floaty feeling, like you're not all there. A client of mine terms this *feeling wonky*. It can be difficult to focus. Driving can be particularly dangerous if you're dissociated — you may not remember driving somewhere, and there's the potential for accidents.

Your Mind

Feeling overwhelmed is the energetic state of chaos. It happens when you are holding too much and there is not enough space to contain it. There is too much of everything. There are too many feelings and thoughts. There's too much to do, too much to remember, and not enough time or energy to do it all. Sometimes it feels like your mind is just going to explode! It's difficult to focus during the day, and it makes it damned near impossible to sleep at night. If you do wake up in the night, good luck getting back to sleep because you start thinking about all the things you didn't get done yesterday, which adds to your plate today, and you're beating yourself up for forgetting those tasks or running out of time to complete them. You think, "I may as well get up and start with everything, so maybe I'll get it all done today." But you won't because your list is impossibly long, and it's not humanly possible to do it all.

Let me tell you a dirty little secret. Your head is where your ego lives. It's the part of your mind that mediates between the conscious and the unconscious. It is responsible for reality testing and a sense of personal identity. In other words, it's where you get your esteem. And it will lie to you to satisfy that. The ego's job is actually to keep you alive, but somewhere along the way mankind has allowed it to take over. But it was never meant to be in charge. The ego will lie to you to get what it needs.

When you get overwhelmed, experience anxiety, and then abuse yourself verbally (whether out loud or in your head), your head is lying to you. It's telling you that you're not enough: not good enough, pretty enough, sexy enough, organized enough, thin enough, and so on. And the cycle continues over and over again, day in and day out. Your mind will tell you that you have to be perfect, be more in control, and do things better. Don't listen to it! This will only make your anxiety worse.

This is also an indicator that your attention might be focused outside of yourself, and that you are finding your worth from what others think, feel, or say about you. When this is the case,

it's easy to be caught up in the tornado of life instead of living in the calm, centered eye of the storm.

Your Spirit

Now we come to your spirit, the last leg of the three-legged stool of body/ mind/ spirit. While your anxiety is causing havoc in your body and your mind, with too much of everything, it crowds out your spirit because there just is no room left for it.

Your spirit is your connection to source. It is known by different names depending on your belief system: All That Is, God, Universe, the Divine, the I AM. As you are experiencing anxiety and the feeling of being physically and mentally overwhelmed, you can lose that felt sense connection and feel like you are dealing with this all on your own and that only you can figure this out and *fix* it. You may even question why God is letting this happen to you. If you are praying over and over for help and none seems to be coming, you can wonder whether you're just not worth saving. This is a spiritual crisis as well.

Let me assure you that the connection is still there; it's just been crowded out and forgotten through the chaos. You're not alone. As your anxiety eases, you will feel that connection in a more visceral way, and it won't feel so soul crushing.

Compensations for Anxiety

If you have anxiety, you have developed compensations for it. These compensations can be called coping or numbing techniques. You've learned ways to deal with that anxiety and, whether they are healthy or not, those ways of relieving it have worked — kind of. This is a good time to get real with yourself about what those are for you. This is not meant to be in a shaming way. Rather, it's an acknowledgement of what you've *had to do* to deal with your anxiety. You can't change what you don't acknowledge. I prefer to look at it this way — you are such a resourceful person you've been able to find ways to coexist with your anxiety. You can decide later whether they are working for you. Simply acknowledge them at this point.

These compensations could include denial, withdrawal, avoidance, self-harm, drinking, drugs, weed, overexercise, overeating, shopping, endless scrolling on the phone, binge-watching TV, excessive sleeping, controlling habits or controlling others, or even focusing on everyone but yourself.

Don't worry, we will talk about some healthier ways to cope in subsequent chapters. This is just the acknowledgment or awareness phase. Use your journal to write down the techniques you have been using to compensate for your anxiety.

Grounding to Manage Your Symptoms

When your anxiety first hits, remember that you have become ungrounded and need to reestablish that grounding as soon as possible before the anxiety escalates. It's like taking fast-acting insulin when you are having a diabetic event. Here are some step-by-step techniques I've learned to help you ground, and some things you can buy to help you, as well. Getting grounded is key to lowering your anxiety level and symptoms in the moment. Each of these is called a practice, because you really do have to practice for it to be effective. The more you ground, the quicker your body will return to that sense of safety. You will feel calmer, more in control, and more centered within yourself.

Rock Grounding

The best grounding method I've found is Rock Grounding. With this method you need a rock that is somewhat flat and smooth. A river rock or a rock used in hot stone massage would be perfect. In a pinch, you can use a lacrosse ball. You are going to step on this rock in three different places on your foot — the ball, the arch, and the heel. Be sure to keep your eyes open while doing this technique.

1. Put the rock on the ground.
2. Stand behind the rock and notice how your feet feel. Where does your foot touch the ground? Where does it not? Is there any pain, discomfort, or tightness?
3. Now step onto the rock with your right foot, in the front area of your foot (or the ball of your foot). Put as much weight on that foot as possible, without it becoming too painful. It can *hurt so good*, but it shouldn't be painful. Hold on to something, such as a chair, to support yourself.
4. The bottom of your foot will start to release or feel like it's *melting* on the rock. This usually takes less than a minute, but feel free to stay in each position as long as you like.

5. Move the rock under your arch, in the middle of your foot. Continue as you did in steps three and four.
6. Move the rock beneath your heel, at the back of your foot. Continue as you did in steps three and four.
7. Step off the rock completely and stand behind the rock. Notice how your right foot feels after the exercise. What else do you notice in your body? How does that foot feel compared to the left foot? Are your hips even or uneven in height now?
8. Step onto the rock with your left foot and repeat steps three through six.
9. Step off the rock completely, standing behind it. How do you feel now? You should feel more balanced left to right and top to bottom. Notice how your body is feeling — have your anxiety symptoms lessened? Does your mind feel less active? Do you feel calmer?

This grounding exercise should be about five to ten minutes each time. As you continue to use it you will ground even more quickly. I highly recommend doing this technique preemptively when you wake up, in the afternoon, and then right before you go to bed, especially in the beginning. After being grounded begins to feel normal, and you have that felt sense in your body, you won't need to do it as often. You can also use this in the moment when you are feeling anxious. Of course, just *reading* about this technique is not going to help you! You need to actually try it.

Why does this simple exercise work? Let's break it down:

- Physically, when you become *ungrounded* your foot raises up slightly. The fascia in your foot shortens and becomes tighter. There is a saying: "Where your energy flows, matter goes." This means when your energy is going upward, your body will too. When you stand on that rock, the rock digs into it and loosens that fascia, releasing it. Bringing your body (namely, your foot) more in contact with the ground will bring your energy down as well.
- The rock provides acupressure to the bottom of your foot. It's believed that acupressure affects the autonomic nervous system, which controls involuntary operations of your body, like your heart beating, digestion, and even breathing.

- When you have a hard object under your foot, you're forced to focus your attention on it. There's another saying: "Where your attention goes, your energy flows." By putting your focus and attention on your feet, your excess energy (that was congregating in your stomach, heart, or head) is sent back down to the ground, where it originally came from. This calms your mind and centers your spirit in your body.

All of these things, happening at the same time, will restore proper energy flow within your body and bring you back into balance.

It's also very important, when doing any grounding exercise, to keep your eyes open. When you close your eyes, the energy you are trying to ground will go back up, making it easy to dissociate. Often people close their eyes as a way to escape, and your intention is to do the opposite, in being present.

Toe Tapping

Toe Tapping is another great grounding technique that also takes only five to ten minutes. It can be done sitting but is most effective when you lie down.

1. Lie down on the ground. If you have a yoga mat to lie on, that is helpful.
2. Start with your feet apart and slightly flexed, resting your arms comfortably by your side.
3. Set a timer for between five and ten minutes.
4. Keeping your heels as the pivot point, bring your toes repeatedly to center, rocking your legs in and out. Your entire leg should be rotating all the way up to your hip joint. Do this motion continuously, in a back-and-forth fashion, meeting your toes in the middle, for the allotted time.
5. Breathe in and out gently while you do this exercise.

Why this works: As you tap your toes together and let them fall open, you are circulating energy in the body and stimulating your meridians (lines of energy that run throughout your body), releasing stagnant energy. When you get stressed or anxious, that stagnant, heavy energy tends to accumulate. You might find your chest tightening and your head getting hot as you stress. Using

this exercise helps blood flow upward from your legs, some of the largest muscles you have in your body. Your belly will begin to warm, and your energy will become more centered. It takes you out of your mind and into your body, effectively grounding you.

Other Ways to Ground

Although the grounding techniques I described are simple, effective, and easy, you may not always have a rock with you or be able to lie down. There are additional ways to ground.

There are items that you can purchase that will help with grounding. One of my favorites is a grounding mat, or earthing mat. It plugs into the grounding part of your household outlet, and you put your bare feet on it to ground. It's great to use while working on a computer, doing things in the kitchen or even while watching TV. There are also grounding sheets available for your bed. Not only will it help you to ground as you sleep but you will sleep better and with fewer interruptions. It also plugs into the grounding part of your regular household outlet, and the sheets have little threads of silver woven throughout for conduction. It is recommended for bare skin to be against the sheet.

Essential oils can be a wonderful addition to your grounding protocol. Any wood oil, like cypress, Siberian fir, sandalwood, birch, pine, or spruce, can be applied to the bottom of your feet to assist you with grounding. Pick your favorite and apply in the morning and before you go to bed. You can also inhale the oil by applying a few drops on your hands, rubbing them together, and cupping them around your nose and mouth area.

Other ways to ground that don't cost anything involve the outdoors. Stand in the grass and feel the earth beneath your bare feet. Try sitting with your back against a tree. You'll send your anxious energy into the ground through your coccyx at the base of your spine. Even hugging a tree can be helpful, as they have such deep roots.

The Importance of Your Breath

Different grounding techniques will resonate differently with each individual, so it's vital to find the one that works best for you and in which situations. If you find anxiety coming up when you are surrounded by others or in a situation where you can't try any of these techniques, you can start by just focusing on your breath. Your breath is always with you!

When you are anxious you will tend to hold your breath or breathe shallowly. You do this subconsciously so that you don't feel so deeply and don't feel overwhelmed. Whenever you breathe deep into your belly, you experience feelings. It's all part of trying to hold it all together and not lose control.

Bringing your energy out of your head, where the crazy-making thoughts are happening, down into your heart can begin to ground you until you can use your favorite grounding technique. Put your hand on your heart and think about someone or something that you love. Now connect to that unconditional love. Imagine you are breathing in and out through that hand and into the heart. Take a few slow deep breaths and keep connecting into your heart. Conscious breathing connects you into your core, into your center.

There are a plethora of breathing techniques that can help. Try them all and pick your favorite to put in your anxiety toolbox. Remember to keep your eyes open as you do this. Here are a few to start with:

Box breathing, or 555:5-5-5: Breathe in for five seconds, hold your breath for five, and exhale for five seconds. Repeat until you feel calm.

A variation on box breathing: 4-7-8: Breathe in for four seconds, hold your breath for seven, and exhale for eight seconds. Repeat until you feel calm.

Humming: Take a breath out and allow yourself to hum as you exhale. This technique vibrates the vagus nerve, helping it come back into coherency.

If focusing on your breath resonates with you and you want to learn more, you can do a computer search. There you'll find more advanced breathing techniques, like Wim Hoff, pranayama, diaphragmatic, alternate nasal, and more.

Rania's Story

My client Rania had extreme anxiety. She fled her home in Iran and came to the United States to escape an abusive fiancé. In her country, just to get to school, she had to walk past the police station next door. The station was frequently bombed. Her school, which served women, was often targeted by extremists. She lived every day knowing it could be her last, and yet she pushed forward, determined to become a doctor.

When she escaped from Iran, her fiancé put out an honor killing on her, which meant that he would be able to murder her and not be prosecuted. In his mind, she dishonored him by leaving him. He even threatened to kill one of her sisters since she was no longer there. She had to cut ties with her family so her fiancé couldn't track her down.

While Rania was out of immediate physical danger here, she found that she had incredible anxiety. Her anxiety was chronic, something she had lived with for a long time. Any new experience that brought on an acute anxiety would put her over the top. She enrolled in a PTSD clinic at a local hospital to help her. Unfortunately, she was unable to complete treatment because her anxiety triggered to the point of self-harming. The clinic told her she needed more help grounding, and she couldn't come back until she was able to do that.

Rania and I worked on grounding every session together. She used the Rock Grounding method I taught you in this chapter. After grounding on the rock with both feet, she felt calmer inside with much less anxiety. Success!

Rania practiced this technique daily and used it whenever she felt herself becoming anxious. We did energy healing to release stagnant and fearful energy and continued to delve into the root of her anxiety. She would see a therapist in the same building and scheduled a session with me immediately afterward. After only eight sessions she was able to go back and finish the PTSD clinic and began moving forward with her life. The last time I spoke with her, she had a boyfriend and was moving into her own place. She had begun learning how to drive and had found a job as well.

What's Next?

While these are all amazing tools to help you regain your center and grounding and bring you out of the overwhelming anxiety so that you can function, this is the only the *foundation* to your future mental health. Grounding makes it possible to get out of your trauma response so you can begin to uncover the actual reason you have anxiety.

Bookmark this chapter so you can refer to it as needed to calm your anxiety. Practice these tools and techniques each and every day. I highly recommend doing grounding work first thing in the morning as soon as you get up. Do it again at lunchtime and again before you go to bed. It may seem like overkill right now but it's important to get your body, and specifically your nervous system, into the habit of feeling grounded and connected. In fact, it's imperative to do this before

you continue with this book! Even a 5 percent shift here will help you as you move forward to release this anxiety once and for all.

Next, we will examine what you can release, how to keep more chaotic energy from coming into your life, and where you actually want to focus the energy that you do have.

Questions to Explore in Your Journal

- What situations make you feel unsafe or fearful?
- What in your life brings the most chaos and overwhelming feelings?
- What situations make you more anxious?



Chapter 5: Let It Go

“You heal by releasing, not by suppressing.”

— *Unknown*

Have you ever stood in front of your very full, overstuffed closet and thought, “I have nothing to wear!” What you’re really saying is that you can’t find something that makes you feel fabulous, beautiful, or sexy. It’s all just too much and yet not enough — too much of what doesn’t feel like you and not enough of what does. There is chaos and disorganization, and it doesn’t make for a good start to your day. You put up with it far too long, just getting pissed off every time you have to get dressed, until that day you can’t take it any longer and *have* to do something about it.

You begin by removing anything that doesn’t fit, clothes that have holes or stains and anything that just doesn’t make you feel good when you put it on. You remove the pieces that you bought hoping you’d lose just five pounds and the ones that weren’t quite right, but it was such a deal you couldn’t pass it up. You decide what goes in the garbage, what can be donated, gifted, or sold.

After the purging process, you’re left with what really serves you, what makes you happy, and what makes you feel pretty when you put it on. There is so much space now. You have clarity about what pieces you still need to go with another favorite, a shirt of a particular color, a versatile jacket, a colorful scarf, shoes of a different height, or even a signature piece.

What do you do with what you decided to keep? You’re probably not going to store your clothes haphazardly, there will be some kind of organization so that you can find things when you need them. Some people like to organize by season. Others like to organize by type of article of clothing — all the skirts together, all the shirts together, etc. Some people take it a step further by organizing by color. Then (if you’re like me) you’ll also organize by length of sleeves or skirts within those colors. How detailed you make this process is completely up to you.

When it's all complete you stand back and look at your masterpiece of a closet. It brings you a sense of accomplishment, happiness, and joy. There is space for new possibilities. You no longer dread having to open that closet to find something to wear because that perfect piece of clothing that makes you feel fabulous is easy to find and you now start your day with ease. You've eliminated the pain and chaos that existed every time you got dressed and it was worth all the work it took to complete. You vow to never let your closet get that bad again.

The Process

The steps in healing your anxiety are very much like those used in organizing your closet — Assess, Release, Explore, and take Action (AREA). If you can tackle a messy closet, you can heal your anxiety. Just as there are many ways to organize a closet there are many ways to heal anxiety. The information I'm sharing with you is the way that resonated with me and helped me in my quest to heal my anxiety: viewing the anxiety through the lens of energy and how it is flowing (or stagnating) in my life. It is an empowering way to view things because it releases all judgments of good and bad or right and wrong. It just is! Changing your energy will change your life.

Let's go back to the energetic composition of anxiety, which is too muchness. I'll continue to remind you of this throughout the book because it's important. When you have *too much* in any area of your life there is a lack of space, a sense of confinement, tension, and stress. Before you can add anything new to your life (the things you really want), you have to release or let go of your life's clutter that is not serving you (all the reasons you are stressed and anxious). There is an energetic overload happening in your energy field, in your body/ mind/ spirit, and in your everyday life. Where is that overload for you? Which part of your life is taking more energy than it should? Where does your stress come from?

The clutter in your life can be organized into physical, and emotional/ mental/ spiritual. I've combined the last three because they are so intertwined it's difficult to separate them. The physical clutter is the stuff you can see, the emotional/ mental/ spiritual clutter is the stuff you can't because it happens inside you. Anything you choose to release in any of these areas will make more space in your life for yourself and the things that bring you joy. Notice what happens in your own body when you think of releasing them. You may notice physical reactions like a tightening in your stomach as you think about it. You may notice resistance rising up in the form of avoidance or feeling overwhelmed (mental reaction). You may also want to go into collapse

(spiritual reaction) — resist that urge! This process may raise your anxiety at first, but I promise you that the relief you will get from being ruthless in your releases will bring you closer to a life without anxiety!

Releasing Physical Clutter

“Clutter is nothing more than postponed decisions.”

— *Barbara Hemphill*

Chaos in a physical space is clutter, whether in your home, office, car, phone, computer, or exterior living area. The more clutter you have, the less space you have. Releasing items from your physical space makes room physically as well as emotionally and mentally. There’s another saying: “As within, so without.” What is inside of you is outside of you, and vice versa. If you have physical clutter, you can be sure that you also have emotional and mental clutter. Releasing one will automatically work on releasing the other. Since physically releasing an item is generally easier than releasing the mental or emotional clutter, this is the place to begin.

Consider that for each and every item you own there is an energetic cost that you may not have even considered:

- The cost of transporting the item you bought
- The cost of maintaining, cleaning, or fixing an item (whether DIY or through a service). You have to physically pick up and move everything you own to clean it, so you have expended physical energy as well.
- The cost of organizing and reorganizing when things get messy. Containers to store, units to hold the containers, and the periodic reorganizing.
- The cost of insuring the item
- The cost to protect the item from theft
- The cost to donate, sell, or trash the item when you want to upgrade it
- The cost to store the item (or upgrade your home to hold all your extra stuff)
- The mental cost of thinking about doing these things on a regular basis
- The emotional cost of overwhelm when you have everything everywhere.

As a society we have learned that success looks like having more and better — more gadgets, bigger houses, nicer cars, more clothes, makeup, and so on. We like having lots of choices. In fact, our economy thrives on this concept of consumerism. We have so much stuff there is a complete industry that profits from just storing it all.

When releasing physical items from your life it's easiest to go room by room so you don't get overwhelmed. You can even break this down further to drawer by drawer. A nice goal is to get rid of a bag a week. Here are some helpful hints that will help you in this process.

- Separate those items into donate, sell, or trash in a convenient staging area close to where you are working.
- Touch everything just once.
- Ask yourself, “Do I really need this?” If you get a yes, it's a keeper. If you get a no, decide whether to donate, sell, or trash it. If you get a maybe, put it in a box you label *maybe* with today's date. This box will get stored in an out of the way section of your home. In one year's time, if you haven't needed it, donate the entire box without opening it.

Challenges You May Encounter

Have you ever seen a TV show about people who hoard possessions? It can put them in a panic just thinking about throwing something out. Doing your decluttering can bring up similar feelings of resistance. Here are some of the objections you may encounter:

I might need it again.

You may not want to get rid of something because you think you may need it again in the future. Often you find that you don't really need it at all. This could include things like copious amounts of gift boxes, bags, or wrapping paper, old picture frames, duplicate kitchen items, old craft items, files, or receipts. If you haven't used it in a year, you probably won't. Let it go.

The item was a gift.

Sometimes your possessions were not originally your own, but something that you inherited or were gifted from a loved one. It's not just a physical possession, memories and emotions that are wrapped up in that item. Separating the emotions from the item is helpful in

determining whether to keep it or not. If it brings you joy, keep it. If it doesn't, let it go. Take a picture of it if you want a physical representation of the item. Then bless it and let it go.

The item is nostalgic.

Sometimes objects no longer serve a purpose in your life, but they remind you of a time gone by that you cherish. These might be toys your kids had, baby clothes, or greeting cards. If it's an heirloom, like a christening outfit that's been handed down through generations, save it. Otherwise, take a picture and let it go.

I paid a lot of money for it/ It could be valuable one day.

Many of these items are collectibles we were told would someday be valuable. Most of them are not. If this is really a sticking point for you, research the item to discover its value. It's only as valuable as what someone would pay for it. In the meantime, refer back to the cost of owning the item. That price is not only money, but energy and aggravation. Basements and storage units are full of stuff people no longer know what to do with, but think is too valuable to throw away. What else could you be doing with that space?

My friend Michelle and her husband live in Australia. When they became empty nesters, they started thinking about what they wanted the rest of their life to look like, what experiences they wanted to have, and how they wanted to feel. They decided to sell their house, get rid of most of their belongings, and travel. They began staying in Airbnb's as they continued to work from these new destinations. They kept only the things they considered the *essentials* and have continued reevaluating what they consider essential and purging along the way.

It's been a process for them, and it will be a process for you, too. Take it in steps. This is not a one-and-done event, but it will evolve over time. Each item you release makes more space in your life. Progress over perfection!

As you are releasing clutter, don't forget about your phone and computer as well! Emails, pictures, browsers, texts, and similar all need to be purged as well. Think about it, what happens inside you when you realize you have two thousand emails you haven't read? Talk about anxiety! Or when you have so many photos on your phone you run out of space and have to start deleting before you can add another app.

After Decluttering

As you clean up and clean out your physical space, I highly recommend sitting in that space, closing your eyes, and allowing yourself to feel what having more space feels like. Can you feel the change in energy from chaotic to calming? Do this in each room of your home. You will find your anxiety lessening with each one.

To keep this sense of peace you need to become relentless about what you bring into your space. Here are some helpful ways to do just that:

Use the one-in-one-out rule.

For everything you buy and bring into your home, let go of another item. It doesn't have to be the same kind of item, like a skirt for a skirt. The key is to let something go.

Ask yourself if the purchase is a want or a need.

Deciding to purchase only what you really need will keep clutter at bay. Most of the things you just got rid of were wants and not needs. If something is a need, do you already have something that could fill that need or be repurposed for it?

If the item is a want, what need are you trying to fill?

Wants often have an underlying need that has nothing to do with the actual item. Is there another way to meet that need? For example, maybe you're wanting a new lipstick in a different color, but you already have twelve others. You don't really need another lipstick, so why the desire for another? Maybe you're looking for a change. Perhaps you're not feeling good about yourself and are looking for a pick-me-up. Ask yourself the question, "What do I really need right now that I'm trying to meet with this purchase?" Questions can bring powerful insights of where your attention is being called. Actually meeting that need instead of pacifying it with an object is a more complete solution. You can also notice if this is a pattern for you. If so, note that in your journal so you can explore that later.

A place for everything and everything in its place.

When each and everything you own has a home or place to be kept or stored, you will always know where it is and belongs. Putting items back in their proper place after using it will keep your space clutter-free and Zen. Use the one touch rule here as well to help you keep up with things.

Enlist other members of the household to adopt these practices.

Doing this all yourself when you live with others can be crazy making. Let the other members of your family know what you are doing and why you are doing it. Explain that the excess clutter increases your anxiety. You can even make doing this a game. I really like setting the timer for fifteen minutes and everyone running around picking up and taking care of things. Then you can do something fun as a family as a reward. If you have children living at home, you can teach them to declutter their own things as well.

Give your home an energetic cleanse too.

This is just as important as the physical cleaning of your home. Our houses have energetic clutter as well. Any negative interaction, thought, or event can leave an energetic imprint on your space that can be cleared by smudging or saging your house, which is so easy to do. Light a bundle of sage and then blow it out. The smoke is what clears the energy. Waft it throughout the house as you set the intention for clearing any negative energy in the space. You can also set the intention for what you *do* want instead — love, light, and blessings. The smell of sage can be quite strong, so it is helpful to open the windows while you are doing this cleanse.

Releasing Your Emotional/ Mental/ Spiritual Clutter

The emotional/ mental/ spiritual clutter in life is the clutter you cannot see. It's anything that makes your mind feel it's on overdrive, and it's hard to turn it off. It's persistent negative thoughts, expectations, feelings you've avoided, things you've been procrastinating doing; it's information overload. It's the opposite of peace, and it's a huge contributor to your level of anxiety.

A rule of thumb to releasing this type of clutter is to replace each piece of clutter with something you do want. Replace judgment with acceptance, an outdated belief with an authentic belief, and so on. Out with the old and in with the new!

Releasing Expectations and Outdated Belief Systems

*We don't have to live up to the expectations of others. Passion is personal.
As long as our passion is fueled with the right stuff then keep on plodding forward.*

— Jack White

Expectations are an *expected value*. Some expectations were things that you were taught were important or expected, perhaps from a young age. There are also expectations that you have of yourself, of how you want to be, what you want to do, or how you want to perform. Expectations can feel very solid and immovable as if they were set in stone. In reality, expectations can often be negotiated and more fluid.

Belief systems are a framework of principles that help you understand and define the world around you as to what is right or wrong, good or bad. Belief systems grow and change over time with experience and understanding. These are heavily influenced by family, friends, community, religion, and culture.

I look at both expectations and belief systems as placeholders of how we should act, believe, and feel. When we are young, we don't have enough experiences to decide what works for us or what our beliefs are, so we take on these placeholders from others as our truth, until we figure out what that truth is for ourselves. Every one of those inherited beliefs was formed by another human who viewed life through their own lens of experiences. Then they taught you that their way is the right way when in reality there are an infinite amount of right ways to be. Most of my anxiety came from trying to keep up with all the expectations that I was still holding on to, despite the fact that they were not in line with my beliefs anymore.

My friend Ari was raised in a very Republican, Evangelical home. She took the principles she was taught as gospel. As she became an adult, she noticed discrepancies in what was taught and what was actually done by the people preaching. She became curious as to which beliefs aligned for her. Her guiding light is always love, so that's what she measured what she learned against. If it wasn't loving and kind, it didn't work for her. If it was, she could embrace it.

To discover what expectations or beliefs are causing you stress, do a quick self-inventory and see what that overload is for you. What are you doing that you don't want to do? Where are you acting out of habit and not out of congruency? Where are you doing things because of the shoulda, coulda, woulda, must and have-tos in your life? I frequently tell my clients not to *should* all over themselves, because all of those words are how we create pain in our life; those all reside in the area of the throat chakra. If we are not speaking our truth, it affects that area of the body. Knowing that, it makes sense why so many women have issues with their thyroid!

Are you volunteering at PTA because you think you should, but you don't enjoy it?

Is your boss asking you to do things that are outside your scope of work that you don't want to do because you feel you have to?

Do you spend holidays with your family that suck the ever-living life out of you because it's the right thing to do, but you secretly hate being there?

Are you fostering friendships with people who take more than they give and then feel emptier after spending time with them they've drained you?

Do you find yourself shapeshifting to fit in, not being your authentic, amazing self?

Try this for just a moment: take all those pain-producing words (*shoulda*, *coulda*, *woulda*, *must*, and *have-to*) out of your vocabulary and replace them with just one word — *want* — and see if your statements are still true. Often there needs to be an adjustment to your statement to make it true.

Let me give you an example: You find out that your elderly aunt Betty is in the hospital and not expected to live much longer. She's been living with breast cancer for a while and stopped treatment because it wasn't getting any better. You feel you *should* go see her one more time and say goodbye, but every time you saw her as a child and even as a young adult, she always had something negative to say about how you looked or acted, how you performed in school, or anything else she could say to make you feel smaller and take you down a notch. How can you make that a true statement for you when part of you doesn't want to go? How can you make an *I want* statement that is true for you?

Perhaps you could determine how long you would like to stay: "I want to go see Aunt Betty, but I only want to stay for an hour." You could also have a determining factor added to that statement: "I want to go see Aunt Betty, but if she says something negative, I am going to leave." You could even combine the two. The point is, when you can align yourself to what you want instead of what you feel you have to do, you free up mental space. You're also not making yourself do something you don't want to do. Just by noticing daily where you use those words and making that simple change, you will be reducing your level of anxiety.

Why is this important? When you make yourself do things that you feel are expected of you, but you don't want to do, this is a form of self-betrayal. You are making what someone else wants or expects more important than what you want. You are overriding and not honoring your own beliefs and ideals.

Releasing Self-Betrayal

Self-betrayal, especially over a long time, will result in anxiety, depression, and a lack of trust in yourself. Someone betraying you is one thing, but betraying yourself is so much worse. It cuts into you and ruins your self-esteem, and it lessens your worth in your own eyes. What are some examples of self-betrayal? Staying in a job you hate or a bad relationship, being critical of yourself, not speaking up for yourself, and being a shapeshifter (becoming what other people expect of you).

Notice what happens in your body when you betray yourself. Any time you are out of congruence, if you pay attention, you will feel something tighten in your body. It could be in your stomach, chest, or even your shoulders. Your body will let you know immediately when you've done that. Tuning into what your body is trying to tell you in the moment is a great way to gauge when you are being authentic and when you aren't.

If you feel you have been out of congruency with your truth, or have betrayed yourself in some way, you always get an opportunity to release and shift that. Using the AREA tool, you first have the awareness that you were incongruent. Forgive yourself and release any guilt or shame associated with that action. Go back to the premise that you are always doing the best you can in any given moment, with the tools you have. You are learning new tools that will help you. Then explore another choice that aligns more fully with you. What do you want to do instead? Notice in your body how that thought feels. It usually feels like more space, or a relief, so your body relaxes. Lastly, take action by making that other choice.

Releasing the Past

While you're thinking about what else you want to release, release living in the past. If you have regret, guilt, shame, anger, sadness, or fear, those emotions are often linked to the past and then projected onto the future. These are all like boulders that you carry with you that weigh you down. Could you consider that these are places where you were just trying to get your needs met, to attempt to gain love and acceptance outside of yourself?

Every time you get triggered, where you have a reaction that is greater than a situation warrants, a past event is being projected onto the current event, making it so much worse. Anything that triggers you is a wounding that needs healing.

The best tool I've found to heal any triggers is becoming the witness or observer, taking yourself out of the situation, stepping back, and going inside yourself. Witness what is happening in that moment and observe what emotions are happening inside of you. What event in your past is this current event reminding you of? What was the wounding, and what response did you need at that time?

Say to yourself, "I love and accept myself, even though I acted incongruently with myself." Send love and forgiveness to yourself. Picture the other person who wounded you in front of you. Release any energy you hold of them by visualizing it returning to them. You can also retrieve any energy they are holding of yours in the same way. Silently ask for forgiveness from them as well. This is radical self-love and acceptance instead of condemnation and penance.

Other Things to Release

Consider also releasing judgment of self and others, perfectionism, and having to do everything yourself. These are things that have no redeeming value whatsoever, and yet we as women can get caught up in this so quickly! Looking back at situations or conversations that you wished had gone differently and beating yourself up over it isn't going to do you any good. If you need to make amends for an action you took or an unkind or thoughtless word you spoke so you can let it go, then do that. Otherwise, let that shit go!

What we judge in others we dislike in ourselves. The other person is reminding us of a fault we believe we have. When you find yourself having a judgmental thought, you can release that thought, send blessings to the other person to repair the negative energy you just sent them, and replace that thought with something kinder.

You can come up with your own way of doing this — I use Control-Alt-Delete: I visualize my fingers pressing these keys on a computer to delete the judgment. Sometimes I even make the motions with my hands. Then I hold my hands palm out and quietly say, "Sending blessings to you. Forgive me for my judgments of you." Then I replace the thought with a mental compliment, seeing the best in them. Taking it one step further, I put my hand on my heart and send myself love and forgiveness for having that judgment, recognizing I judge myself for it as well.

Obligations You Can't Release

Now, I understand that there are things that you have to do, the things we call adulting. You have to work to live and there are chores that have to be done. Even though you can't get out

of doing them, there are ways to make them more enjoyable and less of a drag. Personally, I hate doing dishes and laundry because they are a never-ending cycle that is never truly completed. I reward myself for doing these things by watching a TV show on my tablet while doing them or listening to my favorite music. It makes the time go quickly and the job less painful. In fact, listening to funk music (my favorite) while cleaning brings so much joy, I sing and dance while doing so. That lifts my energy even higher and makes me so happy that the chore becomes a blessing.

Releasing Relationships

“People come into your life for a reason, a season, or a lifetime.

The hard part is figuring out which one.”

— *Unknown Author*

This area of releasing tends to be the hardest for most of my clients. As sensitive caring people, they find the thought of discarding people harsh. There is a tendency to self-judge, thinking things like, “I’m supposed to be there for them in good times and in bad,” and “What kind of horrible person am I for cutting them out when they’re having such a difficult time?” and even, “This isn’t really who they are as a person, I know they’re good at the core.” It’s also uncomfortable to think about any conflict that will arise as you release folks from your life, but what if people aren’t meant to be in our life forever? What if they have a part to play just as we do in other peoples’ lives?

People bring to your life either peace or chaos. They can suck the energy out of you, or they can fill you up; they also can be neutral and have no effect on you. Evaluating relationships from this observer’s perspective can be valuable in helping you see your relationships with fresh eyes.

As I grew in my spiritual journey, there were some friends who didn’t understand it. Some of my family thought I had joined a cult because there was nothing familiar about the path I was taking. From an energy perspective, as I let go of some of the things we are talking about, my energy rose. I released heavier vibratory thoughts, beliefs, and expectations. I felt lighter, and I started to soar. The friends who were not on that same path now had a lower vibration, which isn’t

a negative but rather a quantitative statement. When the difference between two vibrating objects is too great, they will repel, and that's what happens with relationships.

We are meant to grow and change in this lifetime. Things that stay stagnant will rot and die — this applies to everything, including relationships. It doesn't mean that those people aren't good, loving, or worthy, and it doesn't make you bad, uncaring, or vicious to let them go.

In other relationships, when I changed, and I no longer served *their* purpose for me, they let me go. When I felt stronger within myself and wasn't so easily manipulated, they no longer had a use for me. I'm sure they found others that could fill that role! A few have done so in very hurtful ways like unfriending and blocking me on social media rather than saying it directly. If I have any advice to give you, I would say do this type of release gently, with love and honor for what they meant to you.

My friend Lisa made a conscious choice to cut her mom out of her life after many attempts to find ways to peacefully coexist in separate countries. But even that amount of space was not enough. After Lisa had her son, the amount of trauma in her life due to her mother's narcissistic and psychopathic tendencies was too much to bear. Her mama-bear instincts said there was no way she could allow her mom to treat her son the way she had been treated. It has been the best decision for her, and though she is sad about it at times, she knows she did the right thing, and her life is more peaceful because of it. She even wrote a one-woman musical about her experience. With this production, which has been in theaters off Broadway, she is helping others with her story.

When we release toxic people from our lives, it is easy to focus on the loss, but what we will gain is far greater. You will find that the universe brings into your life more people who are resonating at the same level as you and are more aligned with how you want to be and what you want to do in life.

In the next chapter, I will take this a step further and teach you all about boundaries for better relationships. For now, begin thinking about which of your relationships feel life-giving and nourishing and which ones are life-taking and deplete you. This would be a great thing to include in your journal.

Other Releasing Tools and Techniques

Create a Ritual When Releasing

When you are trying to release things, it can be helpful to have a ritual to do so. One of my favorites is to write what you want to release on small pieces of paper, put it in a fire-safe container, and take it outside. Light the paper on fire and let it go into the ethers. What you write on that paper is completely up to you. You can write words, past situations, and peoples' names. You can even write complete letters to people where you are brutally honest and vulnerable in a way you couldn't with them personally. You get to decide what works best for you.

Epsom Salt Baths

As a sensitive person, it's easy to pick up on and feel other peoples' emotions. This can be confusing as to why you are feeling particular things. To clear yourself at the end of the day, you can enjoy a relaxing Epsom salt bath.

Fill your tub with water as warm as is comfortable. Add two cups of Epsom salts and one cup of baking soda, along with any essential oils that speak to you. Soak for twenty minutes. The Epsom salts will clear your field of any energy that is not yours or heavy. It will also work on the physical level by relaxing and releasing tight muscles, encouraging more energy flow.

Questions to Explore in Your Journal

- Which area of releasing feels more difficult for you?
- Which is easier?
- What things are you easily able to release to make room for yourself?



Chapter 6: Reduce Your Anxiety with Boundaries

“When you say yes to others you are saying no to yourself.”

— Susan Renee Gibson

Almost every morning during the week, when it was nice outside, Teresa and I would walk. She lived a few houses down from me, and after the kids got on the bus and went to school, we’d do our walk and talk. No subject was off the table. We would talk about things that were happening in our lives, both the challenges and celebrations. One day I was lamenting that I was overextended and stressed and that I didn’t know how I was going to get everything done. I will never forget that moment when she came to a full stop, turned to look at me, and asked, “Do you ever say no to anyone?!?”

I was stunned. It stopped me in my tracks. I didn’t have an answer to that. Hesitantly, I stammered, “Uh, uh, no?” She told me that I needed to learn how.

That one question impacted me the entire day, and the rest of the week, and became an underlying current in my life from that point on. Wow, I never realized that I never said no. As I considered that further, subconsciously, I don’t think I felt I had a right to say no!

That one question created an avalanche of change for me. Saying no wasn’t easy for someone who never said it, so I started saying it in small ways. If someone asked me to do something that I didn’t want to do, I’d tell them I didn’t have my calendar with me and so I’d have to check. (This was before we carried our calendars on our phones). Then I just never got back with them. It wasn’t a true no, but it was the only way I could do that at first, and it worked! I realized that they weren’t asking *me* specifically, they just needed a body in place, and any would do. When they didn’t get an immediate yes from me, they just went to the next person and asked them. Wow, what freedom! As I started saying *no* to people, I automatically had more time and space to do things for myself, and my anxiety lessened.

We teach people how to treat us. If you don't like how people treat you, it's time to look at your boundaries. When you don't set good boundaries, you allow others to decide the boundary for you.

Boundaries

What is a boundary?

A boundary is where one thing stops and something else begins. Your skin is a boundary. You have an energy field, and that is a boundary. Have you ever noticed that when someone gets too close to you it doesn't feel good? It's because they've crossed a boundary of what's socially acceptable. You would probably step back to create more space for yourself, creating a new boundary. It lets that other person know that it wasn't OK for them to be that close in your personal space. A boundary lets someone know what is OK for you and what is not.

To set a boundary you need to know what feels good and what doesn't feel good to you; you are the only one who gets to decide that. If you have been doing things that don't feel good, that is where you need to set a definite boundary. You may think it's easier to just go along rather than to make a fuss.

Let me be clear — in the moment you allow someone to run over your boundary you are betraying yourself and that will add to your anxiety every single time. Is always saying yes to someone worth that?

How do you know you need to set a boundary?

Checking in to your emotions will tell you every time you need to set a boundary. If you become anxious when you think about something or someone, that's a good sign a boundary is in order. Another indicator would be if you find yourself complaining or whining about a situation or a person. If you follow what everyone else wants, overriding what you want in favor of the other person/ people, you probably need to set a boundary. And frequent anger also indicates the need for a boundary.

No Is a Valid Boundary

Saying *yes* when you really want to say *no* has consequences. You might find that something will come up, and you will have to cancel. Your anxiety might keep you from doing

what you promised. Your body can invent an illness, so you don't have to do it. You will worry about doing it up until the last moment and cancel right before you should be there. Then you feel even worse than if you had said you couldn't or didn't want to do it in the first place. It's much better, in the long run, to say yes only when you *really* want to.

This one thing can make a huge difference in your life. When you have an empowered *no*, your *yes* will be more empowered as well, and you will see massive shifts happen (especially around your anxiety). You're letting your body and soul know that you are trustworthy. And the emotions that come from doing things that run contrary to who you actually are, can be released. It makes your word that much more powerful. Honestly, most of the time people don't care what your reasons are. They just want a yes or no answer.

Anger

When you negate your feelings or your preferences you are actually stuffing those things down inside of you and causing yourself harm. And, because everything is energy, that overabundance of energy in your gut will cause anxiety and stress. That energy has to go somewhere. Notice: Have you ever picked a fight with someone to release that excess energy? It's common to start that fight with someone other than the person you're angry or upset with, because it's safer!

Women sometimes think that anger is an ugly emotion. They try to avoid it or get rid of it as quickly as possible. When you remember that everything has energy that means anger is an energy too. *But anger shouldn't be feared. It's just information that a boundary has been crossed.* When you're angry, become curious about what boundary has been crossed, and let the other person know what they did to cross your boundary, even if it was an unstated one. Get clear about your boundaries first and ask for what you need.

How to Set a Boundary

You will set boundaries when you are ready and not a minute sooner. It's impossible to force this and do it well. It requires practice, just as yoga needs to be practiced. You're not going to get it right every time, especially at first. You start with baby steps and go from there. It probably won't feel good inside when you start doing it. When I started putting boundaries in place, even small ones, I felt like I might vomit. That's perfectly normal. You may feel your heart beating

faster, or you may feel red in the face. Again, very normal! You may also feel ashamed or afraid. Stick with it. The more you practice setting boundaries, the easier it becomes.

When you realize you need to set a limit with someone, be firm, clear, kind, and unapologetic, without anger, and in as few words as possible. Don't start it with "I'm sorry, but..." This opens the door to negotiations on your boundary. You don't need to give an excuse or a reason for your answer; your answer is your answer, and it's valid. Adding anything extra to the boundary creates wiggle room for the other person and lets them know your boundary is negotiable.

Here are some good examples of boundaries:

- "I don't like being touched that way."
- "I prefer phone calls to texts when we are discussing difficult subjects."
- "I didn't appreciate the way you spoke to Joe's teacher tonight. It was condescending and rude."
- "I don't gossip, and I won't listen to it from others. Let's keep it positive."
- "You can borrow my car today, but only if you can have it back by 3:00."
- "You can disagree with me, but you cannot be disrespectful or rude."

Remember this: You cannot simultaneously set a boundary and worry about the other person's feelings. Their feelings are not your responsibility, and in your quest for a life without anxiety your first concern needs to be you and your health.

Practice, Practice, Practice

The more uncomfortable you are with setting roadblocks, the more you will need to practice. It will feel awkward at first, and you won't always do it right. But that's OK! A support system can be helpful as you strive to establish and enforce boundaries. You can practice with a friend in a role-playing situation. It helps to say no, out loud, in a safe environment, to someone who can receive it well.

As you begin telling people what is OK and what isn't, you'll find they'll start to test you. They'll want to see if you mean what you say, if it's negotiable, and where the boundary actually is. Those who have benefited from your not having boundaries are going to push back. Humans look for the easiest path possible, the path of least resistance. Those who push back likely enjoy having things their way, and don't want that to change. These folks are also usually the ones who

don't have good boundaries themselves. Be prepared and follow through by acting in congruence with your boundaries.

Other folks are happy to respect your boundaries. To them it's a nonevent, a matter of fact. These are probably people who have healthy boundaries themselves. Because they honor their own boundaries, they appreciate yours.

Notice what happens in your inner circle when you begin setting and practicing boundaries. In the last chapter, we spoke of releasing toxic people who bring chaos to your life. If you weren't sure what constituted toxicity, how people accept your boundaries is a great litmus test. This is how you begin that identification process.

By the way, there is a fun, positive side to boundary setting. You get to identify what you like, what feels good, what you want more of, and what brings you pleasure. Those all can be exciting discoveries.

Identify Your Support System

As we speak about others, it's a good time to recognize your support system as you make some of these changes. Learning who is there to support you, who makes things more difficult, and who makes you want to give up on it all together tells you who you can trust to be there as you heal your anxiety.

It's helpful to begin by making a list of those you can count on — friends, family, colleagues, clergy, therapists, etc. Take it one step further and think about their capacities in different areas. You may have one friend whom you can be completely vulnerable with but another friend whom you can laugh and joke with, to raise your spirits. Not everyone can be every support that you need. Making a list now that you can refer back to is a great exercise for future changes that you want to make. And keep updating it as you are shown their capacity in different areas.

Why You Are Reluctant to Set a Boundary

It's often easier to set a boundary with someone you don't know well but more difficult with people you love. If this is the case for you, there might be a subconscious thought that you might lose their love if you set a boundary.

It would be helpful to start with a small boundary as a test of that belief. When you set that boundary, what happens? How was it received? Did you actually lose that person's love or acceptance? If you did feel that person pull away, the next step would be to have a conversation

with him or her. It could look like, “Hey, when I just set a boundary (or told you what was and wasn’t OK with me), it appeared to me that you withdrew a bit, and I wanted to check that out with you. What happened within you?” They can choose to respond honestly, or not. They might not be aware they responded that way. They could also either get upset with you or gaslight you and make you feel crazy. (Gaslighting is when someone tries to manipulate you into believing what happened wasn’t what you perceived.) Either way, you are gaining information into whether they are a safe or unsafe person to have in your life. Pay close attention to how people react. If that particular person doesn’t handle your request well, try boundary setting with someone else and see what kind of reaction you get.

What has happened in the past when you tried to set a boundary and say something wasn’t OK to you? Was that honored or did that person try to manipulate you into changing your mind (and them getting their way)? I hear this from so many women.

One of my clients, Sue, told me that when she was a little girl, she said no to her parents. Their response was, “Don’t you say no to me young lady! I told you to do it, now you do it!” When she cried, she was told if she didn’t stop crying, they were going to give her something to cry about. You can see when it is ingrained in someone from a young age that their opinion doesn’t matter, it makes it difficult to reverse that belief as an adult.

Some questions to consider if boundaries are not your strong suit:

- Do you have any memories of how your needs were either met or rejected in your childhood? Are your needs met or rejected in your current life?
- Have your boundaries been validated, or have they bulldozed over?
- Were you able to have autonomy over your own body?
- When you said no, was it honored?

My grandsons love it when I tickle them. Before I would tickle them, I told them that when they had enough, they had to say stop. As soon as they say “stop,” I pull my hands away. I want them to know that I honor their autonomy and I honor their wishes — it makes them trust me more. As an advocate, I am big on informed consent, and I believe we should teach it to young ones at an early age.

Could You Be an Empath?

In my practice, I've discovered that most of my clients who have chronic anxiety are empaths. Empaths are emotionally sensitive individuals who feel the energy of others, sometimes even taking on that energy themselves. They learn to become peacemakers, making everyone else happy. They feel things deeply and are sensitive souls. Because of their sensitivity, they are also easily hurt. They take on the issues of their families and communities as their own; they're often the activists and advocates. Empaths are also great at reading a room when they walk into it, knowing where to find safety in the blink of an eye. In that way, it is a superpower.

Empaths are some of the kindest, most open-hearted people on this planet. They listen, empathize, and make you feel validated. They give you grace in nearly every circumstance, but they often don't do the same for themselves. They *do it all* themselves, hold it together, and push toward perfectionism. What they won't do is create boundaries, and they abhor conflict, avoiding it like the plague.

Other Words for Empath Are Peacemakers and People-Pleasers

If you find yourself having weak or no boundaries, you may be an empath/ people-pleaser. This means you place a higher value on making others happy, even above your own happiness. Often, especially for someone who has had abusive relationships in the past, (physical, emotional, or sexual), this may be a default mode, designed to keep them safe. "If I just do what they say, they won't get angry, and they won't hurt me." Unfortunately, that doesn't work. It may keep you safe in the moment, but it will also show that person that you value yourself less than you do others. They will continue to bulldoze any boundaries you have. Projecting that energy will attract toxic people who are happy to become the center of the attention you want to place on them.

Do you have an unconscious belief that you don't have a right to say no, that you always have to say yes? Most of our belief system is formed in childhood. Parents generally don't like it when their kids tell them no.

In my family we learned to follow the rules, do as we were told, and toe the line. When we didn't, we lied to cover it up and avoid punishment. When we didn't do what was required, we knew there were going to be consequences, often in the form of a spanking with the belt. Knowing that made us think twice of doing anything that would be considered *bad*. I was also taught to be *nice* and *good*. This meant I was not able to, nor encouraged to, have my voice. Setting boundaries

was a terrifying prospect. I believe this is one of the greatest disservices a parent can do to their daughters. It taught me not to trust myself and my perceptions and to put everyone else ahead of me, and ultimately, that learned behavior set me up for the abuse I suffered as a teen. It also made me gravitate toward narcissists.

If you find yourself nodding your head and this description of an empath/ people pleaser resonates with you, boundaries are the most important skill you can learn to reduce your anxiety.

Energetic Boundaries

If you pick up on other people's energy or even feel it in your body, an energetic boundary has been crossed. Learning to clear your energy, after interacting with others, is important. Feeling *heavy* after being with people is a sign your energy isn't completely your own. I experience this also as a slimy feeling. Learning to protect your energy is important, too, so you don't have to clear your energy as often.

Here Are Three Ways You Can Protect Your Energy

1. Visualize yourself encased in a bubble of protection; you can visualize gold or white light around you. I like to visualize Teflon because nothing sticks to that!
2. Cover your stomach area, where your ribs split, with your hand when you are with another person. This is where your third chakra is and that is what where people often try to cord into.
3. Remove yourself from the situation. It's OK to walk away when you don't feel comfortable

Three Ways to Clear Your Energy Field

1. Take an Epsom salt bath. Add two cups of Epsom salts, one cup of baking soda, and any essential oil you desire to as warm of water as you can handle. Soak for twenty minutes. This will clear your field and will relax your muscles as well.
2. Use your hands in a clearing motion from the top of your head to the tips of your toes. Set your intention that you are clearing any energy that is not yours as you do it.

3. Sage yourself. Light a bundle of sage and blow it out so that it smokes. Set your intention to clear any energy that is not yours while wafting that smoke in your field.

Using these techniques to protect and clear your energy is another way to lower your level of anxiety.

Beverly's Story

Beverly was not only one of my favorite clients but also an amazing woman. Even though she was in her eighties, she was an absolute firecracker. Beverly created vintage window treatments. Many of her treatments are featured in important historical homes and places, such as Lincoln's home and the Taft Museum of Art.

Bev wanted to keep learning and understanding herself at a greater level, especially at the level of her soul. She believed that if she didn't learn something in this lifetime, she would have to have to come back again to continue the lesson. She wanted to clear up these things before she died so she would have a clean slate. She accomplished most of her goals as we worked together, but she had difficulty, as a peacemaker, setting boundaries. As much as she wanted to, there was something inside of her that wouldn't go there. We'd have conversations nearly every session about what had been coming up for her around that subject, but she wouldn't take the action needed to change that part of her life. Perhaps she hadn't reached that breaking point yet and, unfortunately, she never did. Bev left this world just a day shy of her eighty-fourth birthday.

You Can Do This!

When boundaries haven't been your strong suit, there will be a learning curve setting boundaries at first. But setting them is possible. I went from no boundaries to the ability to set a boundary faster than a gunslinger. I protect my time and energy and make myself a priority. I'm either a *hell, yes*, or it's a *no*. If I think I *should* do it, it's a *no*. If I think I *have to* do it, it's a *no*. If I get excited thinking about it, it's a *yes!* It took me years and a lot of practice to get to this point, but the more you do it, the better you become.

Questions to Explore in Your Journal

- Who do you need to have better boundaries with?
- What have you not said that you wish you could?
- What makes you the angriest; what infuriates you?



Chapter 7: Handling Conflict

“Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the ability to cope with it.”

— *Dorothy Thomas*

When Kent and I were going through our divorce, I decided not to stay in the house that we owned together. It was too big, had a large mortgage, and was very traditional, and I was looking for something that was more open, modern, and less expensive. I had been a work-at-home mom for nineteen years and didn't have the capacity to fully support myself at that time.

Luckily, my friend Paddy was a realtor, and she helped find the perfect house. I wanted something nearby so my sons Bobby and Lucas could easily go back and forth between us at will. They were nineteen and sixteen, respectively, so driving was not a problem. The house I found was everything I wanted. I put in an offer, and it was accepted.

As Kent and I negotiated our divorce contract there was one thing that I wanted removed. Ohio law states that if I were to cohabitate with someone else, my support would stop. That felt very much like control to me, which is one of the major reasons our marriage ended. I wanted that taken out of the decree. Kent asked why he should give up something that the State of Ohio was allowing him. I told him it was important to me and I couldn't let it go. And if he couldn't agree to that, we needed to renegotiate everything we had already decided. Although I didn't say it out loud, he knew exactly what I meant. Every five years, he received an enormous payout from his company, a bonus of sorts, and I hadn't asked for any of that. But if he couldn't give me this one thing, I was going to demand my share of that bonus. His response was that holding up the divorce for this could cause me to lose this house I found. I told him it would be worth it, but inside I was quaking. Not my house! He said he would talk to his lawyer and let me know.

A few nerve-wracking days later, he got back to me and agreed to my demand. I couldn't believe it! This was the first time that I had stood up for myself in a big way. The first time I didn't

cave to his will. It was probably the scariest thing I had ever done, and I *won*! It was so empowering, and I was so proud of myself.

What he said next was gratifying: “For someone who hates conflict, you really are getting quite good at it.”

I knew then that I was on the right track, and I was going to be OK.

What Is Conflict and Why Is It So Hard

Conflict happens when two people have different thoughts, ideas, and/ or needs. That can happen at work (with colleagues, an employee, boss, or client) or at home (with a family member, child, spouse, or friend). Maybe it’s something they did that upset you or an expectation that you had that they didn’t meet. Or maybe you were the one who let someone else down.

Many of us don’t know how to best resolve that conflict without hurting the other person. Even after talking about it, sometimes the conflict doesn’t feel resolved and there’s an underlying energy current that festers until you have a blow up, so you avoid the other person.

We want conflict to be simple: You want something, I want something else, so how do we find a compromise? That seems pretty simple, doesn’t it? Each person gives a little and you find a place in the middle.

The problem is it is rarely that simple. Most of us haven’t been taught by our family or even our teachers how to effectively deal with conflict. We learn how to deal with conflict from our parents, either directly (with them consciously teaching you) or indirectly (by watching them in conflict). Many people learn that conflict doesn’t mean there needs to be a negotiation; it means that someone is going to win, and someone is going to lose. By the way, that’s not conflict — that’s a fight.

Conflict, by definition, happens between you and at least one other person, although you can have inner conflict as well. We don’t learn anything in life without relationships. If you were sitting on the top of a mountain and never saw anyone, you wouldn’t have conflict, and you probably wouldn’t learn anything either. Relationships can bring us the most angst, but it is also the source of so much joy and happiness.

The trick to not only surviving but also thriving with conflict is practice. I know this is about the seventeenth time I have used that word, but you don’t get good at any of this without practice. You’ve had a lot of practice running your energy the way you have been for years, so this

is just learning another way to do that. You can do it! You've lived with anxiety for a long time and have made things happen in your life in spite of it. So, if you can do that, I know you can do this.

How to Have Healthy Conflict

Here are some guidelines that will help you manage conflict in a healthy way:

1. Accept that conflict happens and is just part of being in a relationship. It is an opportunity for growth, greater understanding, and connection.
2. If you are in an emotionally charged situation, give yourself space to calm down before having a discussion. You could say something like, "I'm too upset right now to talk, but I want to continue this conversation after I attend to myself." Ask for the amount of time you need and then come back to the discussion.
3. Use "I" statements when speaking, stating the specific problem, the impact it is having on you, and what you would like the person to do in the future instead. For example, "I feel unheard and disrespected when you cut me off midsentence and would appreciate it if you would wait until I'm done speaking before interjecting."
4. Actively listen to the other person when they speak, instead of formulating a response in your mind while they're speaking.
5. Keep things respectful. No name calling, profanity, or exaggerations (like you *always* or *never* do xyz)
6. Separate the problem from the person. Did they do a bad thing or are they a bad person?
7. Analyze the conflict — what is the actual issue? What triggered the conflict?
8. Work together to solve the issue. Just blaming one another will get you nowhere. What part did each of you play in the disagreement?
9. Agree to disagree. If you cannot come to a resolution, agree to disagree. If it always comes down to this, though, nothing is getting solved and perhaps the relationship is broken.

If boundaries and conflict have not been your strong point up until now, I know that you have not been getting your needs met, you probably have a lot of anger that makes you either lash

out at others or implode toward yourself, and you feel disempowered. You've been doing everything for everyone else and have made others more important than yourself. Your anxiety is here to wake you up and tell you that this is not working for you; something has to change.

These two things, conflict and boundaries, are intrinsically connected and necessary to having healthy relationships. I know this can be difficult when it's a new skill you are practicing, and it can raise your anxiety level, so don't forget to also practice self-care to get through it. No one person in any relationship is more important than the other. Pay attention to what is happening in your body during conflict and attend to your needs.

Body Symptoms with Conflict

When you have anxiety, it is important to always come back to your body and feel what is happening in it. Conflict can cause your anxiety to rise almost to the point of almost a panic. When this happens, your sympathetic nervous system kicks into high gear, and you go into fight/ flight/ freeze/ fawn. This is called trauma mode. Your heart rate increases, your pupils dilate, you sweat, your digestion stops, and your bladder relaxes. You may feel sick to your stomach and feel like you want to vomit. Sounds like a great time, doesn't it? No! It doesn't! This is why people try to avoid conflict at all costs.

If this happens to you when you experience conflict, attend to yourself. Are you safe at that moment or are you in physical danger? If you are in danger, remove yourself from that situation immediately. If you are safe, begin by being kind to yourself. Grounding can help your nervous system. Keep bringing yourself back to center. One technique that can help with this is snapping a rubber band on your wrist or holding an ice cube. You can move your body in a gentle way to prevent stuckness. My husband will instinctively rock back and forth, in a gentle manner, when he's upset. If you do these things to settle your nervous system, give yourself what you need, and come back to the present, you can break through to the other side and know you are safe. When you experience that breakthrough, it begins to heal that trauma wound inside by giving yourself a different experience than what you've had in the past.

Boundaries and Conflict

The number-one reason people don't set boundaries is because they don't want to have conflict. Remember that when you start setting new boundaries you are going to get some pushback

from those who have been benefiting from your lack of boundaries. If you are aware this is going to happen, you can anticipate it, and you won't be surprised when it happens.

It could also be the case that the other person is completely unaware that you have that need *because* you haven't spoken about it. It's so easy to be in our head and roll it around a thousand different ways, but if you haven't actually said the words, they may have no idea.

It's important to know that if you have conflict with another person, you are contributing to it in some way. Take responsibility for your part in it. You can't control the other person and what they do and how they react, but you can control how you show up in that conversation.

If you have a need that hasn't been met or have a stressor you need help to relieve, it requires you to first define what it is that you need/ want/ require, and then convey that to the appropriate person. Then fall silent. Give the other person a moment to process what you've just said and formulate a response. It can go one of two ways — agreement or conflict. If they agree, awesome! Thank them for hearing you and move forward. If the other person gives you push back, ask them to give you more information on what the issue is for them. Seeking to understand their point of view is important.

For example, here's a conversation between a husband and wife about money:

Problem: Husband randomly makes a large purchase and doesn't tell his wife. When she goes to pay the bills, she discovers they don't have money.

The way things usually happen:

The wife sees that there's money missing from the bank account as she's paying bills, and she's pissed. This always happens, and she's sick and tired of it. Why does she have to be the one to make a dollar stretch all the time, but he just takes money out without saying anything. She stewes in her anger until she can't take it anymore, and then she lets him have it. Her father was the same way, and it always brings back bad memories from the past. He calls her a nag and slams out the door, saying he regrets marrying her. *Peace* is not a word in her vocabulary.

With her new conflict skills:

The wife see's there's money missing from the bank account as she's paying bills. She gets angry. She remembers that her anger means that a boundary has been crossed. She asks herself

why she is so angry. She remembers how her father put her mother in the same situation, and then they would fight. She hated it when her parents fought, so she would hide in her room in the closet. It was scary. She wonders what needs are not being met and what boundary she needs to set. She formulates a plan in her mind before her husband comes home.

He gets home, changes his clothes, and sits down in the family room (not hitting him with it as he comes in the door), she says:

Wife: “Babe, I went to pay the bills, and there’s \$500 less in the account. Do you know what happened to it?”

Husband: “Yea, I had to buy some things.”

Wife: “If you’re going to spend more than \$100 on something, can we talk about it first, please, so that doesn’t happen again?”

Husband (deflects and turns it around): “You spend more than I do. Why are you trying to control me? I deserve to spend what I want.”

Wife: “I’m not trying to control you. I’m just trying to make our budget work. I’m happy to talk with you also if I need to spend more than that amount.”

Husband (triggered): “Who are you, my mother?”

Wife (ignores the implied insult): “Here are the bills that need to be paid. How do we get this done?”

Husband: “Man, I didn’t realize those weren’t paid. I saw we had the money, and I needed to get some new tools for our basement project I wanted to do. Let me see what we can do.”

Wife: “I know you needed some new tools, that’s valid. Moving forward, more communication around this would be good. I don’t mind you having what you need, I just want to make sure we cover the bills too. There are some things that I need as well. Let’s see how we can make it all happen.”

Husband: “I guess I can take the tools back and see if I can rent some things at a cheaper rate, so we get these bills taken care of. I could also probably borrow some from my dad or brother until I can get my own. I’m sorry I didn’t tell you about it before I did it. Sometimes I get so excited about doing something that in my head we’ve already had the conversation.”

Both of them had needs they wanted to meet and also a collective need for the family. By validating the needs and talking about getting them all met, fully or partially, together they can

come up with a plan of action. They heard what each other had to say and came up with a compromise. This is the ideal way of handling conflict.

Of course, conflict is not always that easy because we are complex human beings, carrying baggage from the past. There are some hidden traps that can come up that you need to be aware of. I noted a few of them in the example above, so let's dive a little deeper.

Conflict Traps

There are three hidden traps that can derail a conflict negotiation quickly, shutting it down and ensuring that nothing gets solved.

Getting Triggered

When people are *triggered* it means that the current situation is bringing up a situation from their past that wounded them and it's as if they're back in that wounded place again. (Remember we talked about this in Chapter 5). For example, if you ever had a partner cheat on you, and then he comes home late one night with no explanation, you may get triggered and think he's cheating on you again. Or maybe your father left the family when you were young so in the back of your mind, you're always expecting your partner to leave, too. So having a fight may bring up your abandonment issues and you might expect him to leave if things aren't perfect.

The person you're having the conflict with can also get triggered with their own issues. If you're both triggered at the same time (because we are really good at knowing what does that to each other), then there might be an explosion of emotion that escalates. If either person in the conflict is triggered, they truly are not present in that moment and the conversation won't be productive. Take a break and resume the conversation later. Allow yourself the space to discern what is coming up for you in the trigger by using the tool of becoming the witness or observer. Just make sure you come back to the conversation at a later time. Don't let it pass by and just sweep it under the rug.

The Turn-Around, Deflection

People who don't like to be wrong or can't be wrong, will take whatever you're saying, turn it around, and make it your fault. "Well, you did xyz," "You do that too," and "If you hadn't done xyz, I wouldn't have done this" are phrases they might use to get out of the hot seat.

To handle this, it's best to stick with what it was you wanted to talk about in the first place. "We're not talking about me right now; we're talking about you." "Please just let's talk about the situation at hand without bringing up the past" are two phrases you can use. If they continue to deflect it's difficult to continue the conversation and come up with any solutions. This is a toxic trait. If you cannot have a rational conversation, this is a good indicator that a healthy relationship is not possible with this person.

Gaslighting

This is probably the most difficult trap of all. Gaslighting is a form of psychological manipulation in which the person attempts to sow self-doubt and confusion in their victim's mind. It's deny, deny, deny. It can sound like this:

- "Why are you so defensive all the time?"
- "You are so emotional."
- "You need help."
- "You're always twisting things around."
- "You're getting upset over nothing."
- "I didn't say that."
- "It's not a big deal."

Someone who uses gaslighting during conflict is trying to manipulate you. This is something that narcissists do. Don't continue the conversation because they will just keep twisting it around. Instead, you can say something like:

- "We remember things differently."
- "If you continue to speak to me like this, I'm done with this conversation."
- "I know my truth and I'm not debating it with you."
- "I hear what you say and that isn't my experience."

If this is one of the frequent traps that your conversations fall into, you may be in a codependent relationship with someone who has narcissistic tendencies. You may have to decide

if this relationship is worth the effort it will take to make it work. You will never be able to control the other person and how they respond. But you can control you, how you respond, and how you show up in that relationship. Shifting your energy will automatically shift the relational energy. It takes setting boundaries, getting good with conflict, knowing what your needs are, having clear communication, and nurturing your own unconditional self-love.

If you've gotten to this point and you're thinking this is all too hard and want to avoid all of it, I completely understand that. Doing hard things is, well, hard! But I know you can do it if you take it just one step at a time. You don't have to do everything perfectly, that's just not possible. Control what you can control and let go of what you can't. If you keep showing up, setting boundaries, and getting more comfortable with conflict, your personal growth will be exponential, and your anxiety will dissipate.

Questions to Explore in Your Journal

- Which relationships are more difficult to have conflict in?
- How do you feel when you do have conflict with someone?
- Which of the conflict traps do you experience?



Chapter 8: Discover What Caused Your Anxiety

“Our cells react in very real, literal ways to the memories from this life and previous ones that our spirit minds infuse them with, whether our conscious minds are aware of those memories or not. And so, by accessing those cell memories, we can rid ourselves of long-buried illness, phobias, pain, and trauma, and also re-create the greatest emotional and physical health our spirits have ever enjoyed.”

— Sylvia Browne

Barb was in her midforties when she started experiencing overwhelming stress. Her life had always had stress in it, and she had been able to still take care of business. But at this point, it was difficult to do it all. She had four children to care for, had gone back to school after being a stay-at-home mom because she had dreams of finishing her degree, and was working a full-time job as well. Every moment was scheduled to the minute. The family helped out with some chores, but the bulk of the housework landed on her shoulders.

Barb had lost both of her parents at a young age, and her sisters lived out of town. So, there was no one to help her out to give her the breathing space she absolutely needed. Her husband also worked full time. He was successful at his job and had hobbies that he really enjoyed and made time for.

This went on for a few years, and she became more and more exhausted. She often fell asleep in front of the TV at night. She didn't have time for exercise, she probably wasn't eating as well as she should, and something had to give. What gave was her heart. At forty-seven years old she had a heart attack that took her life.

Barb was my mother. I was twenty-three years old when she died. Her doctor said that it was very rare to see a woman that age die of a heart attack.

The Physical Contributors

As I began to delve into energy healing to heal my own wounds, I discovered that mind/body/spirit connection I spoke of earlier. In Western medicine, we go to a physical doctor (general practitioner, primary care physician, or any number of specialists) to help us with physical issues and to a mental health professional (therapist, psychologist, or psychiatrist) for emotional issues. When we have a spiritual crisis, we seek out a spiritual advisor such as a priest or rabbi. If you treat just one of the three aspects of dis-ease, you are not healing the whole of you. There is an emotional and spiritual aspect to every physical issue you, and there are physical components to every emotional or spiritual issue you face. They cannot be separated. Your body, your physicality tends to get your attention first, in the form of pain or dis-ease.

Every organ, every part of your body, holds a different emotion. Your kidneys hold your fear, your lungs hold grief, your liver carries your anger. Knee issues? A possible contributing factor could be unresolved family issues, difficulty making decisions, and fear of moving forward. I have a reference book that I use to look up every physical issue a client may be having, and the issues that are showing up in their life are always shown in the parts of the body that are *acting up*.

When you experience pain in your body, it is your body's way of getting your attention. It's telling you that something is wrong and there is something you need to look at. Usually, if it is something small, you will ignore it. I know you have a busy life, and there are many things that require your attention. Perhaps a little headache is taken care of with a pain reliever, and you keep moving forward.

When your body can't get your attention with a small pain, the pain has to increase to elicit a response. It will continue to amplify until it actually does get your attention. How far has it increased in *your* life?

Mapping out any physical issues you are having is one way to begin uncovering the hidden sources of your anxiety. Where are your aches and pains? Do you have overall inflammation? What disease processes have you been diagnosed with? Do you have headaches? Low libido? Allergies? Make a note of all of these in your journal. You could even draw a physical body and make notes at each area you are having issues.

Now I want you to get honest about how you are caring for your physical body. Do you eat nutritious foods? Are you getting the vitamins and minerals that you need? Are you moving your body on a regular basis? Do you have regular health care visits? How are your bowel movements — are they regular? Any issues with constipation or diarrhea? If you want your body to perform efficiently at a high level, you need to take care of it the best you possibly can.

Consider this, if you had an expensive sports car, would you put crappy gas in it? No, you'd use a high-octane gas. You'd also make sure you service your car, following the manufacturer's recommendations. If you got into a wreck, you'd take that car to a body shop to get it fixed so it looked like new again. You'd do all that because it was important to you to have that car and you value it. So, you treat it like you value it.

Are you valuing yourself that much? Are you treating your physical body, your vehicle, like that sports car, or is it more like a run down, thirty-five-year-old Chevy Chevette with 500,000 miles on it that you're just praying will just make it a few more years?

It's important to consider everything that supports your physicality—nutrition and any supplementation is a start. Sugar, fried or processed foods, food additives (MSG, food dyes, aspartame), and caffeine can all contribute to anxiety.

Examine the quality of sleep you are getting, as that can impact not only your physicality but also your mental and emotional state. Excess worry and fear can make it harder to not only fall asleep but to stay asleep through the night. Sleep deprivation can worsen anxiety and create a negative cycle involving insomnia and anxiety disorders. If you're exhausted, it's easy to reach for caffeine to get through the day, but that then stimulates the adrenals, burdening them further.

Those who suffer from anxiety already have overtaxed adrenals. The adrenals are endocrine glands that produce a number of hormones including cortisol and adrenaline, and help regulate your metabolism, blood pressure, and your body's response to stress. When you are in fight/ flight/ freeze mode, your adrenal glands are activated to help you cope. If you live in a chronic state of anxiety, you could have adrenal fatigue

As you age, your sex hormones can become unbalanced as well, contributing to an elevated level of anxiety. Too little estrogen can cause brain fog and depression. Too little progesterone can cause anxiety, insomnia, and irritability. Getting a thorough physical with a doctor who can provide detailed testing of your hormone levels, along with a thyroid function test, is an important step in understanding how your body might be contributing to your anxiety.

We spend our time and our money on the things that are important to us. What changes in how you treat your physical body are you willing to make right now to improve your overall health and well-being?

I understand that this is going to take more time than perhaps you've been allowing. That is why we began this entire process with letting go of things that have been sucking your time and energy, to make space for these things that *are* important to you and healing your anxiety.

Connect and Listen to Your Body

As a society we have really gotten good at listening to our mind, trusting our thoughts and beliefs above all else. Living in your head is an indication of being ungrounded, and this raises your anxiety. When you are living in your head, you are disconnecting from your body. This makes it difficult to actually feel things inside your body, disconnects you from your heart, and also your feelings. Not wanting to feel is one of the main reasons for disconnecting in the first place! It's important in the healing process to reconnect with your body in a visceral way.

An easy way to do that is to begin listening to your body in an intentional way. Take ten to fifteen minutes to lie down, close your eyes, and just feel your body. There is no need to change anything you feel or sense, the goal right now is to just connect and listen. What do you feel? Where is there discomfort, heaviness, pain? Does your body feel bloated, full, or empty? Does it like the stillness of the moment or does it want to move? Feel any and all sensations in your body. What is calling most for your attention? In other words, where is the greatest pain and discomfort? Put your hand there now and allow the heat from your hand to penetrate that part of your body. When you feel very connected to that part, ask it what it has to tell you. Why is it calling for your attention? Listen deeply — the answer will come into your mind. It won't be a loud booming voice; it will be more like a soft whisper. You may think you are making it up, but you aren't. Trust what you are getting.

It might tell you it wants movement, more water, or more rest. It may want more of your attention or a more loving touch. Perhaps it wants stretching or massaging. After you receive that message, whatever it is, thank that part of your body for letting you know what it needs. If you can then give whatever that was to yourself at the end of your listening session, great! If you don't get an answer, don't be discouraged and don't give up. It takes practice listening and also trusting

what you hear. You will probably want to discount what you hear, thinking you made it up in your mind. That is not uncommon. Just try trusting what you get.

This exercise can be done whenever you have pain (whether emotional or physical), but I recommend doing it on a daily basis when you wake up in the morning or before you go to bed, taking a moment to check in with your body. It's similar to how you would connect with a partner, friend, or child — you'd ask how their day was, what went well, where were their challenges, and if they needed anything. It's how you show they are important to you. In this same way you are letting your body know that it's important to you and you're willing to give it what it needs.

You can also connect in this way to your anxiety as it appears. What does your anxiety have to say to you? Why is it there? What do you need to know? Place your hand wherever you are feeling the anxiety in your body and have that conversation.

In my own life I have found that my left knee is the part of my body that lets me know when I am out of balance. When I feel a twinge of discomfort in the past I would push through, continuing on my course of action for the day. Now I stop, sit down, and put my hand on my knee. I listen deeply to it, send unconditional love and healing energy through my hand, and thank it for letting me know I'm out of balance. All of this takes just five minutes, and the discomfort goes away.

Connecting and listening to your body is always the first step. The next is connecting to your feelings.

The Emotional Contributors

Feelings can be difficult, especially the ones you deem negative. Everyone would like to be in love, happiness, and joy all day long, but not feel anger, pain, grief, or despair. The problem is that numbing the difficult ones numbs all of them, including the *good* ones, and that is called depression. You are literally de-pressing your emotions or pushing them down.

If you've avoided experiencing your feelings, it's best to start in a slow, deliberate manner. Many of my clients tell me that they're afraid to have all of their feelings because it just feels like too much. They've been controlling their emotions for so long they're terrified of what is going to come out when they actually feel it. Will it release a tsunami of tears that they won't be able to control? Will they collapse and not be able to pull themselves together? What they are actually

saying is that *they don't trust themselves or their emotions*. What is needed is a rebuilding of trust within the self.

Each time there are difficult emotions they get pushed down and hopefully forgotten. But everything has energy, even emotions. Eventually there will be an explosion outward, and it is usually directed at others. What follows is unhealthy conflict, self-recrimination, shame, and guilt. That tears down self-esteem and creates more difficult emotions. It's a vicious circle that continuously adds to anxiety levels. It's time to break that pattern.

If you are resonating with this, the following technique will help you. It's called "Scheduled Feelings." You are going to choose two or three days during the week where you can set aside fifteen to thirty minutes of uninterrupted time and put it on the calendar. Since the goal is rebuilding trust, this time needs to be sacred, meaning you don't let anything change it or keep you from doing it.

At the allotted time, you are going to get in a comfortable position. Imagine that you have a zip-up hoodie on that is helping you keep all your emotions inside and hidden. Set an alarm for the amount of time you have decided on and set your intention to allow your emotions to surface and be felt. Visually imagine you've unzipped that hoodie for this session. If you have trouble feeling, you could journal to access them. When your alarm rings, stop everything you are doing, and imagine yourself zipping the hoodie back up again. That is the end of your scheduled feeling session.

During the week if you have uncomfortable feelings, you can internally tell your body that you will feel them at the allotted time. Now you are no longer pushing them down but letting them know they will have a voice, *just not right now*. That is why it is imperative to keep this date with yourself. If you don't, those feelings get pushed down again and the cycle will continue.

This technique works because you are titrating your emotions in a container or safely, exposing yourself to emotional distress a little at a time, to build up a tolerance and avoid becoming overwhelmed by them. Gradually you will realize that feeling your emotions won't cause an unmanageable meltdown. Eventually, with this practice, you'll be more comfortable feeling your emotions in any given moment. For most of my clients they found that doing this for just two to four weeks was enough time to rebuild that trust in self. Some have even commented that they enjoyed having that time to themselves and looked forward to it.

My client, Danielle, found me after she lost her husband to cancer. She'd gotten through all the *to-do*'s that death brings — the funeral, financial matters, and making sure her children were OK and had what they needed. She knew she had been avoiding grieving, and also knew it was time to do that. But how should she start doing that? Grief is not an easy emotion, and she was afraid to feel it all. It's like opening Pandora's box, she was unsure of what she would find and wasn't sure she could stuff all the emotions back in once she did.

Working together she realized that she wasn't really helping her children by trying to bypass her grief. She was essentially teaching them that grief was to be avoided. I showed her that by scheduling her feelings for a set amount of time, she could prove to herself that she could handle it. She chose two days a week, for a half hour, and put that nonnegotiable time on the calendar. When that time came, she followed all the instructions I shared with you. She set her timer, got into her feelings by either just sitting or by journaling, and did that until her timer went off. As she continued this practice, she became more comfortable with her grief and didn't have to schedule times, she was able to feel it in that moment without worrying it would overtake her.

Just this year she married a wonderful man, and she is moving forward. She still honors her first husband and the love they shared. And she's been able to bring even more love into her life. She's no longer stuck in the pain of the past.

The Spiritual Contributors

Most doctors, when treating patients with anxiety, rarely ask about any spiritual contributing factors. But they should. There are a number of different spiritual issues that can affect your anxiety: past religious experiences, current spiritual practices, and cost of religion/spirituality.

Negative past religious experiences can be a source of anxiety including the extent to which past religious life has caused stress, suffering, or conflict. When you look back at your religious or spiritual practices as a child through young adulthood, were you aligned with those practices? Were there any traumas that happened in a religious setting? I have one client who was severely abused in a religious setting in which she had no say. It continues to be something that contributes to her anxiety. But it doesn't have to be that extreme to affect you still today.

Your current spiritual practices can either bring you hope, strength, comfort, and peace, or it can bring you angst. I've noticed a few areas of angst that have come up in this area for clients with this.

First, there is the question of being abandoned by God. Why are they suffering with anxiety when they keep praying to be healed? If God loved them, why would they suffer? Isn't he listening to their prayers? Maybe they're not praying in the right way.

The second angst I've noticed with clients is questioning if they are being punished by God. I've seen this more with people who have a current spiritual practice that is different from how they were raised, or with those clients who are questioning the religious constructs they were taught as a child. These clients wonder if they've made God angry and are therefore being punished. Similarly, I have clients who don't have a religious or spiritual practice, but they wonder what they did in a past life to deserve this level of karma. Again, a punishment from the Universe.

Underlying both these lines of questioning that contribute to anxiety is a question of worthiness and goodness. There is a kind of bargaining that can occur when pain is too great to bear, whether that pain is physical or emotional, that runs along the line of, *If I'm good, if I believe, will you heal me?* In other words, their level of health and healing is directly linked to how good, worthy, and devout they are.

The cost you paid for being/ not being spiritual or religious is the last spiritual contributor to anxiety. If you were kicked out of a church for having different beliefs, if they turned their back on you, if you lost your community for questioning the teachings or going against them, this can contribute greatly to your anxiety.

My client John is a gay man. He was raised in a very religious household, where they went to church multiple days during the week. The church was the foundation of his existence. When he came out to his family, they disowned him, and the church did as well. In being his true authentic self, he lost everything that was precious to him, and he felt abandoned by everyone. If he was, as he was taught, made in the image of God which is perfect, how could he be so reviled because of who he loved?

These spiritual contributors can raise your anxiety level. There is an unsettled feeling inside with all of them that is looking for attention and reconciliation. If you have had any of these thoughts or feelings around your spiritual life, using the AREA method would be helpful here. Bring your attention or your awareness to your thoughts and feelings in this area. Journaling would

be helpful, or even meditation. Once you've done that, decide what you want to release. What thoughts, ideas, or beliefs no longer resonate with you? Let them go using any of the release methods taught in Chapter 5. Then you get to explore what does resonate for you, what you do believe. Finally, take action in any way that feels life-giving to you. That action could be releasing the trauma of your experience, it might be finding another church community that is more accepting and is truer to God's unconditional love, it could even be finding a yoga practice that connects you deeply to your own divine nature.

Buried Trauma

I'm sure your anxiety didn't start at the level it's at right now. And there may have been other health issues that actually led up to the anxiety. You may be taking over-the-counter meds to deal with it and the other symptoms associated with it. Perhaps you've started doing yoga, meditation, a walking program, and other things to help yourself. Many people with anxiety have trouble sleeping, so maybe you're taking melatonin to help you sleep. I know you are doing everything you know how to do to get some relief. While they may help some, your anxiety is still there and not getting any better. In fact, it's probably been getting worse.

Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result is the definition of insanity (Albert Einstein). Are you ready to try something else? Let's start looking at what is keeping you stuck in this same pattern. I'll give you a hint; events happening currently in your life are exacerbating your anxiety, but they aren't the cause of it. The cause comes from much earlier in your life.

Barb's parents died fairly close to each other. Her mother was dying of Hodgkin lymphoma when her father was accidentally electrocuted at his job in a pottery factory. Both her parents were gone by the time she was twelve. She was one of three girls, an *oopsie* baby, and her eldest sister, Alice, raised her along with her own young family. What a trauma this was for all of them!

She never really spoke to me about what it was like to have all of that happen to her. I think if she had lived longer, we eventually would have, but we never got that chance. My sense is that, in her mind, it was just something that happened to her, and she put it behind her and moved forward with her life. It's just how things were done back then.

But trauma doesn't die, it lives in every cell of your body until you heal it. I don't think it's any coincidence that it was her heart that gave way; it was broken in a way that never had a chance to heal. She carried that with her for her entire life.

My dad Ken was in Canada on a fishing trip with my first husband when my mom died. He was at a lodge without a phone, so we had to send someone to the camp (four hours round trip) to give him the bad news. He then had to drive ten and a half hours just to get back home. This was a trauma on top of the other trauma. He never got over the loss of my mom. Yes, he moved on and married a wonderful woman, Sara, and they had a good life together until he died last year. Still, there were times throughout the years that he would call me, after having a few drinks, and cry about how much he missed my mom. It's not a surprise to me that he died of lung cancer when I know that lungs hold our grief.

Yes, all of us will die of something; none of us will live forever. But how much better would life be if we could tune into what is happening in our body and decipher why it is speaking to us so the pain isn't amplified.

Here is what I know about trauma. Every little *t* and big *T* trauma that you have and don't process will lodge itself in your body and, when allowed to stagnate and fester, will change your DNA. Trauma can leave a chemical mark on a person's genes, which can be passed down to subsequent generations. This alteration is epigenetic, not a genetic mutation.

According to the CDC, epigenetics is the study of how your behaviors, environments, and experiences can cause changes that affect the way your genes work. "Epigenetic changes are reversible and don't change your DNA sequence, but they can change how your body reads a DNA sequence." The effects of trauma, which can be transmitted to offspring, can also be reversed by a positive experience.

Understanding this DNA transmission, there very well could be a part of your anxiety that comes from your ancestor's trauma. This is something that you may not have even considered. Do you know the trauma stories of your mother and father? Of their parents? Trauma is not something that people like to talk about, so you may have some digging to do.

When I saw a cousin recently, they told me that two of my grandmother's siblings had a baby together. We don't know anything about the story of conception, if it was consensual or not. Either way, I'm sure there was some trauma there for everyone involved. It brings up more questions than I had before.

When we say that a particular disease process *runs in the family*, how much of that is a genetic mutation and how much of it is caused by epigenetics? Take, for example, heart disease that seems to run in a family. It could be that an ancestor from generations ago got their heart broken and walled off their heart from ever falling in love again. When you consciously divert energy from any part of your body, it's not being nourished or energized. The energy around it becomes stagnant. Stagnant energy causes dis-ease. Perhaps that ancestor also taught their children to protect their heart at all costs. Don't be a fool or a sucker, think with your head and not your heart, don't get carried away by love. Then that generation taught that to the next, and so on.

Additionally, you can see the benefits of digging into and healing/ releasing any trauma you've had in your lifetime so that you don't pass it down to any children you have or may have. When we heal our traumas, it heals seven generations back and seven generations forward. It's truly our responsibility to heal our own trauma, but we haven't been given many tools to do that.

In my own practice I've discovered that any trauma you experience and don't process will lodge in your grounding cord, pulling it away from the earth and closer to yourself. This makes it more difficult for you to ground. When you aren't grounded you don't feel safe, and your anxiety is heightened. By clearing the trauma from your grounding cord, it makes grounding possible at an even deeper level. Although this is not a technique you can do for yourself, I am going to give you another technique you can use in your work with your trauma.

The Timeline

Using a blank sheet of printer paper, turn the paper so it is long-wise across from left to right. Draw a line horizontally, labeling it with a 0 on the left side and your age at the right end of the line. You can mark the timeline in five-year intervals, spacing them evenly. When you've completed that I invite you to sit quietly in meditation. If you would like soft, calming music playing in the background, start that now. Close your eyes and state your intention to connect to each trauma small and large that you still hold within your memory and therefore your body. Take a few moments to connect inside your body, taking a few deep breaths and releasing them. Then open your eyes and start making notes on that timeline of things that come up in your memory.

What may come up as you do this exercise? Moves, endings — relationships or jobs, abuse (sexual, emotional, physical), car accidents, major illnesses, childbirths, abortions, deaths, divorce, major heartbreaks, broken bones, your birthing story, and even your experience in utero. Don't edit yourself, allow whatever comes to your heart and mind to transfer onto that paper. You can

also note at the top of the page any significant traumas that you are aware of within your family lineage. Take your time doing this timeline as memories will continue to appear as you write. There is an energetic component to this exercise that will loosen memories as you begin to acknowledge and write them down. When you are finished with this part of the exercise, thank yourself for doing this work. Gratitude is important when doing hard things.

The second part of this technique is to connect with your body and see where these traumas are living for you. This can be done in one setting, or you can break it up into as many sessions as you like. You will likely be tired after you do these releases, so follow how you feel and don't force anything (it is counterproductive to force anything). Make sure you're grounded by using one of the grounding techniques I taught you in Chapter 4. Then connect into your body for answers as I've shown you throughout this book. Quiet your mind by taking five deep, belly breaths and releasing them. Set your intention to connect to the traumas that are stored in your body for the purpose of gaining whatever knowledge they have to impart and then releasing them. I've found it easier to start with the most recent traumas and work your way toward the first one.

Ask of the trauma:

1. "Where do you live in my body?" Whatever you hear, put your hand on that part of your body.
2. Then ask, "What do I need to know about you that I don't remember?" Listen for the answer. Continue to ask that question until you glean all of the information you need.
3. Thank your trauma for sharing that information.
4. Ask your trauma if it is ready to be released. Not all trauma will be ready to go at this exact time; don't force it. If it isn't ready, come back to this at another time. If it is ready to go, invite it to be released. You can use your hand in lifting motion, wrapping your hand around the trauma, and lifting it high out of your field and releasing it. Then put your other hand on that area and fill the emptied space with unconditional love.
5. Move on to the next trauma, following the same procedure. Continue until you feel the session is complete.

6. At the end of the session, honor yourself for the deep work you've done. Close the session out by placing your hands on your heart and thanking yourself. Know also that in that moment your ancestors are cheering you on, knowing that you are making a difference for you, for them, and for future generations.
7. Treat yourself gently after these self-healing sessions. Eat good nourishing food, drink plenty of water because you will continue to detox and avoid alcoholic beverages and intense exercise.

Inner Child Work

As you work through the timeline of traumas, you might find some very tender, sensitive places. You may emote and there may even be physical discomfort like an ache that comes from within. It's important to remember that those traumas that happened, especially when you were a child, were wounds that made you retreat inside to protect yourself. Each of those wounds are wrapped up with the emotions you had at the time, and some of your core essence that was either disowned or taken from you.

To visualize what I am talking about, think of Russian nesting dolls. Have you ever seen those? It's one wooden doll inside another, that's inside another, and so on, till you get to a very tiny one. Different sets have different numbers of those dolls. Well, you can think about having one of those dolls inside of you for every year you have been alive.

When you are working that trauma line and find one that brings emotions up, that's an indicator that the child within you at that age is calling out for your attention. Also, whenever you are triggered, that's another indicator. What do you do to shift that when you have that knowledge?

If you were, say, seven years old when one of those traumas happened, think about how you would connect with a seven-year-old in your life now. What would they need? For each trauma or wound that happened, there is a need that wasn't met. While you can't go back in time to change what happened, you can reparent yourself now by giving that young one what they needed back then. This is called inner child work:

1. Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
2. Turn off any electronics around you. If you'd like some quiet music, that would be fine.
3. Take a few deep breaths, filling your belly with air on the inhale, and exhale fully.

4. Go to an area that ached or had discomfort when you did the trauma timeline and put your hand there.
5. Set your intention to connect to that younger version of yourself (by simply saying, I intend to myself at __ age.)
6. Wait a minute or two to allow that connection to happen.
7. I usually imagine a big comfy chair located in my heart and invite that younger part of myself to join me there. You can use any visualization that resonates with you.
8. Ask that part of yourself what they needed but didn't get, and what you can do to help them now. Then listen.
9. Sometimes that part just needs to be given a voice and be heard. Sometimes that part needs a big hug. Whatever that part of you needs, try to give it to yourself.
10. Ask if there is anything else that part of you needs right now. If yes, do steps eight and nine again. If not, let that part of you know that you are here now, and want to connect more with this part of you. Plan to check back in now and again to see if there is anything else.

More than anything I believe this part of you that has been separate and not integrated within the collective you (because of the pain), wants to be heard, validated, integrated, and accepted. When you bury those traumas inside yourself you are disowning those parts of yourself that experienced them. Doing this inner child work can help with that integration. It's very powerful work.

Going through Instead of Around

My husband, Matt, tells me what he loves most about me is that I don't go around problems; I go through them. He is saying that I don't try to avoid things, but instead, I hit them straight on. I have to admit that wasn't the case for many, many years. I avoided uncomfortable feelings and memories for most of my life. It was like driving around a roundabout and never getting off — round and round and round again. I never got anywhere, I just stayed stuck in that circular motion.

Here in northern Cincinnati, roundabouts have been popping up everywhere as a replacement for stop signs and lights. They're meant to keep traffic moving more continuously.

Some are just concrete pits with no design, whatsoever. They're simply functional. Others are beautifully designed with landscaping in the center, making them statement pieces, of sorts.

In life, what is in the middle of that roundabout is all the stuff that's calling for your attention. The stuff that keeps you circling is the underlying cause of your anxiety. Yes, the *too-muchness*, holding it together, lack of boundaries, and avoidance of conflict is all part of it. But the stuff inside the circle is the reason all those other things we've already talked about here exist in your life. Much like those beautifully landscaped roundabouts, you may have made everything in your life look really pretty and functional, but the process is still the same. You're going around and around and not getting anywhere.

In the middle space are the things you don't want to talk about or share with others. It's the memories and events that cause you shame and guilt. It's your past little *t* traumas and big *T* Traumas, the things you've tried to bury deep in your soul.

It's also all the ways you've had to conform to the expectations of others — friends, family, colleagues, religion, culture. The ways you have had to change who you are at the core to be lovable and acceptable to others — the ways you've learned you *have* to be. Because each time you've contorted yourself into the shape others wanted to see, you've had to disown a part of *you*.

This matters because all of those missing pieces of you take away from your own personal power. It makes you smaller than who you actually are. And this world needs you to show up in your life and shine the unique personal light that is you. It doesn't serve you to be less than your amazing self.

From an energetic perspective, keeping yourself small is compressing all your energy into a smaller space. What happens when you compress energy, trying to make it smaller? Pressure builds up until it blows. That pressure is what we call anxiety.

Whatever you've been through in your life has made you stronger. I know that because you are still here. You haven't opted out yet, you keep showing up for yourself. The events you most want to hide are the ones you need to embrace. You're not the only one that has happened to; you're not alone. I can guarantee that if you've experienced it there are at least ten other people out there who have experienced it as well. Maybe even one hundred or even one thousand.

Life is not meant to be easy. If you breezed through life without having difficulties you would not grow, learn, and become. I believe we come here to learn lessons, to grow and help others. We have a purpose and a passion. None of that would happen without challenges. And I

believe we have an individual purpose and a world purpose. To accomplish either of those you need to be able to stand in your own personal power.

Why is standing in and knowing your own power important? If you don't feel powerful in your own life you will gravitate to people who do seem powerful. You see in them what you want in yourself. Often these people are what I call energy vampires. They will suck the energy right out of you, and you will feel smaller than ever.

None of your little *t* traumas or big *T* Traumas have damaged who you are at your core, at your soul level.

Are you ready to take that step into the uncomfortable, the space of where so much of your core essence is being held hostage?

You don't have to do it alone. I'm right here with you. And so is the support system you began identifying in the earlier chapters. If you skipped over that part, go back to it now and do that work. Take a deep breath and get ready to step more fully into your light and life.

Questions to Explore in Your Journal

- What did others expect you to be?
- What event do you wish had never happened in your life?
- How have those events shaped you into the amazing person you are?



Chapter 9: Connect to Your Truth and Trust Yourself

*“Speak your Truth, Speaking your Truth is an act of
Love and respecting yourself.”*

— Dr. Karishma Ahuia

I began dating shortly after my divorce — I was excited to move forward with my life. I was in my own house. I’d registered for school at The Barbara Brennan School of Healing, and everything was new and fresh.

My dinner date was someone I connected with on a dating website, and he seemed cool. As we sat down and ordered our drinks, he turned to me and made small talk. “So, what do you like to do?” he asked. I froze as I considered that question. It wasn’t meant to be a stumper, but it was. What did I like to do? Hell, I didn’t have a clue! I’d spent the last twenty-two years doing what everyone else wanted — my kids, my husband, my family, my friends. I felt like a complete idiot. I’m sure there was something that stumbled out of my mouth, but it raised a question I pondered for the next few weeks. That date didn’t go as planned, and we quickly called it an evening. I knew that this was where my work needed to begin: What did I like to do?

My quest began in earnest. I joined Meetup.com and perused what they offered. If you’re not familiar with that website, it is a way to connect people with similar interests. The first one I went to was a Euchre meetup group. It was a blast! I enjoyed wine, so I joined a wine meetup. That was also a lot of fun. Over the next month I attended meetups where I hiked, had spiritual experiences, listened to sound bowls, learned sound healing, had divorce support, learned belly dancing, and rode my bike. And I met some great people I still connect with today.

It was great finding things I enjoyed and doing those things with other people. But it didn’t really tell me much about my inner self. I’m sure you’ve heard that phrase “speak your truth.” But what if you don’t know what your truth is? Maybe you have an idea, but it isn’t fully formed. And

how does your truth compare to *the* truth? If your truth is different from my truth, then which is the *real* truth? Ugh, it can be so confusing.

The Answers Are Inside

Before you can say what your truth is, you have to know yourself. That may sound strange, because if you don't know you, who does? Knowing yourself is the job of your lifetime. Who you are changes all the time. What you believe can change with new information or knowledge. You are evolving, growing, and changing every day, and that's a good thing. To not have any kind of movement is to create stagnation, stuckness, and dis-ease. So welcome to your life where there's never a destination and the journey never ends.

You may be saying, "Susan, I don't have time to do this. I have so much going on, and to spend this kind of time on myself is selfish!" Consider that this work may be the most important thing that you ever do.

I know that your anxiety is interfering with your life. I know it because you are reading this book. We've already established that you have physical symptoms that you can no longer ignore. And you now know this is your body trying to get your attention, and there are some things you need to explore. Knowing yourself at a deeper level, discovering your truth, and building more trust in yourself is that next step in healing. Not taking this step will mean that you will continue to look outside of yourself for the answers you need, when in reality they are all inside of you.

What Is Your Truth?

Your truth is your inner compass, guiding force, and roadmap to life. It influences your beliefs, compels your actions, and is the essence of your spiritual nature. It is what matters to you, it's your authentic self.

I'm sure you've caught a glimpse of this in moments when you're not feeling afraid or stressed, not feeling judged and there is no one around to impress. In those moments when there is no status quo to uphold or family tradition to bear, and you're not afraid of what others think, these are the moments when you can truly be who you are.

You might find your authentic self while you are reading poetry, walking in the park, or skiing down a mountainside, when you're singing in the shower and dancing to your favorite tunes. It's when you're alone, in solitude, that you can discover what is true, right, and good for you.

What Does It Mean to Live in Your Truth?

To live in your truth simply means to live as your most authentic self, doing things daily that bring you happiness and joy, living as true to yourself as possible. When you are living from this place you will have more peace in your life. In living from your heart, you will become like a magnet to others, because they want to be around someone who feels real. In speaking your truth, you encourage others to speak theirs. You are living an empowered life, living with integrity. You feel balanced and anchored, regardless of what happens. You are validated from the inside. It's not dependent on others to feel good about you. You don't take things personally, and you know you are more than your job, weight, relationship, or financial status. You respect and honor yourself and others.

What Does It Cost You to Not Live in Your Truth?

When you are not living in your truth, you are afraid to reveal who you truly are. Your fear robs others of the opportunity to really know you. You live an idealized version of yourself, allowing others to see only the parts you deem acceptable. People can feel when you aren't being real, and it repels them. You'll never know if the people in your life really like you for who you are because you're afraid to show yourself to them.

Why Are You Not Living in Your Truth?

If you feel like you haven't been living in your truth, the first question you have to ask is *where did your truth go? Why aren't you connected to your truth and able to live it fully?*

As women, and as a society, we are taught to follow the norm. We're told to conform to societal, familial, religious, and other standards. Sometimes we're told to just shut up and take it. Be nice, be kind, be loving, be thin, look beautiful. We're told to be sexual, but not too sexual, and only in the way *we* tell you. The messages are unclear: be natural, wear makeup, be fashionable, be feminine — there are so many messages coming at girls and women that it's confusing, and it chips away self-esteem.

Now add to that the way we learn to negate our emotions. Don't cry, don't be so emotional — oh, it must be that time of the month (because that's the only time we ever get upset, right?) Don't get angry or you're a bitch.

The boys and men have also been taught similar things. You have to be tough; you can't cry (suck it up, man up); the only acceptable emotion is anger.

Collectively, we are taught daily to negate our true selves for the idealized image of what we should be. So how could you stay connected to your truth in such a pressurized world? I visualize someone plucking out small pieces of themselves that they deem offensive and discarding them so they can add more acceptable pieces. It's interesting to me that when we talk about healing, we talk about becoming whole. What I think we're saying is that the healing process is about undoing that entire process we followed since birth — looking at the pieces of us and determining Is this really who I am, what I believe, or how I want to be? Then we have to decide to keep it or let it go and retrieve that discarded part.

Have you ever heard of a midlife crisis? I think this process is exactly what a midlife crisis is. People will get to a certain time of their life and ask, "Who am I and is this all there is?" because they've morphed so much over their life into acceptability and lovability that they don't know who they are anymore. Their life is calling them to this choice point. I've also noticed that men will look more to changing their outside world — losing weight, buying that cool car, divorcing, and getting a younger girlfriend or wife. Women will look inward at what they feel and make changes accordingly.

Much of the *dis-ease* processes we have happening in our life are our body and soul constantly trying to redirect us to reconnect with ourselves. We are led in so many ways to discover the truth of who we are and live from that place of authenticity.

We've also disconnected from our intuition. Were you ever actively taught to listen to your intuition and to follow your guidance? Or were you told you were overacting, there's no way you could know something, and you should ignore it? Most people are not encouraged to hone this vital skill. If you feel disconnected from your feelings, disconnected from your intuition, and disconnected from your body's knowledge, it's no wonder you have anxiety.

Discovering Your Truth

To discover your truth, you have to make time and space for yourself and make this a priority. I'm not telling you to take off to a weeklong retreat at an ashram (which, though that could certainly be pretty awesome, for most people is not an option), but rather finding time for you in your very busy day. Can you wake up thirty minutes early or go to bed thirty minutes later?

I had a client who told me she absolutely couldn't change anything to find fifteen minutes in her day for herself. I told her I couldn't work with her until she could, because nothing would change, and it was a waste of her money and my time. If you can't find time and space for yourself *in your own life* you are destined to live with anxiety until you can.

Remove any distractions from the time you carve out to connect with yourself. Silence your electronics, put a do-not-disturb sign on the door, and find a comfy position. I like to lay on my bed and close my eyes but sitting in a comfy chair or on a couch is also great — use what works best for you.

You may notice that your brain is swirling with thoughts and ideas, judgments, and criticisms. This is normal, just notice them passing through. Put your hand to your heart and imagine you are breathing through it. Take deep breaths, allowing your belly to expand on the inhale and contract on the exhale.

Now listen. What is your body telling you? What emotions are you feeling? Keep connecting in, a little deeper with each breath. Are you safe at that moment? Allow yourself to feel more deeply, centering into yourself, finding that peace and calm that exists inside. This is where your truth lies. This is how to connect to it, every day.

As you connect deeply to yourself, all the chaos of the day disappears. The to-do list doesn't matter, work doesn't exist, the dinner plans are forgotten, and the *shoulds* of the day are gone. At your core, you are love, you are light, and you shine brightly. This is the place your body and soul call you to when you are anxious. This is your refuge and safe place when the chaos of the outer world swirls around you.

How do you find more of *this* in your life and less of the chaos that surrounds you? By choosing you and choosing to create more of this experience for yourself. By trusting that you are worth it and deserve to have it because you are a human be-ing, not a human do-ing. Your worth is not connected to what you have or what you produce. Your worth is because you *are*.

From this calm, centered, embodied space, ask yourself these questions to begin to discover your truth. Use these questions along with your journal:

- What principles do you hold close to your heart?
- What moral values do you honor?
- What brings you joy?

- What would you do/ be if money weren't an issue, and nothing stood in your way?
- What matters most to you?

Contemplating these questions will bring you closer to yourself and your truth.

Building Trust

If you've been following what others have told you to be, you have been negating your true self. You have not been trustworthy to yourself. That trust has been broken. The same way you would need to rebuild trust in a relationship with another if it had been broken, you need to also rebuild that trust with yourself. Think about the things you've had to do with others in rebuilding trust — those are the same things you can do to rebuild trust with yourself. It's about acting with integrity.

To rebuild trust with yourself:

- Do what you say and say what you'll do.
- Keep your promises and commitments to yourself.
- Speak positively and kindly to yourself.
- Make time for yourself and show yourself you are important.
- Communicate in a truthful, kind way.

Be Honest with Yourself

Tell yourself the truth about everything. Don't sugarcoat things, making them seem better or worse than they are. Nothing will change if you're not calling it like it is. Lying to yourself about how you are is the way you're able to stay in any untenable situation (relationships, work, place) you are in.

- If you're not happy in your marriage, admit that.
- If you're not happy with the division of chores, admit that.
- If you feel taken for granted or taken advantage of, at work or home, admit that.
- If your work/ life balance is out of kilter, admit that.
- If you hate where you live, admit that.

Take an honest inventory of your life and make a list in your journal. Ask, *what is working and what is not working for you?* Do this without judgment and without making yourself wrong for wanting something better. This is the awareness or assessing part of the AREA process. Just telling yourself the truth about what you want and feel is refreshing and lifts a huge burden from your shoulders. What do you do next? That's right, release. What of these awarenesses are you ready to let go of? Then explore. What do you want instead? Finally, what next right action do you want to take to make that change?

Speak Kindly to Yourself

This can be summed up in one sentence: speak to yourself the way you would speak to your best friend.

Would you ever tell your friend she's stupid, fat, or ugly? No, of course not. If your best friend said anything like that to you, I don't think she would be your best friend anymore. You wouldn't trust her to have your back anymore, or to have your best interests at heart. But I'd bet my house you've said something like that to yourself. Speaking that way to yourself does nothing to encourage trust. Just stop it now.

One of my mentors once said to change the *S* word (stupid) to sexy, so every time you mess up and want to call yourself stupid, just say "I am soooo sexy." You had a sexy moment. How much better does it feel to say that to yourself? I know this sounds like a small, silly thing, but try it yourself and see how it feels. Not all healing work has to be serious. Every time I make a mistake and tell myself how sexy I am, I giggle a little, and my whole demeanor changes.

When you change how you speak to yourself and only allow yourself to say positive things, you stop the negative energy flow to yourself, you stop the self-hate.

Try this challenge for just a week. I promise it will change your life. Do you say such words as should, could, would, ought, must, have to, and need to? Remove those words from your vocabulary. Catch yourself when you say this and see if you can replace it with the words, "I want." I brought this up earlier, but I really want to emphasize this point to you. You create pain with these words because you are making yourself do something contrary to what you want. You also then shame or guilt yourself into doing it. People who love themselves and trust their choices

don't do this. Every time you catch yourself and reframe that for yourself, you're building trust within yourself and showing yourself that you are worthy of your own love and respect.

Keep Your Promises to Yourself

Whether you tell yourself you're going to do something or you're not going to do something, follow through with that. This goes for things that are major and for things that are inconsequential.

If you decide you're going to make time to exercise three days a week, put it on your calendar the same way you would put a doctor's appointment and keep it. If you have to reschedule because of an emergency, reschedule it for another time. If that's not possible, give yourself grace. Just don't make a habit of it.

The same thing goes if you're playing a game on your phone or watching a TV show. If you say to yourself, after this game or show I'm going to do xyz, then be true to your word. It's OK to have downtime where you disconnect from everything but making it a habit will only raise your anxiety and have you speaking poorly to yourself later.

This requires you to be present and conscious with yourself, deciding what you want more of in your life, and taking action to fulfill that need or desire. If you can't give that to yourself, how can you ever expect someone else to give it to you?

Make Time with Yourself

We want to spend time with people we love and enjoy. Do you remember the first time you fell in love? You couldn't wait to be around that person, you lived for their phone calls. It was devastating when they didn't call. Everything about them was magical. You wanted to know everything about them — what did they like to do, what's their favorite color, favorite food, favorite subject? What was their family like, what were their hopes and dreams for their life?

When you think of yourself, do you feel that same way? Do you see yourself as magical and alluring? Are you excited to spend time with yourself? Do you want to know everything about you? What would it be like to fall in love with yourself? Not in a weird self-obsessed narcissistic way but in a curious, "I want to learn more about you" way.

To do that you actually have to spend time with yourself asking these very questions. Now would be a great time to invest in a journal if you haven't already. Finding the answers to these questions and more shows you that you are important to you, it reminds you of all your amazing

qualities and builds self-confidence and self-esteem. It builds the amount of love and appreciation you have for yourself as well.

Keep an Intuition Journal

Each of us has intuition. We are constantly receiving guidance from our higher self, intuition, and higher power. Sometimes we call it a gut feeling. When we are disconnected from ourselves it's difficult to listen to (let alone follow) that still, small voice. Everyone I know who has ignored that voice has lived to regret it afterward.

If you are wondering if you have an intuition — you do! If you're not connecting to it there are ways to reconnect. I've found intuition will decrease if you're not listening and following it, and increase when you do, so the trick to increasing it is to pay attention.

The best way I've learned to turn this around is by keeping an intuition journal. Every time I got an intuitive "hit" as I call it, I jotted it down in a journal. That is all about acknowledging the awareness. Then you need to take action. You decide whether you follow the guidance or not. Just write down which you chose next to the awareness. And then see what happens. There will be times you don't have a moment to write it down but be sure to do so when you are able. A great example is when you're driving. You're not going to stop your car to write something down. I find my intuition comes in full force when driving — don't go this way, stay in this lane, take this exit instead. When I began listening, my trips became more pleasant.

As you keep an intuition journal, notice if your intuition increases. When you signal to yourself that you're ready and willing to listen and follow your intuition, your intuition will grow. Each time you follow your intuition, you increase your self-trust.

One Step at a Time

If you choose to make any of these things a practice, my advice is to focus on one at a time. Try it out, see how it feels, and make the changes you want. Don't overwhelm yourself by trying to change everything all at once, as it will be too much, and you'd probably stop. Rome wasn't built in a day! You are laying a foundation for a happier, less stressed you. Build that one stone at a time, finding how it fits before you move on to the next.

I hope your greatest takeaway here is that these are things you can choose to change. You can choose to focus on this way of healing, because there are things in your life that aren't working for you. This doesn't mean that you are broken and need to be fixed. It means there are adjustments

you can make that will bring you more peace, love, and acceptance. Your value is not in what you do, earn, or produce. Your value is in your *Be-ing*. You have value in your humanness and in your divinity. You can do this! I have total and complete faith in you.

Questions to Explore in Your Journal

- Which of these concepts do you want to work on first?
- Which concept do you think you might have the most difficulty with?
- How do you imagine life would be if you improved in these areas?



Chapter 10: Balance and Flow

“Happiness is not a matter of intensity, but of balance, order, rhythm, and harmony.”

— Thomas Merton

Richelle is a gorgeous woman, inside and out, and looks like she has it all together. She has a great job, a stable marriage of more than twenty years, and two grown daughters. She’s kind, sweet and generous. You can’t imagine her life being anything other than perfect. While it is true that she has a great life, she also had a great deal of anxiety because, like the rest of us, there were times in her life when she didn’t feel safe.

Richelle learned to find safety in controlling things. She became the uber-responsible one, always doing what had to be done, depending mostly on herself. After a bad first marriage ended, she made sure she never had to be dependent on a man again. It influenced and informed everything about her second marriage.

Her relationship with her father, her first male role model, was almost nonexistent. She learned early in life that she couldn’t depend on men, and she doesn’t. Even after he wasn’t there for her, she was still there for him, including when he asked her to be the executor of his estate when he dies. She doesn’t understand why he wants her to do it, because he never had time for her. And even when they speak, the relationship is superficial at best, confrontational at worst.

This is one of the many things Richelle has taken on herself, shouldering the responsibility even though she doesn’t want to do it. The things she keeps adding to herself, agreeing to do even though she doesn’t want to, are weighing her down and adding to her anxiety. It has shown up in her as an autoimmune disease.

During our second session, I had Richelle do an exercise with me. I had a jar full of coins, and I dumped them all out on the table. Those coins represented her time and energy on a daily basis, and I asked her how she would divide that up. A large bulk of the coins went to work. She

stated that she's been feeling more and more like she needs to take some time off of work and do some things for herself. The rest of it was broken up into the house, her husband, daughters, and friends. There was just a small amount left and she was deciding which pile those should go into. When I asked her, "Is that how much you have left for you?" She looked up, and I saw a painful realization on her face. When she was determining how she spent her time and energy, she hadn't even considered herself once.

If she wanted to add to the pile of resources, she allotted herself, she would need to take from the other pile. Which piles would take from? There were some things she was going to have to let go of; some decisions to make as to what she wanted, valued, and wanted to nurture, and let go of what was no longer serving her.

Balance

I recommend you try the exercise I did with Richelle. How do you spend your allotted time and energy on a daily or weekly basis? Be honest with yourself — no one is going to know, except you. Where are you wanting to make shifts to rebalance your life?

Richelle was looking for balance, or homeostasis, in her life. Homeostasis is the body's tendency to seek and maintain balance even when things change externally. This point is very important! The external changes are those things outside of you that you have no control over — other people, drama, chaos, work, weather, the economy, and similar. Being balanced is being centered and able to ebb and flow with these changes. It's like being in the eye of the storm, where all is calm, even with the raging storm surrounding you. In that place of balance, you don't have to push through life, having to continuously think and rethink everything. You are in flow and accepting of your emotions.

When you are out of balance you are not in flow, life feels hard, every little thing can feel like a mountain, and you become irritable and cranky. That's when your anxiety is going to show up. When the lack of balance becomes too great your anxiety will appear, and you will be completely engulfed in the storm that surrounds you.

It is important to notice when you begin getting out of balance, so you can right the ship quickly and avoid going into anxiety. Since every change begins with awareness, take a few moments each day to check in with yourself. How are you feeling on a scale of one to ten, with ten being fabulous? If your number is anything less than an eight, why is that? Where is the chaos in your life that needs to be addressed? By now, you are well versed in the AREA process, so after

identifying the chaos, determine what you want to release, what you want instead, and take whatever action to make that change.

If your number is any lower than a three, there needs to be a correction. When you're that out of balance in any area of your life, I know you want nothing more than to get back into balance immediately. Unfortunately, it just doesn't work that way. Sometimes you have to go to the opposite extreme for a bit and experience what that feels like first before you settle somewhere in the middle. Have you ever watched a pendulum swing back and forth from left to right and back again, over and over? You know it eventually stops in the middle, but not before making the trip from left to right many times. This is how change happens in your life, too.

To illustrate this, consider boundaries with dieting. If you've ever been on a diet, you know exactly what I'm talking about. When you start a new way of eating you make changes, all at once, in your diet, activity levels, and food choices. You eliminate all the things you love so you lose weight. You love tacos, but you know you can't have them on your diet. There'll be nothing you'll want more than a taco! Maybe you avoid those tacos for a whole month, but then you just have to have one. You stop at your favorite taco place and order two or three, because it's been so long! And if you're going to have tacos, what's an order of guacamole and chips too? The damage has already been done.

Afterward you're stuffed, and you feel guilty about losing your self-control. You go back to eating strictly again until you can't take it anymore. You allow yourself something else you love, maybe a margarita (because I'm on a Mexican food theme here). Perhaps you yo-yo diet for years before you decide to just make moderate changes. Losing weight doesn't happen as quickly as you like this way. But you will lose if you make this diet a lifestyle change, one you can live with long-term. It's about finding *your* way and what balance looks like for *you*. The extremes are just part of the process.

Sure, that was a silly example, but it makes the point. If you've been running your energy one way, and it hasn't been working, the first step in coming into balance is trying something completely different. If you're a giver, try only receiving for a change. If you always say yes, say no for a while. If you tend to drive, be a passenger. It will feel awkward at first because it's something new. You might be surprised that you actually enjoy the change. Eventually, you will find what balance looks like to you, it will be that sweet spot where you have peace with yourself.

Also know that being balanced doesn't always mean that you're always in that middle zone. Sometimes you prefer the extremes, but it all evens out in the end. That's cool, too. Whichever your style, it's perfect as long as it works for you! What doesn't work is being stuck at either end of the spectrum.

Take a moment now to assess where you are in this moment in regards to balance in the following areas of your life:

- Spending/ Saving
- Love/ Sex
- Giving/ Receiving
- Doing/ Being
- Boundaries/ People Pleasing
- Work/ Home
- Responsibility/ Pleasure

If you are in the middle, a level four to six, that's awesome, it's a balanced number. Two or three, seven or eight means you need to make some tweaks to bring you more in balance. If you're a zero or one, nine or ten or you might try the other end of the spectrum for a bit to remember what that feels like and then come back to center.

If, for example, you've been doing a lot, working hard at everything, try just *being* for a day. To just be means to leave your responsibilities behind. Experience things that bring you joy. Meditate, read a book, take a stroll, spend time with friends. When you remember how delicious it is to just *be*, and experience that viscerally in your body, you'll remember to incorporate that into your day no matter what.

Flow

Flow is smooth, even movement. When you are in a flow state, you are in the zone, in full energized focus, enjoying the process of the activity. Nothing seems to get in your way or bring you down; things happen almost effortlessly. From an energetic perspective, you are fully open and not blocking your energy flow in any way. At that moment, you are fully in love with everything. Things may seem brighter and smell sweeter. It is an intoxicating feeling. Though it may seem near impossible to live in this state of being all the time at such a high level, it's possible

to live in this state at varying degrees and more frequently. People react differently to you when you are in that flow state, there is an energy about you that is attractive as hell!

When I think about being in this state, I remember this one day when I was at Costco shopping. I was feeling so *in flow* that morning, and as I walked into the store, people immediately started looking at me. Now, I am not ugly, but I'm no supermodel either. I'm north of fifty and I have an *ahem* mature body. It wasn't about how I looked, but how I *felt* to people. I honestly felt like a bright light was glowing from within, as if someone was shining a spotlight on me.

Me, in flow, felt amazing, and yet disconcerting in another way. I wasn't used to people noticing me. For someone who learned in childhood that bringing attention to yourself could mean trouble, it began to feel uncomfortable, and I started automatically dimming my light. In other words, I started putting blocks up to change my true nature. Consciously aware of all of these things, I became an observer of my actions. I thought about the times in the past that I have done that. Making myself small has never brought me happiness or joy, instead, it's made me feel less-than. All those thoughts happened in a split second, although it felt like minutes. At that moment, I decided I wasn't going to make myself small anymore and I shifted back to that state of flow. I've never enjoyed shopping more.

Negative Inputs

Everything that comes into your life either adds energy or takes it away from you. We call those inputs. Those inputs also either bring you closer to yourself or take you further away, which means they make it easier to be your authentic self or it makes you hide parts of yourself.

To increase the time you spend in balance and flow, continue decreasing your negative energy inputs using all the techniques we've discussed thus far, especially AREA. If it doesn't feel good, eliminate it. If it's sucking your energy, let it go. This applies to things and people. If you have a friend who leaves you exhausted after your interactions, limit the time you spend with her. It is imperative, as you heal your anxiety, to protect your energy from negative input from outside yourself and from within yourself as well.

Many of my clients have identified the news and social media as huge negative inputs that increase their anxiety. While they want to stay informed and know what is happening in the world, if they are constantly connected it becomes a negative. My client Megan was extremely overwhelmed during the pandemic. Working together, I suggested she do a media detox. In

limiting the amount of time she spent connecting to these sources. In doing this, her anxiety dissipated to an acceptable level for her.

Positive Inputs

To increase the amount of time you spend in balance and flow, increase your positive energy inputs. Identify ways to raise that energy. To help you, I've compiled a list here for you to consider.

Add More Self-Care

As you are making these decisions and doing new things, I highly encourage you to make *exquisite* self-care part of your process. Often people think self-care is just mani-pedi and face masks, indulgences that are sometimes considered selfish and time-consuming. Self-care is just what it says — taking care of yourself. It's making yourself a priority in your life, not an afterthought.

As you read through these ideas, keep the aspect of balance in the forefront of your thoughts. If you're already doing much of this, there may not be a need to add anything else. But if you find more chaos and negativity building up in your life, try replacing some of those inputs with some of the following.

Self-care is taking care of your physical body. Making sure you get enough sleep each day, moving your body in a way that pleases you, and consuming foods with proper nutrition are all self-care. Walking outside and being in nature is a great way to de-stress and take care of *you*.

Self-care is taking care of your mental health. Setting boundaries, saying no, asking for what you need, asking for help, forgiving yourself, and other mindful changes in patterns of thoughts and behavior contribute to your mental health. This requires time and space alone. It requires you to disconnect from the chaos outside of yourself.

Some other ideas for mental health self-care are the following: Ask yourself which activities and relationships are truly adding value to your life right now and eliminate those things that aren't life-giving. Creating a gratitude list is also great self-care — it reminds you of all the ways you are blessed and will take you out of negative thinking. Journal your thoughts and feelings. Keep connected — hang out with someone you love, either in person, via Zoom, FaceTime, or on the phone.

Self-care is tapping into your creative energy. This is all second chakra energy. Find hobbies that you enjoy that create beauty in your life, whether it's painting, drawing, cross-stitching, jewelry making, scrapbooking, decorating, or learning something new. The second chakra energy is also used to create businesses. This is where you *give birth* to things in your life.

Self-care is managing your financial life. Financial worries will zap your Zen state. It's caring for yourself to care for your financial health. Self-boundaries with money are a gift to yourself. Avoidance in this area will take you out of balance and flow and bring back your anxiety.

Someone once asked me something that changed my relationship with money. She asked me how I treat money. Do I avoid it, or do I treat it like a friend? At the time, I avoided it and got rid of it just as soon as I got it! Why would money want to have a relationship with me? Now I appreciate it and value it. I no longer ignore it.

What does your relationship with money look like? This is a great question to journal about.

Self-care is feeling your feelings. This is one of the kindest things you can do for yourself. They are called feelings for a reason. You are supposed to *feel* them! *What doesn't work?* Thinking about them, stuffing them down, or ignoring them doesn't work. Avoiding feeling your feelings will bring anxiety and take you out of flow and balance.

Self-care is action. There are times when the best way you can love yourself is to take action. It's doing the things you know are for your highest good but are difficult to do. If you find yourself procrastinating, look at why that is. What is the fear? Fear only has power when it's in the shadows. Bring it to the light and look deeply into its eyes. You are more powerful than your fear can ever be.

Self-care is ongoing, not a onetime experience. Can you imagine saying to your child, "I took care of you yesterday. Wasn't that enough?" That seems crazy, doesn't it? Remember that you need to take care of yourself every day. Nothing says "I love you" to someone as much as caring for them. If you have ever asked yourself how you can love yourself more, this will give you a huge jump start. When you wake up each morning, look at yourself in the mirror and ask yourself, "How do I want to love me today?" And then do it!

Other Ways to Increase Positive Energy

Treat yourself like your own best friend. Have grace for yourself when you fall short of your expectations, instead of beating yourself up. Instead of judging yourself or others, get curious. Practice being an impartial observer instead.

Get authentic. Allow others to see the real you by getting vulnerable in a good way. The idealized version of you is not real, and it doesn't create connection and intimacy. You will always question whether they like *you* for *you*. In the back of your mind, you will be thinking, "If you knew the real me, you wouldn't like me." And in that way, you will never trust that they love you. Allowing others to see the parts of you you've deemed unacceptable will create true intimacy in your life, and not just in the bedroom.

Healing Technique

Showers of joy, hope, and love™. This is a technique that I channeled from the source as a quick way to feel more positive and take you out of chaos, which brings you into balance. You have these emotions within you.

1. Lie down in a comfortable position.
2. See/ feel/ imagine an opening at the top of your head.
3. Visualize joy coming out of the top of your head, circling you, and coming back up your body in a toroidal flow, completely circling you like a fountain. I see joy as white streamers of light.
4. Visualize love coming out the top of your head and around the same way. I see love as a golden light.
5. Visualize hope coming out the top of your head and around the same way. I see hope as an iridescent pastel light.
6. Sit in this flow for as long as you like.
7. When you are done, place your hand on the top of your head to close it.
8. Notice how you feel after this experience. Know that you can come back to this whenever you like.

Questions to Explore in Your Journal

- How in balance and flow do you feel right now?
- What negative inputs would you like to release?
- What inputs would you like to change to increase that balance and flow?
- What self-care would you like to add to your life?



Chapter 11: Creating Your Life through Intention and Essence

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, ‘Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?’ Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world.”

— Marianne Williamson, *A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of “A Course in Miracles”*

Have you ever heard of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs? It’s an idea in psychology that was proposed by Abraham Maslow in 1943. It’s a pyramid with five levels that stack on each other to the top. The lowest levels are made up of the most basic needs. The top level addresses the more complex ones.

Once lower-level needs have been met, you can move up to the next level of needs. The bottom needs are considered deficiency needs. They arise due to deprivation. Satisfying these needs are important to avoid unpleasant consequences. The first level is basic needs, such as food, water, and shelter. The second level is safety. The third level is love and belonging. The fourth level is esteem.

The fifth need is a growth need, not due to a lack of something, but from a desire to grow as a person. That top level is self-actualization, which is a need to grow and develop as a person, to achieve individual potential.

The process I’ve been taking you through in this book, The Gibson Reconnection Process™, loosely follows this pyramid. All of the previous chapters have been about disconnecting from all that is not you and then reconnecting to your basic needs — safety

(grounding), social (boundaries, conflict, learning the hidden causes of anxiety), and esteem (discovering your truth and trusting yourself). Each has built on the level before it. In this chapter I will show you how to reconnect to your intention so you can grow and develop beyond the anxiety you've experienced, to shine your bright, beautiful light out into the world.

You've known darkness. Some of your darkest days have happened when your anxiety was out of control, and you weren't sure you could continue. When you are in that dark place it's next to impossible to feel your authentic power. Now is the time to connect more fully to your light, power, and reason for deciding to incarnate on this planet. Meeting your basic needs through your work in this book has prepared you for this growth work chapter.

Christina's Story

Christina was a young mom with two children. She wanted to make major life changes. She was married to a classic narcissist who was controlling and manipulating and breaking free from that relationship was proving to be a challenge. Her husband was weaponizing their children against her, and it was breaking her heart. She could hear her husband's influence in her boys' words when they returned from his home. She felt stuck and blocked in every direction. How could she get through this and make the changes she knew she needed to make?

When Christina came to me, I was in my last year of energy healing school. We were delving deeply into the energetic aspects called HARA. Hara is a level of our energy field that relates to one's life purpose and deeper spiritual purpose. It's where you've set and held your intentions for your life. It is the foundation on which the auric field rests. The points on it are your Tan Tien (where your power originates from), Soul Seat (your purpose and passion), and Individuation Point (your connection to Source).

Because she was truly unable to make these changes happen, I wanted to assess Christina's Hara. Using my pendulum, I checked all the points and connections between them. My pendulum was completely still, meaning none were functioning. That explained her feeling stuck and blocked, not knowing which way to turn. She was not connected to her own power, nor her purpose. She was existing and fighting her way through life.

With my training, I opened and energized the points and their connections. She felt better and more empowered after the work that we did, and she continued making important changes in her life. She is living life more through her intention than her willpower. She now helps her own clients find a path through their difficult times.

Understanding Intention

Understanding Hara / Intention

To understand what it is like to be in your intention, it's helpful to look at three points or aspects of your Hara.

Your *Tan Tien* is your point of personal power that is located one and half to two inches below your belly button. It is through the Tan Tien that you ground into the earth and generate your energy for your physical life.

Have you ever seen martial artists who karate-chop boards in half with their hands? Before they break those boards, they connect into this place of power.

Your *Soul Seat* can also be called your high heart. This is where you hold your longings for this life. It's your connection to your purpose and your passion. It's located between the heart chakra and the throat chakra. It leads you through life to accomplish your soul's purpose.

I believe that we each have a personal purpose or reason for being here as well as a gift to offer mankind in service. If you have ever wondered what your purpose is, this is where you can connect to find that.

The *Individuation Point* is where you individuated from Source, the Universe, God. You're your connection to the Divine, and this is your first point of individuality as the self was created. It's located three and a half feet above your head.

All of these points, connected in a line and anchored into the core of the earth, make up your Hara. *Being in Hara* means living with intentionality. In simple terms what does all that mean? It means to live as you intended when you choose to incarnate in this lifetime, you need to be connected to your power and your purpose as well as the collective (people, animals, spirit, nature, Source).

The definition of intention seems rather weak to me. It's defined as "an aim or a plan." That doesn't properly convey the power and depth of an intention. Intention is so much more than a hope, wish, or a prayer — it is all of those things with action behind it. When you realize an intention has your personal power behind it, is connected to your purpose and your passion, and that you are connecting into Source (whatever that looks like to you) to help make it happen — wow! You could move mountains!

Do you trust that you are connected, in an unseen way, to everything that exists? Do you believe that you have a unique purpose in life, and the tools and experiences to make that purpose happen? Are you living your life from that place? Are you aligned with your intention each day? If you're not, please don't beat yourself up about it. Most people aren't. Most people are just trying to make it to the end of the day so they can get up again the next day and do it all over again. Most people are just trying to get their needs met and keep their head above water.

How You Disconnected from Hara / Intention

Each point on the Hara, or the level of intention, can become distorted through trauma, which causes you to disconnect. The Tan Tien can be distorted either at birth or later in life. This distortion makes it difficult to ground, feel safe, and stay present in your body. The Soul Seat can be shrouded in great sadness, making it difficult to connect to the meaning of life or your purpose. The Individuation Point, or ID Point, can become distorted when you are doubtful or distrustful about your relationship to Source. This can come from trauma related to religion or a distrust of anything that can't be seen.

Distortions in the Hara line will affect not only your health but also your ability to create or manifest the life, relationships, and connection to self and others that you want.

Reconnecting to Your Intentions

Connecting to Your Power

You are so powerful! You have the ability to make your dreams come true and build the life of your dreams. Perhaps you don't feel that way right now, or maybe that feeling comes and goes. Maybe you feel like you were absent the day that power was handed out. I assure you it's there, and you can tap into it.

What is power exactly? I find that many women shy away from that word. Often power has been a weapon that has been used against them, or it has been taken from them. Your power is your ability to impact or influence things, and I know you have it!

Your power can be found in what you say, what you think, and what you do. The good news is you've already begun to address these as you've worked through this book. As you've done that, have you experienced a shift in your power? Is there a shift in how you speak to yourself, work through conflict, set boundaries, and speak your truth? Stop cutting yourself down and speak

kindly to yourself. Keep doing this work and the power you feel within yourself will continue to rise. You learn that you can handle anything that life throws your way.

I often picture this as being out in the ocean with wave after wave coming toward me. I can choose to fight the waves, which will take me under every time. Or I can choose to let go and body surf to the shore, effortlessly. When you are in your power, it's the same. It's effortless intention. Notice that the more you are connected to your power, the less you will feel the need to control.

To physically connect to your Tan Tien, you can either stand or do the following exercise lying down:

- Bring all your fingertips together with each hand.
- Find your naval and go two finger widths below it. Point all fingertips into that space.
- Under your fingertips is your Tan Tien. Imagine it as a small red ball of light and imagine sending energy through your fingertips to help it grow.
- As you send energy, the area below your fingertips will grow warm. Visualize the ball growing bigger with energy and becoming redder as it grows.
- Send that energy down into the earth's core. You can do this through visualization. Imagine that energy permanently connecting to the core and then bring it back up to the Tan Tien, under your fingertips.
- Notice how you feel. Do you feel more grounded? Have more energy? Can you feel the heat radiating in your belly?
- Next you will move on to your Soul Seat to continue this technique.

Connecting to Your Purpose and Passion

What good is power if you don't have a way to direct it for good? Without purpose, power can be abusive. People flounder in their life when they don't have a purpose. Life becomes a day-to-day struggle to exist. Perhaps you know you are meant for something bigger than what you are experiencing right now. Your collective life purpose is how you want to give back to the world, how you want to help make this a better place.

If you are having trouble connecting to your purpose, ask yourself, *what breaks my heart, what moves me to tears?* Often the circumstances of your life, the events that have wounded you, make such an impact that you want to help others with similar problems. Answering that question will put you in the direction of your purpose. Ask what lights you up? What could you talk about for hours on end to anyone that would listen? Other questions to consider are: What do you yearn for? What kind of life do you want to live? How do you want to make a difference in this world? Journal your answers to these questions.

Your purpose can change over time. When my boys were growing up, my purpose was to help them to become outstanding citizens and also make sure they stayed alive! When I had almost completed that purpose, my next purpose was to heal the wounds of my past. I think that mission will always continue for me, but a higher calling came in, as well. It centered on helping others heal their wounds. That is my world purpose, my gift of service to others.

I've found that connecting to that individual purpose and accomplishing it has to happen before you begin to work on your world purpose. There are no time frames to these. In fact, you don't even have to do either. You could absolutely choose not to have a purpose. But it adds a richness and a dimension to your life that can be accessed in no other way. It is completely your choice.

To physically connect to your purpose, continue the exercise from the previous section:

- After connecting to your Tan Tien, just below your belly button, leave one hand there, connected at your fingertips.
- With your other hand, draw a line up to a point between your heart and your throat. This is where your Soul Seat is located.
- Bring the energy of the Tan Tien up to the Soul Seat.
- Feel/ see/ imagine a ball of light beneath your fingertips charging and growing, just as you did the Tan Tien.
- Send the energy of your purpose down through the Tan Tien and into the core of the earth to ground it using visualization or imagery, attaching it permanently.
- Bring that grounded, purposeful energy back up to your Soul Seat.
- Next you will move on to your ID Point to continue this technique.

Connecting to Source

I've always said it would be a cruel joke to send us to this planet and be like, "Well, good luck! You're going to need it! You're on your own." Wouldn't that just be awful?

We are all connected. Any choice I make will affect you in some way, and any choice you make will affect me. I choose also to believe that we are surrounded by helpers in both physical form and spiritual form. That starts with my spirit guides that lead me daily in life and in my practice. I do believe in angels and archangels as well. Then there is Source. You might call that God, Universe, or Spirit, whatever you feel connected to. I like to take the first initials of each of these words, as it forms the name GUS, which feels much more personal. Additionally, I feel my loved ones who have passed around me, my ancestors who are still alive through me, supporting me and guiding me.

If everything and everyone who has ever been and ever will be are connected, and I am one of those people, I am never truly alone and am supported to the *n*th degree. I tap into that each day, not only in my times of need.

The same is true for you. You are not alone. Even if you don't believe in God, can you conceive of the possibility of your ancestors guiding you? If you only believe in the here and now and this physical world, can you connect to people who can love and support you as you begin to heal from this anxiety?

To physically connect to Source and all that is, continue the exercise from the previous sections:

- While keeping your one hand at your Tan Tien, move the hand that was at your Soul Seat to two feet above your head, or as far as you can reach.
- Imagine/ see/ feel a ball of light at that spot as you bring the energy from your Tan Tien and Soul Seat to meet it.
- Allow the energy from the other two to charge the ID Point.
- When it feels charged, send that energy down through the Soul Seat, the Tan Tien, and then deep into the earth's core using your imagination or visualization.
- Bring that grounded energy back up through all three points, feeling the grounding and connection in all points.

Notice if you feel any different after doing this technique. Like all the other techniques I've taught you, this will take practice. You might notice an immediate shift, but it may also take some time for you to feel the grounded, more connected feeling. There is no right or wrong way to experience this technique. It would be helpful for you to write about anything you experience in your journal. As you continue to *connect to Hara*, you won't have a more positive intentionality toward life. There will be a greater sense of your own personal power, an urge to create greater purpose in your life, and a feeling of being more supported, as if everything that happens has a reason.

After using this technique is an excellent time to set an intention.

Setting an Intention

Setting an intention at the start of each day or before you begin a project can make a huge difference on how your day or project goes. An intention brings you into alignment with what you want to create.

When setting an intention, I like to include feeling words. The more you can visualize and connect with all of your senses (hear, see, feel, smell, and even taste) when setting intention, the more powerful it is.

For example, before I sit down to write, I set my intention that the right words flow effortlessly through my fingers, that GUS is focusing my words, and that we are creating this book together in service to the world. I intend that what I convey be received by those who are called to read my book. I *see* my reader (you) reading and understanding the steps and then putting them to use. Sometimes I will verbalize all of this out loud. Other times, I say it quietly to myself. Other times, it feels important to write it down in my journal.

After setting the intention, the next step is to take action. No action equals a hope, wish, or prayer. Action is what takes these to the next level of making them an intention. Decide what is the next right action to take to make that intention come alive.

After doing the Hara technique, decide what intention you would like to make in your own life. Write that down in your journal now, along with any actions you want to take to launch that intention into your life.

Connecting to Your Core Essence

Imagine there are levels of energy. Your physical body is one level. Your Aura (or energy field) is another, and that is interconnected with your physical level. Your Hara is a third level, which is connected to and through your physical body and Aura. There is one more level of energy that is connected through all the others. That is your Core.

You're familiar with your Core when you're exercising. This is something different, though similarly placed. This Core represents our oneness with the Divine and our source of inspiration. It also represents our own unique individual qualities of the Divine, which is referred to as Core Essence. Your Core Essence is the qualities, or characteristics, that make you who you are. These are things that you naturally embody within yourself.

To access your Core qualities, take a moment to consider what you are good at. What have you been praised for by others? Journal all of these wonderful qualities that you possess. To get you started, consider the following examples:

- kind
- generous
- loving
- funny
- disciplined
- sincere
- responsible
- forgiving
- organized
- flexible
- diligent
- dependable
- honest
- positive
- wise
- respectful
- sincere
- thorough
- tolerant
- patient
- loyal
- humble
- grateful
- creative
- courageous
- attentive
- compassionate

If you have difficulty doing this, you can ask people around you what they think your Core qualities are, what strengths they think you have when they think of you. You may be surprised when you hear what they have to say!

Now I want you to think of people whom you admire in your life — friends, role models, and mentors. What Core qualities come to mind in them that you admire? What qualities do they possess that you admire and would love to have yourself? Write those down in your journal as well.

I want you to know that what you admire in others, and would like to see in yourself, are already in you! For you to recognize it in others means it is already in you. Perhaps it just hasn't been fully developed yet.

Keep this list of your Core qualities somewhere accessible that you can get to quickly. Whenever you are down or at a low point in your life (because stuff happens and you're not always going to feel like you're on top of the world), pull this list out and remind yourself of your amazingness. This list can be evergreen — an ever-evolving list of all your goodness. When you are reminded of a new Core quality that you possess, take a moment and add it to your list. When you realize that one of the Core qualities that you admire in others is also one of yours, add that to your list. The gift of you is all of these pieces and parts, and the world is better off for you being here.

What does living with intention and in your essence look like?

As you've been doing your work through this book you've been questioning beliefs, ways of being, and things you were taught from the beginning of time. Is it true for you, or is it just a placeholder in your psyche? You are waking up to the truth of who you are at the deeper level of your Core and taking a chance on choosing you over all the conditioning and expectations that others have had for you.

You've begun making more space for you in your life. You've started releasing things that don't serve you anymore, because they don't bring you happiness. You're learning how to set better boundaries and deal with any conflict that ensues. You're realizing that your anxiety has roots in your past and have begun exploring that. You're learning to trust yourself more and you're recognizing your true power. The more you do all of these things, the safer you will feel in your own body and the more you will be in this state of balance and flow which brings even more happiness and joy in your life. From this healing state you get to choose what new things you will allow in and when.

This is a place of effortless intention, living in your purpose and standing in your power while connected to everyone and everything and embodying your Core qualities. And you will feel it whenever you are in it. Inside you feel happy; you will be vibrating at a higher, finer frequency that feels light. Good things just happen in your life, even if you don't plan them to the *n*th degree. You will also notice that you don't have to push as hard to make things happen in your life. Doors open, things seem to fall into place, you're led in the right direction, and things seem almost too

easy. You may think these events are coincidences, but there's such a randomness to coincidences. These events feel purposeful. You are living in the juicy yumminess of life. You attract things effortlessly, and it seems all is well with the world. You will be able to surrender more and let go of any need to control. When you are connected to your Hara and Core this way, there is no anxiety, because you are being authentically *you* in every way. Do this work consistently, connecting to the deepest truth of who you are, and you'll hold that place. Sounds awesome, doesn't it?

Healing Technique

Multidimensional self-connection™. This is also a channeled technique that I use with my clients. Its purpose is to connect with yourself at the same time in three levels of your field. It brings your creativity, purpose, and essence together.

1. Place your right hand on your second chakra, located right around your belly button. Here you are connecting with your creativity.
2. Place your left hand on your high heart (upper chest between your heart and throat), connecting to your passion and purpose. Allow the energy to connect between those two points.
3. Move your right hand to a point above your chest to connect to your core essence. Feel the energy connect with the other two points.
4. The energy forms a triangle, and in the center of that triangle they combine into a new energy. Allow it to incorporate and grow by visualizing a ball of energy. Then allow that to fill your whole energy field and body, connecting more deeply to your creativity, purpose, and essence, all at the same time.
5. Sit in this energy for as long as you like. When you are finished, simply open your eyes.
6. Notice how you feel after this self-healing technique.

Questions to Explore in Your Journal

- When exploring the parts of Hara/ Intention, which are the easiest for you? Which are more difficult (if any)?

- How much control do you need to have generally? After doing the Hara connection, how has that amount changed?
- When exploring your Core qualities, did any surprise you?



Chapter 12: When Life Gives You Lemons

“Our anxiety does not come from thinking about the future, but from wanting to control it.”

— *Kahlil Gibran*

Over the past year my husband, Matt, had four brain surgeries to correct a blood flow malformation in his brain that was causing severe symptoms of sudden intense vertigo, followed by profuse sweating and violent vomiting. Any time his blood pressure was elevated for any reason, it could cause one of these attacks with the potential for a stroke or an aneurysm. His life was on the line each and every day. As they attempted to repair the flow of blood in his brain, he was off work for nine months. He was sleeping close to eighteen hours a day, which is what his body needed to heal.

In addition to dealing with this, I was confronting the deaths of my father and two dear friends died, COVID, and a sewer backup in our home, all while running my healing practice. It was a complete shit show, but I thought I was handling it like a champ. I didn't have anxiety or depression, and I hadn't fallen apart. I was patting myself on the back pretty hard. Had all that happened twelve years ago, I wouldn't have been doing well.

Then my body said, “Uncle”; I had a mini stroke. I had a few stressful things happen (minor in comparison to everything else) that put me over the edge, and my body let me know in a very visceral way that all was not well. I'm beyond grateful I'm still here. It wasn't my time to go, but it was a warning sign. I had forgotten to take care of myself. I know firsthand that when I don't treat myself as if I'm *at least* as important as everyone else in my family, my body will redirect me in a very physical way.

I realized I was holding it all together again, trying to be there for my husband, friends, and clients. I was taking care of myself in many ways — acupuncture, chiropractic care, massage — but it was not enough.

Big New Stresses

You will get to a point where you will have your anxiety in check and will feel amazing. You have many tools to use now whenever you are in a stressful situation to control any anxiety that might appear. Yay you! That shows that you are doing the work and getting results. You may feel great for years and years, and then it will happen. There will come a time that something knocks you off your feet. It's big and overwhelming. You will again feel like you are drowning and can't find your air. You will forget everything that you've learned and feel powerless to help yourself. Your grounding will be gone, and you may collapse. You may even feel shame that you're not handling it well or able to control it. Please know in this moment of pain and fear that you've not gone back to the beginning, you haven't undone all the good work you've done. You're just having a very human moment, and it's going to be OK.

It's important to know that moments like these *will* happen. It's not a matter of *if* but *when* something like this will occur again. In that moment, your body will react however it's going to react. Allow it to happen and don't fight it. Now is the time for triage. If you can follow this process, it can help what is happening in your body in the moment:

- Start with your breath, breathing deeply in and out as you keep your eyes open.
- Ask yourself at that moment, are you in immediate danger? If so, get to somewhere safe as quickly as you can and continue this process.
- Feel your feet to try to ground. This may take extreme effort but try as best you can. If you purchased a grounding mat this would be the perfect time to get it out and use it to support yourself.
- Question your thoughts. You are going to have so many thoughts swirling around in your head, most of them fear based. Asking the question of each thought: "Is this really true?" can help you to connect to the truth in each moment and not let the fear take over.
- Center back into yourself and come back to your breath.
- Repeat until you feel a sense of calm again.

It will be the moments, days, and weeks after that you will remember all the tools you've learned and begin to find your footing again by using them. That's OK. Remember that after

something goes to the extreme, it's not going back to balance right away; it will take time. If you feel stuck, make one change, one movement. There is no need to overcorrect.

Remember the Truth

In those very difficult moments, I want you to remember the following. Bookmark this page so you can come back to it as you need to.

You are a force of nature. Women who have been traumatized have enormous capacity to be the most powerful creature of all because you are resilient. You've been through the fire and come through it all. Every difficult experience honed you into the amazing woman you are. Every wounding, every trauma, has given you strength, commitment, empathy, and experience. It's worn off the rough edges and sculpted you into perfection into the beautiful being you are today.

The one thing you know is that you can never go back to what was. The only way is forward, and nothing is going to stop you. Some will say you can't do it, and you say, "Watch me" and prove them wrong. They don't understand your capacity to not only survive but also thrive.

Once you've made a choice to make a change and follow through, what you gain is more of you, more of your essence. You know your worth, what you have to offer this world, and the price people will have to pay to enter your realm and it is worth the price of admission, no matter how high.

Have you ever heard of kintsugi? It is the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery by mending the areas of breakage with lacquer dusted or mixed with powdered gold. It treats breakage and repair as part of the history of the object rather than something to disguise. In this way, the damage is illuminated, and the object is now more valuable than before.

You, I, and we are much like that repaired piece of pottery. We bear the scars of our history but those things we think broke us are what make us shine now.

Whatever this event was that just occurred and made you lose your grounding, whatever it is, will soon be just another scar that will make you even more valuable.

Recovering after Another Event

1. Let It Go

You experienced a traumatic event and then found your grounding again; now is the time to allow yourself to have all of your feelings. Allow yourself to feel them all. Be the observer and

watch what comes up without having to judge it or change it. Trust me, better out than in! You don't want to have to swim through your old feelings twenty years from now, so give them space now. Cry, scream, pound a pillow on your bed, cuss, sob; whatever is there, allow it to be. Just don't collapse. If you find yourself buckling in on yourself, stand up and arch backward as you support your lower back. Collapsing will store those emotions back in your body, while arching back will release them.

2. Determine What You Need

When you are done, when you've gotten all your feelings out, I encourage you to sit quietly and connect to your heart. What do you need now at this moment? Whatever that is, give it to yourself if you can. If you need something from someone else, ask that person if they can give it to you. Your needs are valid and deserve to be met.

3. Determine Your Support System

Who can best support you right now? Go through the list you made and see who you need to call. If that person can't help, find another friend, family member, or trusted individual who can.

4. Identify Your Boundaries

Are there any boundaries that you need to set? Does anything need to change because of this event? Sometimes those boundaries are with others, and sometimes they are boundaries that we need to set with ourselves.

5. Handle Any Conflict

Again, this conflict could be with another or with yourself.

6. Were You Triggered?

Did anything come up with this event that triggered a past event or memory? Now is the time to sit with that and connect to that part of you that got triggered. How old is that part? What happened and how did she feel? And what did she need?

7. Trust Yourself

You've got this. Don't abandon yourself by pushing away the difficulty. Embrace the pain and its wisdom and learn from it. Don't go into the "shoulda, coulda, must, have tos." You are

resilient and strong. See it for what it is instead of making it seem better. After all, if you put lipstick on a pig, it's still a pig.

8. Set Your Intention

How do you want to move forward? Come up with your plan and set it in motion. Rely on your personal power, connect to your purpose and passion, and allow help from the powers that be.

9. Come into Balance Again

Taking those steps, however long they take, will bring you back into balance and flow again. The more you use this process the better you become at it, and the quicker you can come back into coherency.

After my major health event, I followed my own steps, and it took me about two weeks to come back into balance. The more you embrace this with not only the big things that happen in life but also the smaller things, the more it will serve you in the most amazing ways. You will know that you can handle anything that life throws your way. My motto is that as long as I am still breathing I can still exact change in my life.

Questions to Explore in Your Journal

- What comes up for you when you think about having another stressful event?
- Notice which of these steps you have any resistance to.
- Which step do you need more help with?



Chapter 13: What Holds You Back

“Nothing diminishes anxiety faster than action.”

— *Walter Anderson*

Twelve years ago, I picked up a book, read it, and did the exercises it suggested. In doing so, I changed my life. What was it about that particular book and not the other seventy self-help books I had on my bookshelf? I read 85 percent of them; I always had a book in my hand. I knew there was something terribly wrong in my life, and I was desperately looking for the answers. But nothing was working. Was it that it had exercises at the bottom of each chapter, things for me to explore? Was it just that I had reached the “rock bottom” that so many twelve step programs talk about? Was it just that I was finally ready to do the inner work that healing required? I don’t know, maybe it was some combination of them all.

I do know that when I got to a particular part of the book, I hit my edge, and I was done because I was stuck. I reached my mental and emotional capacity and didn’t know where to go next. I reached out to my friend (and former cousin-in-law) Kristen because I trust her opinion. She suggested that I go see her friend Jen who is an energy healer. I didn’t know what that was, or even if I believed in it, but I was ready to try anything because I was that desperate. My thought was that if I didn’t like the session, I didn’t have to go back; there was nothing to lose. I ended up having the most amazing experience of my life. I could feel the pent-up anger that I didn’t even know I had leaving my body. At the end of the session, I had a peace that I had never had before. Jen gave me a recommendation for a therapist who was a perfect fit for me. Every step I took forward into the unknown led me to the next right step for me.

There are many pitfalls on this journey of self-discovery and self-healing that might derail you from getting the results you want so badly. Let’s talk about what those pitfalls might be and bring awareness to them so you can release them and take whatever action is needed for greater mental health.

I've learned that when I feel stuck, and don't know which way to go, the worst thing I can do is stay in that condition. Doing the same thing time and time again will just give me the same result I've been getting. It doesn't matter what step I take as long as I take some action.

Remember, if you get in your car and start driving, eventually you will get somewhere, even if you don't know where you're going. But it's all predicated on you turning the key or pushing the start button. If you don't do that simple step, you'll still be at home.

You Don't Have Enough Time

There is a Zen proverb that goes something like this: "If you don't have time to meditate for an hour every day, you should meditate for two hours." If you think you don't have enough time to heal your anxiety, you need to make this your focus in the worst way. Still, it is a choice, which leads us to the next point.

The Pain Hasn't Gotten Bad Enough

Sometimes the pain just hasn't gotten bad enough yet for you to take action; you haven't hit the rock bottom. Eventually it will happen, and you'll do the work. Keep this book nearby for when you do. Still, there is something to be said for making the choice instead of it being made for you.

No Accountability

There's a reason people join groups like Weightwatchers when they need to lose weight; having a weekly weigh-in helps hold them accountable. It's like a tether. It binds them to a joint purpose with people who are going through the same thing. It also provides the support they need for the difficult weeks, gives strategies for avoiding pitfalls, cheers for them when they are successful, and provides empathy when the going gets rough. This kind of support is invaluable in making the changes you want to make.

Working with a coach can hold you accountable for doing the work in a way that you might not if you tried to do it on your own. Having support is that missing piece that can make the difference in whether you finally kick this anxiety to the curb or not.

Family and Friends

Do family and/ or friends think you are being irresponsible for not taking anxiety medications? When this happens, they are withdrawing their support for your autonomy, your

ability to make your own choices and decisions. They are actually telling you they know better than you what is right for you. This can be out of concern, but it could also be from a controlling place. It's your body and your choice to address what is right for you. Thank them for their concern and love and let them know this is your choice right now. You can always make another choice later if you need to.

Meds Would Be Easier Than Doing This Work

You would be absolutely right. Meds would be quicker, easier, and could help to lower symptoms. But they don't address why you had anxiety in the first place, so you would need to take them constantly. And there may be side effects you'd rather not have. Knowing how the body works, your body would then either have to amplify your anxiety or find another way to get your attention. What other dis-ease process do you think would get your attention enough to do this inner work?

Fear of What You Might Find

Some people don't finish this journey because they are afraid that, in doing the inner work, they might find something that is so bad, so awful that they won't be able to forget it. This can be of particular concern to those who have periods of their life that they don't remember. The thought is that the reason they don't remember is because something bad must have happened.

Yes, it is true that our mind is powerful enough to block out traumatic memories as a safety mechanism. In my experience I have found that if that is the case the memory will only come back when you are emotionally able to handle it, and not a moment sooner.

It is also true that those memories live in every cell of your body. Not knowing is part of the reason your anxiety has reached the level it's reached. Avoiding it is temporary because what you resist will persist and bubble to the top. By doing this work now, you learn to control how it happens, you're able to make the choice. That is better than having the memory pop up and take you down. That can result in a mental break that requires a hospital stay.

It also could be that you have no traumatic event at all. Perhaps you carry a subconscious belief that you are a bad person. The fear is you'll find out how bad you really are, and the smokescreen you so masterfully erected around your life will be gone, leaving you exposed. That is a deep-seated fear, but it's not impossible to overcome. I use a tool called Emotion Code™ with my clients to help. This can help identify where that belief comes from, at what age it started, and

why it's there. By discovering what the fear-based subconscious belief is, you can release it from your energy field — and from your body, with the use of a magnet. I can tell you with great certainty that your fear is just a fear and not actually true.

The Fear of Falling Apart

When you have been holding it all together for a long time it is terrifying to think of letting go of that control. It's like having all those plates in the air spinning at the same time and worrying about them crashing to the ground. But sometimes that's exactly what needs to happen. If you're working that hard all the time, it's exhausting.

Having control is all about making sure you're safe, no matter what. If you never let your kids have a sleepover or a babysitter, you can make sure your kids are never harmed. If you never give your heart to someone, it won't get broken. If you keep the well-manicured facade up, you will always look perfect, and people will like you. Controlling yourself, controlling others, controlling circumstances.

All of that will drive you crazy, and it doesn't work in the long run. It's part of the reason you have anxiety to begin with. Not everything is controllable forever. That way of being is not working for you (hence the anxiety). Trust that the universe is for you and not against you. Trust that life is going to happen in spite of your control, knowing that you are able to handle any aftermath that happens.

You Think You Can Do It All Yourself

Having to do everything yourself is another defense mechanism that many people with anxiety have. This pitfall is all about trust (or lack of trust in others) and needing to control. That tells me that people have let you down in the past, and you learned to rely solely on yourself. This is also exhausting. It makes it difficult to delegate to others and keeps you from getting the help you so desperately need. Doing it all yourself is linked to the belief that you're not worthy of help, and the fear of appearing needy. Somewhere along the way you learned that your needs weren't going to get met and that even having needs made you appear weak.

What you've been doing isn't fully working, so it's time for something different. Working with an expert who has a proven process will save you years of aggravation.

Fear of Abandonment

You have carefully crafted your life. The thought of changing it now can be like playing Jenga. Pull the wrong stick, and it could all come crashing down. When you change things in your life, releasing things that don't serve you, your energy changes. That shift in energy will automatically shift your relationships in some way. Relationships are two people coming together with individual energies that form a third energy of its own. If either person's energy shifts, the relationship will shift. The fear is that it will change for the worse and you'll be abandoned or left behind. The flip side of this fear is the fear that you're the one who will want to leave the relationship. Both can be scary.

I view relationships as contracts we've made to learn and grow from in this life. They are here for a reason, a season, or a lifetime. The lifetime ones are very rare, though these are the ones we want the most of. If a relationship has fulfilled its reason, it will naturally fall to the wayside. The relationships for a season can create quite a bit of angst as they end. Trying to hold on to them past their viability only brings pain.

Of course, things could also change for the better! That change of energy could attract even more fabulous friendships in your life that are supportive of your new way of *Be-ing*. If you're married or have a partner, often the partner will see how much happier you are and get on board with the changes. Perhaps you will inspire them to make changes in their lives as well. Remember that you have the power within you to do great things!

If fear of abandonment is still coming up for you, working it through with a professional can be helpful. Speaking with a trusted and impartial counselor can be priceless.

I'm Not Seeing Results

If you've been doing the work, following each step, and giving yourself plenty of time and space to do this and still not seeing results, I would suggest booking a call with me so we can figure this out together. I've never had a client follow my reconnection process and not see results.

Questions to Explore in Your Journal

- Which of these pitfalls are you most concerned about?
- What will you do to neutralize those concerns?
- Who can best support you through these changes?



Chapter 14: Moving Forward

“Words may inspire but only action creates change.”

— *Simon Sinek*

To change anything in your life you have to first be aware that there is something that you need to change. The pain’s job is to bring that to your attention. Once it has your attention, the next step is always to release. Let go of what is bringing you pain so that you can make room in your life for something different. You then get to explore options about what that something different is. Finally, you have to take action to make that change. This process can be used time and time again for anything that isn’t working in your life: Awareness, Release, Explore, and take Action.

Anxiety is a symptom of too-muchness — too many overwhelming things, emotions, and chaos — and the antidote is space. When you get overwhelmed and you lack the space or capacity to deal with it all, it causes you to become ungrounded because you don’t feel safe. It triggers a response in your sympathetic nervous system that hijacks your bodily functions, and it’s easy to dissociate when this happens (part of the fight/ flight/ freeze/ fawn response.) When you become ungrounded the energy you displaced in your grounding has to go somewhere, and it will show up in either your belly area as constipation, diarrhea, or IBS symptoms, in your heart as rapid heart rate, or in your head as circular thinking that you can’t get out of. It can make you dizzy and irritable, cause excessive worry and fatigue, and make it difficult to sleep or concentrate.

The first step is always to find your safety and grounding. You can’t address the underlying causes until you feel safe because your body simply won’t let you. Ground in whatever way you resonate most with, and try all of the ways I taught you:

Use the rock grounding method, or sit with your back up against a tree and imagine you have roots growing out of your feet. They are anchoring you into the earth. Walk barefoot in the

grass, or use grounding devices like a grounding mat or grounding sheets. Breath can also bring you back into a grounded and centered state of being. Just be sure to keep your eyes open while you are doing these exercises. When you close your eyes, your energy immediately goes back up and out, and that's the opposite of what we want.

Once you are grounded and have a sense of safety, the next step is identifying what your particular version of too-muchness is. What is causing you chaos and to feel overwhelmed and what are you willing to let go of? On your path to identifying what is too much in your life you will look at what brings you peace and what brings you chaos. You will identify beliefs that are ingrained in you that you no longer resonate with. Question everything in your life and decide what works for you and what doesn't. Let go of perfectionism, shame, and guilt. None of those things serve you in any positive way; they keep you stuck and overwhelmed.

Letting go of things then requires boundaries and getting good at conflict. People who have benefited from any lack of boundaries are not going to like you doing so now. They will probably push back to see if you really mean it. Stick to your boundaries. Your naysayers will get used to your stance, but not before setting traps and trying to break your resolve. Knowing the tactics can help you avoid those landmines. Every successful boundary you set eliminates more chaos and gains you more space for yourself, which reduces your anxiety. Not only that, it brings you more confidence and pride in yourself and your capabilities.

Boundary setting and conflict resolution help with the anxiety in your present-day world. The next step is exploring what memories and events from your childhood are looking for resolution and causing pain in your current life. This is an issue when you get triggered or respond in an over-the-top manner. These are the actual root causes of your anxiety. Digging up the past when you've tried to avoid it isn't the easiest thing to do but it will be the most rewarding thing you do in the long run. This can be emotional work, so be sure to take care of yourself exquisitely while you are doing it. Continue to listen to your body and give it what it needs. If you need a break, take it. If you find yourself disconnecting, do more grounding work. Never force yourself to do anything. This is an invitation for exploration, and it will take as long as it takes.

All of these steps are helping you build even more trust with yourself and connecting you to your truth. As you grow in each of these areas, your confidence and self-esteem naturally grow as well, not by doing affirmations that don't resonate or saying things to yourself that you find hard to believe but, rather, by doing what you say you're going to do, not betraying yourself for

the other, allowing yourself to have whatever feelings you have, and making yourself a priority in your life.

In this space, you feel balanced and in flow. Life is no longer one fight after another. Instead, it flows almost effortlessly, and you're finding more goodness. You're more connected to your intuition, and you notice synchronicities that happen more frequently. Over this time, your anxiety lessens until one day you wake up and realize you haven't been anxious for a while and your anxiety hasn't been consuming you the way it did in the past.

You begin to connect deeply to your power, your purpose and your passion and learn to take appropriate action. You learn that you don't have to do it all yourself, as you have helpers here on earth and also in the spirit world (God, Universe, Spirit). You recognize all the amazing, wonderful Core qualities that you have. You bring such goodness to this world, and you stand in that easily.

You have the tools you need to make the necessary changes to alleviate your anxiety, and to do it without medications. Each step along the way just requires time. This isn't a one-week process, but the more you follow it, the easier it gets and the faster your results will be.

If you find you need more support in making these changes, remember that you are worth getting that help.

My wish for you, dear reader, is that healing your anxiety ultimately leads you to a deeper, more loving connection with *self*. You are a gift to your loved ones, your community, and this world. Sending you so much love and gratitude.

Acknowledgments

Within thirty-days, three different people told me that I was going to write at least one book, and it confirmed an unspoken secret I carried deep in my soul. Since that time twelve years ago, as I've learned, grown, and come even more fully into myself, this book came into existence.

It all began with a reading from an intuitive astrologer, Robert Ohotto, who told me that I was going to build a temple for the Goddesses and that they were cheering me on. I had so many questions — what temple and what Goddesses? Did I believe in Goddesses, and why was I going to build a huge physical structure for them? Did I mention that I am a very literal person? This was so far outside of my realm of understanding at that time.

Now I realize that each of us is a Goddess in our own lives and we should treat ourselves as such, not like the peasants we portend to be. Our bodies are our temples, holy and sacred places where we meditate, pray, connect, and worship. When we as women remember that truth, shine our light brightly, and live from that place of centered power, we can change the world.

Over the next twelve years, each next step and each new learning divinely appeared at exactly the right time. People were brought into my life who sanded off the rough edges and brought great love in at the same time. I invested in myself in a huge way, over and over again. With each new experience I gained more of myself and additional knowledge, as well as friends, mentors, and colleagues. All of this has shaped me along the way as I kept what resonated and let go of what didn't.

My many thanks to The Barbara Brennan School of Healing, its staff, and my fellow students and friends whom I trained with there. The more than seven thousand hours of training is the foundation on which I've built my life's mission. The deep work I did at BBSH was truly where I healed my wounds, found deep acceptance for myself and my journey, and found peace in the process. Thank you to Theresa Kaj, my mentor through all five levels of Healing Touch. I remember thinking I wanted to be you when I grew up! To my Thrive Academy family who helped me learn how to find and connect to the people I wanted to help, you pushed me out of my comfort zone into massive action. To Bo Eason, who saw me deeply and spoke into my greatness, you taught me the power of my story and how to look at it from the perspective of all the participants and to give them a voice. To Myra Kotze, you helped me realize the one thing all my clients were struggling with most — anxiety — and pushed me to speak to that, bringing my book even further

into focus. I've taken all that learning, through schooling and relationships and alchemized it into my process that I use to help others reconnect more deeply with themselves.

To The Author Incubator team, thank you for helping me bring my soul's dream to life. Special thanks to Angela Lauria, CEO and founder of The Author Incubator for believing in me and my message. To my editor in chief, Madeline Kosten, and managing editors Trever McKenzie and Erika Roman Saint-Pierre, thanks for making the process thought provoking and deep. It was beautiful, challenging, and so rewarding to take your direction and marry it with my vision and voice. I've become a better writer because of you! Many more thanks to everyone else at TAI, but especially Lisa Steele George, who was my lifeline when I had my mini stroke while writing my book, and the amazing designers who brought my cover into existence.

To my courageous clients who have trusted me to help them on their healing journey and allow me to live my soul's purpose, I am eternally grateful. Your encouragement to write this book to help so many more women than I could have otherwise is what has driven me forward.

To my wonderful sons, Bob and Lucas, thank you for going on this ride of life with me, even when you didn't understand where I was going. It was bumpy at times and a rollercoaster at others, but you hung in there and loved me through it all. Bob, you love and feel so deeply, and care so much for others. Thank you for expanding our family with Julia and the boys. They've brought even more dimension and love into our lives. Lucas, thank you for challenging me in such a beautiful way since the day you were born. Your heart and your commitment to equity and inclusion make me prouder than I can say.

To my friend Cindy, I am so grateful for our connection and mutual support. You are my partner in crime and sister-from-another-mister with whom I laugh, cry, sing, and dance. I know you will always have my back, and I have yours.

To my friend Mary, who is full of fun and joy, you literally fell into my life, and I love you so. You've expanded my world with your smile, laughter, and gigantic heart and brought so many other wonderful people into it. Your friendship means more than I can ever say.

To my friend Valerie, you've been my forever friend. From the moment our boys met in kindergarten, you've been there encouraging me, reminding me of my light, and loving me through it all.

Finally, to my husband and partner, Matt. I wasn't looking for you, but I'm so glad we found each other. Your belief in me and my calling pushes me forward daily. The many phases

our relationship has gone through has me discovering you, me, and us in new and different ways. These last few years have been challenging, to say the least, but we keep showing up and loving each other, and for that I am grateful.

About the Author



Susan Renee Gibson is the owner of Your Path to Peace and creator of The Gibson Reconnection Process™. As an intuitive energy healer and life coach, she helps hardworking, perfectionist, sensitive women overcome their anxiety without medication. After suffering anxiety for most of her life, Susan came to a choice point in her life and had to choose whether to continue on the anxiety merry-go-round or finally get off. She chose to take the journey of a lifetime and discovered how to heal her anxiety, depression, and panic attacks.

Susan became an energy healer through The Barbara Brennan School of Healing after more than seven thousand hours of trainings and studies, graduating with a BS in Brennan Healing Science in 2014. She expanded her training with the Healing Touch Program™ and then became a Reiki Master. Since energy isn't bound by space or time, Susan is blessed to work with women all over the world to help them heal their anxiety.

After volunteering for five years with Women Helping Women in Cincinnati as a hospital advocate and then support group facilitator, Susan started her own sexual assault support group that incorporated her vast healing knowledge. This catapulted her down a path of exploring power and control dynamics, trauma, and the anxiety connection to both. Susan has been featured in multiple magazines and podcasts for her healing work and is excited to bring this work to even more people.

Susan lives in Cincinnati with her husband, Matt, and two cats. She's been blessed with two amazing birth sons and a bonus son and their families (including three grandsons). She loves dancing, Pilates, riding her bike, and relaxing in her backyard oasis.

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Thank You

Thank you, dear readers, for choosing this book to help you find a solution to your anxiety. I know there are a plethora of books on this subject, but for some reason, this one caught your eye, and you were compelled to buy it. I'd like to think that it was the Universe giving you what would most resonate with you. I honor you for your commitment and trust in yourself, the content, and in working through the Gibson Reconnection Process™ as you reconnect to your light, truth, and essence at a deeper level than ever before. It has been a pleasure being on this healing journey with you thus far.

Since you have finished reading this book, I know you are on the path to creating a life without anxiety. You've been doing the work, assessing what isn't working in your life, releasing, or letting go of thoughts, beliefs, and ways of being, deciding what you want more of, and taking action. Remember that it is a process, one that is going to continue for the rest of your life.

If you're wondering what your next steps are, I've got you covered! As a bonus for reading this book I'm offering you a free thirty-minute masterclass. I'll also send you a download with my favorite resources that I mentioned in this book. To get them both, email me directly at susan@yourpathtopeace.com and put "GIFT" in the subject line.

I'd love to be a part of your support system, so please stay in touch. Much love and blessings to you in living your life anxiety-free!



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