

NEWS YOU DIDN'T KNOW YOU NEEDED

Carla Cotropia



MUSIC FOR THE MONTH

Tema di Barbara by Alberto Baldan Bembo—listen to this when you want to feel like you are on a movie set somewhere on a lush tropical island. The trumpet plays and you can almost feel the ocean breezes. Relax time.

All You Want is More by Sheila Chandra—with the opening drums and tambourine, you can feel the excitement. Something is going to happen. Is it good or bad?—Lyrics: *I give you the message, I tell you the score, I take down the answer, who could ask for more. I live for the moments, my windows a door. I ask you for nothing but all you want is more.*

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Inspired By Bach: The Cello Suites by Yo-Yo Ma—This will make anyone and anything better. Magical Bach played on the cello by a world master. This will make your heart soar and make you feel like you could fly. Listen to this when you want to leave your troubles behind.

Tighten Up by Archie Bell & the Drells—Feeling slouchy and sluggish from 2020 covid year? If so, this is the song for you. Lyrics: *Tighten Up –once you start doing the Tighten Up you will be out of sight. Tighten Up now. You can Do it!*

Umoja by Skinshape—Want to feel in the groove? Feeling slinky? Want to sway to a tropical beat? Get your Panama hat and *Goombay Smash* drink.

Radha Pranam from the album *Jewel of Hari* by Jaya Lakshmi—Thinking you should meditate but are resistant. Never mind, just listen to this and you will feel like you are the Buddha himself. This is not Enya music.

Do I Ever Cross Your Mind sung by Dolly Parton and Randy Travis –Dolly with her country-western twill, Randy with his deep country twang and classic guitar picking is guaranteed to have you picking up your step. Get a spring, a country twang spring, in your step.



SETTLING CASES TWO SNEAKERS AT A TIME

ANXIETY ANXIETY PLEASE GO AWAY

Are you anxious? Do you have anxiety? Anxiety is a cross between coming unglued and wanting to scream but too nervous to do so. Anxiety is the face of someone wanting to run away as fast as possible but then realizing they have nowhere to go. EGAD. Anxiety.



I think anxiety is catching, like a high-frequency wavelength. When someone else is anxious, you can feel it. It seems to change the air. When I am around my mother, I catch her anxiety, and she has a lot of it. Sometimes when I catch her anxiety, I try to get rid of it in a way that isn't good, like dumping it on my Assistant, Alyssa. Sorry, Alyssa! She is a good sport but still, that isn't right.

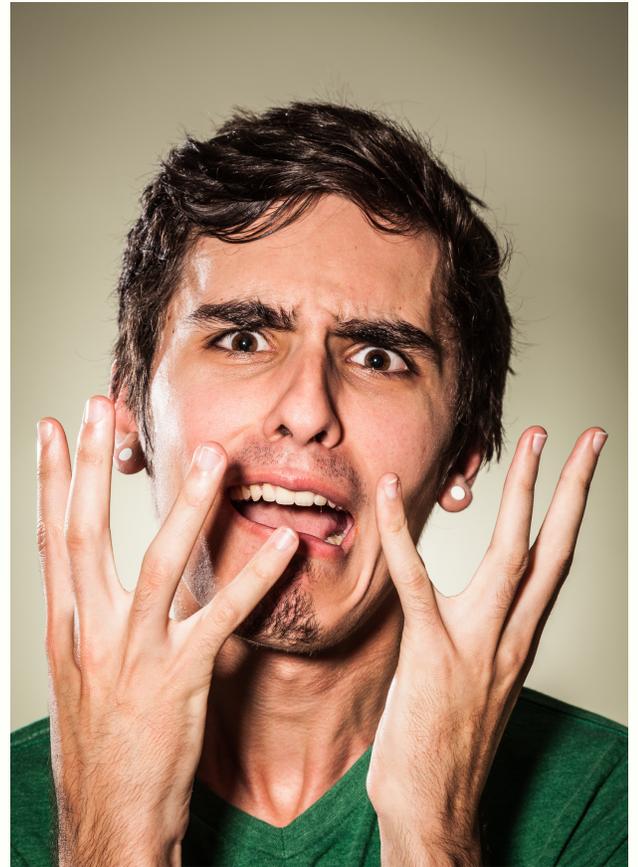
Do you want to know how to get rid of or lessen anxiety? A lot of us, me included, try to relieve it by self-medicating, be it by eating, drinking, shopping, smoking, or gambling. This, of course, is only temporary. I find myself immediately putting something in my mouth and starting to chew when the anxiety from my high-powered, energy-driven, crazy-making mother starts to spread. I am sure the COVID ten pounds some of us, me included, gained was from this anxiety-driven habit.



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Procrastination is another way people ease anxiety. If you are anxious about doing something and anxious about it being right, what better solution than to procrastinate. If you procrastinate, then you haven't made a mistake or not risen to whatever high standard your anxious mind has set.

Anxiety is basically fueled by worry. I worry and my Neanderthal brain searches for a solution to the problem. But for many things, like the COVID pandemic, there is no answer, so my Neanderthal brain can't find a solution, so it does the next best thing, it begins to worry. And some people are better at worrying than others. The more and more you worry, the more and more you are anxious. Anxiety is like a fire; it just grows and grows especially when it is being fed logs of worry to keep it fueled up.



Then there is the problem of habit. Why in the hell can't I stop emotional eating. Have I inherited the anxiety worry gene from my family? Is that the reason? Maybe anxiety runs in my family.



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My dad's mother, Miss Mary Cotropia, was also a championed worrier. My mother and dad waited until the night before they were leaving on vacation to tell Miss Mary because she would start to worry and basically drive them crazy before they left.

If you are a championed worrier or addicted to anxiety, then you are perhaps doing it regularly just because you are so used to doing it. How do you correct this bad habit? The first step is the same with any habit, which is awareness. You have to be aware you are anxious as hell. Perhaps you refer to it as being nervous as hell. Whatever. The second step is instead of self-medicating you are supposed to "sit with it". But who wants to do that? Hello, this is the reason we are eating, drinking, etc. to get our anxious minds calm without having to just sit with it and do nothing. The recipe for anxiety removal is that if you force yourself to "sit with it" ultimately it will pass and begin to have less power over you. This may be true but I worry/anxious that even if I sit with one worry, there will be many many more to take its place. Which just having that thought makes me more anxious....

Writing this blog is making me anxious. Good thing I have the book "Unwinding Anxiety: New Science Shows How to Break the Cycles of Worry and Fear to Heal Your Mind" by Judson Brewer. Curious? My next blog offers a brief overview.



SETTLING CASES TWO SNEAKERS AT A TIME

CARLA'S BOOK REVIEW OF UNWINDING ANXIETY: NEW SCIENCE SHOWS HOW TO BREAK THE CYCLES OF WORRY AND FEAR TO HEAL YOUR MIND

Unwinding Anxiety is written by Dr. Jutson Brewer. Dr. Brewer suffered from anxiety panic attacks when he was in medical school. As a result, it propelled him to study anxiety. The book explains how and why will power doesn't work. Dr. Brewer explains we need to understand how our brain works instead as the solution. Don't think for a second our willpower can muscle our way through the habit of worry.

In simple terms, our brains are composed of an old ancient brain and a new brain. Our ancient brain was formed when humans were cavemen and cavewomen when the most important thing was survival and staying alive. Our ancient brains were always on the lookout for ways to protect us. Our ancient brains wanted us to survive by looking for food and keep us from being eaten by a saber tooth tiger. As millenniums went by, humans developed a frontal cortex, our new brain. The new brain is looking for solutions. So when our frontal cortex can't find a solution like what to do about COVID, our old brain steps in and says, "Here is what you did in the past that made you feel better. Since that worked in the past, lets do it again and you will feel calmer."



SETTLING CASES TWO SNEAKERS AT A TIME

That “something” your old brain remembers that worked in the past to smooth your anxious feelings, is an individual thing. That “something” depends on you and what makes you feel better, translation what soothes you in the moment. That “something” can distract your anxious feelings by eating, shopping, smoking, gambling, Facebook, and the other social media hooks. Your old brain is trying to help.

The problem is all of these “somethings” are just distractions but they are so powerful and happen so often, they cause roadways in your brain. New brain says, “I am very worried about X”, so old brain jumps in to help by remembering that before when you gambled, smoked or binged, you found relief. This happens so often these brain roadways become superhighways making them very easy to go down.

For example, if you find relief from stress by eating that cupcake and you do it enough it became a super well-paved highway in your mind. It is so well paved that you are going down it when you don’t even realize you are doing so. It becomes a habit. And no matter how strong your will power is, it can’t stop that autopilot drive down that cupcake freeway in your mind.



SETTLING CASES TWO SNEAKERS AT A TIME



So what the heck can you do?

Dr. Brewer says there are steps and talks about the procedure called RAIN which stands for Recognize, Allow, Investigate and Notice or Nurture.

Step one in RAIN is Recognize. What are your habit loops? What do you do when you are stressed? Recognize your habit loops.

Step 2 in RAIN is Allow. This is a tough step. It means sitting with it first. Thinking about that cupcake craving. How does it feel? Where do you feel it?

Step 3 in RAIN is Investigate. Question it. Question the anxious feelings. But Dr. Brewer warns not to think too much about trying to figure out the WHY you are anxious. Trying to figure out why you are anxious can make you more anxious and you can get in a habit loop of being addicted to anxiety. (This can get complicated which is another reason I recommend you read the book.)

Step 4 in RAIN is Note or Nurture it. Here is how this works. When you feel anxious, Dr. Brewer says to note it. Ask yourself, is it a feeling or thinking? If it is a thinking thought, try this. Question it. Be curious about it. He believes curiosity is the cure-all for anxiety. If you are curious, you are not uptight but open.



SETTLING CASES TWO SNEAKERS AT A TIME

Curiosity is a wonderful thing. Being curious is what babies do when they are exploring the world. They drop things because they are curious about what happens. They are little scientists conducting experiments about gravity. Dr. Brewer says when you are having those anxious feelings and you can sit and think wow this is curious. Say to yourself, “I wonder what I am feeling? It sure is a curious thing. Very interesting.” By being curious and doing this, you actually can drive out those bad anxiety feelings. Curiosity chases away anxiety.

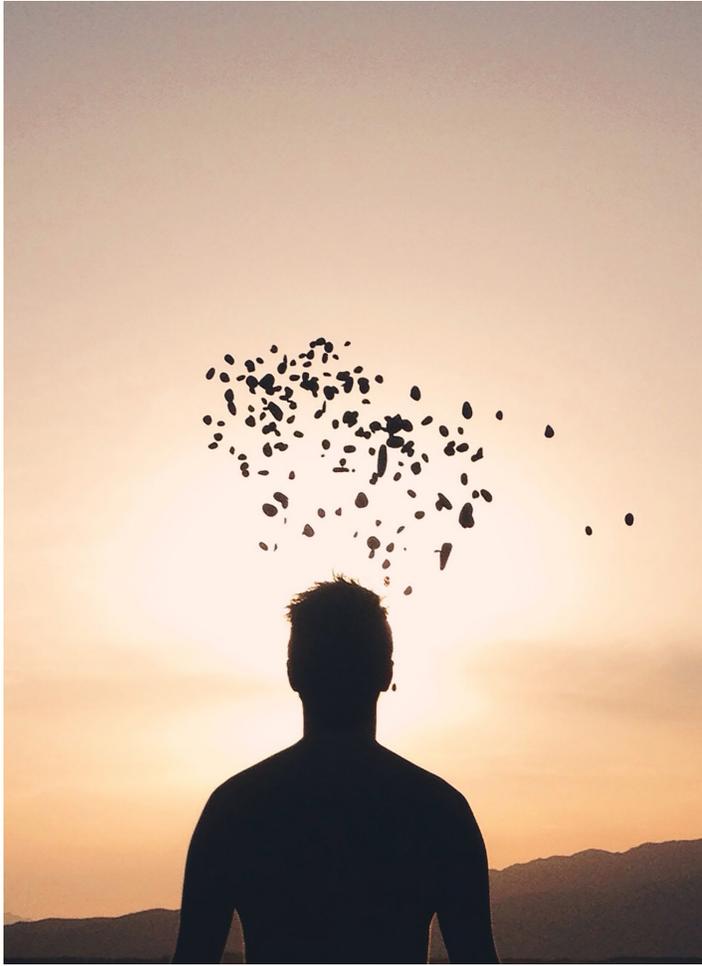
Dr. Brewer has several interesting tips. He says one is to just breathe. We all know that one. Actually, I am tired of my Apple watch telling me to breathe. What the hell does my Apple watch think I am not doing: Not Breathing? Actually, Apple needs an app that reminds you to stop surfing the web but I digress.



Another interesting fact Dr. Brewer suggests has to do with your eyes. He says when you are curious, your eyes get wider. When you are suspicious or worried your eyes squint. He has conducted experiments where he had students think of something scary and open their eyes wide. They couldn't do it and vice versa they couldn't be happy and squint their eyes.



SETTLING CASES TWO SNEAKERS AT A TIME



All of this goes back to when we were cave people. Cave people's eyes were wide open because they were out in the world exploring, open for possibilities. When your eyes are wide open, you are open and inquiring. When your eyes are squinting, you are not looking to find answers by thinking and exploring instead you are all about action. You squint and hit that send button with a snarky email or shoot the finger at someone on the freeway going slower than you like. But I digress again and maybe I was squinting my eyes.

Another tip of course is the phrase of mindfulness or being in the moment. I don't know about you but my rebel nature gets my eyes squinting when I think about having to be in the moment. I like being in my mind. But I have to admit Dr. Brewer has a point. One phrase he had in the book was "Forgiveness is giving up hope of a better past". Or another way of saying get out of the past because that is going nowhere and neither are you if you are in the past.



SETTLING CASES TWO SNEAKERS AT A TIME

Mindfulness can be improved he says if you wish kind thoughts towards others which in the end affects you. Humans are way too critical of themselves. Self-Judgment is fuel for anxiety. When you send thoughts to others wishing that they are happy, healthy, and safe, you are also sending these same thoughts to yourself. We all need more of the happy, healthy safe kind of thoughts. So when you are feeling the pull of the cupcake, catch your craving, sit with it no matter how painful it feels and watch how it affects you with curiosity and then note that you are making a new freeway in your mind. Your mind is slow to establish these roadways but after practicing your brain is going to learn that cupcakes are not the solution, it really is just sending yourself a little love, healthy and safe good wishes that you need. And right now I am going to open my eyes wide and send some of those healthy, happy, safe thoughts to all of you!!



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