

MANAGING ANXIETY

**A SELF HELP GUIDE TO
OVERCOMING ANXIETY**

INTRODUCTION

"I'm going to get - "What if ..." inscribed on my gravestone. What if I'm late?... What if I make a fool of myself?... What if they notice my hand shaking?... What if I don't know anyone? It goes on and on and I can't stop it".

"As soon as I turn out the light at night, I start to worry about a whole host of things which I know probably won't happen but I can't stop. Then I start to worry about worrying. It's a vicious circle".

"I'm am petrified that another panic hits me. I thought that I was going to die when I had the last one. It came out of the blue - I couldn't get a proper breath, I thought my heart was going to burst and I felt I was going to pass out. It was the worst thing that has ever happened to me".

"I just can't control my life anymore".

"I can't concentrate on anything - I can't follow any film I watch and I get to the end of a page of my book and go straight back to the start. It makes me worry that there is something wrong with my brain".

"If the supermarket isn't too busy and as long as my husband stays by my side, I can cope. If I have to stand in a queue at the checkout, I think all sorts of things - I won't get my shopping into my bag, the girl will see how bad I look and will say something to me about it. What if I drop something and it smashes - everyone will look at me. I would panic like mad and run out of the shop - I know I would make an awful fool of myself".

"I used to cope as well as anyone in the past - if there was a problem, I would look for a solution. Now, whenever there is a problem, I just look for other problems".

THE AIM OF ANXIETY CONTROL

This manual was devised to help the great number of people who complain of stress or anxiety. Unlike depression, where people seem to have given up, people who are anxious make an intense effort to control their problem but feel that what they are doing isn't working. Indeed, what they are doing often makes the problem worse. Once you are in this position, anxiety will start to spiral. Even if the things which caused the anxiety in the first place have gone, anxiety will hang onto you as, for reasons this book will soon look at, the anxiety will be feeding itself.

This book has been designed to tackle the main obstacles to getting on top of your anxiety. It will provide you with accurate information about anxiety and why you are reacting in the way you are. This will act as the foundation on which to build the therapies you will use to combat anxiety.

There is no magic cure for anxiety. You should not think that this book will get rid of your anxiety. Anxiety is part and parcel of life so the aim is to keep it at a reasonable level rather than abolish it. So keep your expectations realistic.

In the long run, you should be aiming to acquire a 'Hardy Personality'. This will be very useful in fighting off anxiety in the future. A 'Hardy Personality' involves:

- 1 **Having a Sense of Control** You are aiming to achieve a belief that you can influence what happens to you in life. You take responsibility for things working out and things going wrong. You don't blame fate.
- 2 **Having a Sense of Commitment** You are aiming to achieve a sense of purpose and direction in your life. This could show itself in your family life, work, interests etc.
- 3 **Having a Sense of Challenge** As changes in life are inevitable, you are aiming to regard change as a normal part of life and regard it as an opportunity to develop. Be flexible and ride with the waves - don't be swamped by them.

This book teaches you how to take control of your own therapy. the sequence we will go through is as follows:

- 1 **Information** The book will teach you all about anxiety - what it is and what it is not. It will look at what may have caused it and what keeps it going. The role of anxiety and the various forms it takes will be described. The more you know about your anxiety, the better you will be able to confront it.
- 2 **Therapy** It will teach you a range of ways to tackle anxiety and do so in a way that you feel confident enough to put them into effect.
- 3 **Coping with the Future** It will help you realise the coping resources within you which are being held down by your anxiety just now. Doing this will help your self-confidence to build-up which will help you face your future without dread

YOUR ROLE

- 1 **Taking Responsibility** You must take responsibility for controlling your anxiety from the word go. This book is based on this. The book is designed in such a way that you are expected to adapt what you learn to fit your own problem. So don't think of yourself as a patient but as an equal partner in the attempt to get on top of things.
- 2 **Priority** You must give controlling your anxiety top priority over the next few weeks. This book has been made as straight-forward as possible but it needs you to work very hard on the suggestions in the book. This hard work must continue after you have improved to maintain your improvement.
- 3 **Expectations** You must accept that your anxiety will not clear up quickly or without a struggle. Anxiety is a complex problem and it may have built up over a long time. It will take time to get control of it. Usually, you don't make smooth progress - it is often two steps forward and one backward. So don't get discouraged by set-backs - learn them.
- 4 **Belief** You must, most of all, believe in yourself and what you are doing especially when the going is

rough.

THE ROLE OF THIS BOOK

Read the book over a few times to get the hang of it. You will pick up the information easier if you read it in chunks rather than at one go. Make notes, underline what you want - the book is yours to keep. Give it to others to read so that they can learn what you are going through. You may not understand it all at this stage but don't worry. Reading the book on its own won't be enough to get in control of your anxiety but it will start you off on a strong footing.

THE PLAN OF THIS BOOK

The book divides into nine steps:

Information: Chapters 1 - 7

The aim of this part of the book is to give you information about anxiety. This acts as the base upon which you can build the therapies described later. Anxiety is described in some detail - what causes anxiety, what keeps it going, the role of anxiety, the different forms it takes etc.

Clearing the Decks: Chapter 8

This section will help you to get rid of some of the things which may be making the problem worse.

Working out the Pattern: Chapter 9

Is there a pattern to your anxiety. Are you worse at certain times?, in certain places?, with certain people? Working this out will help you target the treatment at the problem with greater precision.

Quick Control: Chapter 10

The fifth step is to learn some quick techniques that can be useful in the short term.

Controlling your body: Chapter 11

The sixth step is to learn how to relax your body. You do this by learning a powerful relaxation technique, you will be given a relaxation tape for home use.

Controlling your Thoughts: Chapter 12

This involves learning about how your mind reacts to stress and teaches you how to use positive thinking to

get rid of the anxiety.

Controlling your Actions: Chapter 13

You will learn better ways of dealing with your stressful actions using a range of approaches.

Controlling Related Problems: Chapter 14 - 16

This step concentrates on coping with panic attacks, depression and sleeping problems.

Controlling your Future: Chapter 17

The final step will look at ways of coping with the future by learning to look ahead and get on top of problems before they get on top of you

CHAPTER ONE

WHAT IS ANXIETY ?

The Extent of the Problem

Anxiety is the twentieth century problem. A recent survey by the Gallup organisation showed that four out of ten people interviewed in Britain said that worrying was a problem in their lives. Similar results have been found in the United States. Ask any G.P. and he/she will tell you they deal with many people complaining of anxiety every day.

Although it is a very common problem, it is one which you don't often hear about much as people don't like to talk about it and often become very skilled at putting on a mask to disguise it. Often, people won't accept it is anxiety as they may often go to the doctor complaining of a physical problem - upset stomach, headache, dizziness, sleeping problems, muscle tightness etc. Indeed, some feel quite insulted if they are told it is anxiety.

Anxious people often feel that their mind is taken over by it. Sometimes they feel that they are losing touch with reality. Often, this happens because they think they are unable to cope with situations which anyone else could cope with. This raises three points.

1 **Everyone does not cope** As this book points out, anxiety is an extremely common problem. However, people suffering from anxiety often exaggerate how well others cope. At the same time they exaggerate how badly they themselves cope. Bear in mind how well you can probably hide your anxiety from others. They may well be hiding their anxiety from you.

2 **Anxiety affects all sorts of people** It used to be thought that only certain people were at risk of anxiety. Now, we know that anxiety can affect anyone and everyone - young and old, outgoing or shy, intelligent or unintelligent, male or female, rich or poor. It affects people from all walks of life. You are not "strange", "inadequate" or "stupid" because you have stress.

3 **Insight** Strangely enough, it is a good sign if you realise your fears are irrational. This is very good evidence that you have anxiety and not a more serious psychological problem. Therefore, as a rough rule of thumb, the more you think you are cracking up, the less you are. This understanding is called **INSIGHT**.

The Stigma of Anxiety

How did you feel when your GP suggested that you see a specialist? - angry?, embarrassed?, did you tell everyone?, did you pray you wouldn't meet anyone on the way to the clinic? Most people would rather have a "real" physical problem. Let's look at how someone suffering anxiety may compare with someone with a physical problem.

BROKEN LEG

Everyone can see
Not my fault
Others won't blame
Know it will mend
Know what caused it

ANXIETY

Invisible
Maybe my fault
Others might blame
Might get worse
Might not know

The common attitude to anxiety in this country (although it is slowly changing) is to "give yourself a good shake" as if it is your fault and that you could get rid of the problem if you really wanted. there are two points to be made here.

- 1 Anxiety is a problem which no one wants to have.
- 2 The causes of anxiety and the things which keep it going are complex.

If it were as easy as giving yourself a good shake, you would gladly have given yourself one. So don't let anyone criticise you for having anxiety - ask them to read this book instead. If they still criticise you, why bother worrying about the opinions of someone who isn't capable of realising that life isn't as simple as they would like to believe. Often, your fiercest critic is yourself. Anxiety is very bit as "real" as any physical problem. It's not your fault for having anxiety; the reason you still have it is because either there are things going on in your life which are causing anxiety and will have to be tackled or that you have lost the feeling of control and don't know how to get back in control. This book aims to put you back on the right track and to reinstill a sense of control in your life. So no more self-criticism. Put all your energy instead into getting on top of things.

CHAPTER TWO

MYTHS AND FACTS

Everyone these days seems to be an expert on anxiety. Open any magazine or paper and there is likely to be an article on anxiety. In it, people who don't know what they are talking about will happily tell you how to get rid of it. Books on the topic will offer a "cure " if only you follow their simple advice. Not only are these "cures" mainly bogus but the information given is often nonsense but plausible. This section looks at the facts about stress and compares them with the popular myths.

MYTH - Anxiety is a mental illness.

FACT - Anxiety is not a mental illness (or a physical illness). You have too much of a normal emotion.

MYTH - Although anxiety is not a mental illness, it will lead to mental illness because you can't stand that pressure for any time without cracking up.

FACT - Anxiety does not lead you to crack up. The worse that can happen is that it will keep going.

MYTH - Anxiety leads directly to heart attacks, cancer and other life-threatening conditions.

FACT - Anxiety does not directly lead to any life-threatening condition eg in heart attacks, anxiety may play a minor role as part of a range of factors - being overweight, unfit, eating the wrong foods, having a family history, smoking and drinking to excess (the last two play much greater parts in causing heart disease and most cancers). You should note that anxiety indirectly increases your risks because you may smoke more, drink more and eat more because of anxiety. If you are doing this, you can stop and straightaway lessen your risk.

MYTH - Anxiety only affects inadequate people.

FACT - Anxiety affects anyone and everyone. Now that people are talking more openly about anxiety, we are seeing just how common a problem it is. It affects people from all walks of life. You are far from unique because you have anxiety.

MYTH - You are born with anxiety. It's in the blood so you can't do anything about it.

FACT - Even if you see yourself as a "born worrier", you will be able to point to times of your life when you coped without any great anxiety. This points to the importance of what happens to you in your life and the way that you react to these events. Anxiety can be treated. You shouldn't expect to feel like this for the rest of your life.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NATURE OF ANXIETY

THOUGHTS : T

ACTIONS : A

BODY : B

Anxiety has three faces:

- 1 **WHAT YOU THINK** : What goes through your mind when you are anxious.
- 2 **WHAT YOU DO** : How you act when you are anxious
- 3 **HOW YOUR BODY REACTS** : Physical symptoms you experience when you are anxious.

These are known as the three systems of anxiety. You can remember them by thinking of T A B.

T: THOUGHTS **A: ACTIONS** **B: BODY**

Try to memorise this as this book will often refer to T A B. This book will now look in some detail at the nature of the thoughts, actions and body symptoms and explain, in turn, how each has an effect on your anxiety.

T A B (1) = THOUGHTS

In order to understand anxiety, you have to know about **WORRY**.

"I'm always worrying about something"

"As soon as I stop worrying about one thing, I start to worry about something else"

"Once I start worrying, I just can't stop"

The Nature of Worry

Everyone who complains of anxiety knows what it is to worry. You usually know you shouldn't be worrying or, at least, shouldn't be worrying at the extent you are. This lack of control you perceive over your own thoughts tends to add to the problem. Although psychologists are still learning about worry, we can say:

1. Worry is usually triggered either by something happening to you e.g. being told bad news or by having a thought going through your head. As you will see later, you react to many thoughts which are in your head but

which you may not be aware of. This may make you feel the worrying has started out of the blue for no reason but worry is always a reaction.

2. Once it starts, the worry seems to feed itself so one worry will lead to another and another then another. As your worries increase, you will feel less and less in control, this is especially true as the thoughts tend to become less and less realistic once they take off.

3. Usually worry takes the form of thoughts but it can take the form of images - you may find yourself running a film of certain events in front of your eyes.

4. Worry is usually about the future and it is an attempt to avoid unwanted things happening to you or to work out the best way to deal with them if they do happen e.g. "If he says that to me, I'll say this....."

5. You often feel compelled to keep worrying even although you are upset by it. You often can't stop worrying by yourself although you may be able to distract yourself by doing something e.g. talking to friends, playing with your children etc.. You may find that the worry comes back later in the day.

6. As worry will stop you from paying attention to the 'things going on around you' may feel that you 'withdraw' from the outside world - your family may have complained that you seem to be living in your own wee world.

7. Worry is both caused by anxiety and causes further anxiety. Although everyone worries from time to time, the difference is that when anxious, you cannot as easily shut it off. This feeling of lacking control will often make the anxiety problem worse.

8. When you worry about the future, you may find yourself preparing ways of coping if certain things happen even although you realise that these things may be very unlikely to happen. By preparing to cope with them, you are making them more 'real' or 'concrete' than they deserve to be.

"What If"

"What if I panic like that again, will I stand it?"

"What if the surgery is busy when I get there?"

"What if it isn't anxiety causing these headaches?"

"What if I meet someone I know? How will I handle it?"

If you look at some of the things you have worried about recently, you will often find that you painted a much blacker picture than you needed to and thus you made too much of the worry. The problem is that anxiety often stops you being able to see things in proportion. Instead you have a one-track mind which seems to push you into worrying more and more. Something which makes this worse is:

Vigilance

Think of a ship sailing through Arctic waters - the ship's radar constantly scans the seas for icebergs. When danger is detected, the captain steers a course through safe waters. The radar rarely detects danger when

none exists.

You also have a radar which constantly scans for danger. The problem is that your radar is much, much too sensitive and it often detects danger where none exists. If we carry on with the iceberg analogy, you 'see' icebergs (threats) everywhere and may be blind to the safe waters where you could steer. The following example gives you an idea how this may work in real life:

If you are afraid of making a fool of yourself while talking to people at a party, you notice one person yawning. Your 'radar' detects this and says "he thinks I'm boring; he thinks I'm an idiot". Even although everyone else appears interested in what you are saying, your radar zooms in on this threat and usually magnifies it. Not only this but you are likely to generalise - "they all think I'm boring. I've got to get out of here". You are making this threat too concrete and, of course, you are ignoring the evidence that shows your fears are wrong.

Demoralisation

In order to feel in control of your life, you have to feel self-confident - feel good about yourself and feel that you control the events in your life rather than the other way around. Anxiety often conspires against you in this respect - you worry about making decisions; feel that whatever you do is likely to end in failure (and thus avoid doing it); feel that you are not as good as other people and, generally feel helpless and hopeless about the future. You may feel dejected and full of self-criticism. This, of course, leads to your self-confidence and self-esteem falling and demoralisation rising. A vicious circle ensues.

Ignoring the Positive

A highly competent Nursing Officer, based in a maternity hospital, told the following story:

"I was sitting in my office the other day when one of my nurses came to the door in a very tense state. There was an emergency on the ward - one of the women was having a dangerous complication with her birth. No-one on the ward felt they could deal with it and the ward sister told the nurse to come for me as she thought I could handle it. I hadn't worked on the ward for some time and was very, very anxious however I went down to the delivery suite. The situation was serious and the baby was at considerable risk. To cut a long story short, with the help of the nurse, I delivered the baby safely. It was an emotional experience and the young nurse was on the point of tears; she actually hugged me and said that she would never forget what I had just done. And you know, all I was thinking was - 'God, I was so slow. Why couldn't I have done that properly? That baby could have died because of me'. It was only when I was driving home that I became aware of the gulf between the way I looked on what had happened and the way the other nurses had looked at things - everyone had looked to me in the first place to deal with the situation and, when everything was all right, they were full of praise for the way I had handled the situation. All I could do was criticise myself for not being as quick as I should have been. I couldn't tell myself that, firstly, I hadn't had any practice for two years and that, at the end of the day, the baby was fine. It dawned on me then that if this is how I react when I have coped so well, how do I talk to myself and pull myself down when I am just doing the usual things in my life".

The way we talk to ourselves is critical in anxiety. In the above case, it didn't matter how well the Nursing Officer was coping - she performed at a very high level of expertise - she still was unable to see the positive

side of her actions. Her self-confidence should have been fed by the way she had coped and by the obvious respect she had earned from her staff. In such a state of affairs, anxiety will flourish. For this reason, we will look in detail at the way you talk to yourself and see if you are being fair to yourself.

Anxious Thinking

Especially when your anxiety is high, you will find it hard to argue with yourself e.g. if you are at the shops and feel a bit dizzy, you might worry that you are about to faint and that if you do, **everyone** will look at you and you will make a complete fool of yourself. When you aren't anxious, you may be able to tell yourself that you have felt like this often in the past and that nothing bad has happened and that, to paint the blackest picture, if you did faint, would anyone really think you had made a fool of yourself? When you are anxious this isn't so easy. This is because anxious thoughts don't always follow the same common sense rules that govern your other thoughts. In the treatment section, we will come back to this.

Stressful Images in Anxiety

In addition to anxious thinking, you may have anxious images. Just as if you are watching a film in front of your eyes, you may have upsetting images involving yourself e.g. acting in a violent way, lying dead, acting in a bizarre way. They stop you having as clear a view of the world as you need to get on top of the anxiety. They are often taken as signs of insanity as they can appear to be very strange.

Most people see that if they could control their thoughts and images, they could make a great stride forward in controlling their anxiety. This is why this book teaches you ways of doing this. The next section gives a list of some of the thoughts that are common in anxiety.

TAB (1) = THOUGHTS

Worry
Fear of illness/disease
Fear of looking foolish
Fear of losing control
Nightmares
Fear of being alone
Fear of meeting people
Fear of challenges
Fear of being criticised
Irritability
Feeling of impending doom
Feeling no-one understands
Afraid to face the day
Feel cut off from the world
Loss of sexual interest

T A B (2) = A C T I O N S

In the previous section, we looked at how people **think** when they are anxious. In this section, we will look at what people do when they are anxious. Here are some examples:

- 1 **Avoiding day to day events** - Paying bills, making phone calls, chatting to neighbours, answering the door, arranging a night out.
- 2 **Avoiding socialising** - Making excuses to get out of invitations, avoiding having people up to the house.
- 3 **Avoiding making decisions** - Avoid planning ahead, avoiding responsibility.
- 4 **Acting differently** - Fidgeting, speaking too fast, hesitating, saying nothing for fear of saying something silly, playing with your hair, watch.
- 5 **Always being rushed** - Trying to do too many things at the one time, never having enough hours in the day, never giving yourself time to relax always having to be on the go.
- 6 **Always going at top speed** - Eating too quickly, running instead of walking, talking too fast, speeding in your car.

The best way to look at **ACTIONS** is to divide them into two parts: **AVOIDANCE** and **BEHAVIOUR**.

AVOIDANCE

Of all the things we know about anxiety, this is the most obvious:

IF YOU AVOID DOING SOMETHING OR GOING SOMEWHERE BECAUSE OF ANXIETY, YOU ARE MAKING THE PROBLEM WORSE.

We wrote earlier that if you are anxious, you often anticipate that you will cope badly if you have to do something or go somewhere. Common sense would suggest that if, for example, you fear having a panic attack if you go to a parents night at school, you should avoid going there. **COMMON SENSE IS WRONG.**

While avoiding may work in the short term, it will make the problem worse the next time round. If you don't face up to the situation, you never learn if you could have coped with it or not. There is no easy answer to this - you simply have to face up to these challenges. Note the old adage - if you fall off a horse, get right back on again. Your problems won't go away if you avoid them. So face up to them now, you will feel a lot better about yourself for facing up to these stressors and, because you are actively trying to regain control, your self-confidence gets a chance to build up. So the message now is:

FACING UP TO THE THINGS THAT CAUSE YOU ANXIETY WILL, IN THE SHORT TERM, MAKE YOU MORE ANXIOUS. IN THE LONG TERM, IT WILL BECOME EASIER AND EASIER TO DO THIS. YOU WILL FIND THAT YOU CAN COPE AND, AS A RESULT, YOUR ANXIETY WILL COME DOWN

BEHAVIOUR

Often anxiety is an invisible problem - it goes on under the surface but it becomes visible when it affects your behaviour. You fidget, you can't sit still, you do too many things at the one time, you lose your temper etc. Because you are often painfully aware of doing this, it will make your thoughts worse, e.g. "oh no, I am acting like a complete idiot, everyone will see that I am not coping". Other people, indeed, may pick up these signs. This may make it more likely that you will avoid situations because you fear others will see just how bad you are.

Examples of both Behaviour and Avoidance signs are shown below.

AVOIDING: -

Making decisions	Travelling on buses	Going out in the dark
Shopping	Leaving home alone	Reading about illness
Driving	Going out socially	Talking to neighbour
Being at home alone	Taking responsibility	Being far from home

BEHAVIOUR

Speaking too fast	Stammering	Poorer performance
Unable to sit at peace	Hesitating	Speaking too quietly/too loudly
Drinking more	Accident prone	Taking longer to perform tasks
Always rushed	Smoking more	Taking longer to perform tasks
Overconcern with safety	Social withdrawal	More argumentative
Poorer performance	Nail biting	Trying to do too many things at the one time

T A B (3) = BODY SYMPTOMS

Most anxious people first go to their GP complaining of physical symptoms. This isn't surprising as the body signs are often the most obvious. The body responds to anxiety with a vast range of symptoms and you may find that you are more prone to certain ones while never getting others. Some people notice that their symptoms change over time for no obvious reason.

Most of these symptoms are unpleasant and a second problem may arise in that, while the symptoms are a reaction to stress, you become afraid of this reaction. This may highlight what has happened to you in your life e.g. if someone in the family has died after a heart attack, you may fear palpitations and tingling in your fingers more than e.g. headaches. If someone had died of a brain tumour, you may tune more into the headaches than the other symptoms.

You may find that the symptoms appear out of the blue at times when you would not expect them e.g. sitting in front of the TV while you have been feeling relaxed. This may make you fear that you have a serious physical problem or that something bad is about to happen to you.

The symptoms that are caused by anxiety are called **psychosomatic**. This does not mean that they are all in the mind. If you do have e.g. a headache, it is real - you are not imagining it. It has simply been caused by anxiety and not by a physical problem.

Remember that the way the body reacts to anxiety is meant to help you deal with danger by putting you on alert (see next chapter). In anxiety, the body has got into the habit of being on the alert for too long. In other words, the nervous system has become too sensitive and is being switched on by things which, in the past, would not upset you. Not only this but the body takes longer to return to its relaxed state after you have become anxious.

Depersonalisation/Derealisation

Two long jargon terms but important to describe. They are the two sides of the same coin - the first refers to a feeling about yourself, the second to things around you. No two people describe them in the same way - some report that they feel cut-off from their surroundings, 'It's like I'm there but I'm not there. Some say they feel like they are walking on cotton wool or that there is a glass screen between them and the world; that the pavement is like jelly or that the walls seem to be rippling. These sensations terrify people. They are not dangerous. They will clear as you get your anxiety under control.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER:

- 1 Anxiety can cause very marked changes in your body. Most people underestimate the power of anxiety in affecting the body.
- 2 These changes are not dangerous. You are not damaging yourself.
- 3 These changes do go away. The body can only stay in an anxious state for so long until it comes off the alert and relaxes again.

Some of the symptoms are listed below. As with the other lists, this is by no means a complete index of the signs and symptoms so don't worry if you have problems that don't appear here.

Palpitations	Tension	Stomach pains
Rapid heart rate	Headaches	'Butterflies'
Missed heart beats	Chest pain	Tiredness
Dizziness	Shortness of breath	Dry Mouth
Head light	Choking sensation	Problems swallowing
Faintness	Muscle pains	Nausea
Numbness	Pains in head	Craving for food
Sweating	Trembling	Bladder weakness
Sleeping problems	Feeling unreal	Diarrhoea

Pins and needles
Flushing/chills

“Jelly legs”
Shakiness

Loss of appetite

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ROLE OF ANXIETY

In the previous chapter, we looked at the nature of anxiety. In this chapter, we will look at why we react in the way we do when anxious. Although no two people will have exactly the same problem, there will be certain things they have in common:

- 1 A feeling of threat which may be vague but intense.
- 2 A fear of something bad happening in the future either to them or to those close to them.
- 3 A sense that they are losing control of areas of their life that they feel they should be in control of.

This chapter explains the role of anxiety in order to make sense of these feelings. Some of the information is hard to understand but it is very important that you do pick up the ideas contained here. So read it over several times until you have mastered it.

Why do you react in the way you do when anxiety builds up?

Why does it have such a strong effect on your body?

Why can't you switch off your mind and stop worrying about things which you know you shouldn't really be bothering about.

What possible use can anxiety have?

Have you ever asked yourself any of these questions? Have you been able to answer them? This chapter attempts to provide you with the answers. Anxiety doesn't come out of the blue - it is built into all of us for a purpose and knowing what that purpose is and the way we respond to it will help you understand why you are reacting in the way you are.

In order to understand anxiety, you must first understand about instinct. Humans (like the entire animal kingdom) have certain in built survival instincts - a newly born baby will turn to it's mother's breast and suck in order to feed; a six month old baby will show a fear of heights and will usually avoid crawling towards a drop ; a mother hearing any baby cry will usually want to pick up the baby and nurse it. All of these instincts are of great use to humanity - they protect us and the next generation thus keeping humankind going.

Anxiety (or fear) is also an instinct and if we did not have it built into us, we would not have survived for the very long time humans have been on earth.

Fight/Flight

The particular task of anxiety is to protect us from danger. It does this by:

- 1 Alerting us to danger and threat
- 2 Putting our bodies and minds on "alert" to confront danger.

3 Keeping us on alert until the threat has passed.

Psychologists know this response as "fight/flight" because it puts us in our best shape to either run away from danger - flight - or tackle the danger head on - fight. This response was particularly useful for early man as life then was a lot more dangerous than it is now. Anxiety helped stone-age man survive - look at this scene and see why:-

Think of a stone-ager walking alone at night. In the darkness, danger takes many forms - wild animals, enemy tribes etc. As he doesn't know if there is a threat out there it is better to be on his guard i.e. anxious so that he will be more alert. This will help him become aware of the presence of a threat by sensing danger, various changes to his **AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM** (see later) will occur to help his body and mind get into the best shape to either fight or flee. To do this, he needs to quickly build up a lot of energy. In particular:-

His Heart Beats Faster and Stronger

This helps take blood to where it is most needed - his legs so that he can run faster - flight; his arms so that he can hit out - fight; his lungs to increase his stamina. At the same time, blood is taken from places where it is not needed e.g. fingers, toes and skin. (If he gets wounded, he will lose less blood as a result). this may cause tingling, coldness or numbness and accounts for the pallor often seen when someone is tense.

His breathing quickens and deepens

This helps oxygen to be carried to the lungs, arms and legs via the blood stream. This gives him more power. Side effects may include chest pain, breathlessness and a choking feeling. As there is a slight drop in oxygen and blood being sent to the brain, he may feel dizzy and confused and have blurred vision.

Muscle Tension

The more power he has e.g. in his shoulders and arms, the better he will be able to punch. This may also cause pain in the muscles and/or shaking.

Sweating Increases

Sweating helps cool the muscles and body to stop them from overheating. It has another function - in hand to hand combat, his foe will be less able to grab him as his skin will be slippery.

Pupils Dilate

This lets more light into his eyes so his overall vision improves. This is useful if someone is creeping up at his side. Side effects may include sensitivity to light or spots before his eyes.

Digestion and Salivation Slow Down

These are not important while in danger and so are slowed down. The saved energy goes to where it is most needed. Side effects may be nausea, a heavy feeling in the stomach and a dry mouth.

Vigilance Improves

He will be tuned into looking for danger and will be much less able to concentrate on anything else as this would not help in his survival.

Anticipation Improves

He will be waiting for something to happen and will be more able to work out where the danger will come from - from the bushes to the left? - from the hills up ahead? This is the basis of the way we worry.

The Reaction Does Not Die Down Once the Danger Passes

Let's say that he is attacked by wild animals and that he is able to fend them off. He will stay on alert because, in the wild, danger often doesn't go away. The animals may regroup and try another attack hence the threat is still there. Only much later when the danger is gone will he calm down. Due to the amount of energy used up, he will feel hot and flushed and tired.

All of these changes will improve his chances of surviving. Bear in mind that he didn't decide to set these changes in motion - they were switched on **automatically** as soon as he felt under threat. Bear in mind also that he was so busy looking out for a danger which he knew existed that he wouldn't pay attention to how his body reacted. If he had, he would not have worried as he would have seen these changes as helping him to come through this danger in one piece. Most importantly, because he knew the source of his feeling of threat, he would have an explanation for why he reacted in the way that he did.

PRESENT DAY STRESS: Physical threat.

Happily, we now live in a safer age - we are rarely under the types of threat that stone-age man was under. So anxiety as a survival mechanism for physical danger is now less in need but still it can help us. Imagine you are crossing a road and you suddenly see a car coming towards you fast. You have to get out of the way as quickly as you can. The threat in this case is mind at "action stations". You will be able to concentrate on the danger; will develop the extra power to run faster and be able to anticipate the best direction to go. You may not be conscious of any of this and may feel that your mind went blank and that it is a miracle that you survived. It isn't - your ancient survival mechanism worked to save you from injury or death.

PRESENT DAY STRESS: Mental threat.

It is important to see the connection between this survival device in stone-agers and the way you are reacting. They both stem from the same source. The crucial word here is **THREAT**. As soon as you feel threat, a switch in your mind is turned on to try to protect you. The problem is that this switch only helps prepare you

to fight or flee from a physical danger. You don't face this kind of problem - you face a psychological threat. So this ancient response no longer meets your needs. Not only that but because of the way it affects you, you can begin to fear the response itself.

Once the reaction affects you, you are pumped full of energy, ready to fight or run but as neither is likely to be an appropriate response, you are left with all this energy and perhaps no way of getting rid of it. You may pace up and down like a caged animal, drum your fingers on the table etc as a way of burning up the energy. You may worry that others will see how anxious you are and, of course, you can see the effect the anxiety is having on you. You should bear in mind the reason why you are acting in this way.

Humans are creatures of curiosity - we like to be able to explain why things happen. As the triggers of anxiety are often so subtle, you may not have a good explanation of why you are anxious. If there is no obvious reason in front of you e.g. a mugger, a snake, a car coming towards you, you will search around for a reason and, nine times out of ten, you will come up with the wrong one. The common one is to look at your response to the threat:

"Why am I worrying. I must be heading for a breakdown"

"Why can't I control myself. No-one else acts like this"

"I feel really dizzy. Am I going to have a stroke?"

Once you start this, you have a vicious circle - you feel threatened by these thoughts - your anxiety reaction is switched on - you worry more - you feel threatened and so on and so on.

THE AUTOMATIC NERVOUS SYSTEM (A.N.S.)

The A.N.S. is the part of the nervous system which is switched on when we feel under threat. It tends to be an all or nothing system. So once it is switched on, it will create changes across the body and not just in one part. The A.N.S. divides into two parts with each part having a distinct job:

SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

This system's job is to prepare you for action by building up your energy and so sparks the fight/flight changes we have just mentioned. To do this, it releases chemicals (adrenalin and noradrenaline) into the body when threat is felt. Their job is to send messages throughout the body to put it onto the alert. One result of this is to keep the anxiety response alive for a long period of time even after the threat has passed. The anxiety may also increase because of the effect of the chemicals. This may lead to fears that the anxiety is spiralling out of control. You should bear in mind that these chemicals have only a certain life span so after a while they will die and their effects will, of course, die with them.

PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

If the job of the sympathetic nervous system is to prepare you for action, the job of the parasympathetic nervous system is to bring you back down to normal again. This means that after a certain period of time, the parasympathetic nervous system will exert a calming influence and stop your anxiety spiralling out of control. It acts as your protector.

CONCLUSIONS

We have been talking about parts of the nervous system which influence our anxiety reaction. THEY DO NOT CAUSE IT. THEY ARE ONLY TRIGGERED IN RESPONSE TO THREAT. CONTROLLING THE FEELING OF THREAT WILL STOP YOUR AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM BEING SWITCHED ON WHEN THERE IS NO NEED FOR IT TO BE SWITCHED ON

SUMMARY

In this chapter, we have seen:

- 1) That the signs and symptoms of anxiety are inherited from our ancestors. They are part of our built-in defences against danger.
- 2) That they are triggered whenever we feel under threat.
- 3) The changes which happen are to allow us to fight danger or flee from it.
- 4) If faced with physical danger, they work very well for us.
- 5) If we are faced with psychological danger, they are of little use to us.
- 6) If we do not know why we are anxious, the reaction may make us worse as we look for a reason for the changes. The chances are that the reason we come up with will be wrong and will increase the anxiety e.g. "I'm having a heart attack"; "I'm making a fool of myself".
- 7) As threats only exist in the future and as we can only guess what the future holds, our imagination comes into play. As imagination is not limited by reality, we can imagine the most frightening things occurring to us. Common sense may play little part in what we fear.
- 8) Threats can be handled if we feel there is some way to fight them. Anxiety - because the precise threat may not be known or because it doesn't seem important enough to lead to such a marked reaction - leads us to feel that there is nothing we can do to control the threat. Anxiety is unlikely to clear up in these circumstances.
- 9) The signs and symptoms of anxiety (the changes which happen due to fight/flight) are not dangerous. They are there to protect the human race. They wouldn't fulfil this function if they harmed us.

So why is anxiety so common if life is a great deal more safer than in the past? Simply because the nature of danger has now changed. While we are not often faced with physical danger, we are faced with psychological danger or threat every day - being criticised, fearing going to certain places, thinking something has happened to our children etc. We react in exactly the same way to these threats as we would to physical danger. Plus, once anxiety gets a grip, we sense danger far too often. Not only this but we are much more likely to sense it in things which, in the past, would not have bothered us.

So far we have looked at why people react in the way they do when they feel threatened. We all have this in-built skill but we don't all develop anxiety and someone who is anxious usually isn't anxious all their life. So why does anxiety develop? Chapter 6 will look at this question.

CHAPTER FIVE

DIFFERENT FORMS OF ANXIETY

Anxiety takes many forms. We don't know all that much about why one person suffering anxiety develops e.g. an obsessional fear about their health, why another fears becoming mentally ill or while a third just generally feels tense no matter what is happening. What we do know is that the various problems e.g. phobias, obsessions, panic disorders etc are not separate disorders - most anxious people are likely to have more than one type of anxiety and that one person's problem can change over time. The one feature common to all of these problems is, of course, feeling unpleasant or unhappy and having a sense of events are outside your control. This chapter looks at the most common forms of anxiety. These are:

GENERALISED ANXIETY DISORDER

PANIC DISORDER

SOCIAL PHOBIA

AGORAPHOBIA

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER

DEPRESSION

1) GENERALISED ANXIETY DISORDER (GAD)

GAD is the most common form of anxiety. The main feature is worry. This worry may start for no obvious reason and you may feel that your worries are unrealistic but, and this is crucial, you can't shut off from them. These worries are usually about everyday concerns e.g. family, work, health but you may find that while you know you are worrying, you can't put your finger on what it is you are worrying about. Everyone has their own worries and no two people will have the exact same concerns.

If you have this problem, you may feel that you aren't coping well with your life and may be very sensitive to criticism. You may fear that you don't measure up in some way. You are likely to feel threatened by situations or by things which, in the past, wouldn't have bothered you. You may simply feel threatened by everything.

You may feel you have always felt like this and will recall worrying about things which no-one else seemed to worry about. GAD tends to creep up on you slowly rather than appear out of the blue.

You tend to have a lot of bodily symptoms and may fear something bad happening to you as a result of these symptoms. You may feel depressed. As you will see later, anxiety and depression often go hand in hand. You may have problems dealing with social situations and although you may not avoid going places or doing things in the obvious way that you would if you had a phobia (see later), you may avoid dealing with a range of things in your life in very subtle ways.

You may feel that you wake in the morning feeling anxious and carry it with you all day but the chances are that it does come and go to some extent. Some people find that their anxiety is worse when the least expect it - when they are sitting in front of the T.V.; on holiday; out for the night with their friends etc. Insomnia may be a problem so that instead of relaxing and falling to sleep, your mind fills with anxious thoughts and leaves you

tossing and turning. The reason for this is that anxiety can get to you more when you don't have anything to distract your attention. Everyone has their own pattern of anxiety. It will be important that you find out what your pattern is as it will help in getting on top of the problem.

CASE HISTORY 1 : Kate

Kate is a thirty-five year old school cleaner. She says she is a born worrier but that over the past three years, she has become a 'nervous wreck'. She has no great problems in her life but she worries over the least thing:

"I worry about being late for appointments; what the people at work think of me; having to chat to my neighbours; just everything. I can't concentrate on T.V. or reading and I can't relax at all at home. I never sit at peace for more than five minutes and although I get to sleep all right, I wake up during the night and can't get off again. If I have to be anywhere at a certain time, I am ready hours in advance and can sit in the living room with my coat on and the keys in my pocket even though I won't be leaving for ages.

I am always looking ahead and trying to plan ways of dealing with every possible outcome and, of course, I am always waiting for the worst to happen. Even when it doesn't happen, it doesn't make any difference the next time round. I don't seem to be able to learn from the past in the way that any normal person would.

I always feel under threat and imagine that people are putting me down even when they are not. I often find myself getting into arguments with people in my mind even when there is no need to. Once this happens, I can get myself all worked up and not know how to calm myself down again. I often pick over whole conversations with neighbours to see if I have said the wrong thing and worry about the impression I gave. I'm terrified that I will be rejected by those around me and, at the same time, worry that they are taking advantage of me.

It isn't always there - that's what baffles me. Some days are O.K. I can manage fine then just when I think it might be going, I wake up the next morning feeling as bad as ever. On these bad days, my imagination runs riot - I read about multiple sclerosis the other day; within minutes, I thought that's what I had. In fact, I'm scared to say to myself that I feel better now as it is like tempting fate. I just feel I am so foolish thinking in this way instead of getting on with my life.

Generalised Anxiety Disorder has been called the 'basic' anxiety problem as anyone with anxiety, of whatever kind, is likely to have some of the problems noted above. As well as worrying about future events people with GAD also experience the bodily symptoms of anxiety listed earlier. Therefore

Generalised Anxiety Disorder

Has the following characteristics:-

Marked worrying	Dizziness or light headedness
Trembling, twitching or feeling shaky	Nausea, diarrhoea or other stomach upset
Muscle tension, aches or soreness	Hot and cold flushes
Restlessness	Weakness of the bladder
Easily tired	Problems swallowing or lump in throat
Shortness of breath or smothering sensation	Feeling keyed up or on edge

Palpitations or faster heart rate
Sweating or cold clammy hands
Dry mouth
Irritability

Marked startled response
Problems falling or staying asleep
Problems concentrating or mind going blank

2) PANIC DISORDER

The word 'panic' derives from the Greek God Pan. Pan seems to have enjoyed lying in wait for innocent travellers in remote mountain areas. He would pounce out on them and, as a result, frighten them to death. While you may have the same fear reaction, you, at least, will not die of fright. Although panics are frightening they are not dangerous.

Panic attacks involve a sudden rush of intense fear, a feeling that something awful is about to happen and a feeling that you are losing control. Often, they seem to come out of the blue although you can often be aware of where and when you are more at risk of having a panic attack. You may then avoid these situations. Sometimes, you can wake up from sleep in a panic attack.

Panics usually involve very strong body sensations - heart racing, breathlessness, dizziness etc. - and frightening thoughts - fear of dying, going mad, doing something strange, passing out etc. Panics can last from a few seconds to a few hours and will leave you feeling shaken, tense and exhausted. Due to the unpredictable nature of panic, you tend to come up with the worst possible explanation for what is happening to you and this, of course, makes you all the more afraid.

CASE HISTORY 2 : Margaret

Margaret is a thirty-one year old receptionist. She has been having panic attacks for the past two years. Her first panic attack happened at a union meeting at work one lunch time. The room was small and full of people. She was tired, having been out at a party the night before. She hadn't eaten so far that day and she was pre-menstrual.

The panic came without warning. It felt like a wave breaking over her head. Margaret suddenly felt very hot then suddenly very cold. Her heart was racing. She moved to the open window as she felt she had to fill her lungs in order to stop herself from passing out. She felt tears well up and she thought everyone was looking at her. She just knew that she had to get out of the room. She ended up in the toilets crying uncontrollably and shaking from head to foot.

As a result of this panic, Margaret was convinced that there was something physically wrong with her. Even after her tests proved negative, she still feared dying; although of what she didn't know. She got back to work although avoided union meetings and, indeed, any other meetings. She finds that she is more prone to panic when she is in company and if she is tired. Over and above the panic, she is now generally tense for no reason.

The most common signs and symptoms of **panic** are shown in the list below:-

Choking

Palpitations or faster heart rate

Hot and/or cold flushing
Trembling or shaking
Fear of dying
Fear of going mad
Fear of losing control
Chest pain or discomfort

Dizziness, unsteady feelings of faintness
Nausea or upset stomach
Depersonalisation/derealisation
Numbness or tingling sensations
Sweating

3) PHOBIA

A phobia is an irrational fear of an object or a situation. If you have a phobia, you will feel that you have no good reason to fear it or at least to fear it to the extent that you do. However this awareness on its own will usually do nothing to help control the stress. Phobias are very common and often don't upset your life too much but some can be very disabling. The usual way that phobias are dealt with is to avoid facing up to them. As noted before, this keeps the problem going. The most common phobias are:

Agoraphobia: fear of public busy places (not open spaces).

Social phobia: the fear of social situations.

Animal phobias: fear of e.g. dogs, rats, snakes, spiders.

Height phobia: fear of e.g. tall buildings, crossing bridges.

Claustrophobia: a fear of confined spaces e.g. lifts, small rooms.

Blood, Illness and Injury phobia: A fear of e.g. seeing accidents, cutting yourself or becoming ill, seeing someone vomit.

The two most common phobias are social phobia and agoraphobia:

S O C I A L P H O B I A

CASE HISTORY 3 : Gerry

Gerry is twenty years old. He works as a hospital porter. Gerry copes well with his job but has great problems coping with tea-breaks and dinner times. If it is only his friends at the table, he copes fine. If there are more than five people there, he becomes more withdrawn, avoids talking and then worries about what everyone is thinking of him. He is particularly bad if young, attractive females are at the table.

If he is out with his friends, he tends to drink too much in order to give him Dutch Courage. He realises that he is creating further problems for himself by doing this. Gerry has been completely unable to approach a girl he wants to ask out on a date as he is afraid of blushing and making a fool of himself.

The most common problems associated with **social phobia** are listed below:-

Eating in public

Fear of others watching you

Fear of acting strangely
Going out on a date
Writing in public (filling out forms etc)
Using public toilets
Talking to people in authority
Being assertive
Talking in front of a group

Parties
Fear of embarrassing yourself
Meetings
Fear of being the centre of attention
Keeping a conversation going
Starting a conversation

AGORAPHOBIA

In ancient Greece, the name for the market place was the 'agora'. Hence, agoraphobia is the fear of the market place. This is a very good description as the main problems associated with this complaint relate to a fear of being in busy places. It is not that you fear the actual place e.g. the supermarket check-out but the fear relates to what might happen to you in that place. The fears are worse if you feel that escape from the situation is difficult or would draw attention to yourself. Avoiding going to these places is a common way of coping. You may be able to go when the places are quieter or if someone is with you. Panic attacks and depersonalisation are common problems. Sometimes there will be a fear of staying alone in the house in case 'something' happens to you and there would be no-one there to help you. Agoraphobia is a very common problem.

CASE HISTORY : Jenny

Jenny is a forty year old housewife. She has had the problem on and off for the past nine years. It came on seven months after the birth of her third child. She had a panic attack while standing in the queue at the check-out at the supermarket. She then found herself apprehensive before leaving home. She noticed she was better when out with someone - even her youngest child. She avoided going to the shopping centre on Saturday afternoons and avoided certain shops. She did her shopping as quickly as possible. She stopped going to the pictures with her husband as she felt 'suffocated' in the darkness.

Jenny did continue going to the chapel but only if she could sit at the end of the pew next to the door as she felt she could get out without drawing attention to herself if she felt ill or panicky. She was unable to take communion as she was unable to go down to the altar rail for this. If Jenny wanted to hang her washing out in the back garden, she would check to make sure there were no neighbours outside; her worry was that they would notice how tense she was if she had to stand still and talk to them.

The most common signs of **agoraphobia** are shown below:-

Fear of being stuck in traffic jam	Restuarants
Being alone at home	Shopping centres
Supermarkets	Fear of cinemas, churches, pubs, tunnels, large offices
Being far from home	Travelling by car
Travelling by public transport	

POST -TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

This disorder affects people who have been involved in an extremely frightening, life threatening or traumatic event such as rape, war, serious car crash, serious injury, witnessing death or serious injury, personal attack etc. As these events are outside 'normal' experiences, these events would be distressing to anyone.

Often survivors report intrusive memories of the event and may have nightmares based on it. There may be a feeling of reliving the event where you feel yourself back in the situation. If other people have died, or have been seriously injured, there may be strong feelings of guilt ("why did they have to die while I survived"). PTSD sufferers often get worse in the run up to the anniversary of the event or in situations which are similar to the place where the trauma occurred.

CASE HISTORY 5 : Stephen

Stephen is a 52 year old paramedic who was on duty at a serious accident. He witnessed sights which even in his experience, were gruesome. He was particularly affected by the sight of a young girl's body as the child was wearing a dress similar to one worn by his four year old grand-daughter. However, when he returned home to normal duties, he did his best to come to terms with what he had seen.

Six months after the incident Stephen was watching the news on T.V. when a picture of the major accident came on the screen. He burst into tears and had a very strong image of the child's body. Since this time, he has been off work, has been tense and very irritable. He is also drinking far too much, far too often and this is causing problems at home. He feels detached from the things in his life which in the past were important to him. He avoids watching T.V. news in case he hears of accidents. He will not drive near where the accident happened. He also notes that problems can develop if he sees an accident or a young girl dressed in similar clothes to those worn by the girl in the accident.

The most common signs and symptoms of **PTSD** are as follows:-

Recurring memories of the event	Sense of future being shortened
Nightmares based on the event	Problems falling or staying asleep
Reliving the event/Flashbacks	Irritation, anger outbursts
Avoidance of thoughts/feelings associated with the trauma	Problems concentrating
Avoidance of activities which recall the trauma	Very vigilant
Inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma	Exaggerated startle response
Loss of interest in significant activities	Physical reaction if you see something which resembles the trauma
Feeling detached	Restriction in emotions Increased drinking

OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER (OCD)

An obsession is a thought or idea or image which keeps recurring even although you know it is unreasonable

or nonsense. You will try to suppress these thoughts but often without success. Common thoughts are fears of having a serious physical illness e.g. cancer or heart disease; something bad happening to a loved one; worrying if you have caused harm to someone by your actions or that you will cause harm to loved ones; worrying about whether you have carried out an action e.g. locked the door or turned off the iron.

A compulsion is a response to the obsession and is an act which you do over and over even although you don't want to do it or feel it is not sensible to do e.g. repeatedly checking that the cooker is off; that the plugs are out; cleaning the house even although you know it is not dirty; counting or checking certain things a certain number of times. The purpose of the compulsion is to prevent something bad from happening e.g. to prevent your children becoming contaminated by germs; prevent a fire breaking out. Sometimes the compulsion may involve a 'magic number' e.g. "If I don't touch this table seven times, something terrible will happen to my son".

You may find that trying to resist acting on the obsession leads to your anxiety increasing and thus may feel that you have to do it to get some relief. If you give the responsibility of e.g. locking up at night to someone else, you will usually feel better.

CASE HISTORY 6 : Mary

Mary is a 30 year old woman who is divorced. She washes her hands excessively. She has to wash her hands after almost every tasks as she fears contamination. She has to wash her hands in a set way and if the routine goes wrong she has to start again. The water she uses is extremely hot. If she feels she has been contaminated she has to undress to wash correctly. She also finds that there are areas in her home where she cannot touch or go as she fears contamination. If she visits other peoples' houses she can behave in a perfectly normal way doing things without the need to wash. Because of her excessive washing she has very high gas bills. Her hands are nearly always red due to scrubbing them and sometimes the skin is broken.

The most common signs and symptoms of **OCD** are shown below:-

Fear of serious illness - cancer, AIDS, stroke

Fear of acting in a bizarre or violent way

Images of someone close to you dead/dying/being killed

Fears of contamination from e.g. dirt, faeces, urine, germs, blood

Fear of accidentally harming others

Being too orderly - ornaments in a particular place, cleaning in a particular pattern

Rituals - carrying out certain acts in a certain way or a certain number of times

Repeating meaningless words/images/tunes in your head

Cleaning self/changing clothes far too frequently

'Magic numbers' - doing things e.g. 7 times If interrupted, you may begin from square one again

DEPRESSION

Depression and anxiety tend to go hand in hand. You shouldn't think of someone with depression as sitting alone staring at the wall all day. Often they will be able to mask the depression and appear to be coping fine

with life. Depression is often described like a cloud that settles over you and just doesn't shift. Winston Churchill, who suffered severe bouts of depression all his life, described it as 'a black dog' that followed him everywhere.

Depression is not the same as a fit of the blues or being fed up. It can be a frightening experience especially when you feel there is no light at the end of the tunnel.

CASE HISTORY 7 : Holly

Holly is a twenty-one year old student. She first felt depressed three years ago after she broke up with a boyfriend. At first, she felt this was a normal reaction as indeed it was but in Holly's case the depression stayed and got worse. She went from being happy-go-lucky to being very serious and unhappy and could not, no matter how hard she tried, shake off the blackness which surrounded her.

She is very short-tempered, avoids her friends, cries a great deal for no obvious reason and feels she is going through life without any meaning or pleasure. Holly has given up a lot of her interests as she feels that she hasn't got the energy required for them. Her concentration problems have badly affected her studies and there is a danger that she will not be able to continue at college because of this. She has lost all of her enthusiasm for the course and doesn't know what she wants to do with her life. Holly doesn't feel she can cope with any pressure being put on her even although, in the past she used to relish challenges.

Holly lost two stone in three months (without dieting) as a result of her depression. This worried her a great deal as she did not think that depression could do this. Although some days are worse than others, she often goes to bed hoping she doesn't wake up in the morning.

The most common signs and symptoms of **depression** are as follows:-

Poor Concentration	Loss of interest
Loss of or increased appetite	Loss of energy
Problems falling or staying asleep	Loss of sexual interest
Sleeping much more	Unrealistic guilt feelings
Weight gain or loss	Feeling worthless
Agitation	Thoughts of suicide/death
Feeling 'flat'	Feeling slowed down/tired
Loss of pleasure in life	Feeling inadequate/sorry for oneself
Frequent crying spells	Brooding on the past
Future appearing black	

CHAPTER 6

THE CAUSES OF ANXIETY

"I've always been anxious. As far back as primary school, I remember being a nervous wreck. When I look back on it, I am a carbon copy of my dad. I remember him acting really awkward when we were out somewhere and often being off work for no obvious reason. As a child, I didn't think much of it but looking back, my dad was anxious. I am exactly the same. It must be in the blood and I'm afraid that I'll pass it on to my children".

"I'm forty two. Until last year, I coped fine. If there was a problem, it would be me who could stand back and look for the solution. Now, I just go into problems with a temper. I've no sense of humour or proportion any more. Everything is a problem and I'm always waiting to be found out. I have no good reason for feeling this way. I respond to events - in the past, I initiated them. In fact, I used to be very dismissive of people who complained of anxiety".

Two quotes from people who suffer anxiety, two very different reports. The first person describes himself as a born worrier, the second sees anxiety as something alien to him. Are they talking about the same thing? This chapter looks at what causes anxiety.

1) INBUILT FACTORS

2) STRESS FROM WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU IN LIFE

- a) **Childhood**
- b) **Modelling**
- c) **State-Dependent Memory**
- d) **Life Events**
- e) **Our Perception**

1) INATE ANXIETY

We all have the ability to develop anxiety. Chapter 3 tells you why this is. It is the case, however that some of us are more prone to develop stress than others.

If you are a sensitive person - perhaps you get easily upset, care a great deal about the plight of those around you etc., then you may be more prone to anxiety. This feeling will, to some extent, be inborn. If you are like this, you may describe yourself as a born worrier.

You can't change your basic nature (nor should you try) but you can reduce the chance of developing anxiety and this is because your basic nature does not condemn you to suffer from anxiety. While certain things can't be changed - e.g. the colour of your eyes, anxiety is not 'fixed' like this - it is much more flexible. Humans have a great ability to 'bend with the wind' - to adapt to a wide range of situations. This inbuilt skill will help you combat your anxiety. There is nothing 'inevitable' about anxiety.

Inbuilt factors account for only a small part of the reasons why anxiety develops in any one person. It is what happens to you in your life that is of much greater importance.

2) ANXIETY RESULTING FROM WHAT HAPPENS IN YOUR LIFE

Let's look in on two people talking about anxiety - one suffers from it and the other is trying to understand it.

"I'm a born worrier - if I don't have something to worry about, I worry about not worrying. I'll never change".

"Is it always like that or are there times when you cope better than others?"

"Sometimes I cope fine - the things which bothered me a month ago may not bother me at all now. But I know it is always there - waiting to hit me again."

"Is it related to the things which are going on in your life at the time?"

"I don't think so. For example, a couple of years ago, I had all sorts of problems at home and at work. I got on top of them yet a couple of months later after it had all calmed down, I found myself getting into a state again for no reason. So you see, it isn't affected by what is happening in my life. It has to be in the blood".

"Anyone else in the family like you?"

"Yes. My mother is a bag of nerves and my twin is just like me. Isn't that proof that it is in the blood? Although, in saying that, my other brother and two sisters are fine".

The main theme of this chat is that the problem comes and goes for no reason, that the "family history" supports the view that the problem is inbuilt and that the things which happen to this person don't play a part in his anxiety. In fact, everything he has said point to exactly the opposite.

Let us make the argument:

Ask any 'born worriers' if there has been a period in their life when anxiety has not greatly upset them and the bulk will tell you that there has been. Why is this? - if anxiety is a physical problem, we would not expect this. It points us to the importance of the things which happen to us in life and the way we look at them.

A) Childhood

A famous professor of psychology, when giving a lecture based on his research into the way people think, starts his talk by asking the audience a question - "**What is the word in your heart - is it 'YES' or is it 'NO'?**" What he is getting at is how do you typically deal with the world? Do you feel, on the whole, that you can deal with most of the things life throws at you and that everything usually works out all right in the end

or do you feel that your back is usually against the wall and that, at some point, something is going to hit you and you won't be able to cope. It may be that this latter, 'style' of thinking makes you more prone to anxiety and that this style may be laid down in childhood.

One of the most important gifts a parent can give a child is security. If your child lives in a predictable world, he or she has a much better chance of feeling secure. So, for example, your daughter needs the same people to be there for her; has to know that when she acts in a certain way, you will respond in much the same way as you did yesterday; has to know that you will support her if she wants to take on a challenge; has to know that when she is scared, upset or ill, you will comfort her. At a certain age, she has to feel able enough to cope with life on her own while knowing that you will always be there for her if the going gets tough. If this security isn't there, the girl may grow up unsure of herself; unsure of her place in the world; unsure of how to cope with relationships, unsure of how to cope with set-backs; be scared of facing challenges and, in general, worry about the future as she has never been in a position to feel secure about how the world works or to know where to look for safety when it is needed.

Anyone who has a childhood which gives this security should feel very lucky. Life rarely works out perfectly - parents and grandparents may be seriously ill; may die; may divorce; may have their own problems which prevent them giving the love and security their children need. It seems likely that adults who have had an insecure childhood are more at risk of anxiety when they meet problems in later life.

B) Modelling

Another factor is the role of MODELLING. Children learn so much from their parents. We try to teach our children the things we think it important to pass on to them in the hope that they behave in a way that we want. Children also learn a great deal from us simply from watching what we do - how we behave to others, how we cope with disappointment and, of importance in this context, how we handle anxiety. If a young child senses his father looking anxious when dealing with neighbours or when having to make important decisions etc., the young child may, without realising it, model (or copy) his behaviour on that of his father as he is an important 'role model' for the child. Just as our children often have the same mannerisms, turns of speech etc. as us, children can copy our style of coping with the world (children are very acute at sensing anxiety in parents).

C) State-Dependent Memory

"I can remember from the earliest times being anxious. I've never been any different".

Is this an accurate account or a memory bias? When you are anxious, you are likely to have a bias in what memories come to you. Talk to an old school friend you haven't seen for years and you will start to remember things you thought you had forgotten. As you talk, more and more things will be recalled.

In the same way, present day anxiety will act as a magnet for old anxious thoughts while blocking thoughts of times when you coped fine. The more you think of these old anxieties, the more unpleasant memories will come into your mind. This may lead you to think that these are the only memories you have and, thus, come

to believe that the past was much worse than it, in fact, was. Asking parents or friends what you were like in the past often gives you a different and more accurate picture and may make you change your mind that you are a 'born worrier'.

D) Life Events

A Life Event is anything which happens to you that makes you change your routine. It does not have to be bad. We are creatures of habit. On the whole, we like routine as it lets us predict our lives quite well. This is good for our feeling of security. While we like some change in our life - a holiday, a change of job perhaps, too many changes occurring within a short space of time, increase our chances of anxiety.

Below shows some of the most common Life Events. Your Events may not be on this list but they would act in the same way as those ones on the list.

Often, however, anxiety doesn't start when the Life Events occur. It is more usual for there to be a time lag between the event(s) and your anxiety reaction. This often puzzles people. It goes against common sense for your reaction to occur when things may have died down but, in this case, common sense doesn't work.

To stick to this theme of common sense - common sense tells us that bad things which happen to us could cause anxiety e.g. the death of a loved one, being attacked etc. What isn't so easily understood is that good events - having a much wanted baby; getting promotion at work; even events such as holidays and Christmas etc. can also cause anxiety. The reason is that any of these events will make you change your life in one way or another. They often produce other Life Events in any case. Two other factors are important:

Firstly, there is rarely one obvious cause - it is usually caused by a number of things. Each one, on its own, is not enough to cause anxiety and, indeed, may be so trivial that you do not pay any attention to it. Therefore, when you look back, you will not remember it. It is the power of the events taken as a whole that can start the problem.

Secondly, if you are under pressure for whatever reason you do your best to cope in order to keep going. Your coping skills and ability have finite limits and eventually the pressure upon you becomes too much i.e. the straw that breaks the camel's back. It is at this point that the anxiety becomes obvious. This may erupt suddenly and sometimes in a very dramatic fashion.

COMMON LIFE EVENTS

Personal injury	Trouble with boss	Christmas
Child leaving home	Sexual problems	Child starting school
Marriage	Change social life	Unemployment
Trouble with in-laws	Birth in close family	Promotion
Personal illness	Holiday	Burglary
Spouse begins work	Change in finances	
Spouse leaves work	Change of house	Neighbour problems
Retirement		Pregnancy

CASE HISTORY 8 : Elaine

After a long illness, Elaine's mother died in her sleep. Given her suffering, the family felt relief that she had passed away. Elaine had been strong for all the time she had looked after her mother and, especially, when she had nursed her over the last seven months. She didn't even cry at the funeral nor when she emptied her mother's house (her father had died some years ago). Life went on and Elaine felt the worst was over.

Five months later, while on holiday, Elaine broke down in tears in the hotel dining room. Her husband got her back to the room but she was, by this time, shaking like a leaf. She wasn't thinking about her mother and had no idea why she felt like this. A doctor was called. He didn't know what was wrong but gave her something to sleep. Her upset got worse and worse and she flew back home one week earlier than planned. Her own G.P. knew this was the start of an anxiety problem and referred her for specific anxiety help.

When Elaine was seen and had discussed what had been going on, it became clearer why she was anxious.

Elaine had been under great pressure nursing her mother. Apart from the time and effort she was putting in, she was also trying to keep the truth from her mother (she had terminal cancer). There was also resentment towards her sister who was not helping out as much as Elaine felt she should. Elaine also felt guilt towards her own family as she always seemed to be at her mother's house. Instead of having any time to herself, she would be spending any free time with her sons and daughter to make up for the times she wasn't there. She was also having to watch her mother die slowly in front of her eyes.

By the time of the death, Elaine was so emotionally numbed that she was unable to get rid of all her hurt and grief by crying. She felt she had to be strong for the sake of her children. So instead of releasing her grief, she stored it up inside her, where, like a time bomb, it ticked away without her knowing it was there.

Meanwhile, where her mother had been, there was now a void and Elaine didn't know how to fill it. Elaine only slowly realised that she relied greatly on her mother - she could take over her problems with her and, when she was well, they would go out together most days. She was her friend as much as her mother. All this had now gone but Elaine hadn't tried to come to terms with the changes in her life. Thus the time-bomb went off when she least expected it on holiday.

E) Our View of Life Events

Life Events, on their own, are often not enough to explain why anxiety starts up. The critical missing ingredient is the view we take of them - **our perception**. In particular, what meaning do these events have for us. This may bring in all the other things we have touched on in this chapter. Let us look at David's story:

CASE HISTORY 9 : David

David is a thirty-six year old teacher. He coped well with his job, had a stable marriage and had a lot of interests. The anxiety condition came out of the blue and, in the space of six months, he went from being self-confident, capable and contented to being tense, irritable, unable to relax at all and worrying about things which, in the past, would not have bothered him in the least. He complained of always feeling tired and had severe headaches. His concentration was affected and his job suffered. David had to be signed off work by his G.P. He avoided going out with friends and problems at home increased. At this stage, he felt that he was losing control of his life - a feeling he hadn't had since childhood.

There appeared to have been a lot of changes in David's life in the last few months - he and his wife had moved to a new area when David got promotion. They had a better house, a bigger car and few problems paying the bills. Best of all, after many years trying, the couple had their first baby.

All good things - yet David's anxiety still happened. Life Events still seemed to provide the key to understanding why the stress had happened and why he was having such problems coping with the changes in his life:

David left his old school. He had to get to know the staff at his new school and learn to cope with the responsibilities of his promoted post. David left behind his family and good friends. He and his wife knew no-one in the new area. Following the pregnancy, his wife had to give up her job and rises in interest rates meant that their mortgage was a good deal dearer than they had budgeted for.

The birth of their son delighted them both but sleepless nights wore the two of them down slowly, David felt he was less able to cope with the pressures at work and gradually began to worry about how well he was coping with his job. His confidence started to decline and spread to other areas of his life and hence the slow development of David's anxiety.

At this point, a general statement covers both this case and Elaine's case - namely - when you are trying to cope with new routines, you are more vulnerable to anxiety (you may be more vulnerable to physical illness too). If nothing else happens to you during this period, you will usually be fine. If other Life Events occur, your chances of an anxiety problem starting up increase. As we have seen, Life Events often trigger other ones in any case. Thus, to some extent, the chances of developing anxiety is a matter of bad luck - of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. But, in reality, it is often more involved than this. Let us go back and look at background factors in David's case and the way his perception of the Life Events affected his reaction to them.

David did not anticipate that he would be more prone to anxiety as a result of the changes in his life. When he did get anxious his first response was to start to drink more at home. This led to arguments at home and, for a while, the marriage was at a very low ebb. At this point, his anxiety seemed to explode.

When David was a child about the age of seven - he can't remember exactly - his parents went through a bad time in their marriage. He remembered standing on the top landing late at night listening to them arguing.

There was no violence but David recalled that he was terrified that they would split up and he would go to an orphanage (he had heard someone say this at school). No-one talked to him about it but he remembered that his father often came home drunk at the weekends. Nothing happened and the marriage survived but David never quite regained the security he had prior to these troubles.

What upset David was that he thought he had put all of this behind him. The trigger seemed to be an argument he had with his wife over him coming back one night after having been out drinking and he suddenly saw himself as that young boy trembling on the landing. He had never felt as vulnerable since that time and he felt that things were in danger of falling apart and that there was nothing he could do to prevent it. He knew he coped with pressure in the same way as his father - instead of facing up to it, he drank or otherwise avoided it. His feeling now was that he was in over his head and wanted out.

Of course, when things were going fine, which was most of the time, David was not prey to this insecurity but when the Life Events were happening, his old insecurity re-emerged and were strengthened by view he took of the Events.

3) CONCLUSIONS

As we reach the end of this chapter, let us return to the two people having the discussion at the start. Can we now suggest another explanation for the facts we have been presented with?

- 1) **"Sometimes I cope fine"**. This highlights the importance of what is going on in his life. Anxiety rarely stays at the same level.
- 2) **"Yet after it has all died down, I might get the anxiety back for no reason"**. This fits with what we know about Life Events - that you tend to cope in a crisis but when things settle down, you then react.
- 3) **"My mother is a bag of nerves"**. Did this affect the person's childhood? Did she model herself on her mother in respect of anxiety? Did these affect the way she viewed whatever happened to her as an adult?
- 4) **"My twin is just like me"**. Remember not only do twins share the same genes, they share the same home. So any problems at home are likely to affect the others in the home. If they, however, are much younger or older, they may react differently to events.

The woman in this example describes what happened to her quite well. What she didn't do well was draw the right conclusions from the facts available to her. You have to examine your facts and draw the right conclusions.

In this chapter, we have looked at the most common causes of anxiety. One of the problems is that because childhood factors and, to a lesser extent, Life Events, are in the past, you may have forgotten what they were.

In the case where the problem was caused by a combination of Life Events, you may be unable to think of what they were because, on their own, none of them may seem important. In addition, you may be unaware of the factors involved in your perception of these events and, again, there will be a gap between what has happened to you and your reaction to these events. While it is nice to know why the problem has arisen, it is often unrealistic to expect to know exactly what caused it. So try to work out possible reasons for yourself and come to terms with them. Remember, in any case, that whatever caused the problem is now in the past and can't be changed. Of much greater importance are the things which keep anxiety going and that is what we will turn to now.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WHAT KEEPS ANXIETY GOING ?

THOUGHTS ACTIONS BODILY SENSATIONS

One of the aspects of anxiety which confuses people is the fact that anxiety often stays alive even long after the problems have gone. You may find that you had to work hard at coping with whatever problems were in your life and, now that they are gone, you find that you don't know how to lower your defences even although the original purpose of putting the defences up have now gone.

Common sense suggests that when your life is going well, anxiety should go. In this, as in other aspects of anxiety, common sense doesn't work all that well. Put simply - once anxiety gets a grip of you, it keeps a grip. The reason is that anxiety feeds itself and the fuel comes from T A B : Thoughts, Actions and Body. In order to deprive anxiety of it's fuel supply and, hence control it, you must understand how it is feeding itself.

In previous chapters, we have looked at some of the factors which keep anxiety alive - avoidance, fear of the symptoms of anxiety, continued sense of threat triggering the anxiety reaction etc but it is the way that the T A B problems feed each other that is the main cause of anxiety staying alive.

THOUGHTS

Let's imagine someone who has a problem getting to sleep one night as a direct result of anxiety. His thoughts concern a wedding he has to attend the next day. His train of thoughts involve:

"I don't want to go through with this, I won't cope well. I can't sit at peace when I'm tense and everyone will spot it a mile away. How can I get away with not eating anything because I can't stop my shaking if I'm holding a knife and fork and, anyway, given the state of my stomach, I'm afraid that I'll bring the food straight up again in any case. My mouth will be so dry, I won't be able to speak. Why can't I just go and get on with it like everyone else?"

What is going on here? Clearly there is a lot of apprehension in this man. He expects the worse - everyone will spot the anxiety; he will vomit; he won't be able to speak. He compares himself badly to everyone else and he doesn't come up with any way of handling the wedding - he seems 100% certain that he won't cope.

It is very likely that these thoughts will trigger:

BODILY SYMPTOMS

While having all these thoughts in bed, his anxiety will be rising and with it, his bodily symptoms. His heart is racing, his muscles have tensed and his stomach churns. He finds his breathing becoming laboured and feels generally unwell. His mind tunes into his body and, of course, this feeds his anxiety. This will trigger:

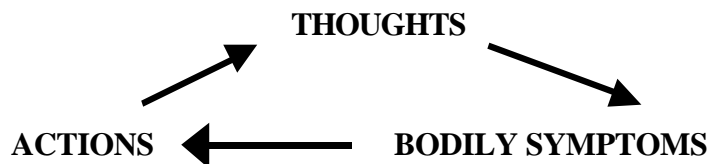
ACTIONS

Instead of being able to shut off from these thoughts and bodily symptoms and get to sleep, he tosses and turns, fidgets, gets up, goes to the kitchen to eat. He takes some aspirin to help his headache. This will take him back to:

THOUGHTS

"I feel awful. My head is killing me. If I don't sleep, I'll be useless tomorrow. I would be daft to go to the wedding feeling like this - I would be asking for trouble. I'll not bother going".

As we see, he avoids facing up to the threat. He won't be able to see how he would have coped so his anxious thoughts are not challenged. Although he may feel relief in the short term, he feels that he has let down his family (and himself). His self-confidence has been hurt again and the next time he has to go anywhere, this avoidance will mean that he will be less able to face up to it successfully. He is in a vicious circle:



As the diagram shows, the T A B symptoms feed each other. Caught in this vicious circle, he will get sucked deeper and deeper into the problem. This is why, even in the absence of anxiety provoking events, anxiety feeds itself and thus stays alive. It is for this reason that this book concentrates on attacking Thoughts, Actions and Bodily symptoms in turn. By doing this, the vicious circle is broken.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this part of the book is to help you understand what anxiety is, why it affects you in the way it does and why anxiety keeps going. It is important that you have this knowledge as it will set you up for understanding why the treatment is as it is and will help you put the treatment into effect. Knowledge is power and the knowledge you have now gained is the first (very important) step to getting back in control.

IMPORTANT STATEMENTS

1. You do not have a unique disorder. Anxiety is a very common problem. You simply have too

much of a normal emotion.

2. Anxiety is not a mental illness.
3. You will not go mad because of anxiety even if the anxiety is severe.
4. You will not die because of anxiety even if it is severe - no-one ever has.
5. We all have the potential to develop anxiety but developing anxiety depends what happens to you in life.
6. Anxiety can continue even in the absence of problems. It does this because anxiety feeds itself because of the vicious circle involving T.A.B.
7. You are not weak, inadequate or abnormal. The successful treatment of anxiety is a lot more complicated than giving yourself a good shake.
8. Tranquillisers may help dampen the symptoms but they will not cure the problem.
9. Up until now, you have not known how to combat anxiety. This book will give you the tools to do this. However it needs hard work on your part.
10. You can be taught to recognise the danger signs of anxiety and, thus, help prevent problems building up in the future.
11. There is no magic cure - don't be impatient. Overcoming anxiety takes time.
12. Believe in yourself - you can do it.

ANXIETY QUESTIONNAIRE

I FEEL TENSE OR 'WOUND UP'	Most of the time	3
	A lot of the time	2
	Time to time, occasionally	1
	Not at all	0
I GET A SORT OF FRIGHTENED FEELING AS IF SOMETHING AWFUL IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN	Very definitely and quite badly	3
	Yes, but not too badly	2
	A little, but it doesn't worry me	1
	Not at all	0
WORRYING THOUGHTS GO THROUGH MY MIND	A great deal of the time	3
	A lot of the time	2
	From time to time but not too often	1
	Only occasionally	0
I CAN SIT AT EASE AND FEEL RELAXED	Definitely	0
	Usually	1
	Not often	2
	Not at all	3
I GET A SORT OF FRIGHTENED FEELING LIKE 'BUTTERFLIES' IN THE STOMACH	Not at all	0
	Occasionally	1
	Quite often	2
	Very often	3
I FEEL RESTLESS AS IF I HAVE TO BE ON THE MOVE	Very much indeed	3
	Quite a lot	2
	Not very much	1

I FEEL TENSE OR `WOUND UP'	Most of the time	3
	A lot of the time	2
	Time to time, occasionally	1
	Not at all	0
	Not at all	0
I GET SUDDEN ATTACKS OF PANIC	Often	3
		2
	Sometimes	1
	Not often	0
	Very seldom	

CHAPTER 8

CLEARING THE DECKS

Before you get onto the things which will help you, you must get rid of the things which are making you worse. These may include the following `false friends' :

1 ALCOHOL

There are some horrifying statistics which suggest that up to half of all alcoholics started down that road by using drink to calm their nerves. Social drinking is fine but if you drink to cope with anxiety, you may become dependent on it. If you can't go to certain places or do certain things unless you have a drink beforehand, you are storing up trouble for yourself. Some of your symptoms e.g. nausea, sweating and shaking may, in fact, be related to alcohol. Heavy drinking makes anxiety worse - **STOP IT NOW.**

2 TABLETS

Tranquillisers like Valium (diazepam) work well for a short time. If you have been taking them regularly for more than four months, they are doing nothing for you as your system has got used to them. Sleeping tablets may not work after three weeks continuous use for the same reason. Don't just stop taking them as there can be nasty withdrawal effects. You might need to wean yourself off of them. Discuss this with your GP. Other drugs such as beta-blockers (Inderal/Propranolol) or the newer tranquillisers e.g. Buspar help some people in the short term but, again, are very unlikely to solve the problem. You can depend too much on them. Often, people say that if they didn't take their sleeping tablet, they wouldn't get a wink of sleep. In fact, they are giving credit to a tablet which is doing nothing for them when they should be giving the credit to themselves. You must get away from the `pill for every ill' mentality - it doesn't work for anxiety.

3 LOOKING FOR THE MIRACLE CURE

It doesn't exist. Be very suspicious of anyone offering you a "cure" for anxiety (it will probably involve you handing over a lot of money). Your anxiety has probably taken a long time to build up so it isn't going to disappear overnight. Beating anxiety takes a great deal of hard work on your part. The answer lies within

you. This book aims to put you on the right lines but, at the end of the day, it will be you who controls the anxiety.

4 REASSURANCE

This may be nice in the short term but, again, you can become dependent on it. If you are constantly asking people at home for reassurance, they will quickly get fed up of it. This will often lead to arguments and, hence, more anxiety. You have to feel strong enough to supply your own answers.

5 SELF-CRITICISM

If people who are anxious have one great skill, it is this. Bashing yourself doesn't help. If things go wrong, accept them. Learn from your mistakes and then get on with things. You have to learn when to pat yourself on the back when you do something that helps. This will help your self-confidence to pick up.

6 AVOIDANCE

The bad habit in anxiety.

Common sense says that if doing something makes you more tense, you should avoid it. **COMMON SENSE IS WRONG.** While avoiding may help in the short term; in the long term, you are simply building up trouble for yourself. You have to face up to the problems in your life. If you ignore them, they won't go away but will keep feeding into your anxiety. Facing up to them will be hard in the short term but, in the long term, will greatly help.

In addition, as you see yourself facing up to problems instead of running away, you will get a boost to your self-confidence.

CHAPTER 9

WORKING OUT THE PATTERN

Know your enemy

Is there a pattern to your anxiety? Are you worse at certain times?, in certain places?, with certain people? What things make it better?, how does it affect your body? Getting the answers to these questions is an important step in knowing how to deal with the anxiety. Two forms will help:

A) 'Describing your anxiety'

At the end of this book you will find a questionnaire called 'describing your anxiety'. Fill this in now and study it. By writing down the factors involved in your anxiety it will help you to get a clearer picture of the what, how, where and when of anxiety. Writing also helps you to think more clearly. This works by showing your thoughts and making you put them in a logical sequence. People often find that this alone helps them to feel more in control and sometimes helps them see patterns they had missed before.

B) Daily diary

Keeping a diary every day will be very useful. You will find these diary sheets at the end of the book. From today you should begin keeping this diary every day. You should complete it about 12 am, 6 pm and at bed-time. You have to do three things:

- 1 You rate your anxiety level by choosing a number between 1 and 10. The higher the number, the higher your anxiety level.
- 2 Try to explain why you were anxious or relaxed - was it affected by what was going on around you? Was it affected by what you were thinking about? Think hard about these questions and don't be afraid of guessing. You may not be all that good at first but, with practice, you will get better.
- 3 At the end of the seven days, write down what you have learned over the week about what affects your anxiety. Keep this diary going until you have conquered your anxiety. You will have to discipline yourself to filling out the diary at the right times. Don't let anything interfere with this task. It is a very important part of controlling anxiety.

Learn the lessons contained in your forms - they are helping you to pinpoint anxiety. This makes it much easier to attack. They also get you started on the road to controlling anxiety.

CHAPTER 10

QUICK CONTROL

Controlling anxiety is, of necessity, a long, slow business. While you are doing this, it can help to use techniques which can help you in the short term:

1 DISTRACTION

Dwelling on worries leads to more worries. One way to get short-term relief is to distract your attention. Here are some ideas which you can try:

a) Mantras

Sit alone in a quiet, dark room. Try to clear your mind as much as possible. Think of a word or phrase e.g. "I am calm"; "Relax"; "I am in control". Close your eyes and repeat the word/phrase in your mind over and over. Do this for ten or fifteen minutes each day or whenever you are anxious. Don't allow unwanted thoughts to come into your mind.

b) Mental games

- i) Count backwards from 100 in sevens - 100, 93, 86 etc. Repeat using other numbers.
- ii) Pick a letter of the alphabet at random and think of the name of e.g. a town in Britain, a country, a film star, an animal, a football team starting with that letter. Repeat with other letters.
- iii) Make up a conversation where each sentence starts with the succeeding letter in the alphabet e.g. 'Awful wet today isn't it?', 'But it is getting brighter', 'Can't see it stopping' and so on through the alphabet.

c) Memory object

This is anything which reminds you of a happy time e.g. a holiday snap; a picture of your children. Use this object to bring back a pleasant memory. Work hard to then build up as much detail about the memory as possible.

d) Describing your setting

Describe out loud if you want, everything you can see in great detail e.g. "I can see an electric fire. There are two bars, one of which is on. It looks quite new and there is a label on the bottom of it.....". If you are outside, you can focus your attention by looking for certain things - people with red hair, green foreign cars etc.

e) Staying busy

If you are more tense when you aren't doing much, go out for a walk, visit a friend, clean out a cupboard etc.

2) EXERCISE

In Chapter 5, we looked at how anxiety fills you full of energy. One way of reducing this stress is to get rid of your pent-up energy by exercising. Jogging, swimming, walking, badminton, aerobic classes etc. can be of use.

One of the other great advantages of exercise is that it gets you out of the house and lets you meet new people.

3) TALKING

If you bottle up your feelings, you are building up the pressure inside yourself. Talking to a trusted friend or loved one can allow you to release this anxiety. In addition, they may be able to give you good advice that you have not thought of yourself.

CHAPTER 11

PROGRESSIVE MUSCULAR RELAXATION P.M.R.

We noted earlier that the Sympathetic Nervous System builds anxiety up in the body while the Parasympathetic Nervous System calms it down again. The role of relaxation is to suppress the former system while boosting the efforts of the latter. In other words, relaxation directly fights the build up of anxiety while it works hard at slowing down your body. The easiest way to learn it is by using a tape. These may be available from your GP or from your mental health worker. At the back of this book is a description of a form of deep muscular relaxation. Read this chapter first and then use the instructions given at the back.

PROGRESSIVE MUSCULAR RELAXATION (P.M.R.) therapy divides into three parts:

- 1) LEARN DEEP RELAXATION**
- 2) LEARN RAPID RELAXATION**
- 3) PUT IT INTO ACTION TO PREVENT STRESS**

PART ONE = LEARNING DEEP RELAXATION

Deep relaxation is the form of relaxation most favoured by experts in anxiety management. One word of warning. If you have any serious physical problems e.g. a back injury which makes you unsure about carrying out these exercises, ask your doctor. If you find that muscles hurt the following day, you may be tightening too much. Ease off next time.

What is it?

P.M.R. teaches you how to relax your body and mind. You first become aware of the way anxiety affects your body - 'I didn't realise that my shoulders were up at my ears all day'. Having become aware of this, you then use the exercises to get rid of it. In the long run, the plan is that you use the exercises to prevent anxiety building up in the first place - as soon as anxiety begins to creep into your body, an early warning signal will be picked up by your mind and tells you to nip it in the bud. In other words, prevention is better than cure. You will find the instructions for this at the end of the book.

What do you do?

Relaxation is a skill to be learned. Like all skills, you won't pick it up overnight. You should expect that it will take a few weeks to even start to get the idea. Remember you are learning something you have lost the knack of - let patience be your watchword.

Where should you do the exercises?

You should do the exercises in a room where you can get some peace and quiet and where you can be comfortable. Many people find the bedroom a good place; others prefer the living room - suit yourself. You could try out different rooms to see which is best for you.

Should you sit or lie down?

Again suit yourself. The best places may be the bed or the settee. You may prefer the floor. If you have a comfy chair (recliners are very good) you could use this.

When should you do the exercises?

Every day. Do not miss the exercises for any reason. You have to give the exercises top priority if you are serious about controlling your anxiety. Decide what time of day suits you best and then stick to this time.

What will happen when you do the exercises?

It will help you relax your breathing to a steady pace and lead you into a series of exercises designed to slow down your body and mind. You will tense and relax various muscles. The idea is that you become aware of the difference between tension and relaxation in your muscles. Once you have gone through these exercises, you will go into relaxing your mind.

The following gives you some tips for relaxing:

TIPS TO HELP YOU RELAX

1 Get as comfortable as possible before starting. Take off your shoes and wear loose clothes. Make sure the room is warm. If you can, take the phone off the hook and make sure no-one in the house interrupts you while you are doing the exercises. If they want to join in from the start then that is fine.

2 At first, you should do the exercises when you are feeling reasonably calm as you will be able to concentrate better. This will help you pick it up more quickly.

3 When you go to do the exercises, you may think of all the other things you should be doing instead. Do not allow yourself to be distracted. This is precisely one of the problems i.e. that you do not allow yourself time to relax. You must allow yourself time to relax.

4 As with learning any skill, practise makes perfect. So you must practise at the same time each day, every day.

5 Don't worry about how well or badly you are doing. Most people find that their concentration wanders during the first few attempts. This is normal. As you get used to the exercises, your concentration will improve. So allow the relaxation to develop naturally - don't try to rush it and, when the feeling of relaxation

comes, enjoy it.

6 Steady and regular breathing is very important for the effective relaxation. Practise slowing down your breathing to about 10 -12 breaths per minute at various times of the day (use the seconds hand on your watch). This will help you become aware of your breathing getting out of control at the earliest point.

7 Deep relaxation, especially when you become good at it, can leave you feeling nicely drowsy. Some people fall asleep. If this happens to you, don't worry but bear in mind that you are learning a skill. So you will get more out of it if you can stay awake. If you are doing something which requires your full attention after relaxing e.g. driving, make sure that you give yourself time to feel fully alert before setting off.

8 You may find that when you are tensing your muscles, you hold your breath. Don't worry - you will soon get the hang of breathing normally while you go through the instructions.

9 Continue doing your deep relaxation exercises until you can relax well. At this point, you can either continue doing deep relaxation or switch to RAPID RELAXATION.

PART TWO = LEARNING RAPID RELAXATION

You go into this when you feel you have mastered the deep relaxation.

Rapid relaxation allows you to fine-tune your new skills. The idea is the same as that behind deep relaxation except that now, because you are a good deal more skilful, you can relax yourself more quickly than before. As before, you concentrate on your breathing and relaxing your muscles. This time, however, you relax whole groups of muscles at the same time. The same rules apply doing the rapid relaxation exercises at the same time each day -and as before, don't expect to pick it up immediately. So don't be put off if it doesn't work first time.

PART THREE = PUT IT INTO ACTION

Imagine a soldier entering enemy territory. He expects to be attacked at any moment and carries a weapon both as a way of protecting himself and as a way of attacking his enemy. As he is alert to any danger, he has a better chance of hearing the enemy approach and will be in a better position to fight them off.

Let's translate this story into your life. The soldier is you; the enemy is anxiety; the weapon is the skill of relaxation; enemy territory is anywhere you feel anxious. Because of your new skill, you can go into these places armed with a weapon which you did not have before. Therefore, instead of being at the mercy of the situation, you have a way of fighting back. Bear in mind, however, this will not happen automatically. You have to put it into action yourself. As you will be more alert to anxiety building up, you can nip it in the bud before it gets the chance to build up.

So carry out relaxation before you get into enemy territory and during your time in the anxiety provoking situation by carrying out the exercises which no-one will notice - controlling your breathing, relaxing your

shoulders etc. Therefore, you should:

1) **Prepare yourself** beforehand by working out what situations cause you anxiety and use relaxation before you have to face up to these situations.

2) **Overcome** the situation by keeping control of the face of the anxiety when you are confronting the anxiety provoking situation.

3) **Stay in control** by always remembering that you now have a way of fighting back when you feel threatened by anxiety. This will greatly help your self-confidence.

IN SUMMARY, YOU SHOULD:

a) Start with Deep Relaxation/keep a diary.

b) Do the exercise every day until you learn to relax.

c) Move to Rapid Relaxation

d) Do the exercises every day until you can relax quickly.

e) Put your skills into action by:

i) Working out where and when you experience most anxiety.

ii) Carry out relaxation before and during this time.

f) Keep your expectations realistic - it takes time to learn relaxation. Go at your own pace and don't be put off by initial problems.

NOTE A third form of relaxation can be found where it is recommended in the treatment of panic attacks.

CHAPTER 12

CONTROLLING YOUR THOUGHTS

Stage 1 = Understanding your Thoughts

- a) The nature of anxious thoughts
- b) Automatic thoughts
- c) Recognising the mistakes in your thinking
- d) Identifying your own automatic thoughts

Stage 2 = Using Positive Thinking

- a) Replacing automatic thoughts with positive thoughts
- b) "What are the chances?"
- c) "So what!"

Stage 3 = Breaking Anxiety Up

- a) Preparing to face the anxiety
- b) Facing up to the anxiety
- c) Reviewing what happened

Controlling your Thoughts

This book suggested that distraction was a good way to cope with anxiety in the short-term. It doesn't work in the long run because you are not getting to the root of the problem - the way you are talking to yourself. So we now turn to ways of facing up to these thoughts and getting rid of them.

STAGE 1 = UNDERSTANDING YOUR THOUGHTS

a) The Nature of Anxious Thoughts

We talk to ourselves all the time. By doing so, we are giving ourselves feedback about how we are getting on, how we are feeling, what we think is going to happen next etc. This latter aspect is useful in planning how to handle things.

If we feel calm, this self-talk is likely to be a fairly accurate reflection of what is really happening. If you are tense, your self-talk is greatly affected by the feeling of threat which we looked at in Chapter 3. Instead of looking at the world as it is, you are drawn like a magnet to the aspects of it which might pose a threat to you (e.g. "what if the doctor says I need tests?"). Two things now happen:

- a) By thinking about these threats, you make them more 'real' and often get them out of proportion ("what if

they find cancer. How will my children cope without me ...")

b) By thinking about these threats, you are not able to talk to yourself in a calm way so your anxiety does not get a chance to die down ("I am worried sick just now because my imagination is running wild. Tests will let me know where I stand and, maybe, give the doctor an idea of the best way to treat it. Everytime I have something wrong with me, I think I have cancer Well I'm still here aren't I?")

Often people say that they are not thinking of anything in particular when they are anxious. In fact, these anxious thoughts will be going on in the back of your head all the time. You don't have to be aware of what is going through your head in order for the thoughts to have an effect. This is particularly true of the thoughts involved in anxiety. Psychologists call these 'Automatic Thoughts'. To help recognise these thoughts, see the list below.

AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS

- a) They often happen out of the blue.
- b) The thoughts often become such a habit that you can be completely unaware of them.
- c) They are often irrational and wrong BUT they may seem believable to you AT THE TIME. Even if you don't believe the thoughts minutes later, they will still have done their damage.
- d) The thoughts often appear even when you don't want them to.
- e) They are usually about the (near) future.
- f) If anyone else believed the thoughts, they would become anxious.

As an example of the role of automatic thinking, let us look further at the example just given. The woman has been worried about lumps on her breasts. It is understandable that she is worried about going for tests but look at how her thinking gets things out of proportion and leads to greater distress. Remember that her doctor has not even suggested going for tests yet. Note also that, at no time, is she able to talk about what is happening rather than what she fears is happening.

"If the doctor sends me for tests, she must know it's cancer. She wouldn't tell me because she thinks I'm a nervous wreck. I can't cope with this. I know what the treatment is like and it didn't help my poor neighbour. I don't want to die slowly like that and my little girl is only three. How will she cope without me? ..."

These thoughts would upset anyone but the time for them might be when you are told that you are going to die. It is not appropriate to dwell on them just if you think your doctor will send you for tests. There is a great distance between tests and death and a great deal that could be done if the tests came back positive. So she has jumped the gun and not only is the anxiety out of proportion to the situation but she has failed to look at other 'options' -that the lumps are fatty tissue, that the doctor has seen them before and has not suggested going for tests etc.

Because these thoughts may be upsetting, you may try very hard not to think of what is going on in your head. This seems like common sense but, in fact, it makes things worse. As it is important that you understand this, we will spend some time looking at the way your thoughts (and the way you try to avoid them) makes anxiety worse. This will lead us into ways of facing up to the thoughts and, then, controlling them.

STAGE 2 = RECOGNISING THE MISTAKES IN YOUR THINKING

Study your thoughts. You might be able to identify some of the common thinking mistakes:

a) All or Nothing Thinking

Seeing things only in black and white e.g. you are either a total success or a total failure i.e. there are no shades of grey. An example of this may be a mother who sees herself as a total failure if her children are not always well behaved.

b) Overgeneralising

Assuming that if you have one bad experience in a certain situation then it will always be the same. An example may be a man who, after a panic attack at the supermarket check-out, believes that the same thing would happen if he returned.

c) Ignoring the Positive

Rejecting any success or achievement either because it 'doesn't count' for some reason or because you have become so good at only seeing the negative. The story recounted by the Nursing Officer at the beginning of this book is a classic example.

d) Catastrophising

Magnifying or exaggerating the importance of anything that goes wrong. This may start off with a fairly minor thought but the thoughts quickly escalate out of control. The description above is a good example of this.

IDENTIFYING YOUR OWN AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS

You may find it hard to get in tune with these thoughts at the start. We will look at some ways to do this. On the following page there are some of the automatic thoughts noted by other people.

"I'm going mad"

"I'm going to choke"

"Everyone is looking at me"

"I'm losing control"

"What if this isn't anxiety"

"If I panic again, I'll have a heart attack"

"They think I'm an idiot"

"There is no light at the end of the tunnel"

"Everyone is better than me"

"I can't cope anymore"

While you may identify with some of these thoughts, your own thoughts are unlikely to be exactly the same as those of anyone else.

STAGE 3 = USING POSITIVE THINKING

REPLACING AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS WITH POSITIVE THOUGHTS

When we talk about positive thoughts, I want you to develop thoughts which are realistic and reassuring instead of the Automatic Thoughts which are irrational and stressful. To do this, you must learn to challenge the Automatic Thoughts which, until now, you may have accepted at face value.

The Court Case

Changing to positive thinking is straight-forward if you follow the step by step approach given here. We call this 'The Court Case' approach. What you are doing is putting your thoughts on trial. They are charged with causing anxiety by deception. They have a lawyer who stands up to defend them (Evidence for) and a lawyer who stands up to cross examine them (Evidence against). The trial ends with the judge considering the merits of both sides and summing up. At this point you have to decide if the summing up is a better way to look on what is happening to you. Let us look at an example:

Marion's Case

Marion has been invited out for a meal by her friend to celebrate her birthday. She is anxious about this and is beginning to think of an excuse to get out of it. her automatic thoughts are:

"I can't go out with Sarah. I'll panic and make a fool of myself. The last time I went out for a meal, I was really tense and I nearly panicked. What is Sarah notices. She will think I'm an idiot".

THE FIRST STEP for Marion is to write down one of her automatic thoughts:

"I'll panic and make a fool of myself".

THE SECOND STEP is to look for evidence for the thought.

"Well, the last time I went out for a meal, I did feel panicky".

THE THIRD STEP is to look for evidence against the thought.

"I did feel anxious last time but I still managed to stay through the meal. The panic did ease off and I felt better".

THE FOURTH STEP is to sum up and form the positive thoughts from both the evidence for and against the automatic thought.

"Perhaps I will feel tense at the start. However if I do my breathing, that would help control any panicky feelings. Even if I do feel as bad this time, I will manage to cope and Sarah probably won't notice. Even if she does, she's my friend - it's hardly the end of the world."

You can see from this example that positive thinking means that you don't ignore the anxiety but you do take a positive approach to it. You are, no doubt aware that automatic thoughts help 'talk' you into anxiety. The opposite is true as well - positive thinking helps you stand back and get a truer picture of what might happen and what is unlikely to happen. This will help you stay in control.

Brian's Case

Brian's fears centre on motorway driving. He is worried that he might lose control and has an image of causing a multiple pile-up (Catastrophising). Let's put his thoughts on trial:

STEP 1 = AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS

"What if I feel the anxiety coming on when I am driving at rush hour. I'll lose control of the car, I'll end up causing a disaster".

STEP 2 = EVIDENCE FOR THE THOUGHT

"Every time I go on the motorway, I feel anxious. I feel that I am not concentrating enough and I am really edgy till I get off".

STEP 3 = EVIDENCE AGAINST THE THOUGHT

"If I did feel the anxiety get too high then I could pull off the motorway. If it was really bad, I could pull into the hard shoulder".

STEP 4 = POSITIVE THOUGHTS

"It is probably quite normal to feel anxious for the first few minutes on the road. I now know that this anxiety is made worse by the way I am thinking about it. Maybe if I talk to myself in a calmer way, the anxiety won't build up to the same degree. Doing this will feel strange for a while. You won't be very good at doing this for a while but don't stop. It is crucial that you hunt down these automatic thoughts and kill them off. You need to be talking to yourself all the time until you get the hang of this. Once you do, you can move to two quick ways to deal with your thoughts:

WHAT ARE THE CHANCES?

"If I don't get out of here, I'm going to faint".

"**WHAT ARE THE CHANCES** of me fainting. I always think that I am going to faint yet I never have since I was pregnant. On the few occasions when I haven't been able to get out, I have felt very faint but then the feeling passed and I was o.k. So just stay and brave it out. I'll be fine".

"My heart is pounding really hard and my pulse is racing. My fingers are tingling. I'm going to have a heart attack".

"**WHAT ARE THE CHANCES** of me having a heart attack. I've been through this many times before and

I've never had a heart attack. My doctor has told me I'm in fine shape. My symptoms are all in this book and even although they can come on when I feel calm, I now know that this is normal in anxiety".

SO WHAT!

"What if I start to blush in front of the people at work? I would want to die".

"**SO WHAT!** I haven't blushed in front of them and I have worked there for over a year and if I did - would it be the end of the world? - would they disown me? - would I disown someone else if it happened to them? So what is the worst thing that can happen - it would be embarrassing. I can live with embarrassment - it isn't going to kill me".

"What if my son gets into trouble with my neighbour. I couldn't handle it. I would go to pieces".

"**SO WHAT !** He hasn't got into trouble in the past and even if he did now, I'm sure my neighbour would handle it in a sensible way and there would be no problems dealing with him".

WHAT ARE THE CHANCES and **SO WHAT !** are good quick ways to get on top of automatic thoughts before they can build up your anxiety. More importantly, you are putting better ways of coping in their place so your anxiety will come down and you will know that it is coming down because of what **YOU** did.

STATE 4 = BREAKING ANXIETY UP

Earlier, we said that anxiety was about apprehension - a fear of what might happen to you. The way you think about something will depend on when it will happen.

So your perception of threat usually rises the nearer you are to that 'threat' and your ability to think your way out of it is diminishing at the same time. This section will teach you a way of stopping this happening to you in the future by using positive thinking before, during and after an anxious situation:

- 1) **PREPARING** to face the anxiety.
- 2) **FACING UP** to the anxiety.
- 3) **REVIEWING** what happened.

Below are listed some positive thoughts which you could consider using for yourself. These are just some ideas for you to use. Try to pick ones which you feel comfortable with. Even better - try working out your own. Work hard at this and don't be put off by early failure.

The important lesson is that you have to become aware of the thoughts as soon as possible and to challenge them as soon as possible before they can affect you.

We want you to feel that there is something you can do to control your thoughts. Combining this with

relaxation will give you a powerful way of getting on top of the anxiety.

BREAKING ANXIETY UP

1) PREPARING

"What do I have to do? Work out a plan now"

"This could be rough. Prepare yourself for it"

"I'm uptight. That's normal. Don't go overboard"

"Keep thinking about what I can do. Try not to think about the anxiety"

2) FACING UP

"Relax, I am in control. Take a deep breath"

"Don't make more out of this than I have to"

"Don't jump to conclusions. Look for positives"

"Take things one step at a time. I can cope with this"

3) REVIEWING

"I did it. It wasn't as bad as I thought"

"It didn't work - that's o.k. What did I learn?"

"When I control my thoughts, I control my anxiety"

"Not bad and next time I'll be better"

CHAPTER 13

CONTROLLING YOUR ACTIONS

1) FINDING HIDDEN PROBLEMS

At this point, you have to look deeply at yourself and your life. Is your anxiety trying to tell you something? Could your headaches, worry, nail-biting be a sign of something wrong in your life? Are the T A B signs trying to tell you to change in some way? Let us look at the example of Lesley and Alan :

CASE HISTORY 10 : Lesley and Alan

Lesley is an attractive 34 year old woman. She is married to Alan who is four years older than her. Lesley spends most of her time at home looking after her three year old twins. She has a weekend job in the pub.

Lesley noticed that she was becoming more and more anxious when she was going out to work at the pub and also when she was out with the children. At first she put it down to having to contend with the twins as they could be a handful when outside and to the fact that she did not really like the job anyway. Alan suggested leaving the job as they could get by on his salary. This she did but she still felt anxious when outside.

She gradually began to avoid going out at night with Alan or her friends saying it was far too much trouble getting a baby-sitter even although her mother was more than happy to look after the twins. Much to Lesley's relief, Alan began to take responsibility for paying the bills, getting repairs done, getting the shopping etc. This, in the long run, merely made Lesley less and less confident, more anxious and more dependent on Alan. Fully-blown problems were on the horizon. Why?

When looking at the problem in detail, two facts stood out.

- 1) Lesley's father had died just before the twins were born.
- 2) Alan, in trying to help, had become over-protective towards his wife during this difficult time.

When all the information is presented one is able to come up with the following conclusion.

- 1) On the surface, Lesley had an agoraphobic problem.
- 2) At a deeper level, it seemed that:

Lesley had not come to terms with her father's death. She refused to talk about him to anyone; refused to look at old family pictures and, when she was at her mother's house, refused to sit in 'his' seat. It was almost as if, in her own mind, he was still alive and could walk through the door at any minute even although she really knew that he was dead. Although these thoughts and feelings are not unusual shortly after the death of a loved one, this denial was important in Lesley's current problems.

- 3) Alan's over protectiveness was now hindering her. He had suggested she leave work; he did not

encourage her to try to get back to doing the things she used to do. Alan was under a lot of strain himself and, in particular, there was a long-standing lack of self-confidence.

In some ways, Alan benefited from Lesley's dependence. He had been worried for some time that his attractive wife would, one day, get fed up with him, meet someone 'better' and leave him. These fears were kept at bay by Lesley needing him so much. What Alan was unable to see was that Lesley loved him in any case and that as any marriage survives on trust, he had to give Lesley more breathing space.

By placing the pieces of the jig-saw together, simply treating the agoraphobia would not work unless, at the same time:

Lesley learned to come to terms with her father's death and :

Alan was able to get rid of his need for Lesley to depend on him too much so that she could regain her self-confidence which would, in turn, help Alan regain his.

Alan and Lesley came to see how these problems were affecting their lives and, between them, they sat and worked out ways of sorting them out. Within six months, Lesley was back working at the pub and attending night-school once a week. She had a picture of her father displayed in the living room while Alan reported that the marriage was in fine shape and that he was coping better than he had in years.

Your job at this point is to see whether there are any hidden problems which need to be looked at. These problems could relate to:

Marital	Being immature	Work
Children	Drinking	Being stubborn
Friends	Sexual	Being too dependent
Money	Parents	Gambling

Think hard about this and write down all the possibilities. Now discuss them with family and friends. Remember, other people have a different view of things and you can benefit from their advice. Having done this, you should try to work out the way forward. By no means everyone who is anxious has these underlying problems so don't feel that you have to 'come up with' a reason.

Avoidance

One of the main things keeping anxiety going is avoidance. Earlier in the book it was noted: Although avoiding a situation may bring relief in the short time, it is simply building up the problem in the long term. These problems could involve:

- Going to a work's night out
- Apologising to a friend when you should.
- Discussing problems in your marriage.
- Complaining about shoddy workmanship.
- Going to the shops when they are busy.

When you plan facing up to a stressful situation, use the positive thinking you have learned as well as your relaxation skills. Give yourself a pat on the back and, if necessary, make plans to face up to the situation as soon as possible.

2) 25 WAYS TO COPE

The following ideas have, on the whole, been suggested by people who have had anxiety in the past.

1) Deal With Problems on the Spot Do not bottle up emotions. These feelings will grow and grow inside you, building up anxious thoughts until they `erupt'. This may make you feel powerless to control your feelings. So if there are problems at e.g. work, make sure that you express your feelings at work and look for solutions instead of bottling it up until you get home and take it out on the children.

2) Strong, Confiding Relationship Try to get or retain a strong confiding relationship as this seems to be very important in keeping us on top of things. So if you have a relationship which is currently under stress, put a great deal of effort into improving it.

3) Humour Anxiety is not a funny subject. However, standing back and looking for funny aspects of situations can be a very good antidote to anxiety. The chances are that there will be something about your reaction which is funny. So, if you can, try to look on the lighter side of things.

4) Slow Down Don't do things at 100 miles an hour. You can only do so much in a day and accept that if you do not get as much done as you would like then it is no big deal - there is always another day.

5) Driving Next time you are out, have a look at drivers as they sit at the traffic lights. You can spot the anxiety easily. See them overtake at the worst spots, go through red lights etc. They get home two minutes earlier and flood themselves with anxiety. Is it worth it? Slow down, enjoy the drive, stay inside speed limits, take new roads home for a change, come out of gear at the lights and be more courteous on the road.

6) Coping with Ruts If you feel your life is in a rut just now - same old routine day in and day out then think about change. Plan your week-ends - do something different - go for a drive, visit friends, go for a long walk. If you can afford it, plan the odd week-end away as a change of scene may help.

7) One Thing at a Time Think of someone at work cradling a phone between his shoulder blade and ear. With one hand, he is writing a letter and, with the other, searching through some papers. In between, he is trying to grab a quick snack. The man is overloading his system. If you are making a phone call, make only the call and do nothing else. This will release pressure. The message is do not keep too many balls in the air at the one time.

8) Prioritise If you do have a busy life, you must set up your priorities. Decide on what has to be done and decide on what can wait. Put these priorities in some order. Number 1 has to be done first, number 2 has to be done by the end of the week etc.

9) Past Experience If you are in a jam, ask yourself if you have been in a similar situation before. How did you deal with it? If what you did worked, try it again. If it did not, learn from your mistakes.

10) Exercise If you are vegetating around the house all day, lying in front of the T.V., lying in bed etc., you may be more prone to anxiety. Think about taking up walking, jogging, bowls, squash etc. Aerobic exercise may be especially good for depression. In addition, exercise often gets you into company and the chance to meet new people. If you have physical problems, try to take up a hobby especially if it takes you out the house.

11) Get Enough Rest You cannot burn the candle at both ends. You need sleep to recharge your batteries. So get to bed at a reasonable time and try to avoid long lies.

12) Do not Accept Other People's Targets If you feel that people expect too much of you, do not try to satisfy these expectations. Have a quiet word and reach agreement. If agreement cannot be reached say 'NO'.

13) Situations Outside your Control Some situations are outside our control and, because we cannot do anything to alter the situation, simply accepting that you (or anyone else) cannot change things may help keep the anxiety at a manageable level.

14) Eating, Smoking and Drinking Social drinking is fine especially if you enjoy the company but if you are drinking as a way of coping with stress - stop it now. It is harming you.

Smoking makes you unhealthy and greatly increases your chances of dying prematurely. It does little to help anxiety - stop it now.

Try to eat more healthy foods - get away from fried and fatty foods. Cut down on sugar and salt. Eat less sweets and cakes. Eat more fruit, vegetables and whole-wheat bread. Eat at regular times and do not overeat.

15) Caffeine Caffeine is a stimulant. It can increase anxiety. Caffeine is contained in a range of products - tea, coffee, some headache tablets and pain killers, soft drinks (especially diet-free versions). Everyone has their own limits but, as a rough guide, 12 cups of tea, 10 cups of instant coffee or 6 cups of fresh coffee a day may be enough to produce symptoms. If you get symptoms from caffeine, cut back slowly to avoid withdrawal effects. Switch gradually to decaffeinated coffee and caffeine free Coke and Pepsi or pure fruit juice instead.

16) Build Relaxation into your Life No matter how busy you are, put aside some time each day for yourself. Go out for a walk, phone a friend, do the garden, read a book, listen to music. Look forward to this time and enjoy it when it happens.

17) Build up Supports Having a range of supports - various friends, interests, hobbies etc, will help if you are having problems in one area of your life as you can fall back on another. The moral is don't put all your eggs in one basket.

18) Don't try to be Superman or Superwoman Do you try to do everything?, succeed at everything?. be the best? This will not work. No-one is superman so you should not try to be. Remember, no-one is indispensable. If you do too much at work, remember that it will still be there long after you are gone. Concentrate on your good points and learn to live with your faults.

19) Other People's Shoes If you have a particular problem, imagine how you would react if someone came to you with the problem. What advice would you give that person? Would that advice work for you?

20) Confront One of the main things keeping anxiety going is avoidance. It may work in the short term but, in the long-term, it is making things worse. Before confronting your problems, work out the best way of coping using the information given earlier.

21) `Worry Time' This is a trick which some people find useful. You put aside a particular time of the day e.g. 8 pm to 8.15 pm. This is your `Worry Time'. So if you start to worry about something at e.g. 10 am, you tell yourself that you are not allowed to worry about it now but will save it for your `Worry Time'. At 8 pm, you would bring it to mind and worry about it. Chances are that either you have forgotten what it was or it no longer seems worth worrying about.

22) Kiss it Goodbye Again, this is a trick which some people find works for them. This one was donated by an anxious executive who spends most of the day in front of her computer. At the end of the working day, she switches off the computer, kisses the screen and says `see you tomorrow Fred' (her computer's name). This is her way of leaving her anxiety with the computer and lets her relax at night.

23) Do the Worst Thing First If you have a list of things to do, do the one you least want to do first. If you do, you can get it out of the way and the rest of the tasks will be easier to cope with. If you keep putting it off, it will prey on your mind and may seem a lot worse than it really is.

24) Look and Sound Relaxed Other people will pick up on how you are feeling according to how you look. So go out of your way to look relaxed - don't sit on the edge of your seat - slow down your speech - relax your shoulders - don't fidget. You will gain confidence if you know that on the outside, at least, you are looking calm.

25) Confide in Others If there are people around who you can trust, let them know how you feel. They may be able to offer solutions to problems which you have not thought about and, indeed, may have had similar problems themselves. In any case, confiding may let you get things off your chest.

3) TYPE A ACTIONS

Type A actions are often found in people who complain of anxiety. If you are `high' on this, you are likely always to be in a hurry, always trying to do more and more in less and less time. You will be very competitive, hate to lose and find relaxing hard. If you are held back in any way, you may be very irritable. Because you may jump in the deep end all the time, you may constantly feel you are trying to keep your head above water. If you are `Type A' in nature, you may be feeding your anxiety by your lifestyle. Of course, some of these things are not bad but they have to be `managed' better.

4) PROBLEM SOLVING

This is a good way to tackle problems one at a time. You ask yourself the following questions:

1) What is the Problem?

Confronting my boss.

Going to the parents night on Tuesday.

Sorting out the money problems.

2) What do I want

e.g. My boss to agree that I need more help.

To talk sensibly to Kirsty's teacher.

To agree to an overdraft with the bank

3) What will I do?

Have my argument at worked out in advance and stay calm and reasonable.

Get there early, take it one step at a time, accept most parents are tense going anyway.

Phone the bank manager and make an appointment.

4) Implement the plan

: Do it.

5) Evaluate

: Did it work? If not, you know where you stand so use your new information to go through this process again.

PROBLEM SOLVING can be very useful for well defined problems. Don't expect success first time. Learn from your mistakes and, most of all, don't give up. Once you get the hang of it you will feel more confident about dealing with any problems which can spring up in the future as there is now something which can be done about them.

To make this more powerful, combine it with relaxation and Positive Thinking.

CHAPTER 14

CONTROLLING PANIC ATTACKS

1) WHAT IS A PANIC ATTACK

Many people with anxiety say that panic attacks are a serious problem in their life. They may affect your T A B symptoms in the following ways :

THOUGHTS

A panic attack involves a feeling of being out of control and extreme anxiety. This is particularly true if your attacks come out of the blue. it is very common to feel that something awful is about to happen to you during a panic.

ACTIONS

The fear of panic tends to make you avoid places/activities which you think will make you more likely to panic.

BODY

A panic attack tends to be a very physical attack involving the same symptoms noted in the box earlier but they are likely to be much more intense.

Although it may feel like it, panic does not come out of the blue. Panic is a reaction. Your job is to understand what triggered it in the first place. Again let us look at T A B :

The Role of Automatic Thoughts

T A B feeds itself - the vicious circle we have talked about is very important in panic. As the panic may seem to come out of the blue and because it hits you with such strength, your feelings of threat badly affect your automatic thoughts :

"This cannot be anxiety. This is what happened to my uncle before he had his heart attack".

"I cannot stand this. If I lose control, I'll get locked up".

"I was feeling fine. There is no reason for this. There must be something far wrong with me".

Thoughts

I'm losing my mind
I'm having a heart attack
I'm losing control
I'm going to die
I'm going to pass out
I'm going to make a fool of myself

I've got to get out of here
I'm going to lose control of my bowels/bladder
I'm going to do something stupid
Everyone is looking at me
Concentration on body state e.g. pulse rate
Confusions

Actions - Behaviour and Avoidance

Inability to stay still
Fidgeting
Foot tapping
Snapping at people
Pacing up and down
Yawning
Sighing
Inability to stay still
Fidgeting
Foot tapping
Snapping at people
Pacing up and down

Exertion (for fear of bringing on an attack)
: Sexual activity
: Running upstairs/running for a bus
: Sports
Getting into arguments (fear of getting angry)
Staying alone (no-one to help you)
Going far from home
Going abroad
Agoraphobic situations
Yawning
Sighing

Body

Palpitations
Sweating
Nausea (sometimes vomiting)
Numbness in fingers and / or toes / around mouth and
nose / sometimes on one side of body
Hot and cold flushes
Choking sensations
Cold, clammy hands
Muscle tension
Dizziness/faintness

Visual disturbance
: stars in front of eyes
: blurring
: tunnel vision
Breathlessness
Chest pains/tightness
Exhaustion
Trembling
Depersonalisation/derealisation
Heart racing

The nature of the bodily symptoms often helps you recognise the automatic thoughts. The automatic thoughts fit the symptoms e.g. thoughts of having a heart attack are usually accompanied by palpitations, going crazy with feeling unreal confusion etc.

The Role of Actions

You will be very aware of the changes in your actions caused by panic and this will feed back into your thoughts - "look at the state of me. Everyone can see what an idiot I am". If you are avoiding places or doing things for fear of provoking a panic, you are aware that you are restricting your life out of fear. Again, this has a bad effect on your self-confidence.

The Role of The Body

If you are prone to panic you will be especially sensitive to the way panic and anxiety affects your body. This is not surprising given the very unpleasant reaction your body has to anxiety. So your Automatic Thoughts tends to relate to serious body problems. One aspect of your body reaction stands out and that relates to your breathing :

The Physiology of Breathing

In order to live, your body needs oxygen. When you breath in, you breath in OXYGEN. The oxygen is taken to your lungs from where it is carried around the body in the blood stream in order to `feed' the cells in your body. Once the oxygen has served its purpose, what is left - the waste product - has turned to CARBON DIOXIDE. This is returned via the blood stream to the lungs. It is then breathed out. If you are relaxing, you will probably breath at about 10 - 15 breaths per minute (although people vary a great deal).

In order for the body to function at its best, there is a balance between the oxygen going in and the carbon dioxide going out. This balance is regulated by your breathing and usually maintained at the right level no matter what you are doing. Think of an old steam train - the faster the train goes, the more coal needed. If the train goes slower, it burns up less coal. So the fireman regulates the amount of fuel he shovels into the furnace.

Your breathing works in a similar way. If you need more stamina and muscle strength e.g. if you are playing football, you will automatically speed up your breathing. As you will be burning your oxygen up more quickly, breathing quicker and deeper will mean you can easily replace the oxygen you are using. When, a few hours later, you are sitting at home in front of the T.V., your breathing will be much slower as you are not using as much energy.

Hyperventilation

HYPER(too much)**VENTILATION**(breathing) results when your breathing is too quick for your needs. Recall the information given on the role of anxiety (Chapter 4). There you learned that anxiety fills you full of energy in order to let you fight or flee from threat. One of the problems in anxiety is that the threats you are worrying about are not those that you can physically fight or run away from. So you are left filled with energy

in the shape of oxygen which you cannot burn up. It is like producing enough oxygen to let you play a game of football when all you are doing is sitting in front of the T.V.

However since more air is entering and leaving the lungs, more carbon dioxide is lost so the level in the blood falls. You have lost the all important balance. The body is, in fact, sensitised not to the amount of extra oxygen but to the drop in carbon dioxide. This causes changes in the blood and lungs (your blood turns more alkaline). These changes directly cause symptoms to appear. These changes - the drop in carbon dioxide and the blood becoming more alkaline - produce the following:

- 1) There is a slight drop in the amount of blood going to the brain. This may make you feel dizzy, have a sense of unreality, confused, choking feeling, breathless and have visual disturbance.
- 2) There is also a drop in blood reaching some parts of the body. This can produce a rapid heart rate, numbness, tingling in the hands and feet, tight muscles and cold, clammy hands.
- 3) Yawning and/or sighing.
- 4) Feeling flushed, hot and sweaty.
- 5) Chest tightness or pains.
- 6) Exhaustion.

Note that the symptoms that are listed are directly caused by hyperventilation and are very similar to the symptoms people describe when they have a panic attack. Thus controlling hyperventilation will be very effective in controlling panic attacks.

DO NOT FORGET, HYPERVENTILATION IS NOT DANGEROUS

To hyperventilate to demonstrate its effects, you should breath in as deeply as possible and in as quick succession as possible. The symptoms usually come on in 30 seconds or so. Try it. You may think that you never breath like this in a panic attack and this is probably so. However as noted earlier, panic is often precipitated after a prolonged period of mild hyperventilation of which you are unaware.

If you hyperventilate quickly and powerfully, these symptoms may come on in seconds but you are more likely to do so in a much slower, subtle way over a period of minutes or hours. If so, the body compensates somewhat and you may not get any of these symptoms (because

the blood does not turn more alkaline) but you may go into panic without any warning when your carbon dioxide level drops below a critical point. This could happen even if you yawn (you lose a lot of carbon dioxide when you breathe out of a yawn).

These symptoms can be very unpleasant and are the ones noted in the Body Symptoms. These body symptoms will, of course, cause anxious thoughts. As you will not be aware of these very slow changes, it helps explain why panics can appear to come out of the blue. Let us look at the vicious circle that is involved:



CATASTROPHIC INTERPRETATION

HYPER-VENTILATION



UNPLEASANT SYMPTOMS ← **TOO MUCH OXYGEN - TOO LITTLE CARBON DIOXIDE**

This vicious circle is the same as exists for people who do not panic with two exceptions - the anxiety and catastrophic interpretations. If anyone hyperventilates, they will get exactly the same symptoms as you get - it is perfectly normal to do so. These symptoms are not dangerous but if you panic, you will **INTERPRET** them as being dangerous i.e. catastrophic. This is where the anxiety enters the circle for the very good reason that if you believe you are about to die or crack up, it is understandable that you feel panicked at the thought. What is wrong in the first place is that you are not going to die or crack up.

The way you react to panic also affects your Actions as, often, you believe you are not getting enough oxygen/air into your lungs. You may try to breath very deeply or going to the open window for more air. This is because of the way the symptoms affect you but, as you have seen, the opposite is true - you have too much air in your lungs. You should be slowing down your breathing instead.

Hyperventilation will be important for about half of the people who have frequent panic attacks. If it isn't a factor in your panics, concentrate on relaxation and controlling your thoughts. If you answer **YES** to any of the questions it suggests that hyperventilation is a factor in your case. You can also deliberately hyperventilate. It will not harm you although it will feel unpleasant when done deliberately.

Hyperventilation does not usually lead to panic. The reason why this is because you are aware of what is causing the symptoms so you do not catastrophise.

From what you have now learned, the most obvious two ways to control panic are :

CONTROLLING YOUR BREATHING & CONTROLLING YOUR THOUGHTS

HYPERVENTILATION

If you are stressed, do you ever find your breathing speeds up or that you shallow breath?	YES/NO
Do you ever feel that you are suffocating?	YES/NO
Do you sigh, yawn or gulp in air a lot?	YES/NO
Do you often feel that you are not getting enough air into your lungs?	YES/NO
Do you often get a tingly, prickly or numb feeling in your fingers, toes or	YES/NO

around the mouth and nose?	
Do you often get chest pain for no reason?	YES/NO

Controlling Your Breathing

The first point to be made is that when you hyperventilate, you often feel that you do not have **enough** air in your lungs. As you have seen, this is not true. So you have to fight against the desire to take in some deep breaths as they simply make the problem worse. You should try to stop yawning, sighing and gulping for air for the same reasons.

Keep monitoring your breathing and, if necessary, slow it down every five minutes. Wear a watch with a seconds hand so that you can time your breathing to about 10 - 12 breaths per minute i.e. one breath every six to seven seconds.

Using a Paper Bag

Hold a paper bag tightly around your mouth and nose so that no air can get in from outside. (If you do not have a paper bag handy, cup your hands over your mouth and nose instead). Breathe normally (10 - 12 breaths per minute) into the bag until you feel better. This method works because :

- a) You are slowing down your breathing. This will build up the carbon dioxide level in your blood.
- b) As the problem in hyperventilation is that you are breathing in too much oxygen while breathing out too much carbon dioxide, using the paper bag helps as instead of losing carbon dioxide when you breathe out, you simply hold it in the bag and take it straight back in as you take your next breath in. This stops you breathing out too much carbon dioxide.

Breathing Retaining

This technique will give you a weapon to use to attack the physical symptoms caused by hyperventilation and, thus, help control panic.

Start by following the advice on relaxing as mentioned previously. Sit in a comfortable chair and let yourself relax as much as possible. Take a slow normal breathe in and think '1' to yourself. As you breathe out think 'relax'; breath in again and think '2', breathe out and think 'relax'. Continue doing this up to 10. When you reach 10, reverse and start back down to 1. Try to put everything else out of your mind. It may help to 'see' the numbers and the word 'relax' in your mind's eye.

As with the relaxation you have already carried out, it will take you a while to pick this up so don't be put off by early failure. You can boost the benefits of this by breathing from the diaphragm:

Diaphragmatic Breathing

Place one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach. As you breathe in, the hand on your stomach

should be pushed out while the hand on your chest should not move. To help, breathe in through your nose, purse your lips and breathe out slowly through your mouth. If you are a chest breather, you will find this difficult at first.

Put these two exercises together and do them twice a day. Once you get good at it, practice when you are at work, sitting on the bus, watching T.V. etc. The aim is to be able to put this into action no matter where you are. This treatment is summarised in the box on the next page.

Controlling Your Thoughts

Look back to the vicious circle on page 72. It is the way you interpret the symptoms involved in hyperventilation that leads to the panic. So interpreting a racing heart as an impending heart attack or an unreal, depersonalised feeling as imminent mental breakdown will obviously make your stress go through the roof. While breathing retraining will greatly cut down on symptoms, you should still be controlling your thoughts. Remember what you learned about how to do this and use these techniques to get on top of your panic automatic thoughts.

BREATHING RETRAINING

1. Take a breath in and think '1'
Breathe out and think 'relax'
2. Take a breath in and think '2'
Breathe out and think 'relax'
3. Repeat to 10 and back down to 1
4. Concentrate only on breathing and on number and 'relax' (use mind's eye)
5. Use slow normal breathing (10-12 per minute)
Breathe in through nose. Purse your lips and breathe out slowly through mouth
6. Use your diaphragm - as you breathe in, your stomach should push out while your chest should not move.
7. As you breathe out, your stomach should pull in.
Your chest should not move in when you breathe out.
8. Practice twice a day in different places.

REDUCING THE RISK OF PANIC

So far we have looked at ways of tackling panic directly. There are other factors which may make you more likely to panic. Learning what they are will help you to further reduce the risks of having a panic :

1) RAPID POSTURAL CHANGE

Don't change your position too quickly. So if you have been sitting down for a while, get up slowly. Don't jump out of bed in the morning. You may get a swimming feeling in your head if you do.

2) TIREDNESS

Make sure you get enough rest as both panic and anxiety are made worse by fatigue.

3) LOW NORMAL BLOOD SUGAR

This is nothing to do with being diabetic. Low normal blood sugar comes about if you don't eat for several hours. So eat a breakfast before you leave in the morning. Don't skip lunch. Don't go on crash diets. As a rough rule of thumb - eat something every three to four hours.

4) ALCOHOL

Panic is more likely 'the morning after the night before' even if you have not had a great deal to drink. You can get into a vicious circle where you drink because you are anxious and you are anxious because you are drinking. This is the road to serious problems. Get off it by avoiding alcohol until you get the panics under control.

5) ILLNESS

You will be more prone while you are ill. Flu, in particular, leaves you more at risk while you are recovering. As you feel so weak and miserable, you are less able to fight panic off.

6) CAFFEINE

Too much caffeine can trigger panic. See guidelines as previously mentioned.

7) PREMENSTRUAL PHASE

Many women find that they are more prone to panic in the days before their period. There is a good reason for this. There is a natural drop in carbon dioxide levels before a period so hyperventilation takes its toll quicker during this time. In addition, normal premenstrual symptoms may increase anxiety levels in any case.

8) ANXIETY

The most obvious trigger is anxiety i.e. if you are anxious, you are more likely to panic.

Knowing what these risk factors are can help. This is especially the case where two or more of these risks combine. For example : You are out late at the weekend. You have a few drinks. You get up early the next day, rush out without eating but drinking a few cups of fresh coffee to waken yourself up. You have increased your chances greatly. You can plan ways of avoiding these things happening or, at least, if they cannot be avoided, planning ways of minimising the risks.

CHAPTER 15

CONTROLLING YOUR DEPRESSION

Measuring your Depression

Fill out the questionnaire on the next page. Add up the scores from the seven statements. If your total score is eight or above, then depression may be playing a part in your problems. As time goes on, fill out the questionnaire again to see if there is any change.

THE NATURE OF DEPRESSION :

Thoughts

Depression often makes you feel like giving up. A major factor in keeping depression going is the way you think about it i.e. your automatic thoughts. Here are some common automatic thoughts :

I'm no good	I hate myself
I can't stand this anymore	I'm a loser
Nothing feels good anymore	My life is a mess
No one understands me	I'm worthless
My future is bleak	Why can't I succeed

If you identify with any of these thoughts, go back and read over what was said about automatic thoughts. Do you have other automatic thoughts? If so, note the effect of these thoughts on your feelings of depression. Tackle these thoughts in exactly the same way as you tackled your stressful automatic thoughts. So refer back to remind yourself how to go about it.

Actions

Depression often makes you withdraw from activities which gave you some pleasure in the past. While we understand why you feel you cannot get back to them - lack of energy, lack of enthusiasm, fear etc. - withdrawing is now a big part of the problem. It is crucial that you feel you are part of the world and not standing on the touchlines. Take control - try things out, accept any failure and try twice as hard next time. Take the initiative - take the children to the baths, phone up a friend, organise a day out, decorate a room. Do something which shows you are fighting back.

DEPRESSION QUESTIONNAIRE

I STILL ENJOY THE THINGS I USED TO ENJOY

Most of the time	0
Not quite as much	1
Only a little	2
Hardly at all	3

I CAN LAUGH AND SEE THE FUNNY SIDE OF THINGS

As much as I always could	0
Not quite so much now	1
Definitely not so much now	2
Not at all	3

I FEEL CHEERFUL

Not at all	3
Not often	2
Sometimes	1
Most of the time	0

I FEEL AS IF I AM SLOWED DOWN

Nearly all the time	3
Very often	2
Sometimes	1
Most of the time	0

I HAVE LOST INTEREST IN MY APPEARANCE

Definitely	3
I don't take so much care as I should	2
I may not take so much care	1
I take just as much care as ever	0

I LOOK FORWARD WITH ENJOYMENT TO THINGS

As much as I ever did	0
Rather less than I used to	1
Definitely less than I used to	2
Hardly at all	3

I CAN ENJOY A GOOD BOOK OR RADIO OR T.V.

Often	0
-------	---

Sometimes	1
Not often	2
Very seldom	3

CHAPTER 16

CONTROLLING YOUR SLEEPING PROBLEMS

Sleeping problems are very common in anxiety. You may take too long getting off to sleep or wake up too often during the night. You may waken very early and be unable to get back to sleep. Not getting off in the first place is very common in anxiety and may relate to the fact that you have less to distract you when you try to sleep and, hence, worries seem to flood into your mind at this time. If you are not sleeping, you are not recharging your batteries so you may feel washed out during the day. This means you will have less energy and may be less able to combat anxiety as a result.

As sleeping tablets may not work after three weeks if you have been taking them every night, you should try other techniques:

One technique which you can try is relaxation. Go into bed and do the relaxation exercises. Not only can it relax you but, at the same time, it will distract your attention from the worrying thoughts which, otherwise, might come into your mind.

The therapy described in the box below aims at getting rid of the 'bad habits'. Below are tips to help you further.

RETRAINING YOUR SLEEPING

- 1) Don't go to bed until you feel sleepy no matter what time it is.
- 2) Use your bed only for sleep so do not read, eat, drink, watch T.V., listen to the radio. Put the light straight out and try to sleep. Sexual activity is the only exception to this.
- 3) If you don't fall asleep within 30 minutes, get up and go back to the living room. Quietly relax, don't eat or drink anything and stay there until you feel tired again no matter how long this takes. Then return to bed.
- 4) If you don't go off to sleep within 30 minutes, repeat 3) again (and again if necessary). Count on being up and down a lot during the first few nights.
- 5) Make sure you get up early each morning, irrespective of how much sleep you have had. This will get your body into a good sleep rhythm again.
- 6) Do not, under any circumstances, sleep or snooze during the day. Save your tiredness for night-time.

- 7) Keep going with this therapy. Even if you have hardly slept the previous night, go through the same steps the next night. It may be rough for a while but insomnia is a dreadful problem. It will be worth it in the end.
- 8) As with all the other techniques, you should keep a diary of your progress.

SLEEPING TIPS

- 1) Make sure the bed and bedroom are warm.
- 2) If your sleeping partner is restless or snores, sleep in separate rooms until you get the problem under control.
- 3) Caffeine can still effect you up to six hours after it has been ingested. So cut down on caffeine intake all day but especially from early evening onwards. See the advice on caffeine as previously mentioned.
- 4) Cut down smoking. Nicotine, like caffeine, stimulates the Central Nervous System (C.N.S). So don't smoke near bedtime. Never smoke in bed. Best of all, stop altogether.
- 5) Alcohol depresses the C.N.S. and some people rely on it to get off to sleep. This is a dangerous practice. Alcohol disrupts sleeping rhythms, cuts down on deep sleep and is likely to wake you during the night. So don't drink.
- 6) Ovaltine, Horlicks and warm milk **do** help you to sleep. The old wives were right!
- 7) Try not to eat for about two hours before going to bed. This will avoid the possibility of indigestion. If you have to eat, make sure it is something light.
- 8) Don't drink too much before bed as you may wake to urinate during the night.
- 9) Relax as much as possible before going to bed - have a bath, listen to music, play your relaxation tape. Don't go to bed straight from a task which has required a lot of concentration - you may be too alert.

CHAPTER 17

CONTROLLING THE FUTURE

You have been learning about anxiety, about your own response to it and ways of controlling it. The hope is that you are starting to feel better; feeling that there is more light at the end of the tunnel; that you are confident that the techniques you are learning will help you; that you feel you are in more control of your life. You are now your own therapist. Take heed of the following eight pieces of advice which will help you in this :

- 1) you are at the crossroads. One road leads to further control over you anxiety. The other leads back to where you started. If you forget about what you have learned and don't put any of it into action, you are going down the second road. Keep working hard at putting these techniques into effect and you are well on you way down the first road.
- 2) Keep your expectations realistic : You have not finished your therapy. you have now learned what to do - you now have to put it into practice.
- 3) Accept that you will almost definitely have set-backs.
- 4) Understand the difference between **relapse** and **setback**. a relapse means that you are back to square one. A setback is a temporary failure. You may have taken five steps forward but only one back. Bear in mind that you are still four steps up so do not talk yourself into a relapse.
- 5) Don't panic if you have a set-back. Accept what is going on. Stand back and work out, if you can, why you are having a bad day and, more importantly, work out what you can do about it.
- 6) Try to predict when a set-back is more likely - after an argument at home, at work, being on holiday etc.
- 7) Let other people help you. Express your feelings to them and get things off your chest. Listen to their advice, be comforted by their concern and take encouragement from them.
- 8) Face up to the problems which lie in the future. Don't worry about the problem - work out how you are going to deal with it using the T A B techniques you have learned.

THOUGHTS

Work out the automatic thoughts which you may have. Go back and work out how to use positive thinking to help.

ACTIONS

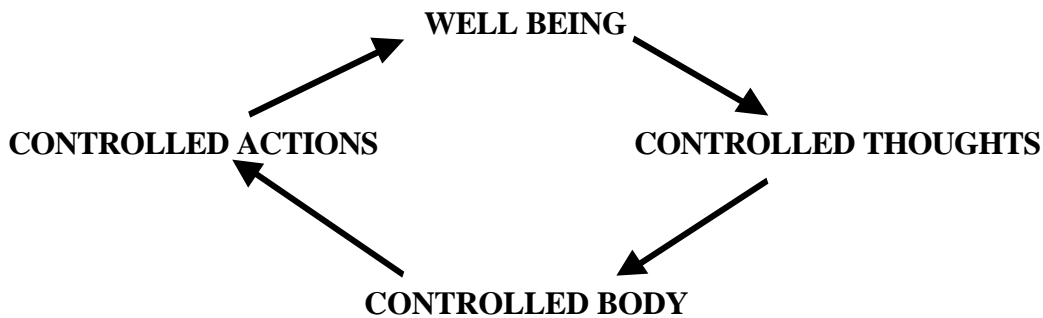
Work out how you may act if you are tense. Make sure you do not avoid and make the problem worse. Again go back and work out the best ways of coping.

BODY

Work out how your body may react. Go back and use relaxation and controlled breathing to cope. Don't leave things to chance - think and plan ahead. Stay in control.

TYING IT ALTOGETHER

The last is to bring everything we have learned together and see how it all fits. By this stage, the jigsaw is complete. Remember the vicious circle which kept anxiety going. The aim of this book has been to get rid of the vicious circle and replace it with a positive circle - one which will not just control anxiety but which will also promote a feeling of well-being. Being able to see how everything that you have learned fits together will help you achieve this.



CONCLUSIONS

You have now reached the end of this book. Compare what you knew about anxiety and it's treatment before you started and what you now know. We hope you feel you have come a long way. Don't regard this as the end - it is really just the end of the beginning.

It is known from research into controlling anxiety that what you do in the next few months is going to be crucial in whether you keep going forward. If you go away from the course and don't practise the new skills you have learned, the chances are high that you will go back to square one. Instead, work hard at putting these skills into practice, cope with set-backs, get a bit better day by day. While there are no guarantees, you will greatly increase your chances of controlling anxiety by working as hard as you can.

Remember right at the beginning of this book, It was said that the aim was for you to develop a 'Hardy personality'.

Feeling a sense of control

Feeling a sense of commitment

Feeling able to take the rough with the smooth

Don't expect to be able to be like this just now but always keep these goals in your sights. Work hard and

believe in yourself. You have taken the first and most important step by reading this book, keep going and

GOOD LUCK