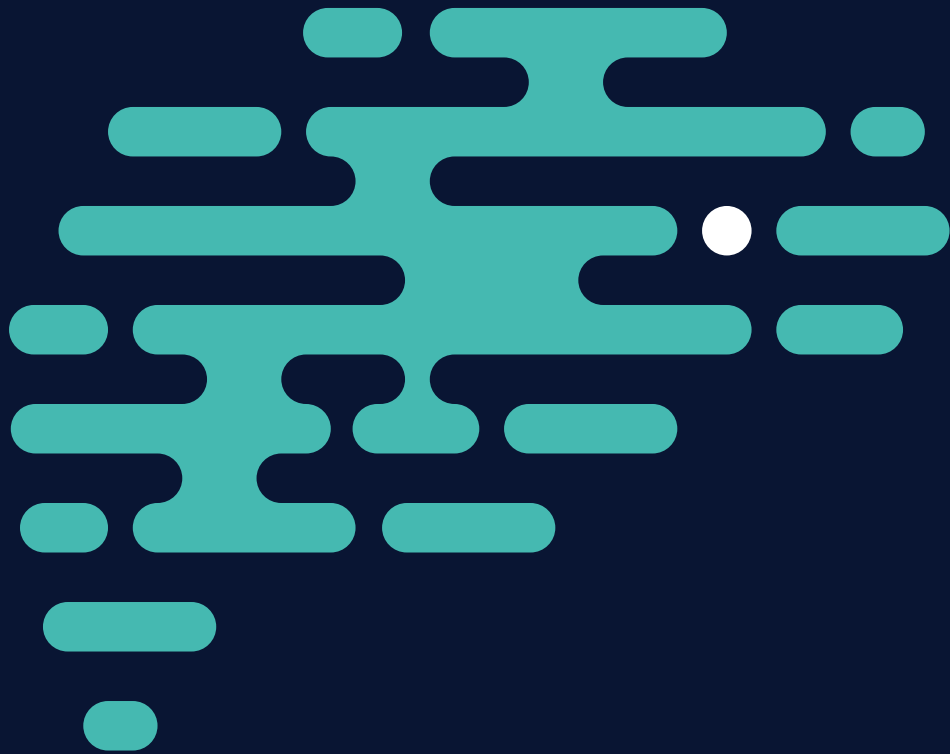


Sharyn Kennedy, PhD



3 practical ways to fix your

anxiety

HOW TO REWIRE YOUR BRAIN (WITH CBT)



stillmind

3 practical ways to fix your
anxiety
HOW TO REWIRE YOUR BRAIN (WITH CBT)

Sharyn Kennedy, PhD

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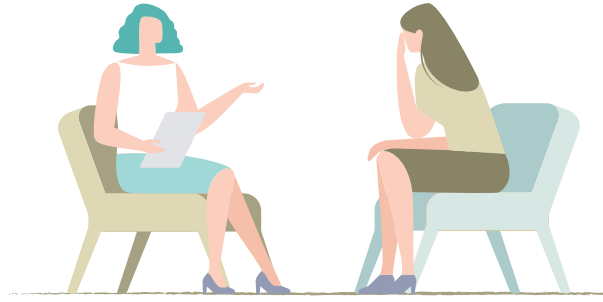
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introduction





Cognitive behavioral therapy, or CBT, is a neuroscience-based therapy that gives you the skills, tools, and strategies to change the way you think, feel, and behave.

Many of these strategies are based on brain research from the past 20 years.

The most powerful finding from this research is that brains are adaptable and changeable, and they build new neural pathways. We call this “brain plasticity.”

We know that thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are interlinked, but you can (with appropriate skills) learn to change any of these.

For example, if you change the way you think, it will affect the way you feel and behave.

If you change the way you feel, it will affect how you think and behave.

If you change the way you behave, it will affect the way you think and feel.

We often need to change the way we’re doing things.

That’s because life is unpredictable and sometimes chaotic.

If you get stuck in old, negative patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving, you are likely to repeat yesterday’s problems over and over.

The first step in learning about your brain is developing an awareness of thoughts and feelings.

When you pay attention to what you are thinking, you may notice that your mind sometimes analyzes, overthinks, and worries.

Constant negative thinking can lead you to feel low, anxious, worried, and unhappy.

When you manage these thought processes, you will improve your mood and your confidence.

CBT involves learning about how your brain works and learning how to change default thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

CBT feels like work because you will need to practice new skills so you can rewire your brain by building new responses. Over time, the new responses become automatic.

CBT feels exciting because it is exciting.

When you make positive changes in the way you think, feel, and behave, they will be reflected in your life.

It is important to remember that when we're using a CBT approach, we're working mostly on what you think about situations and relationships rather than dealing with the issues themselves.

This is not a new idea—even Shakespeare said so:



THERE IS NOTHING EITHER GOOD OR BAD, BUT THINKING MAKES IT SO.

H A M L E T

This eBook introduces you to three CBT processes to give you new ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving.

We discuss how each of these processes might affect your life and one way to change it.

REWIRE YOUR BRAIN TO FIX YOUR ANXIETY

an introduction to CBT





D

o you ever feel stuck in your awful thoughts and feelings?

Do you ever wish you could get rid of them?

This section introduces you to the concept of CBT, or Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.

After reading this section, you will understand what CBT is, how it works, why it works and how you can use it in your life.

It's easy to stay stuck in old patterns of thinking, feelings and behavior.

Life feels like every day is just a reliving of yesterday.

Everything feels stuck and on repeat.

The question is: is there a way out of this chaos?

Yes, there is: it's called CBT or Cognitive Behavior Therapy.

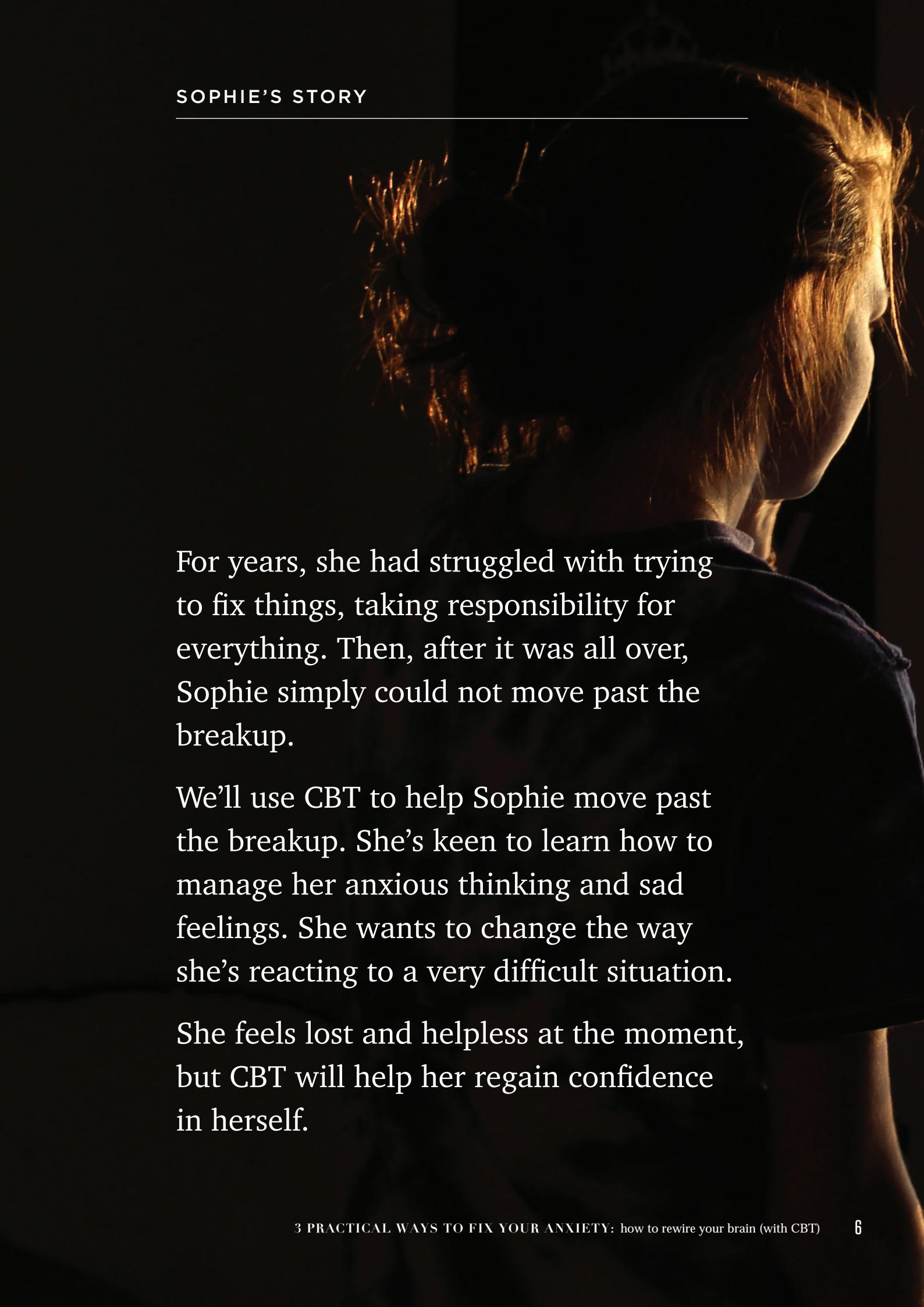
Before you can use CBT to let go of those awful feelings and problems, you need to understand what CBT is.

LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT SOPHIE

Sophie can't stop thinking that everything is going wrong in her life and that it's all her fault.

She worries constantly about getting things right. She's always rethinking what she has and hasn't done.

When Sophie's relationship with her boyfriend started to collapse, she was in agony thinking and worrying about what she had done to allow the relationship to fail.



For years, she had struggled with trying to fix things, taking responsibility for everything. Then, after it was all over, Sophie simply could not move past the breakup.

We'll use CBT to help Sophie move past the breakup. She's keen to learn how to manage her anxious thinking and sad feelings. She wants to change the way she's reacting to a very difficult situation.

She feels lost and helpless at the moment, but CBT will help her regain confidence in herself.

WHAT IS CBT?

CBT is a therapy process based on neuroscience research that's been going on for many decades.

The most important finding for therapists from this research is that brains are adaptable and changeable; they constantly build and rebuild new neural pathways (we call this brain plasticity).

In the past we used to assume that our thoughts, feelings and personality were relatively fixed and therefore not likely to change. We now know brains rewire and adapt and renew connections throughout our lives.

CBT is simply getting in touch with your thoughts and your feelings and knowing what is happening inside your head.

HOW DOES CBT WORK?

CBT is based on research that says neurons in the brain that “fire together, wire together.”

As you think, feel and behave, your brain makes default neural pathways.

We use these neural pathways automatically, often without awareness. This makes our thoughts and feelings go on endlessly, and automatically, inside our brain.

That means when you think something repeatedly, such as “It’s my fault,” that thought will be automatically associated with a default feeling or behavior.

Or, if you feel sadness repeatedly, that feeling will be associated with a default thought or behavior.

You have experienced this default pattern of thinking and feeling many times before.

It’s as though you are reliving your life in the same way every single day.

Sophie mostly thinks that “it’s all my fault,” and this thought is automatically associated with her default feelings of guilt and anxiety. As these automatic associations keep happening, Sophie falls into a spiral of anxious thinking.

Using CBT, you can change these neural patterns and teach your brain new associations.

This practice literally rewires your brain.

By using CBT tools and strategies, you can retrain your brain to think, feel and behave in a different way.

WHY DOES CBT WORK?

Your brain is a learning, changing and adaptive organ.

The more you practice new associations in your head, and change the way you think, feel and behave, the more you will change your brain.

Your default thinking and feeling patterns are just that—they are old, they are generally unhelpful, and they take you nowhere new.

You have a choice about what you think.

You have a choice about what you feel.

WHO IS CBT FOR?

CBT works whenever you want to make powerful changes in your life.

You'll learn how to actively rewire the old, unhelpful patterns so you can teach your brain new responses.

The more you practice CBT and the more you learn about how your brain works, the more you will be able to change your brain's pathways.

If you're willing to learn, understand and practice CBT skills, you can change almost everything about your life.

You may find it hard to get started, but it will become easier the more you practice it.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU USE IT?

When you practice CBT skills and strategies, you are training your brain to do things differently.

Instead of Sophie thinking "It's all my fault" and instantly feeling sad, guilty and anxious, a replacement thought or a different way of managing her feelings will keep her from going down that dark rabbit hole.

When Sophie starts using and developing new brain pathways, her automatic responses start to change.

Instead of automatically feeling anxious, she is sometimes feeling more optimistic or hopeful about what is happening in her life.

She has a range of new thoughts she can use.

Sophie has an understanding of how to deal with unpleasant feelings.

She notices that she behaves differently around others and is happier within herself.

Sophie's now ready to move past her breakup.

Her life is now changing for the better.

HOW DO I KNOW IT WILL WORK FOR ME?

Maybe you've tried other ways to change your life, such as:

- Fighting unwanted habits
- Avoiding awful thinking or scary feelings
- Distracting yourself to make these thoughts and feelings go away or be less overpowering
- Getting other people to help
- Overdoing activities (such as drinking or playing computer games) that will make you feel better

CBT is different. Instead of running away from awful thoughts and feelings, you're encouraged to pay attention to what is going on inside your head.

Maybe you've never done that before.

CBT teaches you to become aware of what is happening inside your head and to know what your thoughts, feelings and behavior really are.

When you become aware, you can change your thoughts, feelings and behavior.

Changing any of these will impact the way you live your life.

You can choose to keep the old thoughts, feelings and behaviors in your life if they serve you well.

If they do not, or if you consistently feel frustrated or unhappy, then you have the choice to change.

REWIRE YOUR BRAIN TO FIX YOUR ANXIETY

manage your
thinking
(with CBT)





Are you stuck in a cycle of never-ending negative thinking?

Do you ever wish you could stomp those thoughts into submission?

This section will help you understand the importance of thinking within the CBT, or Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, framework.

After reading this section, you will understand more about negative thinking, why your brain thinks the way it thinks, and finally, how to manage your thinking.

LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO SAM

Sam is an attractive, dark-haired young woman who has recently graduated and moved into the workforce.

Although she likes her job, she feels that she is working with people she really doesn't like.

She finds her boss to be unsupportive and unappreciative. She feels that she is often carrying the lion's share of the work while others on her team do less.

Sam struggles to ask for the help she needs. Rather than engage in a possible conflict with her boss, she just continues to work hard and put in the hours.

SAM FEELS FRUSTRATED AND UNHAPPY

Her personal life isn't going so well either; she recently ended an important relationship that she felt wasn't working for her.

Even so, she worries that she has ruined the only good thing that she has had in her life.

Sam says that what's going on inside her head is driving her crazy.

She asks: *Can't I just stop all the thinking? What can I do to get some peace? Please give me something I can do so it'll just stop.*

Sam has tried lots of ways to stop the mind talk—but everything failed.

While some of these strategies seem to work for a while, they don't help in the long term.

What can Sam do?

IS IT NORMAL TO HAVE THESE NEGATIVE THOUGHTS?

We know that thinking and reasoning are important brain activities that give meaning (and passion) to our lives.

In CBT, we say “the way you think is the way you feel.”

Thinking and reasoning allow us to decide or predict what will happen next so we can take the necessary steps to make our world manageable.

Thinking helps us make sense of the world so we can predict what will harm or help us.

This helps us use our brain and physical resources wisely.

ULTIMATELY, WE FEEL SAFER, MORE CONTENT, AND MORE AT PEACE

When we're in this relaxed mode, we can focus, work better and function more effectively.

Thinking is a normal and necessary way of interacting with the world.

But our brains—instead of starting from a neutral point—are wired negatively.

Negatively biased brains lead us to:

- Notice more negative than positive information
- Process more negative than positive information
- Understand (analyze and think about) negative rather than positive information

So, when our brain is thinking constantly about something that is scary, disturbing or threatening, that thinking is likely to become more powerful in our mind than positive thinking.

If we continue to think negatively, it's easy for this negative thinking to become a habit and for our lives to be overwhelmed by the repetitiveness and negativity of our thinking.

When our thinking is focused on something emotional (for example, personal relationships, interpersonal relationships, feelings of rejection, unhappiness or even fear), then our thinking may be so negative that we feel like Sam.

Sam has a mind full of too much thinking, and that is normal.

What's not normal is that Sam can't seem to find a place in her mind that is peaceful or allows her to take a break.



WHY CAN'T SAM FIND PEACE?

Sam is like all the other people I see in my psychology clinic.

She hates what is going on inside her head and sees it as totally aberrant.

We know that Sam's thinking isn't aberrant because normal functioning brains are negatively biased.

When Sam learns about and understands how her brain works, she will find that negatively biased thinking is normal and OK.

She wants one thing only and that is to get rid of this thinking . . . but she can't, and no one else can do that for her either.

But using principles from CBT, we can:

- Change her thinking, so her thoughts are different from what she is thinking now
- Change how she responds to her negatively thinking mind
- Teach her to listen to what her head is saying

MANAGING YOUR THINKING BY USING DIFFERENT WORDS

Sam can change her thinking in a myriad of ways.

There are dozens of ways she can use new, different and more empowering thoughts so that her head is less negative.

One way to do this is to simply replace the words that she has inside her head.

This strategy works because Sam isn't stopping the thinking that chatters inside her head—she is merely adding another thought on top of the old one.

We know that the brain's chains of thinking become stronger the more often they are used. So if Sam uses her new replacement thoughts more often than her old 'sticky' thoughts, the new ones will eventually become the default.

For example, maybe Sam has a thought that says: *I have too much work to do and it's never going to change in this workplace.*

Sam can catch that thought in her head and say to herself something like: *Hang on a minute, brain—here's a different thought. I have lots of work to do and I'll have to get someone else to help.*

Not only will Sam feel differently, she may even be motivated to take action to resolve the problem.

In the world of CBT, changing the way she thinks is a powerful way to change the way she feels.

MANAGING YOUR THINKING BY RESPONDING DIFFERENTLY

Sam can also change the way she responds to what is going on inside her head.

That's because if she resists her thinking, hates her thinking, is afraid of her thinking, or doesn't want to think at all, any of these 'fighting' responses will only make her thinking more powerful.

If, instead, she practices a new approach of being easygoing rather than fighting her thinking, or simply allows those thoughts to be and then pass on by, she will find these thoughts will become less 'sticky.'

'Sticky' thoughts are clingy and difficult to let go of.

ONE WAY TO DO THIS IS TO SIMPLY LET THE THINKING JUST BE THE WORDS

This strategy works because Sam, as we said, isn't stopping the thinking that chatters inside her head; she is merely starting to become detached or less entwined in her thinking.

We know that brains can easily get stuck on some things that 'trigger' us; we can practice learning to let the thoughts go.

For example, maybe Sam has a thought that says: *I have too much work to do and it's never going to change in this workplace.*

When Sam catches that thought inside of her head, she can notice the thought and say this:

“

Here's that thought about work again, and it makes me feel awful.
I'm going to put that thought in this box under my desk and
it will be gone.

Changing the way she thinks is a powerful way to change the way she feels.

MANAGING YOUR THINKING BY LISTENING TO YOUR HEAD

Finally, Sam can listen, really listen, to what her head is saying.

When Sam has a lot of thinking going on and a glut of negative, sad and scary thoughts, it's possible that her mind is processing (or trying to process) some difficult stuff.

Relationship breakups are particularly difficult to process because of the emotions involved.

Rather than fight these thoughts and the accompanying feelings, Sam can take time to allow her mind to express what it feels and what it fears.

This strategy (listening to her mind) works because Sam, like most of us, doesn't want to hear the awful thoughts she has inside her head.

Whenever we run away from scary thoughts, or feel fearful that they could be true, we are avoiding them.

WHEN WE AVOID SOMETHING, ESPECIALLY OUR THINKING, IT BECOMES MORE POWERFUL—NOT LESS

Listening to our thinking allows us to understand what is important to us; it teaches us to be less afraid of thinking.

For example, maybe Sam has a thought that says: *I have too much work to do and it's never going to change in this workplace.*

Sam can listen proactively to what her head is telling her by taking five minutes to write down everything that she is thinking—whether it's useful, positive, unhelpful, untrue or negative.

Sam can throw the paper away or she can sort her thoughts into things that she can do something about and things she can't.

Simply noticing the two different thoughts, and working on the things she CAN change, will help Sam manage her thoughts.

Changing the way she thinks is a powerful way to change the way she feels.

CAN I STOP THIS FRENZIED THINKING?

Sam wants to know how to get rid of her frenzied thinking or how to stop this frenzied thinking altogether.

She says: *I have to stop this thinking or I'll go crazy—I need to know how to fix it now!*

When she says these sentences “I have to stop it... I have to fix it now” to me, then that itself is her thinking.

Even though it feels as though she cannot have this frenzied thinking anymore, I ask Sam to take a moment and allow the thinking just to be the thinking.

REWIRE YOUR BRAIN TO FIX YOUR ANXIETY

manage your
feelings
(with CBT)





Are you feeling stuck in fear and anxiety?

Do you think that the way you feel will never change?

After reading this section, you will understand more about feelings, why your brain feels the way it does, and finally, how to manage your feelings.

LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT JOE

Joe is a successful guy . . . at least he is outwardly.

He's respected at work and drives a powerful team of people who solve complex problems.

Coworkers constantly stop by his office for advice and encouragement.

Joe knows his job well and he's uncompromising with his team, as he is with himself.

A committed family man, Joe sees his role as a father as one of the most important things he's ever done. He strives to be the best dad he can be.

NOW, HOWEVER, IT SEEMS THAT THINGS ARE FALLING APART

Despite his best intentions, Joe seems to be unable to cope with the feelings he has when he's around one of his female coworkers.

He finds the situation scary, especially as he's noticed changes in his life.

Joe's starting to neglect his work projects, even the ones he really loves. He's starting to stay late at work instead of going home to his children, and he notices he's unfocused and forgetful.



AT FIRST, JOE FELT OKAY ABOUT WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO HIM

After all, in his past, he's always successfully managed feelings and behaviors to get what he wanted in life.

He began by doing what he's always done before—be determined and controlling, pushing away problematic thoughts and feelings, even bulldozing over the top of them.

This strategy has always worked with his subordinates at work and also with his wife. So, Joe set himself a goal to disconnect this coworker from his life.

He succeeded for a while, ignoring her calls and refocusing on his work. But now when she contacts him, he quickly falls into old feelings and fuzzy thinking that make everything the same as before.

NOW JOE BEGINS TO FEEL AFRAID

What if, for the first time ever, he can't control what is happening?

What if he loses everything, including his job, his wife, his children, even his sense of self?

Fear starts to creep in.

Joe wants to know what's happening to him, and why these feelings drive him to do things that he really doesn't want to do.

JOE KNOWS HE HAS TO DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT— BUT HE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO

But what Joe does know is that he has to figure out what's happening inside his head.

If Joe were sitting in my office, I would say something like this . . .

I tell him to slow down and notice what is happening inside his head.

I want him to hear what his head is saying to him, so he knows clearly the thoughts that he is thinking.

Then, I want him to consider just what a feeling (fear, love, disappointment) really is.

Unless he knows what a feeling is, it'll be almost impossible for him to manage what's happening.

I ASK JOE WHERE HE THINKS HIS FEELINGS ARE

He scrunches his face to concentrate, looking for the answer.

Maybe, he suggests, his feelings are coming from his head.

He's right that thoughts and feelings are inextricably mixed.

BUT FEELINGS ARE MOST DEFINITELY NOT THOUGHTS

If we continue to work on his thinking—and his feelings are the problem—we probably won't get very far. So, I ask him again to keep looking.

I ask him to take his mind down into his body and see if he can find a feeling somewhere; to look for an uncomfortable sensation, heaviness, tightness or an ache or a lump.

I ask him to notice, really notice, what this feeling is like.

Whether it is big or little, black and gray, or yellow and speckly. I want him to notice whether it's stuck in a specific place or if it slithers around all over his body.

Whether it's a rising or sinking feeling or a heavy black cloud.

I want him to think about whether it's fiery and red, or if it's cold like an iceberg.

I want him to identify with any feeling, because when he does, he then knows (really knows) what he feels.

Then we can help him manage those feelings that drive him to behave in ways that are messing up his life.

ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO MANAGE FEELINGS IS TO ACKNOWLEDGE THEM AND GIVE THEM A LABEL

Just saying to yourself, “There’s a feeling of anger.”

Here’s a feeling of frustration.

Here’s a feeling of sadness.

These acknowledgements can calm your brain.

Here’s a powerful way to manage any feelings you find difficult or painful.

S T I L L

S SOFTEN INTO THE FEELING	Even though you’ll want to tense up or push away the feeling, see if you can feel softer toward it.
T TRY TO FIND A SPACE FOR THAT FEELING	Imagine you are creating a space, a clearing in a forest, a cupping of your hands for that feeling, and imagine that feeling going into that space. Make sure that space stays close to you.
I INVESTIGATE THAT FEELING	Look at the feeling with curiosity. Use colors, shapes, sizes and movement questions for your investigation. What shape is this feeling? Does it have a color? Does it move around or stay stuck?
L LET IT BE	Watch it bubble, swirl, sink, whoosh or crawl. Keep watching while you just let it be.
L LEAVE THE FEELING AND MOVE ON	Physically move your body, go away and begin to do something different.

BUT WHAT IF YOU CAN'T FIND A FEELING?

That's okay; some people find it's a strange thing to do.

In fact, Joe struggles with this idea, too, on how to find a feeling.

He complains, "I can't feel anything! There's nothing there!"

Many people find it difficult to identify negative feelings and to recognize them.

I ask Joe, instead, just to look for feelings of tension and tightness.

- Tight shoulders and head may indicate feelings of anxiety or stress.
- Heaviness and extreme tiredness may signal sadness or feelings of hopelessness.

I ask Joe to practice labelling sensations (or feelings) three times a day.

Over time, he will be able to identify his feelings more easily.

NOW JOE DOESN'T FEAR HIS EMOTIONS

He no longer fears his emotional reactions to his coworker. Occasionally, he struggles to maintain a professional distance and to keep focused at work.

But he recognizes the times when he feels scared, angry or disappointed, and these feelings no longer make him feel wildly out of control.

When the feelings sweep over him, he is now able to label them as just feelings.

He can calmly remind himself of what is really important to him in that moment.

For Joe, that means working effectively in his career, and being a great husband and dad.

REWIRE YOUR BRAIN TO FIX YOUR ANXIETY

manage your
behavior
(with CBT)





Are you dreading the beginning of a new semester of school or your return to work?

Do you have that sinking feeling and a sense of things not being OK for you?

After reading this section, you will understand why you might feel this way, why you behave the way you do, and finally, how to change your behavior.

THIS IS A STORY ABOUT LAURA

Laura's studying to be a biochemist.

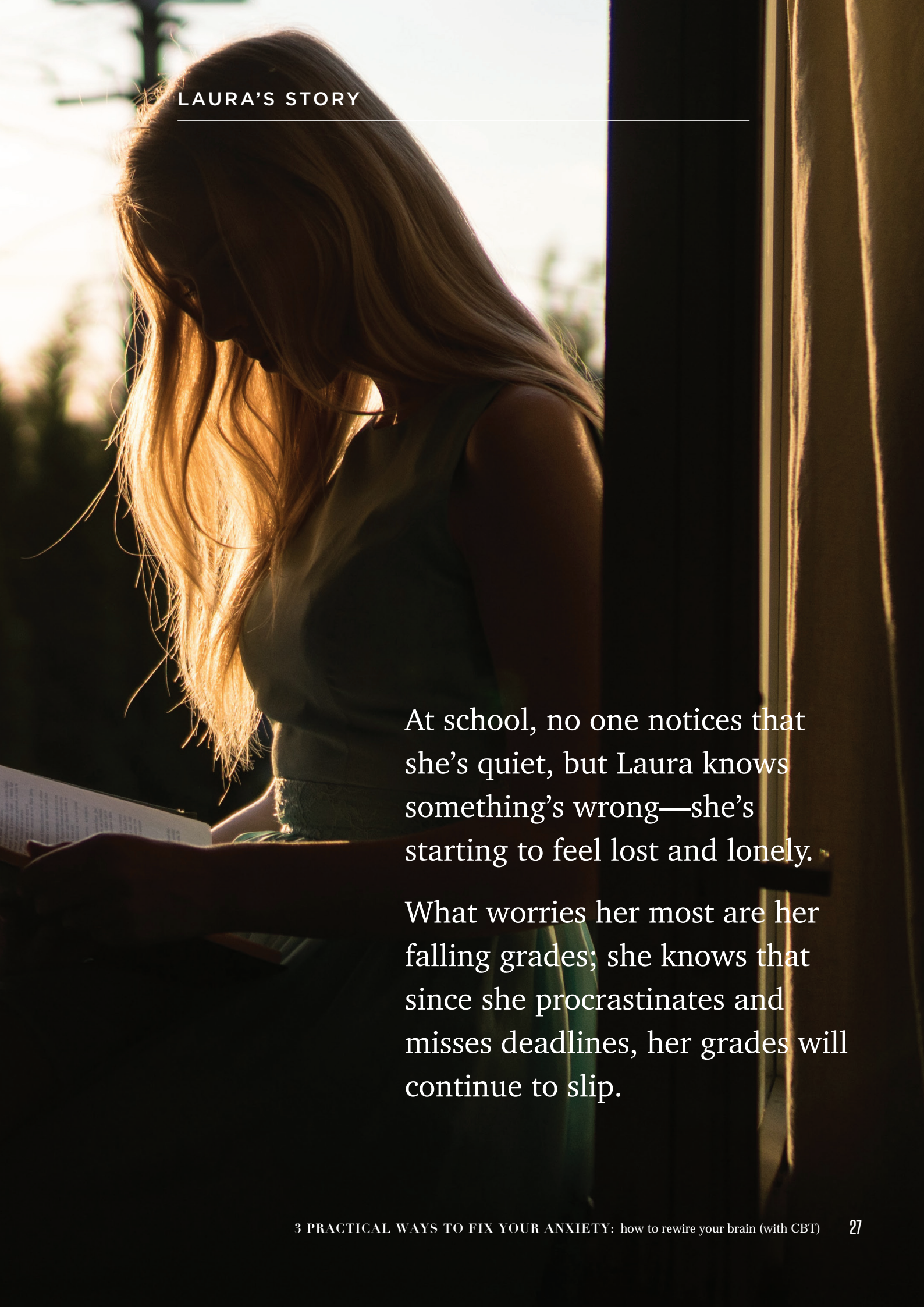
She loves science and is excited to be at university.

But as the time draws nearer for her to leave home for school (Laura studies abroad), she knows that something's not right.

LAURA REPORTS SPENDING A LOT OF TIME OVER THE HOLIDAYS ALONE

She prefers to read and be on her computer and routinely turns down invitations from friends and family. Rather than going to the mall, the movies, or even to visit relatives, Laura simply stays at home.

When she thinks about the past year at school, she notices that at school, too, she was mostly alone.



LAURA'S STORY

At school, no one notices that she's quiet, but Laura knows something's wrong—she's starting to feel lost and lonely.

What worries her most are her falling grades; she knows that since she procrastinates and misses deadlines, her grades will continue to slip.

DREADING THE RETURN TO SCHOOL

When she thinks about school and exams, she notices how much she is dreading the return.

Laura wants to know what she can do to not feel this way.

Laura has arrived at a difficult place.

She is about to return to school, and despite a break at home, she knows the new year will be just the same.

In fact, over the holiday period (when she could have felt happier), she has become more isolated and less confident.

Laura's starting to be wakeful at night and to spend long hours sitting in her bedroom thinking and worrying.

LET'S TAKE A DEEPER LOOK INTO LAURA'S BEHAVIOR

To begin, I ask Laura to take a step back and look at her typical day.

She can record her activities on a sheet in blocks of one hour.

For each hour I ask her to record her activities and make special note of the times when she is

working on something that is important to her or doing something that she really enjoys.

Laura is surprised to see how her time is actually spent.

- The times she is randomly watching computer videos.
- The times she is just sitting and thinking.
- The times she is playing with her phone.
- The times she is engaged in games on her computer.

In a typical day, Laura is rarely doing the things she loves to do such as talking to friends, going shopping, reading, chatting over coffee or cooking.

Neither is she doing the things she needs to do to achieve her dreams—studying, reading, planning, and writing.

NATURALLY, LAURA FEELS DESPONDENT AND DISAPPOINTED AT THE END OF HER DAY

I ask Laura if she plays sports, exercises, dances, acts, or engages in other activities.

She loves running and swimming but says she doesn't have time for these activities.

Without any physical activity to lift her low mood, it's easy for Laura to get stuck in a long trail of unsatisfying days that make her feel alone and unhappy.

It then becomes a downward slide . . . the more Laura is alone, the sadder and more demotivated she becomes. It's difficult to study and achieve when she's in this space.

I remind Laura that studying, reading, going out with friends, playing sports, and exercising are all behaviors.

She can do these behaviors even when she feels lonely, scared, or demotivated.

TO CHANGE A BEHAVIOR, LAURA NEEDS THREE THINGS

1. **Motivation**—the desire to actually do a different behavior
2. **Ability**—the capability to do the new behavior
3. **Trigger**—something to get the new behavior going

To explore this idea, we pick a behavior such as joining a study group at school.



1. Motivation: Is Laura motivated to join the study group?

Laura says it will make her studying much easier and help improve her grades. Even if she feels reluctant about joining the group, she wants to do it.

2. Ability: Is Laura capable of going to the study group and participating?

Yes, she can easily do this, as there is one close by and she has friends in the group.

3. Trigger: Does Laura have a trigger to get this behavior going?

No, Laura does not have a trigger. Therefore, it is unlikely that her behavior will change.

Without a trigger, behaviors are difficult to change.

In this case, Laura needs to create a trigger that will signal it's time for her to go to the study group. Maybe she'll get a friend to call her, or maybe she'll set an alarm on her phone.

LAURA WORRIES THAT SHE WON'T RESPOND TO THE TRIGGER

"What if I can't make myself go to the group?" she says. "What if I have to stay home because I'm too scared?"

When Laura hears these words in her head and feels anxious, she often doesn't do anything.

I remind her that she can do any behavior she chooses . . . even when she is thinking words and has feelings that get in the way of that behavior.

Yes, she can walk to the study group even as she is thinking "I don't want to" or "I wish I were in my room."

LAURA ONLY NEEDS TO RESPOND TO THE TRIGGER

To do the new behavior, *Laura only needs to respond to the trigger* . . . and take the first step.

Then, she will be doing a new behavior.

As Laura repeatedly chooses small activities that change her current behaviors, she will notice that the big things in her life will begin to change too.

Maybe she'll become more social, and maybe she'll study more effectively.

Laura may not be so lonely and anxious anymore.

If she can change those old behaviors, many other things will change for her, too.

summary

We've looked closely at what happens when thoughts, feelings, and behaviors become intermingled with each other and you get stuck in anxiety.

When you know exactly what a thought is, where to find a feeling, and how to manage your behavior, you have a range of unlimited options you can use to make positive changes in your life.

Changing the way you think, feel, and behave always starts with your awareness and grows with your understanding of what is happening inside your head.

As you learn and practice new skills, you are teaching your brain new ways of responding and creating new neural pathways.

The old pattern of "fight and flight" will fade as you progressively adapt to new and more effective ways of responding.

All you have to do is understand your brain, learn new ways of doing things, and practice.

FREE EBOOK: “TWELVE WAYS TO CHANGE YOUR THINKING”

Your brain loves to make sense of things.

It loves to figure out and understand the reasons behind things and to attach meaning to events.

However, when your thoughts become stuck in an overwhelmingly negative cycle, you struggle to get free.

In the free eBook “Twelve Ways to Change Your Thinking,” you’ll find a selection of strategies to help you interrupt these “stuck” thinking patterns and move out of that negative cycle.

For example, you’ll learn:

- How to notice your thoughts
- What different strategies exist—including which ones work best for you
- How to separate yourself from your thinking
- How to change your thinking so you can change your feelings
- What thinking really is (as opposed to feelings)

Choose one or two strategies and practice them often, so you’ll eventually have specific techniques that work well for you.

Download your free eBook here.



Sharyn Kennedy, PhD

Sharyn Kennedy is a practising psychologist specializing in anxiety. She’s worked with thousands of people using research-based theories and techniques that have been shown to dramatically reduce anxiety-based responses. These exercises are now available in her book, *Your Brain on Anxiety and What You Can Do About It*.

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