

Foreword by NYT bestselling author Dr. Michael Gurian

Gregory L. Jantz, PhD

WITH KEITH WALL

the
Anxiety
Reset

*A Life-Changing Approach to Overcoming Fear, Stress,
Worry, Panic Attacks, OCD, and More*

With anxiety now ubiquitous because of the pandemic, Dr. Gregory Jantz's new book *The Anxiety Reset* is needed at this critical time. The book is loaded with useful tools to help people lower anxiety and overcome fear and worry. I highly recommend it.

DANIEL G. AMEN, MD, psychiatrist, founder of Amen Clinics,
and author of the national bestseller *The End of Mental Illness*

A practical and useful read for anyone who struggles with anxiety or knows someone who does. *The Anxiety Reset* offers a fresh and timely perspective on this rapidly growing medical issue—and offers some of the best hope, help, and encouragement I have found for overcoming it.

DR. TIM CLINTON, president of the American Association
of Christian Counselors

The Anxiety Reset is a clearly written, comprehensive, and helpful guide to overcoming different types of anxiety. It describes many up-to-date strategies for managing anxiety in a whole-person approach that includes mind, body, and soul. Highly recommended!

SIANG-YANG TAN, PHD, professor of clinical psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary and author of *Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Christian Perspective* and *Shepherding God's People: A Guide to Faithful and Fruitful Pastoral Ministry*

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The Anxiety Reset: A Life-Changing Approach to Overcoming Fear, Stress, Worry, Panic Attacks, OCD, and More

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Foreword

If you are one of the tens of millions who battle anxiety, you will appreciate this book from its very first word. If you are not one of us, you almost certainly know someone who is—not just “out in the world” but right near you, in your family or in your close orbit. Everyone is afraid of something, of someone, of some situation, of some role, of some period of life. We are an anxious species, and we know it, and that can often just increase our anxiety.

In some ways, our natural anxiety is a good thing. The anxious person lives in constant potential, especially potential for reframing anxiety from paralyzing fear into courageous action. If we are anxious, we have the opportunity to be inspired by bravery, as Dr. Gregory Jantz tells us in *The Anxiety Reset*. Bravery and courage are not just for heroes and saints but for all of us. They are our equal psychological inheritance. But they are not a given. In fact, quite often, we let our anxiety be more of a given than our courage. This can be changed.

Sitting down to write this foreword, I felt fear blooming in me. I felt it in my gut, a situational anxiety because Dr. Jantz is not only a colleague but a friend, and I want to do my job of foreword writer well for him. Not only does anxiety inspire courage, but it also reminds us of the fact that we are living lives in which something is at stake. That is a good thing. As I got started on my task, some of my anxiety abated. Actually doing the work quieted me, as every small courageous action can do.

The anxiety Dr. Jantz writes about in this book is not often as simple as mine was in this case. Today's difficult world has millions of people living on the anxiety spectrum, more of us than know it. Some forty million Americans fit on the anxiety spectrum, and with around forty million Americans struggling with sleep issues (sleep disorders use some of the same chromosome markers as anxiety), we have an overlap that probably exceeds the forty million number.

If you spend a lot of time ruminating on your faults, on the negatives that could happen in your life, on the harm that has been done to you or the harm you may be doing, or on how inadequate you feel to face the world, you are likely anxious. Without realizing it perhaps, you accept personal debilitation inside the core human fear of inadequacy. *I am not adequate*, your mind is saying, *and I don't know how to be adequate*. This fear of inadequacy grounds anxiety in the brain via rumination loops.

There is constant rumination synaptic connectivity between the amygdala's fear centers and other areas of the brain that focus your brain's attention on the fear itself, the inadequacy, the debilitation. The anxious person's brain stays there unless they get help to change. Once help comes, the first step of courage can occur, the shot of dopamine and adrenaline that says to the system, *I am going to do something new to make gold of this fear, to push through it, to reframe, to reset, to be adequate*.

Dr. Jantz's *Anxiety Reset* gives you that shot of dopamine and the template for courage and thus helps direct you toward an empowered future. I cannot remember the poet who said this, but I've never forgotten the line: "Experience shreds us into bits as it forms its wholes." That is a mind bender, I know, but I think the poet is saying that as you live life, you will be shredded somewhat by what happens to you, but even as you fragment and feel afraid, you are forming a person of meaning. You can become *whole*.

The holistic approach of *The Anxiety Reset* echoes this poetic quote. There is no single thread in this book that promises perfect living. Instead, help from various fields and disciplines—neurology, psychology, and nutrition, to name a few—congregates in this book, matched with actual case studies from decades of Dr. Jantz's clinical practice. This meeting of science and human life is, on its own, compelling reading, and it's all the more powerful to those of us who feel anxiety.

FOREWORD

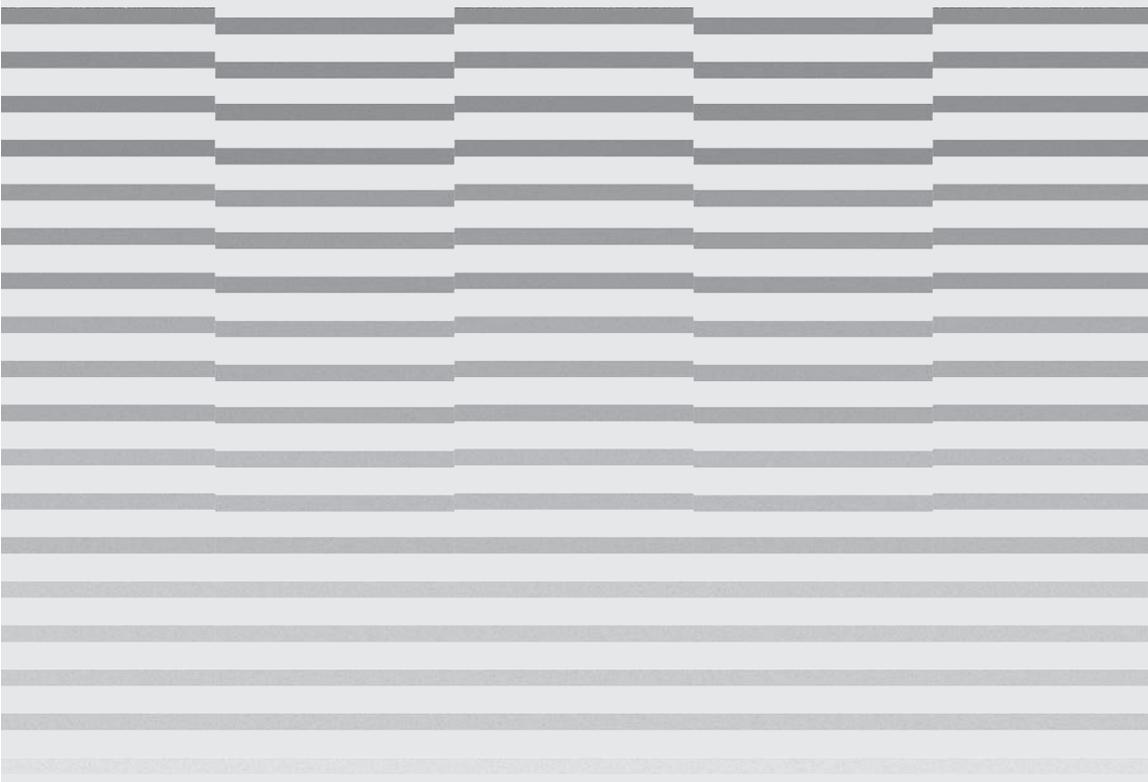
My hope for you now is that you will set aside the time to read the first thirty pages of this book uninterrupted. Do it as an act of courage, in one sitting. If you do this, I believe you will then see what Dr. Jantz is doing here, the gift he is giving. You may feel that anxiety is not just *a* path toward wholeness, but *your* path. For whatever reason—spiritual, psychological, genetic, developmental—you are on this path of anxiety. Now you have in your hands a guide not only to holistic healing but also to other, larger life themes: courage, bravery, adequacy, and living a life of meaning.

Dr. Michael Gurian
Executive director of the Gurian Institute
and New York Times bestselling author
of Saving Our Sons and The Minds of Girls

PART 1

Where You Are, How You Got Here

*Surveying the Landscape
of Your Anxiety*



CHAPTER 1

Living in the Age of Anxiety

*Anxiety may have dominated your life until now—
but you can overcome it!*

You've come to this book looking for answers to your anxiety. Perhaps you come with a sense of distress or even desperation. Maybe you feel aggravation or even agony.

Here's what I can offer you: hope and help, each in plentiful portions.

Here's what I can't offer you: a quick fix or magic formulas.

I believe this rings true for you, because it's likely you have been struggling with anxiety for a long time—months, years, or decades—and you've tried different remedies that haven't brought lasting relief. You know that to experience true healing and wellness, you need expert guidance with compassion and clear direction.

What's more, you know you need to invest yourself in the process, devoting yourself to following the proven, whole-person approach that is detailed in the pages ahead.

So if you have opened this book hoping to discover “secret” ways to eradicate anxiety from your life, I'm afraid you'll be disappointed.

William Shakespeare summed up the reason why in *Much Ado about*

Nothing. The character Leonato is engulfed in grief after learning of the untimely passing of his gentle young daughter Hero, and he believes the girl was “done to death” by false accusations. His brother, Antonio, calls his emotional response childish and counsels patience.

Leonato will have none of that. “I will be flesh and blood!” he says. “For there was never yet philosopher that could endure the toothache patiently.”

The valuable truth contained in the scene is this: we are *all* flesh and blood. We feel what we feel, and no person alive can claim to have never felt crippling fear or suffered sleepless nights in worry over some unwelcome and unexpected event. Periodic anxiety and fear—even to the point of panic—are universal human emotions. They are instinctive responses to life’s frightening challenges, as automatic as breathing.

As strange as it may seem to say so, this is actually *good* news. It means that, if you have picked up this book because you are at your wit’s end in your own struggle with runaway anxiety, you are not the only one. You are in the company of many others who know precisely what you’re going through and who are also determined to find healing solutions that work.

Figures compiled by the Anxiety and Depression Association of America confirm this:

- Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the United States.
- More than forty million American adults—nearly one in five—are afflicted by anxiety disorders.
- Anxiety disorders affect 25.1 percent of children between thirteen and eighteen years old.¹

Furthermore, these numbers have steadily increased in recent decades. It’s not hard to see why. Urban, technological society—by its demanding and fast-paced nature—seems destined to ramp up the stress and the reasons for anxiety each of us lives with every day.² We face a much larger and more varied number of “threats” than did our distant ancestors—perhaps not to life and limb, but what did they know of the pressures of financial insecurity or social status? Or fragile professional standing? Or vague and complex political uncertainties? How about perceived danger to children from drugs, pornography, social media, bullying, or health hazards beyond our control?

These days many people add the looming prospect of global environmental catastrophe to the bundle of burdens they carry. The list of reasons for feeling stressed and anxious in the course of “ordinary” life could go on and on.

My point is not to reinforce those fears—far from it! It is to invite you to fully embrace a fact that is highly valuable as you embark on your journey to manage your anxiety and reclaim your life: *You are not alone!*

- You are not alone, because millions of others are walking the same path as you.
- You are not alone, because you are surrounded by people willing to help.
- You are not alone, because you have access to experts who are specially trained to equip you for success.

You are also not alone, because God stands ready with mercy and healing grace whenever you ask. As we’ll see throughout this book, faith can be a powerful ally in your healing journey.

Here are other things we can say you are *not*: You are not weak, broken, fragile, or “making it all up.” You are not simply stubborn or using your fear as an excuse to be the center of attention—or any of a hundred other such things you have heard from others, or told yourself, over the years.

You are human—nothing more, nothing less.

And you can have a better life than you currently enjoy. Let that sink in for a moment. In my experience, this simple truth is something people who struggle with mental health issues tragically stop believing somewhere along the way. First they lose hope, then they lose the belief they even have a *right* to hope.

My purpose in writing this book is to convince you that line of thinking is wrong. *Very* wrong. You *can* reset your anxiety to a manageable, even productive, level. You *can* heal for good!

Tested by Experience

In the pages ahead I’ll present all I’ve learned in more than three decades of working with clients at The Center: A Place of Hope. I’ve been privileged to help thousands of courageous people who were determined to heal and

regain control of their lives. I've listened to their stories and grown professionally by witnessing their setbacks and sharing their ultimate triumphs.

But my most valuable insights and experiences have been gained in the trenches of dealing with intense anxiety in my own life. Those lessons are also found on every page and have provided me with hard-won confidence that the solutions presented here are not just theoretical but proven—in some of my own toughest moments of fear.

In 2013, my wife, LaFon, was diagnosed with a fast-growing breast cancer. The instant a routine mammogram revealed suspicious spots, our lives were turned upside down. Frightening uncertainties immediately multiplied in my mind, threatening to overwhelm my ability to function in my busy, demanding life. Those uncertainties ran the gamut from how the illness would impact our family and our thriving business to the ultimate fear—would I lose the person I love?

A detailed chronicle of her five-year journey to recovery—through surgery, aggressive chemotherapy, and comprehensive naturopathic care—would require a book of its own. In it, you would see my own “flesh and blood” battles with paralyzing fear, fretful doctor appointments, sleepless nights, and the temptation to despair. But you would also read how God's grace saw LaFon and our family through the dark night and how, with many ups and downs along the way, I was made stronger by my own journey through anxiety and fear. Every gut-wrenching lesson—about what works and what doesn't, what's healthy and what isn't—has made me a better person, husband, and father.

The experience has also boosted my ability to say to you: Yes, you *can* heal. You *can* overcome with the right mix of desire, determination, and willingness to ask for help and face what lies between you and wellness. As we travel together through these pages, I'll share all I've learned—professionally and personally—to show you how.

I am profoundly grateful to say that LaFon has been cancer free for six years. She celebrated her six-year milestone by leading our family on a climb up Mount Rainier. In many ways, it was a metaphor for the long, arduous journey we had traveled together. And we made it.

I can say to you with utmost confidence that whatever anxiety-producing mountain you are currently facing, you can climb it and conquer it with a sense of victory!

Keep Reading If You Want Relief

As I alluded to earlier, there isn't a single cure for anxiety disorders, because there also isn't a single cause. A wide range of factors contribute to a person's inability to regulate their fear and maintain natural emotional resilience. These include genetic and biochemical predisposition, but also lifestyle conditions such as an unhealthy diet, lack of exercise, chaotic sleep habits, substance use or abuse, excessive time spent online or watching television, and any number of behavioral addictions. Unchecked toxic emotions like anger, guilt, and bitterness also play a huge role in escalating anxiety.

Addressing one underlying cause while leaving the others untouched is like changing only one tire on your car when all four are bare. It's unlikely to solve your problem and can even leave you more frustrated than when you first began. That's why, in the first part of this book, we will dive deeply into the many causes of anxiety and different forms of anxiety. When you fully understand your own anxiety, you will be better equipped to implement the many effective treatment solutions in the second part of the book.

This book is intended for anyone who is ready to undertake a full-spectrum inventory of their lives and do the work of real change across the board:

- *People looking for tools to better cope with ordinary life stress.* Not all anxiety rises to the level of a mental health disorder. Many people live under the cloud of low-level fear and could use a little help regaining the upper hand.
- *People for whom the daily experience of anxiety is no longer "ordinary."* It's one thing to feel general discomfort and unease around strangers, for example. But it's quite another to refuse to leave the house for long stretches of time to avoid the possibility. The pages ahead are full of strategies for taming those responses and reclaiming a fulfilling life.
- *People for whom medication has proven to be not enough.* As you'll see in coming chapters, anti-anxiety drugs continue to be the go-to remedy for patients and doctors alike. While these medications certainly have a role to play in responsible treatment, they will never take the place of broad attention to the whole person.

- *People who have gained control over crippling symptoms but can't seem to move on to lasting wellness.* If your best efforts have left you feeling stuck, chances are there is some factor at work in your life that you have not yet examined. I'm confident you'll discover it here.
- *People hoping to better understand a loved one who struggles with anxiety and to offer informed help.* Recovery from mental health issues is a team effort. The more you know about what your family member or friend is dealing with, the better able you are to be part of the solution.

Some level of anxiety is normal, and fear can even be an ally at times when some course correction or protective action is needed. But none of us should live as a slave to anxiety and fear. If you feel that describes your life to any degree, then it's time for an anxiety reset.

Lasting healing, freedom, and peace can be yours!

Your Personal Reset Plan

You stand at the threshold of a fruitful journey toward healing and restoration. Far from being alone on the road, you travel in the company of many others like you—but don't take my word for it. As you set out, prove it to yourself beyond a doubt. Here's how:

1. **Accept fear as a universal part of life.** When you believe your fear makes you different from everyone else, you've created a false wall around yourself. Tear down that wall by acknowledging that your fear doesn't *separate* you from everyone else; it *connects* you. Fear is universal to the human experience. Finish this sentence in as many ways as you can think of: "We *all* feel afraid when . . ."
2. **Be your own best travel companion.** There is wisdom in the common saying, "Wherever you go, there you are." How sad, then, that so many of us go through life with a harsh and unforgiving attitude toward the person we're closest to—ourselves! The road ahead is long. How about lightening the load by easing up on yourself?

For one day, carry a pad and pen with you and pay attention

to your inner dialogue. What things are you saying to yourself throughout the day that could be adding to your anxiety? Examples of negative self-talk that increases anxiety include mind reading (*She didn't say hello when I walked in, so she must be upset with me for something*), labeling (*I'm a loser*), and overgeneralization (*I'll never get it right; this always happens to me*).

Would you plant these kinds of self-defeating thoughts in the mind of your best friend? Of course not. Be a better friend to yourself.

And while you're carrying around that pad of paper, make a list of thirty of your best qualities. Every day for the next thirty days, pick one quality every morning and, while looking in the mirror, compliment yourself on that quality. Out loud.

- 3. Join a support group.** In every community, people just like you gather on a regular basis to move just a little further down the road to freedom from anxiety in their own lives—and to help others do the same. Find them. Join them.

Spend twenty minutes today doing a little research on ways to connect. How do you find a support group in your community? Ask friends for their recommendations. Look online. Make a few phone calls. And then make plans to visit several to find the right fit.

- 4. Look for opportunities to become involved—or more involved—in church.** As you'll see in the pages ahead, spirituality is perhaps your most valuable asset in your quest for wellness. Modern life seems determined to undermine faith in God at every step. That's why we gather: to remind ourselves we are not isolated—not from each other and not from God.

If you are attending a local church, take ten minutes and visit your church's website for information about small groups or opportunities to join a team that is serving in some way, whether that means providing childcare, manning the coffee shop, or greeting people as they walk in the door.

And if you are not attending church and are open to doing so, take ten minutes and google churches in your neck of the woods. Check out a website or two to see when services are held. If you

don't see something that piques your interest, call at least one friend and ask where he or she attends. Then choose a church to visit this week or next.

Finding a spiritual community can play a vital role in your growth and healing.

- 5. Seek out a mentor.** As you settle in to your new group relationships, keep your eyes open for someone among them who is ahead of you on the path and who seems to have gained the perspective and wisdom you seek. Invite them to coffee or lunch and ask them to share what they've learned.

Mentoring doesn't have to be a formal arrangement with weekly meetings. Look for positive, encouraging people who seem interested in your growth, tell them you'd like to learn from them, and see where things go from there.