

WITH KEITH WALL

Gregory L. Jantz, PhD

the
Anxiety
Reset

WORKBOOK

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The Tyndale nonfiction imprint

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The Anxiety Reset Workbook

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Designed by Libby Dykstra

Edited by Jonathan Schindler

Published in association with The Bindery Agency, www.TheBinderyAgency.com.

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ISBN 978-1-4964-4117-1

Printed in the United States of America

27 26 25 24 23 22 21
7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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INTRODUCTION

A Path of Peace

“I don’t sleep at night because I can’t turn off my racing brain.”

“I constantly worry about the future. Where will I end up? What will the world be like for my kids?”

“When people talk about peace of mind, I can’t imagine what that’s like—I’m stressed out every day.”

“My anxiety is like a bag of bricks I drag around every day. I’m weighed down by so many worries!”

Sound familiar? You’ve probably said things like this yourself or had similar thoughts slither around in your mind like a venomous snake.

There’s certainly a long list of things to feel anxious about: job security, tight finances, health concerns, political unrest, and relationship discord—and feeling anxious in stressful situations is normal and hard to avoid. Most people feel anxious when starting a new job, enduring an audit from the IRS, or giving a speech. Who wouldn’t?

But for increasing numbers of people, anxiety is a persistent burden, a debilitating presence that impacts performance and quality of life on a daily basis. In fact, social scientists have labeled our modern era “The Age of Anxiety.” With so much brainpower and creativity in our society, I’m sure we’d prefer to be known for living in the age of opportunity . . . or prosperity . . . or innovation. But the fact is, anxiety and anxiety disorders are on the rise.

A recent article in *Medical News Today* began by saying, “For many, anxiety is an ever-present uninvited guest; in our circle of friends, among family members, and in communities at large. It seems to be rampaging through society like a noncontagious cognitive plague, forming a low-level hum that hides in the corners of our collective minds.”¹

No one is immune to the havoc and hardship caused by unrelenting anxiety, and that includes people we consider to be successful, accomplished, and highly regarded. Anxiety does not just affect people struggling with unemployment, financial troubles, serious illness, or legal problems. Anxiety is an equal-opportunity troublemaker, laying siege to people across the economic, professional, religious, and age spectrum.

Living with anxiety, panic disorders, or phobias may cause people to feel that their lives are spiraling downward, robbing them of joy and contentment. It doesn't need to be this way! Throughout my book *The Anxiety Reset*—and in the pages of this companion workbook—my message has been consistent:

- Anxiety may not be *avoidable*, but it is *manageable*.
- Anxiety may be *present* in your life, but it does not have to *dominate* your life.
- Anxiety may *temporarily* cause you distress, but it does not have to *constantly* cause you despair.

Even in our furiously fast-paced and worrisome world, you can live a more peaceful, purposeful, and productive life. You can be free from thoughts, feelings, and habits that drag you down rather than lift you up. You can learn to draw the life-numbing poison out of your past pain, present problems, and future fear.

I am not giving you a pep talk or offering snappy slogans to help you feel better momentarily. The last thing you need is advice that rings hollow or bromides that promise much and deliver little. If you've been struggling with anxiety for any length of time, you have likely heard all kinds of recommendations that didn't bring you much improvement. Worse, you've probably heard plenty of clichés from well-meaning (but unhelpful) people: “Just let it go . . . This too shall pass . . . Hold on to your faith.”

As a matter of fact, I know that learning to manage anxiety takes

patience, dogged determination, courage to confront painful issues, openness to new ideas, and a commitment to change long-standing patterns of behavior.

Another essential element is needed to overcome chronic anxiety: *hope*.

In my three decades as a mental health professional, I have counseled thousands of people who needed help coping with pain and fear of every kind: anxiety, depression, guilt, anger, addiction, and the emotional scars of physical and psychological abuse. Early in my career, I was often dismayed by the epic scope of battles people waged within themselves and the elusive struggle to achieve true healing. It seemed to me that lasting wellness was a treasure many seek but few ever find.

Then I realized something vital. Many of the hurting people I counseled were eager—or desperate—to overcome their troubles but lacked the key ingredient of hope. By the time these people began therapy with me or sought treatment at the clinic I direct, they had lived with their condition for so long and had tried so many unfruitful treatment options that optimism had all but vanished. Distress and anxiety, usually caused by a variety of factors, were compounded by a fundamental lack of hopefulness and confidence that anything would ever change.

This led me to make hope a cornerstone of all the therapy, speaking, writing, research, and treatment planning I do. In 2014, we changed the name of our Seattle-area treatment facility after clients said, “This is a place of hope.” That’s exactly what we wanted, and thus the name stuck. We are now called The Center: A Place of Hope. My team and I also adopted Jeremiah 29:11-14 as our clinic’s guiding Scripture passage:

“I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the LORD, “and will bring you back from captivity.”

I encourage you to reflect on these life-changing words and embrace them as your touchstone as you pursue your own emotional, spiritual, and

physical wellness. After all, persistently anxious people often feel that they are in captivity of sorts—trapped and immobilized by a force bigger than themselves. But God will indeed bring you back. Anxiety-ridden people often do not feel enthusiastic about the future, if they can envision one at all. But God will help you renew your dreams and refresh your energy to achieve them.

As foundational as hope is to true healing, there are many other indispensable steps to take on the journey. And these steps form the twelve weeks of exercises, assessments, and reflections in the pages ahead. In addition to the need for hope, I realized something else many years ago: most anxiety treatments focus on *one* technique to address a complex mental health conundrum. Care providers tend to use their favorite method as a singular fix to a disorder that is never caused by one thing alone. Most frequently, this means taking anti-anxiety medication, seeing a counselor for talk therapy, starting a specialized diet regimen, or participating in cognitive behavioral therapy.

While each of these individual approaches can be helpful and sometimes needed, I believe that lasting healing occurs through a whole-person, multifaceted approach. In my experience, anxiety always arises from multiple factors converging from lots of different directions in a person's life. Treating one thing at a time, with one method at a time, may move you toward healing but will usually fall short of *complete* healing. This is why my whole-person approach includes the following:

- addressing three deadly emotions: worry, stress, and anxiety
- working through the process of forgiveness for hurts and heartaches
- examining the use of technology and making sure it is not contributing to anxiety
- harnessing your thoughts to provide a positive, empowering outlook
- bolstering your physical well-being by attending to proper nutrition, exercise, and sleep
- uncovering hidden addictions
- focusing on soul care and spiritual practices
- minimizing and managing stress
- refreshing your dreams and future plans

These topics are discussed in detail in *The Anxiety Reset*, where I present an array of scientific research studies, psychological principles, spiritual insights, real-life stories, and practical applications. With this companion workbook, I am inviting you to dive in and dig deep into the *reasons* and the *remedies* for your anxiety. Think of me as your guide and coach through the journey. I will point you in the right direction and offer plenty of suggestions, but the challenge is for you to take one step after another through the exercises ahead.

You might choose to use this workbook by yourself, with a friend, or in a small-group setting (I provide suggestions for group use on pages 7–8). You might be someone who prefers to work through the exercises in one sitting, or you might choose to spread the activities throughout the week. You might go back and forth between the book and workbook, or you might complete them at separate times. My encouragement: whatever works best for you, do it! I have created this workbook to be flexible and adaptable for your ideal use and maximum benefit. If you invest yourself in these pages, you will find yourself a giant step toward wholeness and healing after twelve weeks.

No doubt you come to this workbook struggling with anxiety. I tell you with absolute confidence that you don't have to live this way. You can be free to experience peace of mind and to reach your highest potential. You can leave behind the weight on your shoulders that has been pressing down on you and move unencumbered and unconstrained toward a bright future.

Hundreds of my clients who have put the ideas in this workbook into practice are living proof that a whole new way of being is as near as your ability to hope. They have learned, as you can, that life need not be filled with anxiety, depression, regret, and fear. Every moment can be filled with wonder, exhilaration, optimism, and gratitude.

I leave you with these words from the New Testament, fully confident that you will someday soon proclaim them in your own life: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13).

Guidance for Groups

Healing can and does happen individually, but *most* healing happens within community. People who suffer from anxiety often feel misunderstood. That's why groups centered on discussing anxiety and sharing personal experiences can be so powerful. Such groups are greatly needed because anxiety is recognized as one of the most widespread mental health issues in the world. Research reveals that

- anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the United States;
- forty million American adults—nearly one in five—are afflicted by anxiety disorders; and
- anxiety disorders affect 25.1 percent of children between thirteen and eighteen years old.²

Despite the prevalence of anxiety, some people feel there's a stigma attached to this condition, as if they should "just get over it," have more faith, or act happy so they don't bring everyone else down with them. Worse, many people suffering from anxiety feel deeply flawed at their core, falsely believing that their struggles make them different from others or even inferior.

A group centered on the topic of anxiety should, above all, seek to be loving, gracious, and accepting. Everyone on earth struggles with something,

whether physical ailments, emotional problems, relationship disappointments, past traumas, spiritual disillusionment, addictive behaviors, and on and on. We are truly fellow travelers on the journey toward wholeness.

With this in mind, here are several suggestions for using this workbook effectively in a group setting:

- It's best for one person to serve as facilitator, setting the tone for the gathering, guiding the discussion, and keeping the meeting focused.
- The facilitator should prepare ahead of time by reviewing the week's exercises and deciding which topics and questions would be appropriate and helpful within a group setting.
- Be sensitive to the discussion process. Try to give everyone an opportunity to speak, and when necessary, gently redirect the focus of those who tend to dominate a discussion.
- Be careful not to put anyone on the spot or make anyone feel pressured to share. The questions and assessments in this workbook cover some very personal and sensitive topics. Encourage group members to share their answers and thoughts if they feel comfortable doing so, and give the freedom to stay quiet if they wish to.
- Use this workbook in conjunction with *The Anxiety Reset* if possible. Ideally, the two go hand in hand, with the book providing thorough explanations of the whole-person approach and the workbook following up with practical exercises. However, each section of the workbook begins with an "At a Glance" summary of the corresponding book chapter(s), followed by an "Essential Ideas" portion, so even those who have not read the book, or who missed particular chapters, can get up to speed quickly and find the discussion helpful.
- The sections of the workbook that best lend themselves to group discussion are "Essential Ideas . . . and Your Insights" and "Dig Deeper." Both of these include several questions and space for group members' responses. Some participants might like to share their journaling response from the "Change Your Story, Change Your Life" section. The bottom line is to use *any* of this material that will be most helpful in engaging your group members in the discussion process.

WEEK 1

How Anxiety Affects Your Life

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

- Review chapters 1, 2, and 5 in *The Anxiety Reset* book.

Week 1 at a Glance

Recognizing the far-reaching impact of anxiety in your life—and committing to examine all areas of your life in order to root out factors that are contributing to chronic fear and anxiety—is a great first step toward peace and wellness.

Perhaps, as a society, we would embrace a more whole-person, hope-filled approach to anxiety if we talked more about the prevalence of the struggle and the availability of help. And, in fact, help *is* available.

Through the pages of this workbook, you'll be encouraged to broaden your perspective, embrace healthier thinking, and take proven actions that will help you get from where you are today to where you long to be.

Essential Ideas . . . and Your Insights

1. **There are no quick fixes or magic formulas.** You may already know this. In fact, 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.

And yet here you are, because something inside you tells you there is hope and help—and there is. In fact, there is a proven, whole-person approach through which many people have already experienced unprecedented peace and wellness. Are you ready to invest your time and energy in the healing journey ahead?

Your response: What have you done in the past to deal with your anxiety? Why do you think previous attempts failed to yield the results you were looking for? What feels different about this time? Is there a level of investment you are willing to make that you may not have been willing to make before?

2. **There isn’t a single cure for anxiety disorders because there 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.

To find healing and wellness, you must be willing to undertake a full-spectrum inventory of your life and be willing to embrace real change.

You must also accept the truth that no one lives an anxiety-free life, nor should we! Fear and anxiety can be healthy—even protective—emotions in the face of dangerous or unpredictable circumstances. But no one needs to live life in the shadow of fear and anxiety.

HOW ANXIETY AFFECTS YOUR LIFE

Your response: Emotions. Diet. Habits. Genetics. Unforgiveness. Addictions. Is there an area of your life you are not willing to examine in your quest for freedom from anxiety? How have you perceived anxiety in the past? Have you attributed it to a single factor in your life? What do you think about the idea that anxiety can have a wide range of factors?

- 3. You're not alone, and what ails you is highly treatable.** According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, anxiety disorders are the most common mental health issues in the United States, affecting forty million adults age eighteen and older, or 18.1 percent of the population every year. Of these, fewer than four out of ten people seek treatment—despite the fact that anxiety disorders are highly treatable.³

Your response: Have your feelings of fear or anxiety left you feeling isolated and alone? Are you encouraged to know that anxiety disorders are so common—and so treatable? Why or why not?

Taking Stock

How is anxiety impacting your life?

Anxiety is rarely confined to one or two areas of life. Its influence can be far reaching. How often is the quality of your life in the following areas compromised by feelings of fear or anxiety?

THE ANXIETY RESET WORKBOOK

1 = very little

2 = often but not regularly

3 = on a daily basis

1. Physical and mental well-being

1 2 3

2. Social freedom and enjoyment

1 2 3

3. Romantic relationships

1 2 3

4. Professional opportunity and success

1 2 3

5. Parenting

1 2 3

6. Civic engagement

1 2 3

7. Spiritual resilience

1 2 3

Your results:

- If you scored 1 in any category, your anxiety level is likely moderate and tolerable.
- If you scored 2 in any category, your anxiety level is likely manageable but should be addressed through the treatment protocols presented in *The Anxiety Reset* book.
- If you scored 3 in any category, your anxiety level is likely cause for concern and should prompt you to seek guidance from a mental health professional in conjunction with your personal self-discovery and the information provided in *The Anxiety Reset* book.

Change Your Story, Change Your Life

1. What is the story you tell yourself about your history with anxiety? Do you think anxiety is an untreatable and unavoidable aspect of your life? Or do you have hope that you will find a solution one day? Do you believe that change is possible? Write out your story—just let it flow without self-editing or filtering.

2. Now write out a different narrative you want to embrace. Where do you want to end up? Describe your ideal future and destination.

Dig Deeper

1. What do your feelings of anxiety represent to you?

2. When you feel anxious or fearful, what helps you manage those emotions?

3. How committed are you to finding long-term solutions and healthy alternatives to living with chronic anxiety?

4. Are there any benefits you derive from feeling anxious?

5. Do a search of Bible verses that instruct us to “fear not” and write one or two that resonate with you here.

First Steps, Next Steps

Now it’s time to get practical. We’ve explored many issues that prompted you to ponder and process. Let’s put those thoughts into action. I’ll provide several steps forward, and then it’s your turn to determine three additional actions you will take this week.

1. Chapters 1, 2, and 5 of *The Anxiety Reset* identify a total of fifteen actions you can take to begin your journey toward healing in the “Your Personal Reset Plan” sections. If you haven’t read the book, I encourage you to do so—and to take the actions in these chapters. Like this one from chapter 5:

Make a wish list of things you would do, if not for anxiety in your life. Be bold, and be specific. Think back to dreams you had when you were younger—to learn to sail, take an art-history tour through Italy, write a screenplay, or start a business. Considering these things will help you see more clearly what anxiety has cost you—freedom, enjoyment, opportunity, and achievement. The purpose is not to remind you of pain but to fuel your motivation to do what is necessary to reclaim all that you’ve lost. Give yourself permission to dream big. You are worth it!

If you haven’t taken this action, do it now.

If you have, what were your feelings after completing the list?

THE ANXIETY RESET WORKBOOK

Were you discouraged or inspired? Have you given any more thought to your list—and imagined yourself living the life you long to live? If not, try doing that now.

2. If you have been in denial about anxiety—convincing yourself that “nothing is wrong” while feeling impaired in every area of your life—use the lines below to write the truth. And by the way, write the truth as you would speak it in love to a struggling friend. Here is an example: *The truth is that while anxiety problems are widespread, they are not “normal,” they can be treated, and I deserve a life in which feeling fearful and anxious is not a daily occurrence.*

3. Celebrate the step you are taking by cracking open this workbook and embracing the exercises and actions in these pages. As I’ve mentioned, more than six out of ten people who struggle with anxiety don’t pursue treatment of any kind. You’re not in that group! You are setting a course and making an investment in your wellness! How would you like to celebrate that?

4. Your turn. What steps do you intend to take this week to move toward wellness?

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

Closing Reflections

You are not broken because you struggle with anxiety. Fear and anxiety serve a purpose and can provide motivation to solve problems and get yourself out of potentially dangerous situations.

Everyone experiences fear and anxiety in life, and so will you.

By pursuing a whole-person approach to anxiety relief, however, you can experience a greater sense of peace, joy, and freedom in your daily life. You can be set free from debilitating levels of anxiety. You can experience a better quality of life.

Believe that with all your heart as you continue the lessons in this workbook.

Meditate on This Scripture

When anxiety was great within me,
your consolation brought me joy.

PSALM 94:19

