

## Learning to Control Anxiety / Panic / Thoughts



Anxiety has a sneaky way of seeding doubt regardless of whether the fear is rational or irrational. So what can be done for people who suffer from repetitive anxious thoughts?

To begin, let's look at how an anxious thought is powered and then look to demonstrate how to quickly eliminate the intensity of the thought. Say for example you are going about your daily business when an anxious thought enters your mind. Whatever the nature of the thought, the pattern that follows is usually quite predictable.

The anxious thought flashes briefly in your awareness and as it does so you immediately react with fear as you contemplate the thought. The fearful reaction you have to the thought then sends a shock-wave through your nervous system. You feel the result of that fear most intensely in your stomach (due to the amount of nerve endings located there).

Because of the intense bodily reaction to the thought you then get sucked into examining the anxious thought over and over. The continuous fearful reaction you have to the thought increases the intensity of the experience. The more you react, the stronger the thought rebounds again in your awareness creating more anxious shock-waves throughout your body. This is the typical cycle of anxious thoughts.

For some it feels like the anxious thoughts are hijacking their peace of mind. Because of the reaction you are having, you may continue to spend the rest of your day thinking about the anxious thoughts you experienced.

"Why am I thinking these thoughts?"  
"Why can't I shake off this eerie feeling?"

The harder you try not to think about it the more upset you become. It is like telling someone

*'Whatever happens do not think of a pink elephant'.*

Naturally enough it's all they can think about. That is the way our brains are wired. So how can you eliminate these unwanted anxious thoughts?

**To begin with:**

When you start to experience anxious thoughts, it is very important not to force the thoughts away.

Let the thoughts in. The more comfortable you can become with them, the better. These thoughts will never go away fully **but what you can learn is to change your reaction to them.**

By changing your reaction to the anxious thoughts you become free of them.

Once you establish a new way of reacting to the thoughts it does not matter if you have them or not. Your reaction is what defines the whole experience (and that applies to almost everything).

Everybody experiences fleeting thoughts that many would consider scary or crazy. The difference between most people and somebody who gets caught up in them, is that the average person sees them for exactly what they are, fleeting anxious thoughts, and casually ignores them.

The anxious person is at a disadvantage as they already have a certain level of anxiety in their system. The thoughts easily spark feelings of further anxiety which builds into a cycle of fear. You break the cycle by changing how you react to the fearful thought.

**Here is an example of how to approach this:**

You are enjoying the way your day is going but then all of sudden a fearful thought comes to mind. Before you would react with anxiety to the idea and then try to force that thought out of your mind.

**This time, however, say:**

"That's a fear of X. I could worry and even obsess over that but this time I'm going to do something different. I'm not going to react to it. I'm also not going to try and stop it either. I'm just going to label the thought and not react."

Then the thought comes again with more intensity and possibly with new 'scary' angles you never considered. When this happens you do exactly the same. As if you were observing a cloud passing overhead, you simply

**-Observe it,**

**-Label it (fear of whatever), then**

**-Watch it as it passes by with no judgment.**

Then

**-Move your attention on to what you were doing.**

**Observe, Label, Watch, Move on**

See the anxious thought for what it really is: -one of the thousands of fleeting sane and insane thoughts every one of us experiences daily.

If you are a more indoors type of person then instead of thinking of the thoughts like clouds passing in the sky, you might try imagining a large cinema screen and the anxious thoughts are projected out onto the screen in front of you. Play around with this approach. Find what works for you.

**The key thing to remember is to: Observe, Label, Watch, Move on**

By practising this approach you gradually stop reacting with fear to the thought and you learn to treat it as nothing more than an odd peculiarity.

When you are at a stage where you are comfortable doing the above exercise and you feel you are making good progress, and then try this additional step:

**Actually invite one of your more regular fearful thoughts in.**

Call the fear to you; say you just want it to come close so you can observe it.

It may seem like the last thing you would wish to bring upon yourself, as you don't particularly enjoy these thoughts but this approach can be very empowering. You are now calling the shots. You actually invited the issue in.

By doing this you are discharging the dense vibration of fear surrounding the anxious thought. That fear was sustaining itself on your resistance, -the idea that you could not handle these thoughts.

The fear quickly evaporates when you turn around and say "yes of course I can handle these thoughts."

Fear intensifies when we pull away from it. Anxious thoughts become a mental tug of war if we struggle with them.

It is the mental struggle of pulling against the anxious thoughts that creates the inner psychological tension.

The inner tension is fuelled by thoughts like:

*"I can't handle to think about this -please go away"*

*"I don't like that thought- I want it to stop!"*

Take a different stance. Invite anxious thoughts in. Willingly sit with them, label them and do your very best not to react.

Yes, it does take practice but very soon you find yourself in a unique position of control. You are no longer a victim of fearful thinking but a decision maker in what you will or will not be concerned about.

As with every technique there is always a level of practice involved in the beginning. Initially you start observing but then suddenly get anxious about the fearful thought. **That's very normal in the beginning.**

Keep at it. Practice and you will quickly see how less impacting those fearful thoughts become.

**Do not let your mind trick you into believing that your anxiety is something you will always have to struggle with. That is simply not true.**