

*Making Everything Easier!™*

# **Managing Anxiety with CBT**

FOR  
**DUMMIES®**

## **Learn to:**

- Understand what anxiety is and how it can hold you back
- Prepare for change and establish goals for the future
- Face your fears and keep your worries in perspective

**Graham Davey, et al.**



# Managing Anxiety with CBT For Dummies®

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FOR  
**DUMMIES®**

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# Introduction

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Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, or CBT, is one of the most popular modern treatments for psychological problems, and is the treatment of choice for common mental health problems such as anxiety and depression. In this book we help you use the principles and practices of CBT as a tool to help you overcome problematic anxiety.

The strength of CBT is that it helps you to identify patterns in your thoughts and behaviours that exacerbate and maintain your anxiety. CBT then provides basic ways in which you can change unhelpful thinking (the *cognitive*, or thinking, bit), and find new ways to behave (the *behavioural* bit) that minimise anxiety.

You're not unusual if you suffer from anxiety problems. They're a common feature of modern-day living, and sometimes anxiety can overwhelm you. In this book we use tried and tested treatment methods that enable you to overcome your own anxiety. We discuss how normal anxiety can turn into a problem, and the various ways in which problematic anxiety can manifest itself. And we show you how the principles and practices of CBT can help you, and how you can maintain your progress and build a better and fuller life.

## ***About This Book***

We wrote this book to provide comprehensible coverage of what anxiety is and how you can use CBT to overcome it. The book covers:

- ✓ Knowing what anxiety is and how it can become a problem.

- ✓ Understanding your own anxiety and drawing up a map of your anxiety that helps you explain what causes it and what maintains it.
- ✓ Setting goals for yourself when starting to deal with your anxiety.
- ✓ Using techniques for facing up to your fears and anxieties.
- ✓ Dealing with uncontrollable worrying.
- ✓ Identifying unhelpful rules you use that maintain your anxiety, and providing you with various techniques to change these rules and 'errors of thinking'.
- ✓ Putting your anxiety into perspective and helping you to make lifestyle changes that maintain your mental health and ward off anxiety.

We've tried to adopt a simple, readable style, and we've provided interesting activities, examples and illustrations that we hope you find accessible and even entertaining. Most importantly, we hope that you find out a little about CBT and are able to use it in the context of your own life to help you understand and manage your own anxiety.

However, if your anxiety is causing you considerable distress to the point where it's interfering significantly with the things you need to do each day and with your enjoyment of life, then we recommend that you seek professional help to provide you with an additional helping hand.

## ***Conventions Used in This Book***

*Italics* introduce new terms, underscore key differences in meaning between words and highlight the most important aspects of a sentence or example.

**Bold** text shows keywords and the action part of numbered lists.

Sidebars - the grey shaded boxes you see in most chapters - contain interesting tidbits of information or occasionally expand on a topic within the chapter. Read them if they look interesting to you, or skip them.

# ***How This Book Is Organised***

We divide the book into four parts consisting of a total of 11 chapters. The table of contents lists subheadings that provide more information about each chapter, but below is a brief description of the purpose and contents of each of the four parts of the book.

## ***Part I: Understanding Your Anxiety***

This part helps you to understand what anxiety is and why people experience it.

In Chapter 1 we discuss ways in which people experience anxiety, and cover the physical experience and how anxiety affects your thinking. We explore the question of when anxiety becomes a problem, what forms anxiety takes when it becomes a problem and whether you can learn to overcome your anxiety when it seems to control you. We also introduce you to CBT and how CBT can help you to manage your anxiety.

Chapter 2 then guides you through making a map of your anxiety that helps you to explain what causes it and keeps it going. This map is useful in later chapters because it provides you with a guide to what you need to change.

## ***Part II: Tackling Your Anxiety***

We start this part, in Chapter 3, by helping you to think about what goals you set for yourself and where you would like to end up when you've dealt with your anxiety. Chapter 4 provides you with some methods for facing up to your fears and anxieties, and we discuss ways of putting yourself into situations that you've previously been avoiding. Then, in Chapter 5, you put your anxieties

into perspective with a few tests to determine whether your fears are real or not.

Chapter 6 gives help in beating that chronic feature of anxiety known as ‘worrying’. Persistent worry is one of the main features of anxiety, and overcoming it requires dedicated attention. Finally, everyone lives by rules, and Chapter 7 describes how unrealistic and unhelpful rules for living play a role in anxiety, and describes ways of overcoming these rules.

### ***Part III: Making Progress and Moving On***

There’s more to you as a person than anxiety! In this part we start, in Chapter 8, by putting your anxiety into perspective by describing some of the common contributing problems, such as low mood, depression, troubled sleep and problems with alcohol or prescription drugs. We also provide you with tips and advice about keeping a healthy lifestyle that helps you keep anxiety at bay. Then, in Chapter 9, we look at how you can move toward a brighter future based on our guidance in the book, building on successes and dodging pitfalls.

### ***Part IV: The Part of Tens***

This section contains some quick tips about dealing with anxiety and using CBT. We offer our top tips for tackling anxiety and the best ways to expand your horizons and get on with your life.

## ***Icons Used in This Book***

We use the following icons in this book to alert you to various important or helpful types of information:



This icon alerts you to a true-to-life example that helps you understand the point.



Here we provide practical advice for putting CBT into practice or describe an activity that we hope you find useful in helping you to understand your anxiety.



This icon tells you that we're discussing something important, so make sure that you take this issue in and remember it.



Beware! This icon alerts you to red flags and things that you should avoid in order to progress successfully or to develop better emotional health.



Whenever you use CBT to help you with your problems, you engage in specific activities to help you understand the process. This icon provides some examples of things for you to try out.

## ***Where to Go from Here***

We hope you enjoy this self-help book and benefit from the journey we lay down for understanding and managing your anxiety. We also hope that you gain a genuine insight into how you can use CBT to deal with common emotional and mental health problems.



If you feel that you cope better with anxiety as a result of using this book, make sure that you build on these successes and move towards a healthier and happier lifestyle.

We wish you well!

# Part I

## Understanding Your Anxiety

The 5<sup>th</sup> Wave

By Rich Tennant



“It’s just a little device I use to help relieve the anxiety from meeting new people.”

## ***In this part . . .***

In this part, you learn about the different types of anxiety problems and what causes them. In particular, you discover the role that thoughts and behaviours play in maintaining anxiety problems. We show you how to make a map of your anxiety and give you an overview of how CBT can help.

# Chapter 1

## All About Anxiety

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### ***In This Chapter***

- ▶ Finding out why and how you experience anxiety
  - ▶ Discovering the benefits of anxiety
  - ▶ Knowing when anxiety becomes a problem
  - ▶ Using CBT to alleviate anxiety
- 

Anxiety is just one of a number of important emotions that you experience on a daily basis and that have important effects on the way you think and behave. Most importantly, anxiety is an emotion that can have beneficial effects (making you alert and focused when faced with potential challenges) or it can be debilitating and distressing if it takes over your life and feels uncontrollable.

In this chapter we lay the foundations for a thorough understanding of anxiety. We explain what exactly anxiety is, and why and how you experience it. We determine when it is that anxiety becomes a problem, and seems to control you. Finally, we introduce you to cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT): what it is, and how it can help you.

## ***Understanding the Basics of Anxiety***

Everyone experiences many emotions on a daily basis. In this section we look at some of those emotions, including

anxiety, and explain that emotions – even anxiety – can be useful when experienced at the right time and in the right amount.

## ***Knowing that anxiety is a normal, and useful, emotion***

Your feelings have evolved to serve adaptive purposes and, in most cases, they help you to solve problems that you encounter. Here are some important emotions that you experience pretty much daily:

- ✓ Anger in response to feeling challenged or thwarted.
- ✓ Anxiety in response to anticipated threats.
- ✓ Disgust in response to repulsive or sickening things or events.
- ✓ Fear in response to immediate perceived threats.
- ✓ Happiness/joy in response to things that you find positive or rewarding.
- ✓ Sadness/sorrow in response to losses or failures you experience.

In general, positive emotions like joy make you feel good (because you associate them with achievement and reward) and negative emotions like anger tend to feel unpleasant (because you associate them with threats, challenges and losses). Nevertheless, the significance of all emotions is that they help you react to, adapt to and deal more successfully with these various types of life events.

So in the case of anxiety, most people are willing to put up with the unpleasant feeling that anxiety gives them because the emotion helps them to deal more effectively with the threats and challenges they face in day-to-day life. Yes, we're talking about a positive side to anxiety.

Table 1-1 provides everyday examples of the advantages of the emotion.

**Table 1-1 The Benefits of Anxiety**

<b><i>Threat or Challenge</i></b>	<b><i>Benefits of Anxiety</i></b>
Preparing for an interview	Feeling a bit anxious makes you focus on the interview and provides a level of arousal that ensures that you're motivated and alert to answer questions.
Meeting an important person for the first time (for example on a date)	Normal levels of anxiety enable you to think through a few of the things that might happen during the meeting and prepare yourself to deal with these possibilities.
Finding your bank balance is overdrawn	A bit of anxiety focuses you on the problem and helps you to problem-solve how you could get your bank balance back into the black.

### ***Appreciating the purpose of anxiety***

To survive as living organisms, people must be able to effectively deal with all those things in the world that are likely to pose threats to survival. Many unsophisticated organisms survive by having biologically pre-wired responses to basic threats. Humans too have some responses they're born with that help them to deal with potential threats. For example, people have pre-wired startle responses that make them suddenly alert to the kinds of things that might signal threats. People are startled by:

- ✓ Sudden loud noises.
- ✓ Looming shadows.
- ✓ Rapid movement of things towards them.
- ✓ Rapid, unpredictable movements around them.
- ✓ Staring eyes.

Interestingly, all these things that startle people are also characteristic of potential predators, so the startle response is a primitive one designed to make you alert to, and avoid, physical threat. However, the modern world is made up of many more potential threats and challenges than this, so people have evolved a more flexible system to help them deal with the vast range of threats and challenges that confront them during a normal lifetime. This situation is where anxiety and its various elements comes in as a means of helping you to deal with anything that you've labelled as threatening.

So, if you've thought about something and decided - for whatever reason - that it's potentially threatening, you begin to experience anxiety as an emotion that helps you deal with this perceived threat by making you more alert and focused.



The more things you interpret as threatening, the more anxiety you experience. So, the more you tend to interpret events as threats, the more anxious you feel.

## ***Experiencing anxiety***

You experience anxiety in a variety of ways:

- ✓ **Feelings:** You experience an unpleasant feeling of apprehension (as if you're under threat).
- ✓ **Bodily sensations:** You may have tense muscles and a dry mouth, a shirt stuck to you with sweat, and be trembling and struggling to swallow.
- ✓ **Physiological changes:** Your heart beats faster, you feel more alert and vigilant, and your reactions are faster.