

Dr. Kay Says...



Dr. Karen McGibbon

FEAR LESS!

REDUCE ANXIETY WITHOUT MEDS

Mind | Body | Spirit
Series



WELCOME

Hello! Thank you for choosing this book on managing anxiety without medication. My hope for you is that in it, you will find practical strategies and genuine support. I've written this as a companion for your journey—one that acknowledges challenges while focusing on empowerment and growth.

Take what resonates with you, practice patience with yourself, and remember that seeking help in any form shows tremendous strength.

 Dr. Karen M. Gibbon

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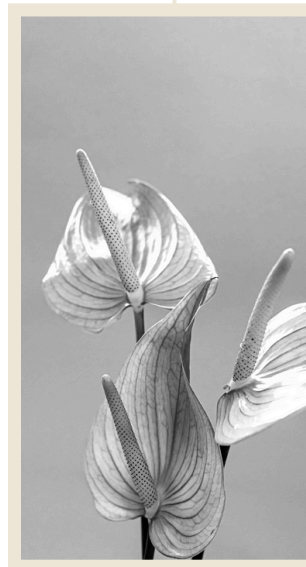
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How to Use This Book

While reflecting on my personal journey with anxiety, I decided to create this guide from the wisdom I have gained about managing my own Generalized Anxiety Disorder. Over time, and while pursuing my studies and working with clients, I discovered that anxiety isn't inherently bad—it is a natural response that becomes problematic when triggered by uncertainty rather than actual threats.



I recommend the following Mind|Body|Spirit approach to treating anxiety without medication:

MIND

- First, seek to understand anxiety's mechanisms and clearly identify specific worries;
- Second, distinguish between current problems and hypothetical "what-ifs" and building a "worry management toolbox" with techniques like calm breathing and uncertainty tolerance; and finally
- Third, develop better problem-solving skills for real challenges.

BODY

Several evidence-based physical activities can help reduce anxiety symptoms:

- Aerobic exercise - Regular moderate-intensity cardio such as walking, jogging, swimming, or cycling.
- Nature-based activities - Hiking, gardening, or simply walking in natural settings provides additional anxiety-reduction benefits beyond exercise alone.



- Breathwork exercises - Deep diaphragmatic breathing, box breathing, or alternate nostril breathing can quickly activate the parasympathetic nervous system.
- Progressive muscle relaxation - Systematically tensing and releasing muscle groups can reduce physical tension associated with anxiety.

The most effective approach is finding activities you enjoy and can sustain regularly.

SPIRIT

Various spiritual and religious practices have been shown to help reduce anxiety symptoms:

- Prayer - Personal or communal prayer offers comfort and perspective, providing a sense of connection to something greater than oneself.
- Religious community participation - Regular attendance at religious services provides social support networks and community belonging, both protective factors against anxiety.
- Bible study - Reading religious texts can offer wisdom, comfort, and guidance when facing anxious thoughts.
- Gratitude practices - Keeping gratitude journals or engaging in thankfulness rituals helps shift focus from worries to appreciation.
- Praise/Worship - Singing hymns, or spiritual songs can regulate breathing and provide meditative focus.

The effectiveness of these practices varies by individual and often works best when aligned with one's existing beliefs and values.



Medical Disclaimer

This book is intended for informational and educational purposes only and does not constitute medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. The content provided is based on research, clinical experience, and the personal perspectives of the author and is designed to support, not replace, the relationship you have with a qualified healthcare provider.

If you are experiencing severe anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, or any other serious mental health issue, please seek immediate help from a licensed mental health professional or medical provider.

Before starting any new health-related program—whether related to diet, exercise, supplements, or mental health practices—consult with a licensed healthcare professional, especially if you have existing medical conditions, are taking prescription medications, or are pregnant or nursing.

Neither the author nor the publisher assumes any liability for potential risks, injuries, or damages resulting directly or indirectly from the use or misuse of the information contained in this book.

~ *Dr. Karen McGibbon*





CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

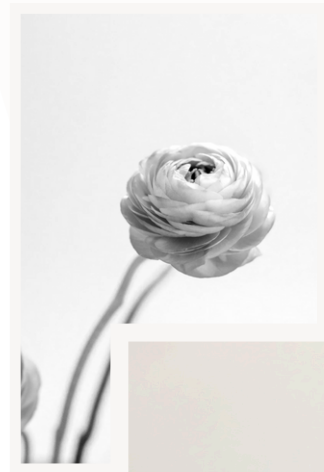
Understanding Anxiety



What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a natural human response to stress or perceived threats. It is characterized by feelings of worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome. While everyone experiences anxiety occasionally, it becomes problematic when it's excessive, persistent, and interferes with daily functioning.

Anxiety manifests both physically and psychologically. Physical symptoms often include increased heart rate, rapid breathing, sweating, trembling, fatigue, and sleep disturbances. Psychological symptoms typically involve persistent worry, difficulty concentrating, irritability, and a sense of impending danger or doom.



Types of Anxiety



Several distinct types of anxiety disorders exist, each with unique characteristics:

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) involves excessive, uncontrollable worry about everyday issues like health, work, or family. For example, someone with GAD might constantly worry about financial ruin despite having stable finances, or be unable to stop worrying that loved ones will have accidents.

Social Anxiety Disorder centers on intense fear of social situations and being judged by others. A person with this disorder might avoid job interviews, decline party invitations, or experience extreme distress when speaking in public due to fear of embarrassment.

Panic Disorder features recurring panic attacks—sudden episodes of intense fear accompanied by physical symptoms like chest pain, shortness of breath, and dizziness. Someone experiencing a panic attack might believe they're having a heart attack or dying.

Specific Phobias are intense fears of particular objects or situations. Examples include fear of flying, heights, spiders, or needles that lead to avoidance behaviors significantly impacting one's life.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) involves unwanted, intrusive thoughts (obsessions) that trigger anxiety, leading to repetitive behaviors (compulsions) performed to reduce distress. For instance, someone might repeatedly check that doors are locked or wash their hands excessively due to contamination fears.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) develops after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event. Someone with PTSD might have flashbacks of a car accident, avoid driving, startle easily, or have nightmares about the trauma.

Self-Scoring Anxiety Assessment

Instructions

Below is a questionnaire designed to measure the severity of anxiety symptoms you may be experiencing. For each question, select the option that best describes how often you have been bothered by the following problems over the last 2 weeks.

Questionnaire

#	Question	Not at all (0)	Several days (1)	More than half the days (2)	Nearly every day (3)	Your Score
1	Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	___
2	Not being able to stop or control worrying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	___
3	Worrying too much about different things	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	___
4	Trouble relaxing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	___
5	Being so restless that it's hard to sit still	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	___
6	Becoming easily annoyed or irritable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	___
7	Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	___
8	Physical symptoms (heart racing, sweating, shortness of breath)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	___
9	Difficulty falling or staying asleep due to worry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	___
10	Avoiding situations due to anxiety or fear	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	___

Total Score: ___ / 30

Scoring Guide

0-4: Minimal anxiety

- Your symptoms suggest minimal levels of anxiety
- Continue to practice self-care and stress management techniques

5-9: Mild anxiety

- Your symptoms suggest mild anxiety
- Consider learning stress management techniques and mindfulness practices

10-14: Moderate anxiety

- Your symptoms suggest moderate anxiety
- Consider speaking with a healthcare provider about your symptoms

15-21: Moderately severe anxiety

- Your symptoms suggest moderately severe anxiety
- A discussion with a healthcare provider is recommended

22-30: Severe anxiety

- Your symptoms suggest severe anxiety
- Please consult with a healthcare provider promptly

Important Notes

1. This is a screening tool and not a diagnostic instrument. Only a qualified healthcare professional can make a proper diagnosis.
2. If you're experiencing significant distress or your symptoms are interfering with your daily life, please seek help from a qualified mental health professional regardless of your score.
3. If you're having thoughts of harming yourself or others, please contact a crisis helpline immediately:
 - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 988 or 1-800-273-8255
 - Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741
4. This screening tool is adapted from validated anxiety measures including elements of the GAD-7 and other recognized anxiety assessments.



CHAPTER TWO

THE MIND



We will now take a look at the most impactful ways in which you can manage your mental processes and thoughts, and ultimately minimize your feelings of anxiety.

How to Identify Specific Worries

- Ask yourself: “What was I just thinking about before I noticed this feeling?” That trace-back often leads to the source.
- Write the phrase: “I’m afraid that...” Then complete the sentence 5–10 times. This allows the subconscious to speak.
- Ask yourself: What changed recently—new commitment, conversation, deadline? This often helps uncover a trigger event that kicked things off, which leads directly to the specific source.

Is it a Rational or Irrational Fear?

- A rational fear is based on real, immediate, or likely danger. It has evidence to support it, and responding to it can help protect you. For example: *You're walking alone at night in an unsafe neighborhood and feel afraid. That's rational—there's a real, present risk.*



- An irrational fear is disproportionate to the actual threat, often based on your imagination, past trauma, or distorted thinking. It persists even when there's no real danger. For example: *You're afraid of going to the grocery store because you might faint, even though you've never fainted there and have no medical condition suggesting it.*

How to Solve Problems

1. Define the Problem Clearly: What exactly is happening? What's the real issue underneath the surface?
2. Identify the Root Cause: Why is this happening? What are the contributing factors—emotional, logistical, relational, etc.?



3. List Possible Solutions: Brainstorm freely—include obvious, creative, and even “crazy” ideas. Don't judge yet.
4. Evaluate and Choose the Best Option: Which is most doable, least risky, and most effective right now?
5. Take Action & Review: Do it. Then check in: Did it work? If not, refine or try another solution.



CHAPTER THREE



THE BODY

Anxiety affects the daily lives and overall well-being of millions of people around the world. Physical activity has been shown to be powerful tool for managing anxiety symptoms. .



Get Moving!

- Aerobic activity boosts endorphin production, which can improve mood and decrease stress levels.
- Running stands out as an effective exercise for reducing anxiety symptoms.
- Bicycling is an effective physical activity for reducing anxiety symptoms. This low-impact exercise can be performed at various intensities, making it accessible to people of different fitness levels
- Regular swimming sessions have been shown to decrease levels of cortisol, the stress hormone. This reduction can lead to improved mood and decreased feelings of anxiety.
- Hiking is also a powerful physical exercise that can significantly reduce anxiety symptoms. This outdoor activity combines aerobic exercise with exposure to nature, providing a dual benefit for mental health.



Breathe!

- Deep, controlled breathing activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which helps counteract the body's stress response.
- The controlled breathing required in aerobic activities such as swimming can help regulate the body's stress response. By practicing deep, steady breaths, individuals may find it easier to manage anxiety in daily life.



CHAPTER FOUR

THE SPIRIT



Your spiritual and mental health are connected. Practicing spiritual disciplines can deepen your faith and strengthen your mind, leading to increased levels of relaxation and peace.



SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES TO REDUCE ANXIETY

- Prayer is one of the most powerful ways to fight anxiety and find peace. Prayer changes your perspective so you can focus beyond your circumstances to God, who can help you to manage them well.
- Worshipping God by singing to him is a powerful way to lift your spirit and refocus on God's goodness. Music can powerfully affect emotions. You'll find that you don't have the space in your mind for worries because you'll be so focused on God.
- Practicing gratitude changes your perspective from what you don't have to the blessings that you do have. One compelling way to become more grateful is by keeping a gratitude journal.
- The Bible is filled with verses that can offer profound comfort and strength during challenging times. It contains tips for daily life that can help you find peace and reassurance when you need it most.
- Engaging with others in community can provide additional support and encouragement when facing anxiety.



Additional Resources

DATE	MOOD
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Daily Journal

YOUR THOUGHTS

GOALS	TO DO
<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>


Breathing Exercises to Alleviate Anxiety

A. 4-7-8 Breathing (Nervous System Reset)

Purpose: Activates the parasympathetic nervous system—your rest-and-digest state—and reduces cortisol.

How to do it:

- Sit or lie down in a quiet, safe space.
- Inhale through your nose for 4 seconds.
- Hold your breath for 7 seconds.
- Exhale slowly through your mouth for 8 seconds, making a soft "whooshing" sound.
- Repeat for 4 cycles initially. Over time, build up to 8 cycles.


 Use this before sleep, after a triggering conversation, or when your body feels flooded with tension.

B. Box Breathing (Anxiety Stabilizer)

Purpose: Used by Navy SEALs and trauma therapists—it increases focus and emotional containment.

How to do it:

- Inhale through your nose for 4 seconds.
- Hold the breath for 4 seconds.
- Exhale through your mouth for 4 seconds.
- Hold the breath again for 4 seconds.
- Repeat for 4–6 rounds.


 Use this when your anxiety feels like it's hijacking your thinking. It brings the prefrontal cortex back online.

C. Diaphragmatic Breathing (Deep Core Calm)

Purpose: This rewires chronic shallow breathing patterns, often seen in anxiety and PTSD.

How to do it:

- Lie on your back, knees bent, one hand on your chest, the other on your belly.
- Inhale through your nose so your belly rises—not your chest.
- Exhale very slowly through pursed lips, like blowing through a straw.
- Repeat for 5–10 minutes, once or twice daily.

 Excellent as part of your morning routine or after emotional labor, like therapy or caregiving.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

Purpose: Anxiety often creates unconscious muscle tension. This technique restores the body's sense of safety by teaching your nervous system to feel and release tension deliberately.

Standard PMR Routine (10–15 minutes total)

Instructions:

- Find a quiet place. Sit or lie down comfortably.
- Take a few grounding breaths (use 4-7-8 or Box Breathing if you'd like).

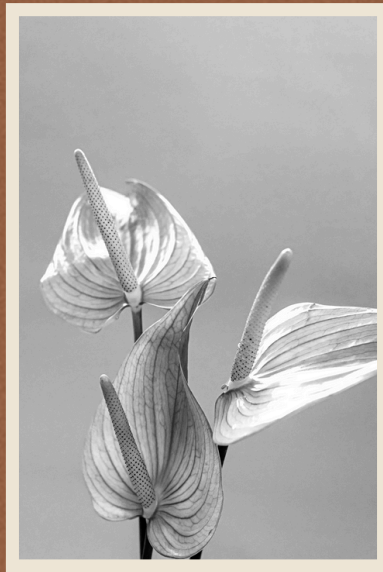
Then move through each muscle group like this:

1. Feet: Curl your toes and tense the arches. Hold for 5–7 seconds.
Release and exhale.
2. Calves: Point your toes up (like a flex). Hold, then release.
3. Thighs: Squeeze your thighs together or press them firmly into the floor or chair. Hold, then release.
4. Glutes: Clench your buttocks tightly. Hold, then release.
5. Stomach: Suck in your belly as if bracing for a punch. Hold, then let it go.
6. Hands: Clench fists tightly. Hold, release.
7. Arms: Flex your biceps. Hold, release.
8. Shoulders: Raise them toward your ears. Hold, then drop them suddenly.
9. Neck: Gently tilt your head back and hold. Return to center.
10. Jaw: Clench tightly. Hold, release.
11. Eyes and forehead: Squeeze your eyes shut and raise your eyebrows.
Hold, release.

Finish with a few more deep breaths and observe how your body feels now.

💡 Tip: You can do a shortened version just on the shoulders, jaw, and stomach if you're pressed for time or in public.

NEED MORE INSIGHT & SUPPORT?



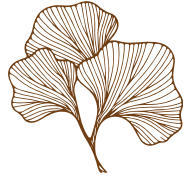
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Dr. Kay Says...

MIND ~ BODY ~ SPIRIT SERIES

- Cheer Up! Feel Happier Without Meds
- Rest Well! Improve Sleep Without Meds

*Coming!
Soon!*



About the Author

Dr. Karen McGibbon, PhD, DMin, LPC is a university professor, certified life coach, licensed professional counselor, and author.

Dr. Kay, as she is affectionately known, has been helping people live happier, more fulfilling lives for more than thirty years.

