

HOW TO
CONQUER
SOCIAL ANXIETY



A SCIENTIFIC, STEP-BY-STEP FORMULA
TO OVERCOME SHYNESS,
BREAK FREE FROM NEGATIVE THINKING,
& UNLOCK TRUE CONFIDENCE

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A quick note:

If you leave an honest review for this book before April 20 2017, I will send you a free copy of the upcoming video product version of this book (normally \$97) upon its release (July 2017).

The video product will include hidden camera demonstrations of all the challenges contained within this book.

If you want to take advantage of this temporary offer, simply send an email to me at aghayden@email.arizona.edu letting me know you left a review (you don't have to prove you left a review, and you don't need to tell me how you reviewed it). I will then send you a copy of the video product when it is released.

What is Social Anxiety?

[About fifteen million Americans have social anxiety today.](#)

According to the *Anxiety and Depression Association of America*, *Social anxiety* is the fear of being judged and evaluated negatively by other people, leading to feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, embarrassment, humiliation, and depression. Notice that the definition says social anxiety leads to feelings embarrassment and humiliation, it's ironic if you think about it. When we experience social anxiety, we are afraid of getting embarrassed, but in reality, most of the embarrassment we feel is from our social anxiety. In fact, people with social anxiety are unlikely to experience many embarrassing moments, because they are intelligent, empathetic and

socially aware people, and so they learn to filter out saying or doing things that carry any risk of actual social humiliation.

The humiliation caused by social anxiety, is humiliation that isn't based on real feedback, but purely on negative thoughts and emotions, this is far worse than the actual humiliation experienced from giving a bad presentation or being rejected for a date.

How do I know this? I've experienced both social anxiety and real humiliation (many times), and even though I've been rejected by many women and I've given some extremely awkward class presentations (I once literally said I was having 'technical difficulties' during a class debate, and planted my head face down on my desk so I wouldn't have to keep talking), the real pain I've experienced isn't from embarrassing moments like that, the real pain was from the risks I didn't take, from the constant discomfort of social anxiety.

Yeah, in the moment, being rejected hurt, and being laughed at by my classmates for a bad presentation felt humiliating, but the next day, it was funny, I could turn it into a joke. But the constant self-monitoring, the ever-present fear of saying the wrong thing, the endless negative imagined scenarios of humiliation that I would run through my head, those were never funny. They were a constant source of stress, if I didn't have social anxiety I would have gone on a date before the age of nineteen; if I didn't

have social anxiety, I would have enjoyed social gatherings instead of constantly worrying about doing the wrong thing; if I didn't have social anxiety, my memories of high-school and college would have been memories of self-expression and human connection, not memories of sinking quietly into a pit of self-created despair.

Take Responsibility

What I didn't know until I had experienced several years of crippling social anxiety, was that it is something that can be overcome. We are taught that psychological disorders, like anxiety and depression are created by imbalanced brain chemistry. Yet, modern research doesn't back up this claim.

Scientists came to the conclusion that psychological disorders result from imbalanced brain chemistry because people with depression showed lower levels of the neurochemical in their bloodstream than people without depression. This led researchers to develop antidepressants, also known as SSRI's (Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors), in layman's terms SSRI's increase the amount of Serotonin that your body uses on a day-to-day basis. Studies found that antidepressants improve depression (and anxiety), so

scientists were led to the conclusion that conditions like anxiety were caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain, an imbalance that could be fixed with the right drug.

Those of us with anxiety and depression are led to feel like victims; our brain chemistry is imbalanced and we're told only a pill can fix it. If the pill doesn't work, we're out of luck. The idea that we are the victims of a disease that is outside of our control implies that our anxiety and depression isn't our fault, which is, in many ways, true, but it also implies that we are victim to a brain that isn't functioning correctly, and this is misleading.

As good as the logic that says depression and anxiety are caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain looks on paper, decades of more recent scientific research have led the conclusion to seem archaic, and blatantly misrepresentative of the truth.

People with psychological disorders do have changed brain chemistry. But it's not a chemical imbalance in the brain that causes anxiety and depression; it's anxiety and depression that cause a chemical imbalance in the brain.

Before I prove that this is, in fact, the case, I want to explain why it's important. If a chemical imbalance is causing your social anxiety, then the best way to improve it is to take drugs that will change your brain

chemistry. The chemical imbalance would have nothing to do with your day-to-day thoughts and behaviors, and so you would be a victim to your malfunctioning brain. This would mean it's not your fault, and that it's also not your responsibility to improve.

If, however, it turned out that anxiety caused a chemical imbalance in your brain, and not the other way around, the best treatment for anxiety would be not to change your brain chemistry but to change whatever is causing your anxiety. If it turned out anxiety were caused by stress, for example, you would learn methods to reduce your stress, implement them, then experience relief, and your brain chemistry would be normalized in the process. This would mean that your social anxiety IS your responsibility to improve.

I don't say this lightly, because I personally understand how painful social anxiety can be: social anxiety starts and ends with your thoughts and behaviors, both of which, you can change.

You want proof, of course:

First, when we look at when people develop anxiety and depression, it becomes clear that they don't appear out of nowhere, they develop in response to extreme stress. People who develop depression often experience a major stressful life event even before their depression began (for example, the

death of a friend). My anxiety reached its peak shortly after the sudden death of my father, I couldn't cope with this, so I developed anxiety, and then because I developed anxiety, my brain chemistry became imbalanced.

Second, brain chemistry can be changed by behavior. Countless studies have shown that behavior changes can change brain chemistry. In one study, a placebo medication administered to Parkinson's patients changed participant's dopamine levels¹. In another study², Harvard psychologist, Amy Cuddy found that adopting a power pose for only 2 minutes will increase your testosterone levels (dominance hormone) by about 20% and decrease your cortisol levels by about 20%. Other studies found that when people experience a change in status, their serotonin levels change in response to this (this is because of the dominant behaviors that the person adopts when their status increases). Studies like these show that behavior changes brain chemistry, hinting that the disease hypothesis which states that: anxiety is a result of a chemical imbalance in the brain, is totally wrong. Imbalanced brain chemicals don't cause anxiety, when you have anxiety, your brain chemicals change afterwards. This implies that anxiety is caused by something entirely unrelated to brain chemistry.

What does this mean? That behavioral changes are effective for treating social anxiety. In fact, behavioral solutions have been found to be at

least as effective as medications for treating anxiety and depression³.

Change your behavior, and your brain chemistry will change as a result.

Your anxiety isn't your fault, but it is your responsibility to treat it. In fact, the feeling that you are unable to control your anxiety is a part of the problem, anxiety is so scary because it makes you feel out of control.

Treating your anxiety isn't easy, it will require you to challenge yourself; but ask yourself, "If I knew the treatment would work, what lengths would I go to overcome my social anxiety?"

When I asked myself that question, my answer was, "Any length, I would do anything." It wasn't easy to overcome my social anxiety, but I did, and if you want proof, in this [Youtube video](#) I do something that is about as social anxiety provoking as it gets.

But a few years prior to recording that video, I couldn't even ask a girl on a date, in 11th grade my crush leaned in to kiss me at a party, I was so anxious that I literally dodged her kiss and walked away from her and then left the party. I didn't speak to her again for weeks.

When I had to give a presentation for class I would literally tremble, when I was hanging out with friends I would spend more time judging myself than actually interacting with them, and I didn't build enough courage to ask a girl on a date until I was nineteen.

To deal with my social anxiety, at first, I used medications, but I found them mostly ineffective (this doesn't mean you shouldn't consult with a physician about using medications, they certainly can help, they just address the symptoms of anxiety without dealing with the underlying cause). I came to realize that I would have to address my anxiety myself. So, over the next several years I earned a degree in psychology while also reading countless books about stress and anxiety. I implemented dozens of techniques, in the hopes they would help.

Many of these techniques were magic-pill type solutions, like the emotional freedom technique which consists of tapping on your 'meridians' while saying the phrase, "Even though I have this anxiety, I love and accept myself." Unfortunately, none of the magic-pill solutions worked, there was no easy-to-digest quick fix for social anxiety.

What Really Works

What worked? Strategies that addressed the real causes of anxiety directly. I took small steps outside of my comfort zone, and as I did this my anxiety changed from something that controlled me, to something that challenged me. I began to look forward to situations that would cause social anxiety, because I saw them as opportunities, and when I made this shift, I

was free. This next chapter will explain what really causes anxiety so that you can address the root of the problem directly.

The Three Models

There are currently three scientific models which explain how anxiety develops and operates. It is not that one of these models is correct, rather, each of these models complement each other.

According to Dr. David Burns the cognitive model is based on three simple ideas, “1. You feel the way you think. 2. When you're anxious, you're fooling yourself. Anxiety results from distorted, illogical thoughts. It's a mental con. 3. When you change the way you think you can change the way you feel.”

Cognition is simply a fancy word for thought. Thoughts can trigger anxiety, imagine you are driving on the highway and you begin to think of getting in a car accident, you imagine losing control, smashing into another car, and you see yourself crawling out of the wreckage, barely alive. These thoughts lead to more similar thoughts, and your emotions begin to match your thinking. You start to feel uncomfortable, your heart rate increases,

your muscles tense up, your breathing becomes erratic. It all started with your negative thoughts.

This line of thinking isn't new, even the Buddha said that we are a product of our thinking, however, the cognitive model has only recently become accepted in the scientific community. In fact, CBT, or cognitive behavioral therapy, is currently one of the most widely practiced forms of therapy because of how effective the cognitive method is.

The cognitive model explains how our anxieties spiral out of control. We have a negative thought, like being humiliated for asking or crush on a date, then we feel anxious emotions as a result of these thoughts. These anxious emotions feel so bad that we get caught up in thinking about the perceived future humiliation more, which generates more anxious emotions, and so on. The cognitive model shows that anxiety can be a negative feedback loop: negative thought leads to anxious emotion which leads to more negative thoughts, and so on.

How can you change your thinking? We'll cover this in extensive detail soon. Before that, let's look at the hidden emotion model.

The hidden emotion model states that anxiety is caused by a fear of negative emotions. This idea came about because it was observed that people with anxiety are almost all incredibly nice. If you have social

anxiety, chances are you don't start arguments and boss people around on a day-to-day basis, its far more likely that you treat those around you well, too well in fact. When people are upsetting you, you probably don't deal with that conflict directly and assertively, you probably keep those emotions to yourself.

If you keep your upset to yourself, you cause yourself negative consequences. My father died suddenly when I was eighteen years old. He was the person I was closest to, I didn't know how to process his death. What did I do? I didn't get angry (even though I had good reason to), I didn't get upset, I didn't feel anything. I became totally numb for a period of several months.

Unsurprisingly, this had consequences, instead of going through a period of deep (and natural) sadness, I experienced something far more painful. Several months after my father's death, I had my first panic attack. One afternoon, I was playing drums when I noticed a strange pain and numbness in my left arm. The thought crossed my mind, "Can't pain in my left arm mean I'm having a heart attack?" but I ignored this thought. Several minutes later, the feelings intensified, and my heart started racing, I felt dizzy, and I even felt like I was about to faint. I couldn't help but feel that something very terrible was about to happen. I kept thinking I might be having a heart attack. I didn't want to think this, but the conclusion kept

coming up, again, and again, and again. This developed into a full-blown panic attack that lasted for several hours, for the whole duration, I felt like I was *dying*.

I experienced this because emotions cannot be ignored. Ignoring strong emotions, especially, has significant consequences. These feelings will find some way to surface, and if you don't let this happen naturally, this can easily turn into anxiety. When you have social anxiety, you learn to keep negative emotions to yourself. If you're frustrated with someone, you keep it to yourself, if you have a crush on someone, you keep it to yourself, if you feel left out, you keep it to yourself.

Later, these repressed emotions surface as anxiety. Emotions are designed to be expressed, and when we completely block them out, they find another way to show themselves. According to the hidden emotion model, once you honestly express the emotions that you have been holding onto, your anxiety will disappear.

According to the exposure model, avoidance is the cause of all anxiety. When you are afraid of something, you start to avoid it. If you are afraid of making new friends, for example, you avoid going out or engaging with strangers. This avoidance creates an increasing tension towards the action you're avoiding. The more you avoid it, the more anxious you get towards it. The longer you avoid talking to strangers, the more you become

afraid of it. As this builds momentum over months or even years, the avoidance creates catastrophic levels of anxiety so intense that the idea of meeting new people seems like a death sentence. Even though, objectively, it's not a big deal at all.

According to the exposure model, the only way out, is through. To truly free yourself from your anxieties, you must expose yourself to the thing you fear. If you're afraid of heights, you must intentionally trigger that anxiety by putting yourself in a high place. If you're afraid of public speaking, you must give speeches to truly overcome that fear. If you're afraid of asking your crush on a date, that anxiety isn't going to go away until you ask them out.

By definition, anxiety is irrational, when you face your anxieties head on, you will realize that the negative consequences you imagined were all in your head. When you give a speech, the crowd won't boo you and laugh at you, when you ask your crush out, they won't humiliate you, sure, they might reject you, but they aren't going to try to hurt you.

This book is going to address social anxiety through the lens of these three models. We will use scientifically validated methods to take a smart, step-by-step approach to overcoming your anxiety. Anxiety can feel like an unconquerable enemy that causes you endless and unnecessary suffering, but anxiety can be conquered- and this process starts today.

Internet Use and Social Anxiety

The recent trend of increasing rates of social anxiety correlates with our increasing technological access. At first glance, this may seem arbitrary, what could smartphone use and high-speed internet have to do with our state of being?

The problem isn't that there's anything intrinsically bad about internet use, but that internet use can become addictive. In fact, internet use disorder has already been [proposed](#) to become legitimate condition by the scientific community. Internet use can cause the brain to activate in ways that are frighteningly similar to that of drug usage⁴. When people with internet use disorder use the internet, areas of their brain that are associated with addiction activate.

Internet use releases reward chemicals in the brain, Facebook likes release dopamine just like a slot-machines and cocaine do. The internet causes strong releases of dopamine for a similar reason to gambling- the rewards are variant. This means that the rewards cannot be known in advance, when you gamble, it is impossible to predict the outcome. When you look at your email, you are not sure if you will find something exciting, the same is true whenever you receive a notification for a text, or when you

look at your Facebook page. You might have new likes on your Facebook post from earlier, and this possibility is exciting, the uncertain possibility that the internet will lead to rewarding events like this is what makes it so addictive.

You might be thinking, so what? Even if I am addicted to the internet, this doesn't have anything to do with social anxiety. It actually does, because addictive behaviors are also coping behaviors, they allow you to numb yourself from your stress, they are a form of escapism. When you look at your smartphone, you can get away from your real-world problems for a moment, but avoiding your real-world stress doesn't get rid of it.

Unfortunately, you have constant access to coping with your stress via smartphone. Social anxiety isn't caused by internet addiction, but it is perpetuated by it⁵. Our constant access to the internet allows us to avoid dealing with our emotions, whenever we feel uncomfortable, we pull out our phone and use it to numb ourselves from that discomfort. This habit of avoiding our stress and anxiety makes our anxiety worse: instead of coping with our anxiety naturally, we always have a magic pill in our pocket that provides us with an escape.

If you were anxious to meet new people in your high school 20 years ago, social interaction would have been difficult to avoid, because you

didn't have a device in your pocket that could take up your attention. You would have been more likely to face your fear, because you didn't have an easily accessible copout. Today, we have much less incentive to put ourselves in socially uncomfortable situations, because we can avoid this and take up our attention with our phone.

Feeling uncomfortable is totally natural, these feelings are your body's way of telling you that you need to take a certain action. Stress and anxiety point to true north. If you feel anxious about talking to a cute girl, for example, it means that you really want to meet her. These uncomfortable feelings are calls to action, and they're vastly helpful, but because these feelings are uncomfortable, it is easy to avoid them. Smartphones have created the ultimate coping mechanism, because we constantly have access, and we can consistently avoid any uncomfortable feelings, and therefore avoid taking the necessary actions to dispelling those feelings.

Avoidance doesn't release negative emotions, it simply numbs them for a moment, the feeling is still there, it just gets buried and is allowed to fester and worsen on its own. Smartphones have created a culture of avoidance, we have learned to rely on these devices to keep us constantly distracted, but distraction from problems doesn't mean elimination of problems.

Anxiety Serves a Purpose

It may be difficult to admit this, but your social anxiety is serving you in some way. It may seem paradoxical, but social anxiety provides you with a perceived relief from certain forms of pain. Realizing that social anxiety has benefits is essential to building the necessary awareness to make real change. It's very easy to think in binary terms, anxiety is bad, stress is bad, happiness is good. But it's not that simple, anxiety certainly causes more pain than it prevents, but it isn't pain for its own sake, it's pain that is serving a purpose. It's up to you decide if the costs of social anxiety outweigh the benefits.

The Benefits of Social Anxiety

Social anxiety acts as a shield from rejection by causing you to avoid putting yourself out there in social situations. If you don't ask your crush out, they can't reject you. If you don't try to befriend someone you think is intriguing, you don't risk getting the cold shoulder. Anxiety protects you

from taking social risks, and therefore protects you from experiencing the pain of rejection (sometimes).

Of course, social anxiety also prevents you from connecting with other people, if you aren't vulnerable enough to get rejected, you also can't get accepted. This means you will be cutting yourself off from many valuable relationships with other people.

Beyond that, the energy it takes to constantly monitor yourself and prevent yourself from taking risks, causes far more emotional pain than rejection ever could. It's a constant discomfort, whereas when you're rejected you get closure, you don't have to think about 'what if' anymore, and so the pain can be released. Like Kurt Vonnegut said, "Of all the words of mice and men, the saddest are, it might have been."

Victimhood:

Social anxiety allows you to play the role of the victim. This may be hard to admit, but accepting this is very freeing. When you have social anxiety, it's not **your fault** that your social life sucks, it's the social anxiety's fault. The condition takes on a life of its own, and becomes an excuse to live a limited life. When we experience social anxiety, we're able to feel sorry for ourselves, the pain of the anxiety is so substantial that we

feel it gives us a license to prevent ourselves from being vulnerable and really connecting with other people.

“I would go to the party, but I have social anxiety, I won’t have any fun there.” This is a true self-fulfilling prophecy, and it’s brilliant because the rationalization is disguised in what looks like good logic. If you have social anxiety, you probably won’t have fun at the party, because you won’t interact with people in a fun way. But you could, the only reason you won’t is because you have social anxiety as an excuse not to interact with people in a fun way. A bit of a mindfuck, I know. Social anxiety allows you to tell yourself a story in which you are the victim. Social anxiety is an ‘enemy’ that has power over you, and because it has power over you, you have good reason to avoid doing anything someone with social anxiety wouldn’t do.

Of course, this is all a brilliant illusion (people with anxiety do tend to be highly intelligent), a mental prison that exists only as long as you allow it to. To break out of the mental prison, you must first accept that your social anxiety isn’t an enemy, and it isn’t an excuse, it’s a pattern of thinking and emotions that you can overcome through changing your thoughts and actions (stay tuned for the step-by-step how to).

Does anxiety serve any other purpose? Yes, of course, here are a few more: social anxiety gives you a reason to feel special, it gives you an excuse to feel sorry for yourself, it gives you an excuse to complain, it can

justify other negative behaviors like video game addiction, and it lets you avoid the hard work of making social connections. These are just a few of the many possible functions anxiety may be serving you.

Ultimately, it's up to you to decide what purposes social anxiety serves in your life. That's exactly what the following exercise allows you to do. It's a technique psychologists use called a cost-benefit-analysis, and it allows you to get a perspective on your anxiety from a more logical perspective than would normally be possible. You will have the opportunity to admit to yourself that your social anxiety is serving you in some ways, and through that acknowledgment you can make a conscious decision as to whether the social anxiety is worth keeping in your life.

Cost benefit analysis

You can use the above section for some guidance if you have trouble thinking of what the benefits of social anxiety are for you. The first step is to make a list of all the benefits of social anxiety. What is it allowing you to feel (or not feel) and do (or not do), that gives you some kind of benefit? List at minimum, three benefits that your social anxiety is giving you.

Once you have completed your list of benefits, start a list of costs. What pain is social anxiety causing you? What is social anxiety preventing you from experiencing? What opportunities do you miss every day because of your social anxiety? Again, list at minimum, three costs to social anxiety.

Next, give each the costs and benefits a total weight, adding up to a hundred. If the costs are weighed at 70, the benefits would be weighed at 30. This allows you to get some clarification as to whether the costs of your social anxiety are worth keeping or not.

For further guidance, you can take a look at this example of a cost-benefit-analysis for social anxiety.

Example:

Benefits of my social anxiety:

1. It prevents me from getting rejected. I use social anxiety as an excuse to stay quiet and avoid social risks, as a result, I avoid the potential for social rejection.
2. It allows me to feel like my bad social life isn't my fault. By using my anxiety as an excuse, I avoid taking responsibility for my social life.
3. Social anxiety gives me an excuse to rely on alcohol in social situations. I know drinking is a really bad habit, but because I don't feel comfortable unless I drink, I regularly binge drink in social

situations. If I were to take responsibility for my social life, I wouldn't have an excuse to numb myself through drinking.

Weight. 20.

Costs of social anxiety:

1. I feel like I'm a prisoner in my own mind. I don't say a lot of the things I want to say or start the conversations I want to start because I'm afraid of some imagined consequences. I feel like I'm constantly at war with myself, and I don't feel good in my own skin because of this.
2. Social anxiety gives me an excuse to spend my time at home alone playing online video games instead of actually engaging with other people. I'm addicted to these games now and I don't even enjoy them much.
3. I'm eighteen and I've never had a girlfriend, social anxiety has been my excuse to avoid facing rejection from a girl I like.

Weight: 80.

If the weight of the benefits for social anxiety come out as more significant than the costs of social anxiety, maybe you should stop reading here because your anxiety is helping you. Maybe, though, you should re-

evaluate the weights, because if the social anxiety wasn't incredibly painful, you probably wouldn't be reading a book about how to overcome it.

In the following section, you are going to be given a series of challenges based on a therapeutic technique called gradual exposure. Exposure therapy is based on the idea that the only way out, is through. You can't tiptoe around your anxieties and expect to truly overcome them, if you're afraid of spiders, holding a tarantula in your hand is the best route to overcome your fear.

Exposure therapy is by definition difficult, however, the pain of going through your fear lasts only for a few moments, whereas the pain of living in reaction to that fear is constant and debilitating. Once you've faced your fears, they're not so bad, but if you don't face them, they are always impacting you.

Exposing yourself to your fears can seem impossible, and that's why we're going to do so gradually, your first challenge won't be to face your greatest fears, it will be a step in that direction. Each step in the right direction is difficult, but manageable. I've tried rapid exposure on myself multiple times and I've attempted to use it on clients of mine, but I haven't found it to be as effective as gradual exposure in most cases. Besides, exposure isn't so simple that once you've exposed yourself to your anxiety

once, it vanishes completely and forever. It's a process of leaving your comfort zone consistently until you make a lasting change.

The series of challenges in the next section will require you to leave your comfort zone so that you can disprove your social anxiety. You will do things that seem like they may get you judged, that seem like they will have substantial consequences. But, as you do these challenges, it will become clear that those consequences were an illusion.

Exposure alone isn't enough. Anxiety is self-reinforcing, and it is possible to see what happens when you face your fears as further evidence that you should feel anxious. To ensure this doesn't happen we are going to use proven journaling techniques to take an objective lens towards what happens during these challenges. In your journal, you will be forced to root out the irrational thinking causing your anxieties, as you write this journal, you will see that your fears are in fact, quite absurd. You won't be able to escape the fact that your anxiety is not logical, and this awareness will allow you to let go of it.

The Journal

After each of the following challenges, you will be asked to write a journal entry in which you root out anxious and negative thinking. You will be asked to identify any negative thoughts that went through your mind while you were engaging in the challenge. Then, you will identify why those thoughts are irrational. Once you know why the thoughts are, in fact, irrational, your awareness of this allows you to let go of them.

There are eleven cognitive distortions which can color your thinking when you are experiencing anxiety, before each journal entry, you will be provided a list of these distortions, however, feel free to look to this section if you can't remember what any of them mean.

1. All-or-Nothing Thinking: You think that not only will she reject you, but you will always be rejected, you're not just going to fail but you are a failure. You might see yourself as extremely awkward as a person, someone else might be aware that they've had awkward moments, but you see yourself as awkward in a black-and-white way. So of course, you shouldn't talk to her, you're awkward, and therefore, no matter what, so will your conversation with her be.

2. Overgeneralization: You think that because your crush rejected you once, that you will always be rejected. You think that because when you tried to assert yourself your parents yelled at you, you can never assert yourself

without this backlash. You don't take into account that each situation is different, each person is different, and that you will act differently at different times.

3. Mental Filter: You have a negative assumption that colors everything negatively. You think that someone might be mean to you, and all your thoughts turn to the possible ways in which they might be mean to you instead of being aware of the many different possibilities.

4. Discounting the Positive: You don't see the positive possibilities, perhaps you will have a good conversation, perhaps you will get that promotion if you ask for, but you ignore these possibilities and fixate on the negative alternatives.

5. Fortune-telling: You imagine a negative future. You think as if something negative is bound to happen, as if you are a fortune-teller, but your fears aren't based on facts.

6. Mind-Reading: You might think that when you make a joke everyone will laugh at you and humiliate you for your pathetic attempt, you're thinking as if you can tell what people are thinking, but you can't.

6. Emotional reasoning: You feel anxious, so you rationalize that something bad must be about to happen. Instead of thinking about the possible outcomes in a logical manner, your emotions cause you to draw unrealistic conclusions.

7. Magnification and Minimization: You make mountains out of molehills, you think there are severe consequences that don't really exist. If your crush rejects you, you might think she will slap you, or will laugh at you and you will be made into a social pariah, but of course, this never happens. You can also minimize your positive qualities, and convince yourself they don't really exist.

8. Should statements: You add momentum to your anxiety by telling yourself you 'shouldn't feel anxious. You are telling yourself that your negative emotions are wrong, and by labeling them as wrong, you are making them more powerful than they objectively are.

9. Labeling: This is extreme overgeneralization, if you were laughed at once for an embarrassing moment, you don't see it as an embarrassing moment, you see it as proof that you are an awkward person in general. If you gave a bad presentation in school you don't see it as a bad presentation, you see yourself as a bad presenter.

10. Blame: You can blame yourself or blame others. When you blame yourself, you beat yourself up over a little mistake and blow it way out of proportion giving it a lot of emotional power. When you blame others, you take the responsibility off of yourself, "My parents let me play video games all day instead of socializing with other people, it's their fault." Or, "Ever since I tried weed I've been different, now I can't feel comfortable around

other people.” Blame lets you feel like a victim, and to catastrophize your problems, thereby freeing you of responsibility.

Challenge One

A Day Without Screens

The challenge:

Go for an entire day without using your smartphone, internet, or television.

Explanation:

This challenge will show you in a visceral way how dependent you’ve become on your smartphone for coping with daily stress. You can expect that this challenge will be quite uncomfortable. To succeed, you will probably need to put your smartphone out of your eyesight, if you have easy access to your smartphone, your automatic response can easily take over. The fact that this will be so challenging is indicative of the fact that we are addicted to technology, and that we’ve become reliant on it.

Your day without technology may be disproportionately stressful, and it would be easy to think this is because internet use is a good coping mechanism. But it’s almost the opposite. When you take away a source of

an addiction, you create a large amount of stress because when you become addicted to something, you become dependent on it to relieve your stress. Once something is an addiction, this reliance on that addiction for stress-relief prevents you from coping with the stress in a healthy way. Addiction based coping doesn't eliminate the source of the stress, it simply numbs you to it for a time; the underlying stress is still there, and the more you cope with it using your addiction, the worse that underlying stress becomes and the more you rely on your addiction to cope with it.

This symbiotic relationship becomes more and more unhealthy over time. The majority of Americans, especially younger generations, have become dependent on their smartphones as a coping mechanism. The average American spends over [10 hours engaging with electronic media per day](#). The majority of our waking hours are spent in front of a screen, we have such constant access to electronic media (tv, smartphones, computers), that we're never forced to deal with negative emotions or stress in any way other than via numbing them out with electronic media.

As you go through your day without electronic media, notice how you feel. And notice how you feel when you get an urge to use your smartphone or your computer. You may find that whenever you feel uncomfortable, you get an urge to cope with that discomfort through technology. If this is the case, it's a good sign that reducing your internet

use would be a good first step to reducing not only your social anxiety but your anxiety and stress in general.

If you limit your access to your smartphone, you won't be able to so easily avoid social interaction, taking away this unhealthy coping option will make the option of actually interacting with people that much more appealing even when you feel anxious.

If you find that going without electronic media for a day is difficult, it indicates that you may gain a lot of value by going on an electronic media diet. At the very least, this would mean turning off notifications for texts, Facebook messages, etc. At most, this would mean leaving your smartphone at home through the day, and if you really need to keep in touch with people throughout the day, you could buy a phone that doesn't have full internet access.

These steps may seem extreme, and they may be difficult, but the long-term benefits are worth it. Constant access to screens allows you to be anywhere but where you actually are, constantly avoiding reality makes reality more stressful, and this makes it more difficult to appreciate the little things in life. By limiting your access to electronic media, you may find yourself noticing good things in the world that you were previously blind to. Henry Miller put it well when he said, "The moment one gives close attention to anything, even a blade of grass it becomes a mysterious,

awesome, indescribably magnificent world in itself.” It’s difficult to notice the wonders of the world in front of us when we are constantly distracting ourselves with the noise of technology.

Next, I will show you a short example of a journal entry for this challenge. This entry is based on my actual experience with these challenges, and highlights one anxious thought, and all the cognitive distortions that the thought is affected by. In your own journal, do not limit yourself to only one anxious thought, write out all that you can think about. I only provide one example because if I provided several it would be easy to simply copy my examples instead of figuring out what irrational thoughts were causing your anxiety during each challenge.

Example journal entry 1:

- 1 . All-or-Nothing Thinking.
2. Overgeneralization
3. Mental Filter.
4. Discounting the Positive.
5. Mind-reading.
6. Fortune-Telling.
7. Magnification and Minimization.
8. Emotional reasoning
9. Should statements
10. Labeling.
11. Blame.

Anxious thoughts:

1. I need to look at my smartphone otherwise my anxiety will be unbearable.

Cognitive distortions:

This was definitely overgeneralizing by telling myself that my smartphone was the ultimate solution to all my stress.

This was also discounting the positive that I could spend more time interacting with other people and enjoy the world around me by not being on my smartphone.

This was fortune telling because I was predicting a negative future.

I was also, of course, magnifying the severity of my stress as if it were a life-or-death experience.

Challenge Two

Let's go to the mall!

The challenge:

Walk around the mall by yourself (preferably during busy hours) for at least 30 minutes.

Explanation:

This might seem too easy to be a challenge. However, you may be surprised and find that it is actually fairly uncomfortable to go to an area with a large amount of people on your own. Even if it does turn out to be fairly easy, you can use this challenge as an opportunity to become more aware of your inner dialogue. Also, remember, that challenging yourself too much too quickly can backfire. Psychologist Roy Baumeister said that one of the biggest reasons for the self-control problem is overconfidence in one's willpower. This challenge is a step towards facing your social anxiety, without being an insurmountable challenge.

As you walk around the mall, pay attention to any anxious thoughts that go through your head, you might be surprised and find that many very negative thoughts are running through your head-on autopilot. This is good, because as we learned, anxious thoughts create anxious feelings, by becoming aware of anxious thoughts, you can let go of them and change them. As you do this, your anxious feelings will dissipate as well.

Example journal entry 2:

1. All-or-Nothing Thinking.
2. Overgeneralization
3. Mental Filter.
4. Discounting the Positive.
5. Mind-reading.
6. Fortune-Telling.
7. Magnification and Minimization.
8. Emotional reasoning
9. Should statements
10. Labeling.
11. Blame.

Anxious thoughts:

1. People will think I'm really weird for walking around the mall by myself.

Cognitive Distortions:

This thought is mind reading because I'm acting as if I can psychically know what other people are thinking, when of course, I can't.

This is discounting the positive, because who knows, people might think I look like an interesting person to meet. This thought is definitely magnifying, people don't really think about someone walking by that much, if at all.

I'm also labeling myself as weird for walking around the mall, as opposed to labeling it as an unusual thing to do.

I'm implying that I shouldn't walk around the mall because people will judge me for it.

Challenge Three

Eye Contact

The challenge:

Go to a public place and make eye contact with a total of 5 strangers until they look away.

Explanation:

You can do this challenge at a bar, a busy street, the mall, your college campus, or even a busy store. Making eye contact can feel uncomfortable, on the one hand because we are afraid of being judged, and on the other hand because we are afraid that it's too invasive, that people

don't like being looked at. Being overly considerate is one of the major causes of social anxiety, and learning that activities like making eye contact aren't offensive is an important step towards overcoming it.

When you look at someone, give them a few seconds to return eye contact, and if they don't, look away (the point isn't to just stare at people). If they do return eye contact, look at them with a slight smile until they look away. Once they look away, you can look away as well.

This may be challenging, and it may take some time, remember that the more difficult this challenge is, the more that you have to gain from it, if it were totally easy, it wouldn't have much value. You are learning to expose yourself to your social anxiety to prove to yourself that your fears are irrational.

Example journal entry 3:

1. All-or-Nothing Thinking.
2. Overgeneralization
3. Mental Filter.
4. Discounting the Positive.
5. Mind-reading.
6. Fortune-Telling.
7. Magnification and Minimization.
8. Emotional reasoning
9. Should statements
10. Labeling.
11. Blame.

Anxious thoughts:

1. I looked at a man walking by and saw a mean look on his face, I was afraid that he was going to walk towards me and yell at me for being a creep.

Cognitive Distortions:

This thought is definitely all or nothing, maybe he was a bit upset, but he wasn't going to walk up to me and accost me.

I was also discounting the positive that I had pushed myself and accomplished the challenge. I was jumping to the conclusion that he was thinking a certain way or going to act a certain way even though there was no evidence based on reality.

I was definitely magnifying the situation, telling myself something humiliating was going to happen, when it really wasn't (and didn't).

I was using emotional reasoning, I convinced myself that because I felt anxious, it must have meant something bad was really going to happen.

Challenge Four

Busy Sidewalk

The challenge:

Go to a public place with a lot of foot traffic, and lie on the ground for 1 minute.

Explanation:

When you have social anxiety, you filter out certain actions as inappropriate or weird. Disagreeing with someone becomes incredibly difficult because it feels like the tension this creates is an emotion that must be avoided. In many cases, when you have social anxiety, you also have a strong desire to fit in, and to avoid doing anything unusual that might get you judged. So, you filter your words and your actions, constantly telling yourself what you can and can't say. A bit of a filter is useful, there are some things you shouldn't say or do. But our filters tend to be far more extensive than is necessary, and we filter out saying things that show our unique personality, we avoid saying anything that we think might get us judged as weird.

This challenge forces you to do something weird on purpose, to do something that goes against the status quo, and it shows that doing something different isn't going to get you judged or humiliated. In fact, people won't care much at all, and if they do, they will only want to help you. This is what my student Andrew found when he did this challenge, he was shocked that not only did no one make fun of him, but that someone walked up to him to make sure he was okay (that he hadn't passed out or something).

We learn through years of social conditioning how to fit in. But it's the parts of our personality that are different, that are weird, that make us who we are. Genuine self-expression requires that you get comfortable with being a little strange, that you let go of the voice in your head, what best-selling author Jamie Weal calls your inner Woody Allen. This exercise will show you that the consequences you think you will face for being strange are actually all in your head, they're not based on anything external.

Example journal entry 4:

- 1 . All-or-Nothing Thinking.
2. Overgeneralization
3. Mental Filter.
4. Discounting the Positive.
5. Mind-reading.
6. Fortune-Telling.

7. Magnification and Minimization.

8. Emotional reasoning

9. Should statements

10. Labeling.

11. Blame.

Anxious thoughts:

1. I thought that as I lay on the sidewalk, people would laugh at me and form a crowd. I even thought that security would be called to escort me out of the mall.

Cognitive distortions:

I was fortune-telling that terrible things would happen even though I had no evidence for these fears.

I was mind-reading by telling myself that I knew what people were thinking, I don't think they were actually thinking about me much at all.

I was magnifying the seriousness of the situation, thinking that it would stir an uproar.

I was using emotional reasoning, because I felt uncomfortable, I assumed other people would feel what I was doing was really weird or inappropriate.

Challenge Five

Ask strangers for directions

The challenge:

Approach 3 strangers and ask them for directions to a nearby location (like good food nearby).

Explanation:

A certain level of anxiety towards meeting strangers is actually perfectly natural. Our brains evolved over a period of hundreds of thousands of years in dangerous environments. Our ancestors lived in small tribes of 50-150 people, and if they someone new, someone who wasn't from their tribe, this could represent mortal danger. Anyone foreign could be an enemy, they could be from a warring tribe. Our ancestors who indiscriminately approached strangers would not pass on their genes because they would meet an untimely fate at the hands of some dangerous member of another tribe.

Your brain evolved to be fearful of strangers, because in the environment your brain evolved, strangers were very dangerous. However,

this fear is no longer relevant, and by avoiding talking to strangers, this fear will only become more and more blown out of proportion over time.

Fortunately, although your brain naturally fears strangers, it can also be trained to realize that strangers are in fact, not threatening at all. By meeting new people, you will prove to your brain that strangers are not only harmless, but usually friendly.

I remember when my social anxiety was at its worst, I assumed people would treat me meanly, that people wouldn't want to meet me, and that if I introduced myself to a stranger they would give me a disgusted look before walking away in a huff. As I forced myself to face my fears and meet new people, I learned that these thoughts were completely irrational. As I met more and more people, it became clear that not only were people not mean, but they were generally kind and friendly.

Doing this challenge the worst that might happen is someone could say, "Why don't you just look at your smartphone for directions?" If this happens, you can say, "Good point", or, "I didn't bring my smartphone with me."

Ask the person you approach something like, "Hey, sorry to interrupt, but do you know anywhere with good food to eat nearby?" They may say they can't think of anything or they may direct you to a particular location,

either way, you're proving that any catastrophizing negative thoughts you may have about strangers are irrational.

Example journal entry 5:

- 1 . All-or-Nothing Thinking.
2. Overgeneralization
3. Mental Filter.
4. Discounting the Positive.
5. Mind-reading.
6. Fortune-Telling.
7. Magnification and Minimization.
8. Emotional reasoning
9. Should statements
10. Labeling.
11. Blame.

Anxious thoughts:

I thought that the stranger I approached would think I was hitting on them and that they would be offended. I thought that they might accuse me of being weird or give me a look of disgust.

Cognitive Distortions:

This thought was definitely discounting the positive, the girl might have been pleased to meet me.

I was mind-reading by telling myself she was thinking variety of negative thoughts.

I was fortune telling by predicting a negative outcome not based on evidence, but based anxious thinking.

I was almost certainly magnifying the issue, people don't act nearly as dramatically as I was imagining over something so mundane as asking for directions.

I was reasoning through emotion, my negative emotions made me think that something really negative was bound to happen.

Challenge Six

Make Small-talk with Strangers

The challenge:

Make small talk with three strangers, each conversation must last at least 2 minutes to count.

Explanation:

When asking a stranger for directions, you have an excuse to be talking to them. This makes it a bit less nerve-wracking and vulnerable. For

this challenge, you must strike up a conversation without an excuse, as a result, this will be more difficult.

To start the conversation, walk up to a stranger in a public place and say, “Hi, I’m (your name), nice to meet you.” From there, your challenge is simply to stay in a conversation for two minutes. This may feel like an insurmountable challenge, but after you’ve done it a few times, you’ll realize it’s actually quite easy and even natural.

After you’ve introduced yourself, the person will most likely do the same, you can use the following questions to strike up a conversation:

1. Are you from here?
2. What do you do?
3. How is your day going?

These questions may seem like relatively boring interview-style questions, and you’d be right. But these questions are useful because they’re easy to remember, normal, and can easily lead to a longer conversation. These questions aren’t the ‘perfect’ thing to say, but there’s nothing wrong with meeting a stranger and striking up a conversation by asking a few questions about them.

If you haven’t done this before, it might feel like a really awkward thing to do, it might feel like you will be judged or people won’t want

anything to do with you. Once you complete this challenge, you will find that your expectations are at the very least exaggerated if not entirely wrong. Doing this will disprove more of your anxious thinking, and therefore, free you from more social anxiety.

Example journal entry 6:

1. All-or-Nothing Thinking.
2. Overgeneralization
3. Mental Filter.
4. Discounting the Positive.
5. Mind-reading.
6. Fortune-Telling.
7. Magnification and Minimization.
8. Emotional reasoning
9. Should statements
10. Labeling.
11. Blame.

Anxious thoughts:

1. I thought that the person I was approaching would think I was a weirdo and judge me for trying to introduce myself. I thought this would create a scene and that I would get laughed at by passing strangers.

Cognitive Distortions:

I was discounting the positive by assuming that the person I talked to would definitely be upset with a stranger approaching them, instead of considering the possibility that it might actually brighten their day.

I was mind-reading by assuming that this person would think negatively of me for approaching them. I was fortune-telling by imagining I knew what was going to happen as a result of my approach.

I vastly magnified the negative consequences by imagining a horrifying scene playing out.

I was reasoning using emotion, I imagined that my feelings must actually mean something bad was happening, even though I had no logical evidence.

Challenge Seven

Dance in public

The challenge:

Go into a crowded public place and dance for at least three minutes consecutively.

Explanation:

This challenge serves a similar purpose to the earlier challenge in which you laid down on a public sidewalk. You are doing something that goes against social conventions, and by doing so you will trigger social anxiety because you will expect to get judged for being so strange.

You may be surprised to find that people don't judge you, that for the most part they will ignore you, and that if anyone does notice you, they're more likely to cheer you on than to look down at you. Dancing in public is strange, but there's nothing offensive or wrong about it, and any anxiety this gives you is totally irrational.

Dance however you like, just keep in mind that you will get out of this exercise as much as you put into it. If you half-heartedly bob your head up and down, don't expect to get much from this exercise, however, if you push yourself to dance with total enthusiasm, you will really expand your comfort zone, and force yourself to realize that your fear of being judged and humiliated is nonsensical.

For this challenge, consider making it a daily habit, you can dance around your neighborhood, or even dance on the way to work or school. Getting comfortable with being weird is very liberating, and forces you to

let go of your self-image and let go of caring so much about what people think of you.

Example journal entry 7:

1. All-or-Nothing Thinking.
2. Overgeneralization.
3. Mental Filter.
4. Discounting the Positive.
5. Mind-reading.
6. Fortune-Telling.
7. Magnification and Minimization.
8. Emotional reasoning
9. Should statements
10. Labeling.
11. Blame.

Anxious thoughts:

1. While I walked around hesitating to start dancing, I imagined that mall security would surely escort me off the premises. I imagined that if I danced in public, people would look at me with disgust and that my reputation would be ruined, I imagined this news getting back to my friends and becoming a social pariah because of this.

Distorted thinking:

This thinking was all-or-nothing, I imagined that if people thought my dancing was weird, that it would become so catastrophic that it would permanently ruin my reputation.

I was discounting the positive, maybe people would have found my dancing entertaining, maybe it would have been a positive funny memory for them.

I was mind reading again by telling myself that I knew how people would react to my dancing. I was fortune telling by creating a whole scenario that would play out in which my future would be ruined.

I was greatly magnifying the consequences to dancing in public, imagining it would ruin my entire life.

I was thinking emotionally, I imagined negative consequences because I felt bad, but I had no way to know what would really happen.

Challenge Eight

Rejection Training

The challenge:

Ask three members of the opposite sex out on a date.

Explanation:

People with social anxiety tend to have insecurities in intimate relationships. Dating requires a high level of emotional vulnerability, and you must be able to take risks. Even if you are currently in an intimate relationship, this challenge will be useful because you will face your fear of rejection (if you're worried about what your partner might think, ask them if it's okay to do this beforehand).

The challenge is to directly ask a stranger you meet in public out on a date, you're not to strike up a conversation beforehand, just directly ask someone on a date. The goal isn't to get a yes, it's actually to get rejected.

Why? Because you will prove to yourself that rejection isn't a big deal, it doesn't have to mean anything, and being rejected certainly isn't the end of the world. This challenge will make you realize that although rejection is uncomfortable, it's not a horrible thing that needs to be avoided at all costs. The rejection might hurt for a moment, but not nearly as much as you expect it to.

To accomplish this challenge, go to a public place like a mall again, approach a stranger, and say the following, "Hi, I saw you walking by and thought you were attractive. Would you like to go on a date with me?" You

can say this with different phrasing if you like; the key component is that you must explicitly ask them for a date.

Most people will say no, and then continue on with their day as if nothing happened. When my student, [Andrew took this challenge](#), multiple girls he asked actually told him that he had made their day, and that they were flattered. Others said they had a boyfriend, and one said they weren't interested. He was very anxious to ask, but he found that his fears were made up in his mind, and he realized he could let go of his fear of rejection.

Of course, you never know, someone might say yes, but the point of this exercise isn't to get a date (if you want more guidance to improve your dating life, read ([Master the Game: A Practical Guide to an Abundant Dating life](#)), it's to overcome your fear of awkward situations and rejection, which is a major component of social anxiety.

Example Journal Entry 8:

1. All-or-Nothing Thinking.
2. Overgeneralization.
3. Mental Filter.
4. Discounting the Positive.
5. Mind-reading.
6. Fortune-Telling.
7. Magnification and Minimization.
8. Emotional reasoning
9. Should statements
10. Labeling.
11. Blame.

Anxious thoughts:

1. Before I approached the first girl, I thought that she would yell at me, and that her boyfriend would walk over and kick my ass.

Distorted thinking:

This was all-or-nothing thinking because I imagined that if the girl didn't say yes, she would reject me completely and harshly.

I was discounting the positive, she might have been flattered that I asked her out, and she might have even said yes (although she didn't haha).

I was mind-reading by imagining I knew she would perceive my approach as offensive and unwarranted.

I was fortune-telling by imagining a whole scene playing out in which I was humiliated.

I was, as usual, magnifying the risk I was taking, convincing myself that I might experience horrible consequences.

I was reasoning that something horrible would happen, but this was based on my negative emotions, as opposed to being based on logical evidence.

Challenge Nine

Tell someone how you feel

The challenge:

Express feelings that you've been holding in towards someone you care about.

Explanation:

The possibilities with this challenge are limitless, the key is that you must be emotionally vulnerable with someone you care about and with thoughts that you've been holding in. If you never told your high school crush how you felt, tell them. If you feel like your father has been pushing you towards a career that you don't want to do, tell them. If you have always envied a particular friend of yours, but never expressed this, tell them.

If you have trouble with this challenge, you can do it via the internet (Facebook, email, etc). This is difficult, but it's important. We learn to be afraid of being vulnerable, we learn to think that we will be judged or even abandoned by the person we are vulnerable with. This almost never

happens, and in fact, in most cases, this kind of vulnerability brings people closer together.

It's hard to be this real, but every time you take this leap, your ego will be a bit more diminished, and you will find yourself expending a bit less energy trying to make people think of you in a certain way.

Your crush might tell you that they just see you as a friend and your father might argue with you telling you they know what's best, but by expressing how you feel, you will let go of the emotional tension that has built up because you had bottled up your emotions, and you will build your courage and ability to express yourself honestly, even in the face of negative emotions.

Example Journal 9:

1. All-or-Nothing Thinking.
2. Overgeneralization.
3. Mental Filter.
4. Discounting the Positive.
5. Mind-reading.
6. Fortune-Telling.
7. Magnification and Minimization.
8. Emotional reasoning
9. Should statements
10. Labeling.
11. Blame.

Anxious thoughts:

1. I decided to tell my crush how I felt, I imagined losing her as a friend and being made fun of by my group of friends.

Cognitive distortions:

This thought was discounting the positive possibility that she might have had a crush on me as well.

I was mind reading by imagining I knew that she would be offended by my vulnerable statement.

I was fortune-telling by imagining an entire catastrophic story about what would have happened.

I was magnifying the risks by convincing myself this was a huge deal.

I was reasoning based on my negative emotions, I had no way to know what would happen.

Vigilance

After completing this book's challenges, you can expect to feel diminished levels of social anxiety, and a degree of freedom that you probably haven't experienced since you were a child. However, don't expect your social anxiety to vanish completely or to vanish forever. Conquering social anxiety takes vigilance, it's a continuous process. Challenge yourself every day, and you will change so much that your shy, anxious past will seem strange and foreign.

If any of the challenges from this book were particularly challenging, or were particularly beneficial, repeat that challenge for seven days in a row to get the most value possible from it. Doing a challenge once can help you to make progress, but doing it multiple times in a row will cause the emotional lessons to really sink in and lead to much deeper change.

Feel free to come up with your own challenge, if there is anything you've wanted to do, but it makes you anxious: do it. Maybe you've wanted to try standup comedy, maybe you have wanted to share a work of art you made on your social media accounts. Whatever you've been procrastinating on, do it now. Use the momentum you've built from taking on this book's challenges as motivation to push yourself even further.

At this point, you've proven to yourself that your anxious thoughts and emotions can be disproven, and can be overcome. Now that you know this, social anxiety, or any anxiety, is no longer an excuse to get in your own

way. You've shown yourself that the mental prison that was holding you back and preventing you from truly experiencing life, was an illusion. And from now on you can face your fears with courage because you know that the consequences of doing so are insubstantial compared to the consequences of letting your anxiety determine your actions.

For more science-based self-development content (and pre-release free-access to future products): subscribe to the blog at:

<https://tpsychnation.com/>

For videos that will explain how to face your fears and overcome limiting beliefs: subscribe to the Youtube channel at:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDyD-S-52EnbphdlvB8VUUQ>

If this book helped you in any way, share it with someone you care about.

Social anxiety is so common today, and causes so much unnecessary stress, but reaching out to someone who struggles with social anxiety can really make a difference.

If you leave an honest review for this book before April 20 2017, I will send you a free copy of the upcoming video product version of this book (normally \$97) upon its release (July 2017).

The video product includes hidden-camera video demonstrations of the challenges from the book.

If you want to take advantage of this temporary offer, simply send an email to me at aghayden@email.arizona.edu letting me know you left a review (you don't have to prove you left a review, and you don't need to tell me how you reviewed it). I will then send you a copy of the video product when it is released.

References:

1. “In one study, a group of researchers at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver informed a group of Parkinson’s patients that they were going to receive a drug that would significantly improve their symptoms.¹⁷ In reality, the patients received a placebo—nothing more than a saline injection. Even so, half of them who had no drug intervention, in fact, had much better motor control after receiving the injection. The researchers then scanned the patients’ brains to get a better idea of what had happened and found that the people who responded positively to the placebo were actually manufacturing dopamine in their brains—as much as 200 percent more than before. To get an equivalent effect with a drug, you’d have to administer roughly a full dose of amphetamine—a mood-elevating drug that also increases dopamine.”

Dr. Joe Dispenza. *You Are the Placebo: Making Your Mind Matter* (Kindle Locations 718-720). Hay House, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

2. “Humans and other animals express power through open, expansive postures, and they express powerlessness through closed, contractive postures. But can these postures actually cause power? The results of this study confirmed our prediction that posing in high-power nonverbal displays (as opposed to low-power nonverbal displays) would cause neuroendocrine and behavioral changes for both male and female participants: High-power posers experienced elevations in testosterone, decreases in cortisol, and increased feelings of power and tolerance for risk; low-power posers exhibited the opposite pattern. In short, posing in displays of power caused advantaged and adaptive psychological, physiological, and behavioral changes, and these findings suggest that embodiment extends beyond mere thinking and feeling, to physiology and subsequent behavioral choices. That a person can, by assuming two simple 1-min poses, embody power and instantly become more powerful has real-world, actionable implications.”

Carney, D. R., Cuddy, A. C., & Yap, A. J. (2010). Power posing: Brief nonverbal displays affect neuroendocrine levels and risk tolerance. *Psychological Science*, *21*(10), 1363-1368

3. Meditation effective for treating anxiety and depression:

<http://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/1809754>

4. “There is emerging evidence that the psychobiological mechanisms underlying behavioral addictions such as internet and videogame addiction resemble those of addiction for substances of abuse. Conclusions and Scientific Significance: Videogame playing may be supported by similar neural mechanisms underlying drug abuse. Similar to drug and alcohol abuse, internet addiction results in subsensitivity of dopamine reward mechanisms.”

Weinstein, Aviv, and Michel Lejoyeux. "New Developments On The Neurobiological And Pharmacogenetic Mechanisms Underlying Internet

And Videogame Addiction." *The American Journal On Addictions* 24.2 (2015): 117-125

5. "In this study, we verified the effects of smartphone addiction proneness of young children (ages one to six) on problematic behaviors and emotional intelligence. We investigated whether parental self-assessment of smartphone usages affects the way in which children's smartphone addiction impacts their behaviors and emotional intelligence. Smartphone addiction proneness sub-factors interfere with daily life and compulsory control through voluntary isolation and personality distortion."

Cho, Kyung-Seu, and Jae-Moo Lee. "Influence Of Smartphone Addiction Proneness Of Young Children On Problematic Behaviors And Emotional Intelligence: Mediating Self-Assessment Effects Of Parents Using Smartphones." *Computers In Human Behavior* 66.(2017): 303-311.