



Overcome Anxiety & Stress
By changing how your mind works

I believe very few health professionals know how to treat the true cause of anxiety and stress.

They may offer ways to treat the *symptoms*, but without changing how the mind works they can't effectively treat the underlying *cause*. That's because anxiety, stress and related symptoms are created and caused by the mind¹.

In this document I'll explain the real cause of anxiety and stress, and the freedom that gives you to start treating anxiety and stress at its source - whatever your current situation is.

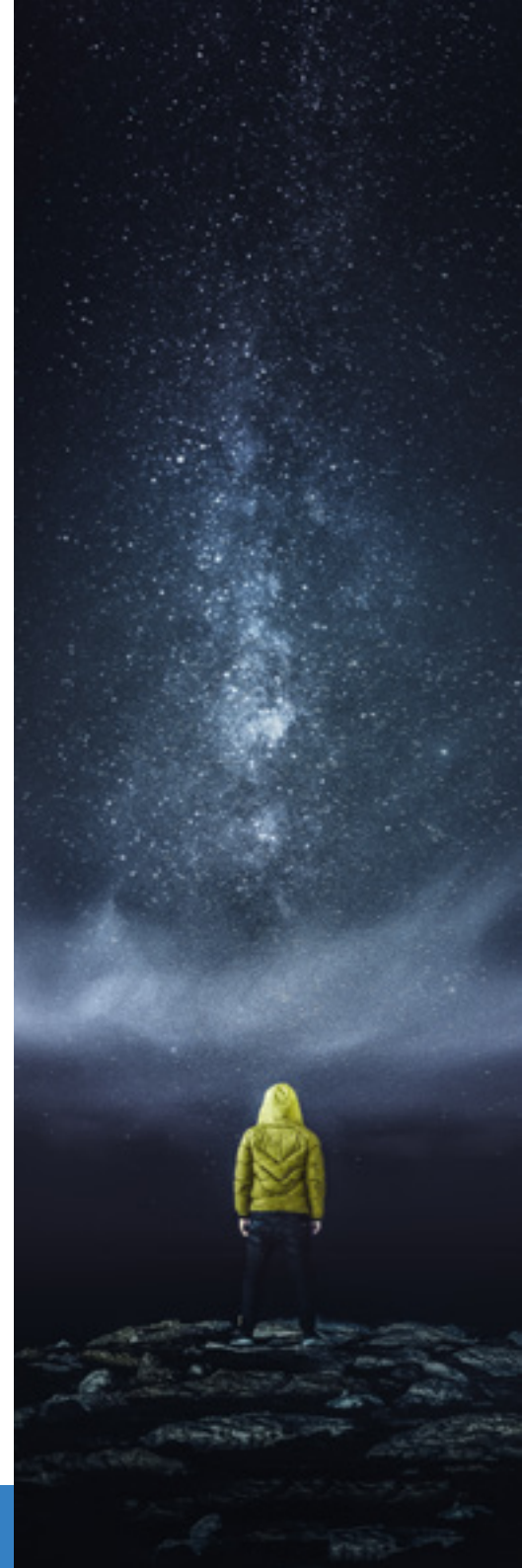
I'll show you how you can overcome anxiety and stress by changing how your mind works.

And then we'll start treatment immediately, changing your relationship with stress so that it becomes a powerful resource to help you overcome whatever challenges you're facing.

I recommend reading this document from start to finish, in the order it's written. This is the best order for learning, plus it helps you get the most out of the audio provided later (please note, the audio is not suitable if you have epilepsy).

Let's start with my own story, to show you the problems I used to experience and how I overcame them.

¹ Stress, as opposed to 'stressors', occurs within our mind and body. There is no agreed definition of stress - even amongst scientists (*The Upside of Stress* - Kelly McGonigal). Later in this document I explain how stress is caused by our mind, and not by our environment. For a full explanation of what stress and anxiety are, see my articles ["What actually is stress?"](#) and ["What actually is anxiety?"](#)



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My Story - How I overcame anxiety, and turned stress into an asset

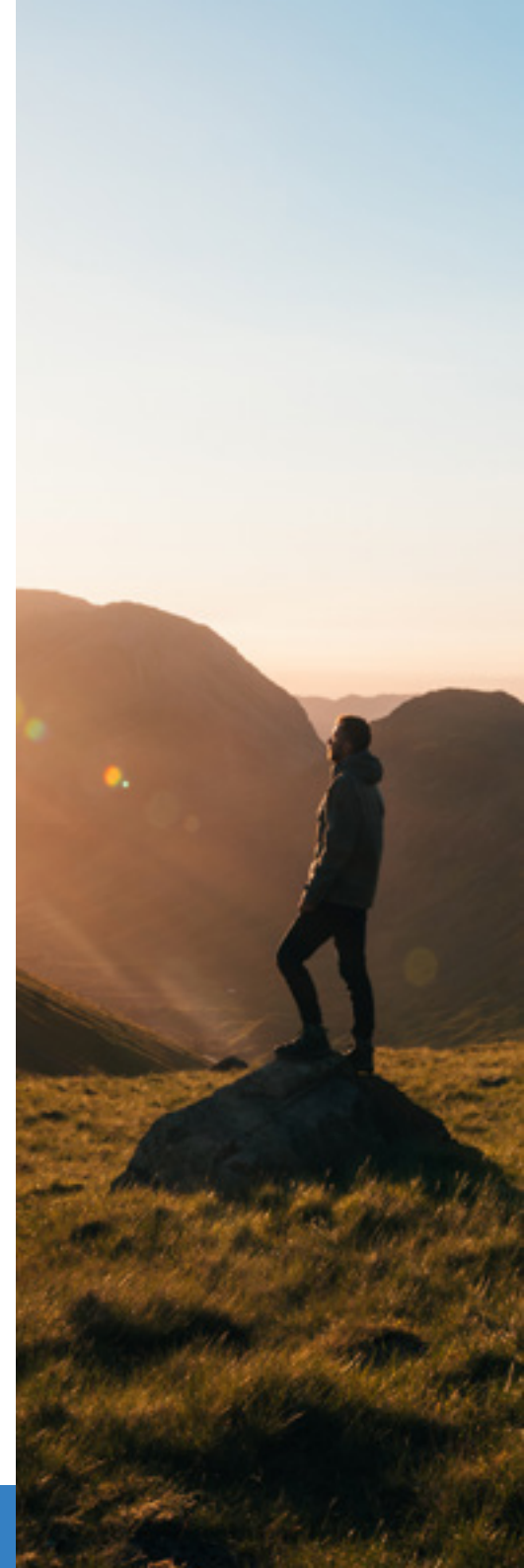
We all experience stress and anxiety differently. I experienced multiple physical health symptoms, but some others just feel 'stressed' or 'anxious'; while others experience various psychological symptoms (e.g. anxiety attacks or panic attacks); and some notice practically nothing at all. While these experiences vary widely, the underlying issue is stress and anxiety - and effective treatment will involve treating stress and anxiety itself.

I had a successful career. I felt proud of my achievements, and I knew I was very fortunate.

However, I felt restless and tense; I had physical symptoms including heart palpitations, dizziness, shortness of breath (feeling like I couldn't breathe enough air), and chronic pain in my hands that threatened my career. I also began to notice that whatever I achieved, whatever goal I chose next, looking back I wasn't fulfilled.

On a typical day I would sit at my desk, and as I was typing on my computer I would get pain in various parts of my fingers and hands. Over time that pain would extend up my forearms - sometimes an ache, sometimes with a few stinging sensations. I would try to stretch my hands, or rest them, but that wouldn't stop the pain increasing. Occasionally I'd get an ache or pain in another part of my body, too.

I would sometimes feel restless, with a strong urge to fidget, like pulling my



hair, or tapping my foot, or something like that. This would escalate at specific times, like when I thought about certain challenges I was facing, or when I wanted to relax by watching something on TV.

Throughout the day I would get pains and various sensations in my chest. I once told a doctor it felt like an “adrenaline rush” sensation in my chest sometimes. I’d also get heart palpitations - usually lasting several seconds; sometimes periodically over many minutes; and on one occasion all night. This made me worry I had a heart problem, though a cardiologist eventually scanned my heart and said I was perfectly healthy.

I’d become dizzy and light-headed at seemingly random times, even when I was just sitting down and working. I also began to experience episodes where I felt like I couldn’t breathe enough air - and when I tried to take deeper breaths of air, I’d just become even dizzy and feel like I needed even more air. (This was despite having my lungs tested in a hospital and getting a good result.)

No matter how often doctors told me I was healthy, all of this had me worrying about my health. I would imagine becoming terminally ill with various illnesses. Then I’d often get an ache, pain or sensation in my body that roughly matched that imagined illness - exacerbating my worries. For example if I worried about getting a heart attack, I’d often get more chest sensations and heart palpitations, immediately or after some time. (And God forbid, if I ever googled these symptoms it’d probably give me 5 days to live!)

I didn’t know why I had these symptoms, and many doctors and physiotherapists were unable to help.

Medication, physiotherapy, using wrist braces and ergonomic devices all failed to reduce the pain in my hands. Exercise and meditation could provide some temporary relief to the restlessness and worries but ultimately wouldn't stop my symptoms escalating.

I worried for my future health as the symptoms escalated, and I thought the chronic pain might force me out of my work.

I quit my job and travelled. I was privileged to have some fantastic experiences, but most of my physical symptoms, health concerns and inability to switch off continued; and over time I felt unfulfilled once again. When I returned to work, the chronic pain returned immediately.

Eventually, a cardiologist diagnosed me with stress and anxiety - but I couldn't believe their diagnosis because at the time I didn't consider myself as feeling 'stressed out' or 'anxious' at all. At the time, I believed I was living a fairly normal life but for some reason, my physical health was falling apart. I was very frustrated that they couldn't offer a physical explanation for my symptoms.

But I later learned that we don't need to feel stressed or anxious to have stress or anxiety. We all experience stress and anxiety differently - in my case I experienced mostly physical symptoms; some other people experience more psychological symptoms (like anxiety attacks or panic attacks); and others experience some of both.

Overall, it took me years to understand why doctors and physiotherapists

had little effect on reducing my symptoms: They were caused by stress and anxiety, which is created in the unconscious mind (as I'll explain later). These professionals could not treat the cause of the symptom - because they didn't know how to work with the unconscious mind.

My hand pain was psychogenic pain, caused by unconscious stress². The dizziness and 'struggling to breathe' sensation (shortness of breath) was caused by hyperventilation: a classic stress and anxiety symptom. Other symptoms such as feeling restless, random aches and pains, heart palpitations and more eventually turned out to be stress and anxiety symptoms too.

Many people don't realise how many of their mental and physical symptoms might be linked to stress or anxiety³. I've included a [list and explanation of stress and anxiety symptoms](#) in the appendix of this document to demonstrate the breadth of mental and physical symptoms that have been found to be stress- or anxiety-related. I recommend reading through to see how wide-ranging stress and anxiety can be - it may surprise you.

Remember, anxiety and stress symptoms may be the same as those caused by medical conditions. That's why you should start by seeing a doctor to rule out physical causes of a symptom first. See the appendix and medical disclaimer at the end of this document.

² For a good overview of psychogenic pain (pain created or modified by the mind - a common stress or anxiety related symptom) see <https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2018/5/17/17276452/chronic-pain-treatment-psychology-cbt-mindfulness-evidence>. See the appendix for more information.

³ Sometimes we can't say whether a symptom is caused by stress or caused by anxiety. To get around this problem I use the term "stress or anxiety symptoms" to refer to all symptoms linked to stress and anxiety collectively - this is adequate for the purposes of this document. See the [appendix](#) for more information.

Having discovered the true cause of my symptoms was stress and anxiety, I overcame them with the help of numerous professionals, each offering different approaches to treating the unconscious mind. I regained the feeling of healthiness and resilience, mentally and physically; overcame the physical symptoms and returned to work; and now I use stress as a tool, to help me attack the challenges and opportunities in life.

Furthermore, doing this opened the door to a career change which brought long-term meaning and satisfaction into my life: Specifically, helping people overcome their own stress and anxiety challenges by combining the approaches that helped me. As such, overcoming anxiety and stress led to long-term, continuing improvements in my life.

Part 1: Uncover the truth - Anxiety & stress are created by the mind

To overcome stress and anxiety, first you must realise most people in our society have the *wrong view* of stress and anxiety - and break free from that view.

Side note: Exactly what “stress” and “anxiety” are is outside the scope of this document. If you’re interested in learning exactly what they are, see my articles [“What actually is stress?”](#) and [“What actually is anxiety?”](#) - but for now, you can continue reading with your own understanding of ‘stress’ and ‘anxiety’, whatever they mean to you.

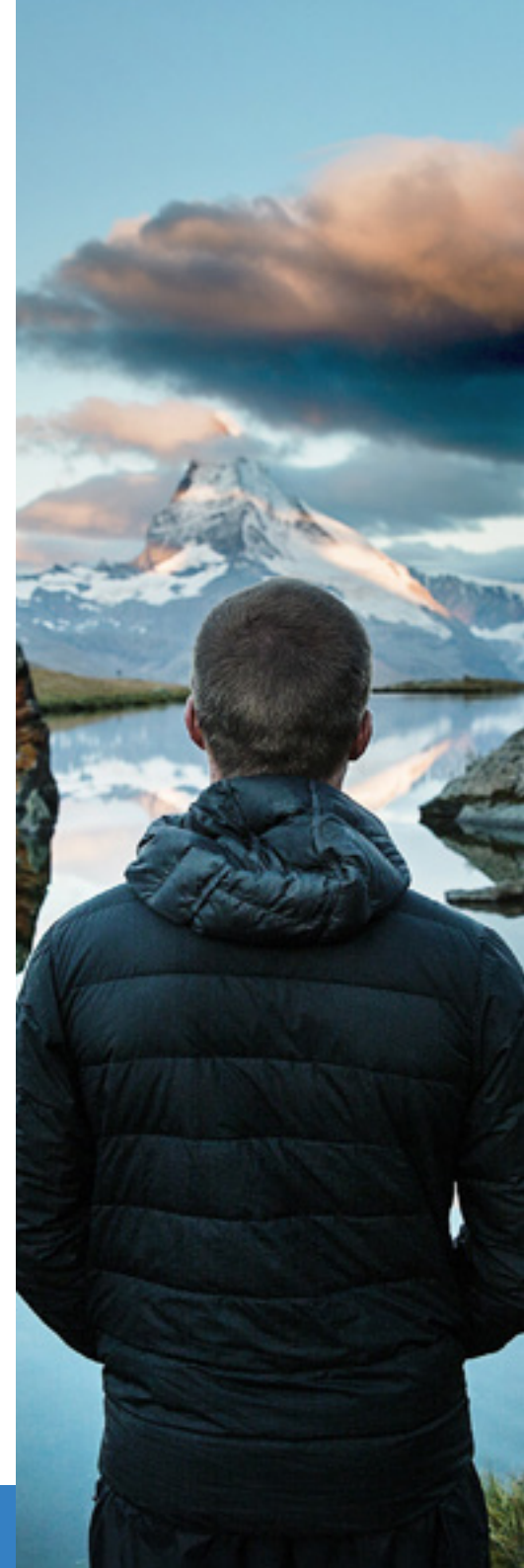
Also note, I’ll often refer to “stress and anxiety” as a single thing - this is because stress and anxiety overlap to a large degree, and can often be used interchangeably⁴.

The Myth: Stress and anxiety are caused by our environment

Family therapist George Pransky believes humanity is currently in the ‘dark ages’ of mental health care, and I would agree. Most of our society has such a limited understanding of stress and anxiety that it prevents people finding effective treatment.

Most people incorrectly think of stress and anxiety as something we ‘catch’ from

⁴ As I explain in my article [“What actually is anxiety?”](#)



events and circumstances - in other words, our environment. Work, school, the people around us, money concerns, crowds of people, etc.

In this incorrect understanding, it's like stress and anxiety are particles in the air that we 'catch' like an illness⁵. The office where we do our stressful job is full of lots of stress and anxiety particles; that person who makes us feel stressed out is surrounded by more particles; meanwhile the beach and the park don't have many particles floating around. When we go to the office or meet that person we 'catch' stress and anxiety, like a cold.

This incorrect understanding offers two rather limited solutions:

a. Stay away from the things that cause stress.

As Pransky says, many people have designed their lives to do this, but it comes at a cost.

Think back to some of the most meaningful, significant, and/or important moments in your life. Where was stress at those times?

Most people would agree that the most important moments in life tend to involve stress - therefore, trying to avoid stress also tends to mean missing out on the most important moments and opportunities in life.

As you'll see later, there's no need to try to avoid stress in this way - and in fact you can turn stress into an advantage to help you excel at life's challenges.

When I work with clients we generally don't need to avoid the causes of

⁵ Full credit to George Pransky for the stress as particles analogy, and the resulting solutions a and b.

stress (at least not permanently). However sometimes a client will have an opportunity to make a lifestyle change that will remove some unnecessary and unhelpful stress - in these cases it might make sense to do that lifestyle change.

b. Doing 'stress management'.

Stress management is doing things like yoga, meditation, going for walks, meeting friends, exercise, reading, or any other activity you do to temporarily reduce feelings of stress and take some time to recover and rejuvenate. Later in this document I'll explain the 'relaxation response', which is one of the most important ways that stress management can help us.

Stress management is a great thing to do as *part of* a treatment plan, but it's not enough to properly treat stress and anxiety on its own.

To borrow from Pransky, doing *only* stress management is like putting a bucket under a leaky roof. It manages the problem temporarily by catching the drops of water, but really you need to repair the roof to properly resolve the issue.

My work with clients involves some stress management, but this is only one part of a proper treatment programme.

So if the view that we 'catch' stress and anxiety from events and circumstances isn't correct, what's the correct understanding of stress and anxiety?

The Truth: Stress and anxiety are created by our mind

Our environment, events and circumstances do *not* cause stress or anxiety. This is because we don't experience our environment directly: Instead, we only experience our own mind, and the perception that our mind creates of our environment⁶.

Everything we experience is only because the mind is creating that experience for us - and that includes stress and anxiety.

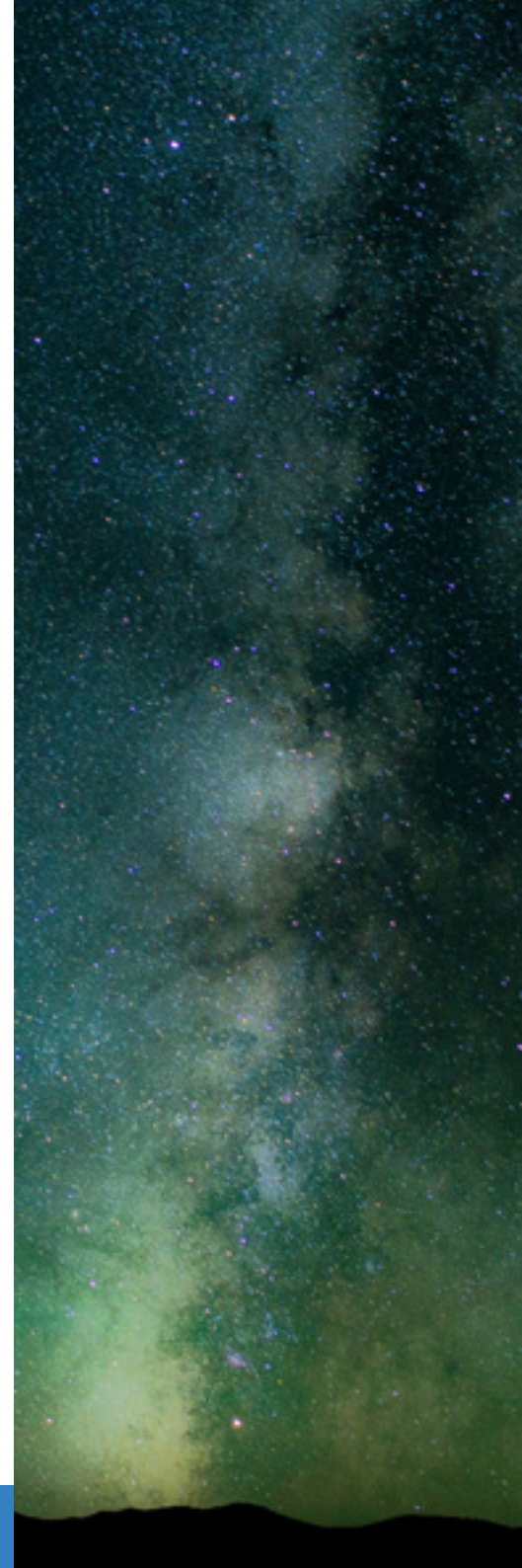
I felt skeptical when I first heard this argument. Isn't our environment - the events and circumstances around us - still what ultimately creates stress and anxiety?

But in fact, there's clear evidence that not only stress and anxiety, but also any other unwanted feelings like anger and fear, are only created by the mind - and we see it all the time.

If there are two people in the same environment, it's possible for one person to experience unwanted stress or anxiety - or any other unwanted thoughts, feelings or physical responses - while the other person doesn't. (The other person might feel calm, or alternatively they might feel desirable thoughts, feelings or physical responses like excitement).

One person screams and runs away from spiders; another keeps them as pets. Some people are horrified by public speaking - others feel minimal nerves, or even enjoy it. Some people are terrified of heights - others jump out of aeroplanes for the adrenaline rush. Some people enjoy knitting, others find

⁶ As modeled by NLP and explored in the neuroscience of perception, eg <https://www.salon.com/2017/04/24/is-this-the-real-life-the-neuroscience-of-perception-offers-us-an-answer/>.



it frustrating. Even dangerous situations like warfare can be experienced as exciting, desirable and performance enhancing by some people⁷.

It doesn't stop there: Sometimes we also observe a person feeling good in a particular circumstance or event - and then later that *same* person, in the *same* circumstance/event, feeling very stressed and anxious.

One example of this is anxiety attacks, which sometimes affects people in crowded places. A person may be able to travel in crowded trains and feel perfectly calm for many years, but after developing anxiety attacks, find themselves feeling very anxious and stressed out, and having anxious or stressed thoughts, while on that same train at the same time of day.⁸

Another example: A person may have felt calm when they walked down a street for most of their lives, but gradually develop agoraphobia, to the point when they can't leave the house. This person finds the thought of going out into the street very stressful and anxiety-ridden.

Examples like these show us that our environment is not what creates unwanted thoughts, feelings or emotions like stress or anxiety (and their related symptoms). Instead, our mind creates stress and anxiety (and as you'll see later, our mind also decides whether stress and anxiety is helpful or unhelpful).

For some people, just realising that stress and anxiety are being created by their mind, not their environment, can unlock their recovery. After all: We can't always change our environment, but we always have ways to change our mind, so you might be surprised at how many ways you can find to treat anxiety and stress

⁷ <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/i-was-the-original-natural-born-killer-1617250.html>

⁸ To learn more about anxiety attacks and panic attacks see my article "[Panic or Anxiety Attacks 101](#)"



with this new perspective.

Furthermore, when we realise our mind is what creates stress and anxiety, that opens the door to new ways to effectively treat stress and anxiety. We'll explore this in Part 2.

Part 2: Discover your freedom - How you can overcome anxiety and stress

In Part 1 I explained that stress and anxiety are created by the mind, and they only exist because our mind is creating them.

This is great news, because **we can change how our mind works** - wherever we are and whenever we choose to start. This is our opportunity to powerfully treat stress and anxiety at the source.

*For brevity, I'm going to refer to the process of 'changing how the mind works' as '**reprogramming**' the mind. Reprogramming the mind is not too mysterious or magical - it actually happens every day, but the key is being able to do it in a deliberate and efficient way to create the changes we want (rather than through trial and error, or luck).*

Let's walk through an example to demonstrate how the mind is reprogrammed on an everyday basis, on a conscious and unconscious⁹ level. While this is an imaginary situation, it highlights common things that we know our brain does on a regular basis.

1. Suppose you meet Sarah for the first time at a bar with your friends. You feel **indifferent** towards her when you first meet.

⁹ The human brain constantly performs very fast unconscious cognition, totally outside of our conscious awareness. We commonly call this the 'unconscious' or 'subconscious' mind. This is explained more later ([jump to section](#)).



2. Over the next few hours you have great conversation and it turns out you have a lot in common.
3. You meet Sarah again a week later, and when you see her, you smile and feel **happy and relaxed**.
4. The next day, a policeman tells you Sarah is a dangerous criminal - and her location is currently unknown! You feel **anxious** and **nervous** at the possibility of meeting Sarah again (and if you do meet her again, you might feel **afraid** of her).
5. Finally, the policeman visits you again and says "Sarah is actually not a criminal, we were thinking of a different Sarah! Sorry about that..." You can now return to feeling **happiness and relaxation** towards Sarah again (and go and tell her the story).

What does this example demonstrate your brain is capable of doing?:

- **Learning, updating learnings, and undoing old learnings.** Your brain learned to recognise Sarah visually. It collected information on Sarah after you first met, and decided that Sarah was a person it wants to be around. Later it learned brand new information from the policeman, and then it changed its opinion of Sarah to someone you don't want to be around. Finally it learned the previous information was false and reversed that change.
- **Choosing and changing its emotional responses.** Your brain changed its emotional response to Sarah multiple times: first indifference; then happiness and relaxation; then anxiousness, nervousness, and fear; and

back to happiness and relaxation.

- **Making changes on an unconscious level.** You didn't consciously decide to remember Sarah's face, or to feel happy when you saw her the second time, or to feel fear when you met her again or happiness again at the end. These changes all happened on an unconscious level.

This simple example demonstrates how we're constantly being reprogrammed in everyday life, and how that reprogramming can happen on an unconscious level.

Also notice that changes like those shown in the example can occur at any age. This is because the brain is very plastic, and is perfectly capable of making changes on the emotional and unconscious level, including later in life¹⁰.

Similarly, our mind can be reprogrammed to stop producing unwanted stress and anxiety. The old ways your brain learned to 'do' anxiety and stress can be updated or unlearned, and new ways of being can be learned instead. Emotional responses can be changed. And those improvements can occur on a conscious and unconscious level.

Our brain is perfectly capable of those changes, at any age (as therapeutic experience also shows).

¹⁰ A few decades ago there was a belief that our brain couldn't change very much in adulthood. This is evidently incorrect: We now know our brain can (1) physically grow, (2) speed up the circuits in the brain, or (3) re-wire throughout life, depending on which part of the brain is being used. A concise summary of the research behind all 3 of these points is [here](#).

But perhaps you're thinking: We can't change *every* aspect of how our mind works. We can't make the sky look green, or make broccoli taste like chocolate, or make every second of your job the best second of our life so far. So can we really reprogramme our mind so as to stop it causing anxiety and stress?

We might not be able to change *everything* our mind does, but that doesn't matter. We don't need to be able to stop *all* of your stress and anxiety (there'll always be some stress, and some anxious moments, in life); we don't need to make *every single* moment of your life calm. All we need to do is change the mind *enough*: Removing *enough* unhelpful stress, and making the stress you continue to experience more and more healthy and productive, to set you free of your old issues and symptoms and allow you to create a better future.

Reprogramming the mind to treat stress and anxiety at the source

In terms of treating stress and anxiety, by reprogramming the mind we can achieve three things:

1. We can reduce or remove unwanted, unhealthy and performance-impairing stress.
2. We can make any remaining stress we experience healthier and performance-enhancing. Life will always involve *some* stress - but that stress can become a powerful and welcome resource that helps us in all of life's challenges.
3. We can treat stress and anxiety related symptoms at the source (instead



of only managing the symptom): Including panic and anxiety attacks, chronic pain, anger and other emotional issues, lightheadedness and difficulty breathing, heart palpitations, sleep problems, obsessive behaviour, inability to focus, increased use of alcohol, drugs or smoking, fidgeting and restlessness, etc etc etc.

(To see the incredible range of possible stress and anxiety symptoms, both mental and physical, see the [appendix](#))



Furthermore, those changes can unlock the door to continued improvements. That new, more performance-enhancing stress can provide rocket fuel for new progress in your work and personal development, which can lead to tangible improvements in your health and enjoyment of life for years to come. And by breaking free from old life-limiting symptoms we can create more time, new opportunities, and a new freedom to enjoy life.

This reprogramming can occur without having to change your environment. You don't need to quit your job, go on a yoga retreat, or live on a mountaintop to effectively break free from stress and anxiety.

If you used to think you "*have*" stress, anxiety and related issues - and that you'll always "*have*" it... If you thought you had to live with stress-related symptoms... Now you know things aren't that simple. Instead, your mind is *creating* stress, anxiety and related symptoms: And you can reprogramme the mind to treat it at the source.

The next level: Using language to reprogram the mind more effectively

So reprogramming the mind is an everyday occurrence - the challenge is finding ways to reprogramme the mind that are accurate and efficient enough to treat stress and anxiety effectively and quickly.

Just by providing you with new and empowering information about stress and anxiety your brain is already changing rapidly. However, modern, innovative therapy is about going a step further and finding the most accurate, efficient and effective ways to reprogramme the mind¹¹.

These modern approaches have uncovered powerful ways to treat issues relating to the mind. For example, eye movement therapy can be very effective in treating trauma and PTSD¹². But if I had to single out the most powerful tool for

¹¹ Research on *QCH Therapy* highlights the potential efficacy of these modern therapies:

In September 2015, a peer-reviewed article in the UK-based *Mental Health Review Journal* compared *QCH Therapy* with national results for *Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)*.

IAPT is a UK programme that gives people with depression and anxiety disorders access to talking therapies, the vast majority being Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) (<https://www.ocduk.org/iapt>).

The article showed that with QCH therapy, *in an average of six sessions 71% reported themselves recovered - compared to 42% of people using IAPT therapies*.

So QCH Therapy (aka Quest Cognitive Hypnotherapy) had a far higher success rate than IAPT, which is primarily Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. [Furthermore, most people were recovered after six sessions of QCH therapy - compare that to many traditional talking therapies spread over months or years.] *Mental Health Review Journal* 2015 20:3, 199-210

<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/10.1108/MHRJ-08-2014-0030>

¹² For example see <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2016/05/31/alternate-ptsd-therapy-vets-ruffles-va-feathers-shows-results.html>



reprogramming that exists today, I'd point to *language*.

Language is clearly one of the main ways we receive information, and the structure of language - the way a sentence is designed - can influence how that information is received and understood. Language is a critical tool to reprogramming of our mind: In the example with Sarah and the policeman, language, carrying certain information, effectively 'reprogrammed' your mind when you first spoke to Sarah - then both times the policeman spoke to you.

Carefully designed models of language have been developed to help the brain learn and reprogram even more efficiently¹³. By using language in these ways, we can enhance our ability to reprogramme the mind and change its behaviour relating to stress and anxiety.

The audio download I'll give you in Part 3 gives you the opportunity to experience this technique. It uses carefully designed language to reprogram your mind, in order to reduce unwanted stress and anxiety, and make the stress you do experience healthier and more performance-enhancing. Especially when we listen repeatedly, linguistic interventions like these can have powerful and sometimes surprising effects on our mind and body.

¹³ Eg, the founders of NLP famously modelled Milton Erickson and his legendary use of language for therapeutic benefit. Trevor Silvester later built a comprehensive and powerful model of linguistic suggestion (Wordweaving), combining multiple approaches from NLP, hypnotherapy and others.

Enhanced reprogramming - harnessing unconscious changes

I'll explain one more important way we can enhance our treatment of stress and anxiety.

The human brain constantly performs very fast [unconscious cognition](#), totally outside of our conscious awareness - a lot like a supercomputer running silently in our head. It uses our memories to identify our surroundings, builds an ever-changing perception of the world around us, manages our mind and body's functioning and more, without us consciously knowing what it's doing.

This is commonly described as our "unconscious mind" (also known as our "subconscious"¹⁴). Most people never really realise it's there - but if you pay attention you'll notice how large a role it plays in your life.

14 Sigmund Freud first named it the "subconscious" in 1893, but later preferred "unconscious".

If you aren't convinced there's an unconscious mind running silently in your brain, I'll give you two classic examples:

- When someone throws a ball to you, and you catch it: Do you consciously calculate the ball's speed, trajectory, size, position your hands, spread the fingers to the right width, close your fingers at the right moment, etc? Of course not - we cannot consciously manage all of these things at once. Our unconscious does all that processing for us (and does it very quickly).
- When you're driving home from work and then, while continuing to drive, you start daydreaming: You aren't driving the car consciously anymore (you're not thinking about the driving at all). So something else must be driving for you: Your unconscious mind.

An accessible and enjoyable book to learn more about the unconscious mind is *Blink* by Malcolm Gladwell.

How does this relate to treating stress and anxiety?

Firstly, based on generations of therapeutic experience stemming back to Freud, the causes of stress and anxiety (and their symptoms) are often found to be unconscious. Therefore stress and anxiety therapy often includes identifying and treating these unconscious issues.

For example, anxiety attacks and panic attacks are basically an unconscious 'malfunction' where part of our brain's survival system has become over-sensitive. Treatment involves reprogramming this unconscious process.¹⁵

¹⁵ See my article ["Panic or Anxiety Attacks 101"](#) for more information

Furthermore, effective treatment of *the symptoms* of stress and anxiety (physical and mental) often involves working on specific unconscious causes of these issues. This includes chronic pain, anger and emotional issues, sleep problems, obsessive behaviour, inability to focus, and behaviours like increased use of alcohol, drugs or smoking, etc etc. (See “Identifying (all of) your Stress and Anxiety symptoms” in the [appendix](#) for the full range of symptoms.)

But while the *causes* of stress, anxiety and their symptoms often lie in the unconscious, so can the *solutions*. By harnessing the unconscious mind to help us achieve positive change, we gain the potential to influence the mind and body in powerful ways.

Bear in mind that our unconscious literally creates the perception of the world in which we live, and manages all our physical functions, and you can begin to see the potential of using it to our advantage.

The audio gift in part 3 encourages continuous and accumulating unconscious changes, for long-term improvement. Sometimes these changes are obvious - but other times they can occur so subtly that it's only later, looking back, that you realise what's changed.

Part 3: Reprogram now - Make stress healthier and more performance-enhancing

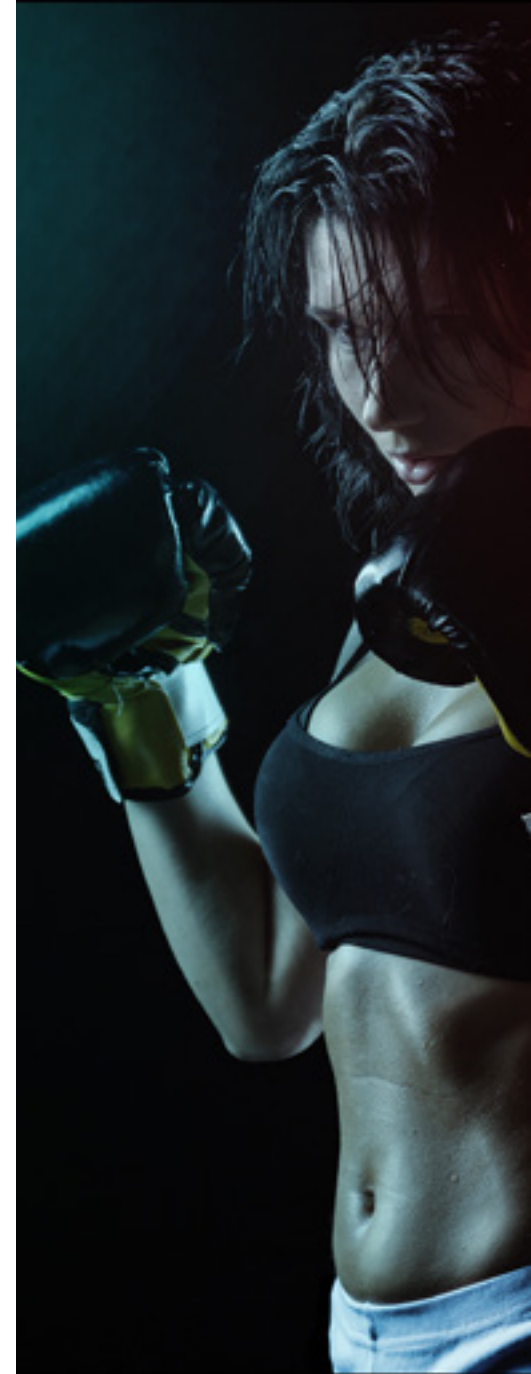
You've seen how we can treat stress and anxiety at the source by reprogramming the mind; how specific use of language is a powerful way to achieve that; and how we can harness the unconscious for even more profound change.

Now we're going to put this into action and reprogram your mind in a way that makes stress more and more performance-enhancing and healthy for you - diminishing the negative symptoms traditionally experienced with stress and anxiety.

This is a powerful example of reprogramming, and while many other anxiety and stress related issues require a tailored treatment, this particular enhancement can benefit anyone - regardless of their specific circumstances or symptoms.

As we'll explore in a moment, research shows these changes can dramatically reduce the risk of long term stress-related health issues, and significantly improve our strengths and capabilities in work and in life. It can also be helpful in managing acute stress-related symptoms, like anxiety and panic attacks, fears and phobias, and chronic pain.

We'll begin reprogramming by simply introducing you to some new and empowering information. I'll give you two key understandings about stress and anxiety that most people are unaware of.



Then I'll combine those key understandings (and more) into an audio download that, through a precise use of language, can reprogramme your mind to make the stress you experience more and more healthy and performance-enhancing over time. We'll generate both conscious and unconscious changes, for efficient and continuous improvement.

The audio is at end of Part 3, but read on for some key info that will allow you to get the most out of the audio.

Understanding 1: We can make stress performance-enhancing and healthier

Let's explore some of the ways we can make stress healthier and more performance-enhancing. These are some of the most recent and, in my opinion, most important discoveries in the treatment of stress, anxiety and related issues.

I highly recommend watching Kelly McGonigal's 15-minute TED talk "[How to make stress your friend](#)" now. This is a great introduction to the power of stress mindsets, and the power of social support during times of stress, in making stress responses healthier and more performance-enhancing.

Next I'll summarise that TED talk and add some more useful information (including information from McGonigal's book *The Upside of Stress*, 2015).

How stress can help you

A stress response is a type of physiological response in the body and brain,

which includes hormonal and neurological changes.

When something causes your heart to beat faster; your breathing to quicken; feelings of restlessness, shakiness, a 'nervous energy'; sweating; feeling 'stressed' or 'under pressure'; having butterflies in your stomach or an upset stomach, etc: At those moments, you're experiencing a stress response. (Note, you may experience some but not *all* of these symptoms - e.g. you may not feel stressed or under pressure - but still be experiencing a stress response.)

This might occur because you're approaching a tight deadline at work, or you're about to give a public speech, or you just saw a spider, or a car is approaching you too quickly, or any number of other things that cause stress responses in different people.

In the past, people thought stress responses were generally bad for us - but we now know that's not true. There are actually three main types of stress responses, with different effects on the body and mind, some of which are healthier and more performance enhancing than others:

- "Fight or flight" stress responses.¹⁶
- "Challenge response" stress responses.
- "Tend and befriend" stress responses.

The full details of these responses is beyond the scope of this document, but to summarise, fight or flight responses are generally less healthy and less performance-enhancing, while challenge responses and tend-and-befriend responses are generally healthier and provide strong improvements in our

¹⁶ In the past it was often assumed all stress was a "fight or flight" response - this view has been outdated by more recent research.



performance, powerfully helping us to deal with life's challenges.

Strictly speaking there are also 'grey areas' between these three major types of response. It's a sliding scale, so the aim is to move your stress responses *closer to* a challenge or tend and befriend 'type'. We can describe this as making your stress responses *healthier* and *more performance-enhancing* (aka 'improving' or 'optimising' your stress responses).

The closer your stress responses are to the challenge or tend-and-befriend types, the better your health, the better your ability to perform under stress, and therefore, the more effective you are at resolving whatever challenges you're currently facing.

On the next page are some of the benefits of a healthier and more performance-enhancing stress response:

The Stress Response Helps You Rise to the Challenge, Connect with Others, and Learn and Grow

- McGonigal, Kelly. *The Upside of Stress: Why stress is good for you (and how to get good at it)* (p. 56). Ebury Publishing. Kindle Edition.

How the Stress Response Helps You:

Rise to the Challenge

- Focuses your attention
- Heightens your senses
- Increases motivation
- Mobilizes energy

Connect with Others¹

- Activates prosocial instincts
- Encourages social connection
- Enhances social cognition
- Dampens fear and increases courage

Learn and Grow

- Restores nervous system balance
- Processes and integrates the experience
- Helps the brain learn and grow²

How You Know It's Happening:

You notice your heart pounding, your body sweating, or your breath quickening. You are mentally focused on the source of stress. You feel excited, energized, anxious, restless, or ready for action.

You want to be near friends or family. You notice yourself paying more attention to others, or are more sensitive to others' emotions. You feel a desire to protect, support, or defend the people, organizations, or values you care about

Even though your body is calming down, you still feel mentally charged. You replay or analyze the experience in your mind, or want to talk to others about it. A mix of emotions are usually present, along with a desire to make sense of what happened.

¹ Via increased activity in three brain systems which occurs during a tend-and-befriend response

² Enhanced by release of neurosteroid DHEA

Additionally, a healthier and more performance-enhancing stress response can actually *improve* immune system function¹⁷, physically *strengthen* and *repair* the heart¹⁸, improve your brain's processing of sensory information and reduce reaction time, and more. For a more in-depth explanation of the physiology of stress responses, see *The Upside of Stress* by Kelly McGonigal (2015).

Now we know that stress responses can be healthy and performance-enhancing, how can we actually improve our own stress responses so we get more and more of those benefits? Stress can be a force for good in your life, so let's harness it.

Adopting a 'stress is enhancing' mindset to improve your stress responses

Research shows that by adopting the mindset that the stress you're experiencing is enhancing - helping you rise to the challenges you're currently facing - your stress response becomes physiologically more performance-enhancing, and healthier.

Yes: The way we think about stress changes our body's physiological stress response.¹⁹

The more you believe the stress you're experiencing is enhancing your performance, the more your physiological stress response improves and

¹⁷ As part of a higher growth index - meaning a higher ratio of DHEA to cortisol.

¹⁸ Via dopamine, which is released during stress responses

¹⁹ This is just one of many examples of how our conscious mindsets can change how our physical body works.

This is possible because our mind and body are connected - research in fields like [psychoneuroendocrinology \(PNEI\)](#) is beginning to explore and explain exactly how that connection works. Understanding this 'mindbody connection' is key to effective treatment of stress and anxiety (especially if you have physical health symptoms due to stress and anxiety).

the more you actually experience the benefits listed in the previous table.

A large and growing body of empirical evidence proves this to be the case. Stress responses can be studied directly through methods like saliva samples, so researchers have directly observed how having a mindset that stress is enhancing physiologically improves your stress response.²⁰

Furthermore, as described in the TED talk, some research that illustrates the long-term health benefits of a 'stress is enhancing' mindset is as follows:

A study tracked 30,000 adults in the United States for eight years. People who experienced a lot of stress in the previous year had a 43 percent increased risk of dying: But that was only true for the people who also believed that stress is harmful for your health.

People who experienced a lot of stress but did not view stress as harmful were no more likely to die. In fact, they had the lowest risk of dying of anyone in the study, including people who had relatively little stress.

If you have deadlines approaching; if you're nervous but you need to give a good presentation; if you have a fear of flying but you need to get on that aeroplane... Adopting the mindset that stress is helping you is one of the best things you can do at that moment for your health and your performance.

Then attacking the challenge, using the stress as 'rocket fuel' to help you succeed, can help you to perform as well as possible and to overcome your

²⁰ I recommend McGonigal's "The Upside of Stress", and following her on Twitter, if you want to learn more. Also check out the latest research from Alicia Crum's team at Stanford's Mind and Body Lab.



challenges quickly.

By teaching you about the positive effects of stress, we're already changing your conscious and unconscious mindset towards a "stress is enhancing" mindset. Therefore, we've already begun making your stress healthier and more performance-enhancing.

But let's take this further - let's give you a conscious routine you can use to adopt a stress-is-enhancing mindset while you're under stress²¹. You might choose to use this routine exactly, or you might find your own way of adopting a 'stress is enhancing' mindset that works well for you - whatever it is, do it consistently, and over time it will become more and more automatic.

1. Acknowledge your stress

Acknowledging when you're under stress may be more difficult than it sounds. We've often been misled into thinking all stress is bad for us, so we might have a habit of not thinking about it - furthermore, we might have been under stress for so long it seems normal to us.

But begin to look out for whatever feelings, physical sensations or symptoms tell you you're under stress. Notice when your heart rate rises, your muscles tense up, or you generally feeling more tense or stressed, etc. Some people find this easy, but if you don't find this so natural, you can improve your awareness with practice.

2. Welcome your stress

We covered some of the positive benefits of stress previously -

²¹ For a more in-depth walkthrough of this routine, you can take the free "Rethink Stress" online course with Stanford's Mind and Body Lab at <https://mbi.stanford.edu/interventions-toolkits/rethink-stress-intervention>.

improvements in both your health and your performance under stress.

Realise how stress is there as a natural resource you can use to enhance your life - if you choose to view it as enhancing.

The more you realise stress can help you, the more you can welcome it.

Note that as a caveat, I'm not suggesting you take on *more* stress in life. As the saying goes, "you can have too much of a good thing" - and even well-optimised stress may not be a state our bodies are designed to maintain in the very long-term. But life will always include stress, and by welcoming it as an enhancing force for us, we maximise the benefits it brings.

3. Utilize your stress

Lastly, consider what the best course of action is under your current circumstances: Then, execute it using your increased energy, attention and focus, cognitive function, memory, enhanced learning abilities and more, as provided by that enhancing stress.

For example, you might acknowledge that you're feeling stressed and anxious because you have a tough exam approaching. Reminding yourself of the benefits I listed earlier, you can welcome that stress and the benefits it brings. Then consider how can you start studying now to improve your grade as efficiently as possible - and start doing that, allowing that stress to boost your performance. You might even notice yourself becoming calmer as you make progress, to be replaced by a better and better focus and motivation to succeed.

Notice that avoiding the causes of stress is not going to help you in the above example - or in fact, in most stressful situations in life. But sometimes you might realise you've been avoiding stress without realising, because we often default to avoidance behaviour. That's okay: Just acknowledge, welcome, and utilize that stress now.

Suppose you feel more stressed and anxious about going to work than seems appropriate. On reflection, you might realise and acknowledge that's because you've been stressed about speaking to your boss, and avoiding her. Having recognised that, you can choose to welcome that stress as fuel instead, and consider how to utilize it: Perhaps you need to speak to your boss to clear the air about something, or maybe you've fallen behind on a project and you need to make fresh progress on that until you've met your boss's requirements.

In this way, you might find that acknowledging, welcoming and utilizing stress reduces procrastination and other avoidance strategies.

The download provided later helps to programme your mind into following an acknowledge, welcome, utilize routine, more and more automatically, while under stress.

We all fall back into viewing stress in a negative way sometimes, without realising. That's okay - just bring yourself back to a stress is enhancing mindset if that happens.

Finally, it's important to understand that **you may not always feel the difference between a healthy and performance-enhancing stress response, and an unhealthy and performance-impairing stress response.** In other words, when you acknowledge, welcome and utilize stress, you might

not always *feel* very different.

That's okay: The important changes that acknowledging, welcoming and utilizing stress achieve are hormonal and neurological differences, and they may not always be immediately noticeable. So instead of trying to notice a difference in how you feel, simply focus on acknowledging, welcoming and utilizing your stress. (Those times when you find yourself feeling better right away? That's a nice bonus!)

Connecting with others to improve your stress responses

Research also shows that, during stress, the human body encourages us to connect with people (to seek out others, and give and receive social support). Furthermore, it shows that doing so can physiologically change our stress response, protecting the body from stress.

During stress, oxytocin is released, which encourages us to surround ourselves with others - to both receive and give social support.

When we receive and give social support we release *even more* oxytocin. All that oxytocin physically protects our body from the effects of stress, including helping our heart cells regenerate and heal from any stress-induced damage.

As described in the TED talk, here's some research that illustrates the power of supporting others during stress:

Another study tracked 1,000 adults in the USA (from 34 to 93 years old) showed that, on average, every major stressful life experience (like



financial difficulties or family crisis) increased the risk of dying by 30 percent.

But that wasn't true for people who spent time caring for others in their community: They showed absolutely zero stress-related increase in dying.

Reaching out and connecting with others during times of stress can not only be a powerful way to find a faster and better solution to your challenges - it physiologically protects and repairs your body at the same time.

You now know two key ways we can make stress healthier and more performance-enhancing: Having a 'stress-is-enhancing' mindset, and connecting with others during stress. These are two powerful ways we can improve the quality of our stress responses (though they are not the only ways).

The download at the end of Part 2 utilises stress mindsets to help you be more and more healthy under stress, use stress more and more effectively to improve your performance, and connect more while under stress.

Understanding 2: We can use the Relaxation Response to further improve our health and performance

I've explained how we can transform our stress responses to make them healthier and more performance-enhancing.

In addition, we can also benefit from giving our mind and body opportunities to rest and rejuvenate during times of stress.

Even when we're relaxed and happy, we all know we need to sleep, eat and relax at times. Similarly, even if we've optimised our stress, we still need to pause and rejuvenate sometimes. If you're concerned that taking breaks might reduce your productivity, think again: Many people report that taking breaks improves their productivity. If you think back, you might recall some moments when your productivity spiked after taking some time off your work.

One of the most efficient and effective ways to rejuvenate is to invoke the 'relaxation response'. The Relaxation Response is your mind and body's ability to make your muscles and organs slow down, and increase blood flow to the brain (via the release of certain chemicals and brain signals)²².

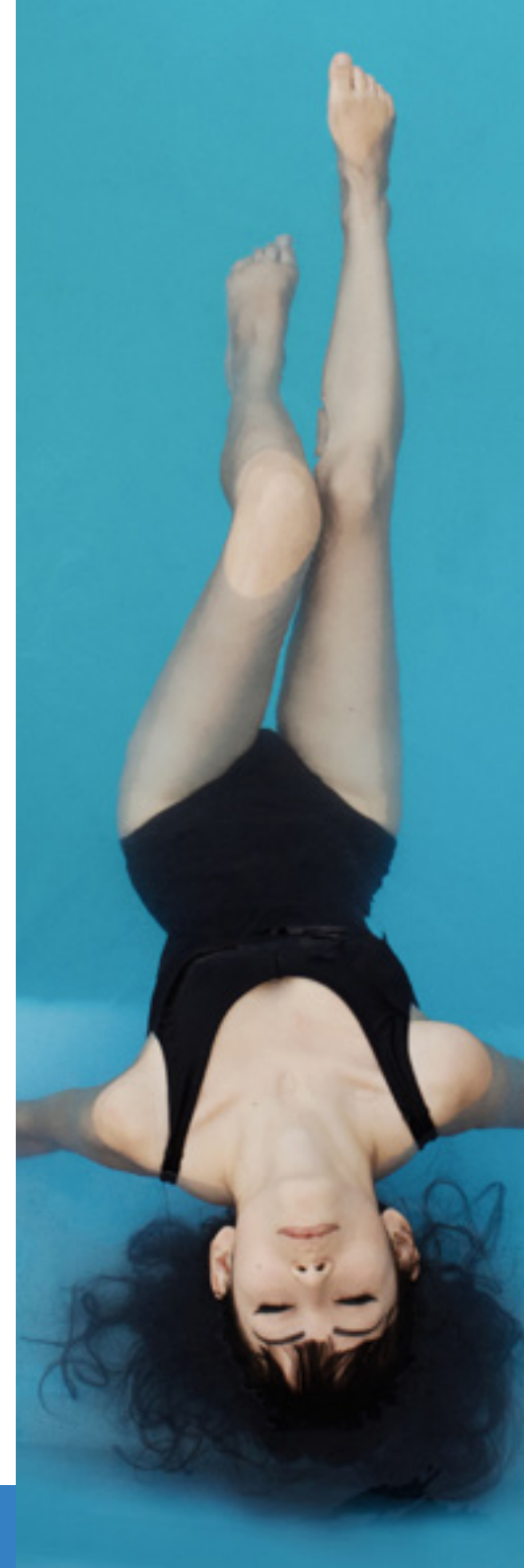
But the relaxation response isn't just an efficient way to enhance your productivity.

As explained previously, you should aim to improve your stress responses, making them healthier and more performance-enhancing - but we aren't trying to make your stress responses 'perfect'. There may still be some less healthy effects from stress responses, particularly if you're experiencing a lot of stress.

In this case, the relaxation response gives us a powerful antidote. The relaxation response essentially has the opposite effect on the body to unhealthy stress, and is a helpful way to turn off unhealthy stress and bring the body back to pre-unhealthy-stress levels²³. Regularly practising the relaxation response can be an effective treatment for a wide range of stress-related issues.

22 *The Relaxation Response* by Dr. Benson; [psychologytoday.com summary](https://psychologytoday.com/summary)

23 I define stress in my article "[What actually is stress?](#)": The relaxation response is essentially the opposite of a "fight or flight" stress response, which is one type of stress response; psychologytoday.com



Techniques that turn on the relaxation response include visualization, progressive muscle relaxation, acupuncture, massage, breathing techniques, prayer, meditation, mindfulness, tai chi, qi gong, and yoga. (I find approaches like yoga, which also include physical movement and stretching, can be particularly effective.)

The audio I'll provide next activates the relaxation response, repeatedly every day, to allow your body and mind to replenish and revitalise - as well as optimising your stress responses, and using specific language and harnessing unconscious processes to accelerate and enhance these changes further.

Putting it all together - Your reprogramming audio gift

Part 1 showed you how stress and anxiety are created by your mind - not by your environment. Then in part 2 we explored how we can treat stress and anxiety at the source by reprogramming the mind; how specific use of language is a powerful way to achieve that; and how we can harness the unconscious for even more profound change.

In part 3 I explained how we can physiologically transform stress responses into a powerful performance enhancer, and protect our health, by adopting a stress-is-enhancing mindset. I also explained how connecting with others improves our health, as well as how the relaxation response can help us rejuvenate and undo unwanted effects of stress.

Now let's combine all of that together into an audio download, to create a benefit greater than the sum of its parts.

Do not listen if you have epilepsy.
Do not listen while driving or operating machinery, as the audio is likely to make you tired and distract your attention. Avoid listening when under the influence of alcohol or other substances too.

[Click here to get your free audio download](https://james-cormack.com/guide-audio) (20 minute mp3)
(or copy and paste this link into your browser: <https://james-cormack.com/guide-audio>)

Listen somewhere you won't be disturbed, and get comfortable. Sit, or lie down.



You can use this audio track in two different ways:

- 1. Listen on a daily basis for at least two weeks.** Many people like to listen before going to sleep, but any time of day is fine. Listening to audios like this regularly and repeatedly tends to lead to the most powerful long-term changes (repetition is a key way the brain learns).
- 2. Listen during moments of high stress.** This audio is also designed to help you rejuvenate and adopt the right mindset specifically during a high stress situation, when you can take a few minutes out to do so.

I recommend doing both: (1) Listen daily for two weeks to change your general mindset, and (2) have the audio ready on your device for any high stress situations in future.

By utilising language, unconscious change and repetition; and of course good quality information; audios like these are a powerful way to reprogramme the mind. Enjoy listening, and then just notice anything different or unusual afterwards. Changes can be subtle, so it may not be until the third or fourth listen that you realise what's different.

About the author

Thanks for reading! I hope this document and the audio have opened your eyes to some new perspectives, new possibilities, and brought you better health and performance under stress.

I'd love to hear how this download has helped you, or receive any feedback you may have. You can drop me an email at jc@james-cormack.com, or post on my [facebook page](#).

I personally overcame anxiety, stress and related chronic health issues, and I now use cutting edge therapies and the latest scientific knowledge to help others do the same. I work online, in English, with clients worldwide.

If you're ready to take the next step towards calmness, good health and new levels of performance under pressure, find out about my no-cost Initial Conversation offer [here](#).

Wishing you the best of luck on your journey,
James Cormack
<https://james-cormack.com>



Appendix: Identifying (all of) your Stress and Anxiety Symptoms²⁴

I often find that my clients have only recognised some of their stress or anxiety symptoms when we first speak. They often report that they've been experiencing other issues too, which they assume are unrelated to stress and anxiety - but on further inspection, they too turn out to be stress or anxiety symptoms.

Some people notice stress and anxiety directly - maybe as some kind of feeling of tension or pressure. If that includes you, that feeling you get is your first stress or anxiety symptom.

But you don't need to feel stressed or anxious to have stress or anxiety. If you don't directly feel stress or anxiety, the only way you'll know if they're affecting you is by noticing any of the other stress or anxiety symptoms that affect you.

Everyone's symptoms are different - some people have more physical symptoms, some have more behavioural symptoms, some have both, etc.

One purpose of stress and anxiety therapy can be learning to (a) manage these symptoms for immediate relief, and subsequently (b) treating them at

²⁴ Sometimes we can't definitively say whether a symptom is caused by stress or caused by anxiety. For example, "feelings of restlessness" is one of the symptoms that constitute Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) (see [webmd's list of GAD symptoms](#)) - but it may also be due to the hormonal and neurological changes caused by a stress response. To get around this problem I use the term "stress or anxiety symptoms" to refer to all symptoms linked to stress and anxiety collectively - this is adequate for the purposes of this document.

the source to reduce and eradicate them. If we only treat a symptom without treating its underlying cause, it seems other stress or anxiety often 'pop up' in place of the previous symptom.

On the following pages is a list of many possible stress and anxiety symptoms, based on [webmd.com's list of stress symptoms](#). Additionally I've added more symptoms from a [list of stress symptoms](#) from [mayoclinic.org \(a nonprofit organization\)](#) (denoted ^M), and [a similar list](#) from [stress.org \(another nonprofit\)](#) (denoted ^S).

Symptoms are listed in no particular order. I've included a few of my own notes added in italics.

In this list I'm referring to "stress" and "anxiety" symptoms collectively. That's because there's generally a *very* blurry line between stress and anxiety, and usually you can use the words "stress" and "anxiety" interchangeably. To learn more see my ["What actually is anxiety?"](#) article.

Original list [from webmd.com](#) ^S = added [from stress.org](#) ^M = added [from mayoclinic.org](#)

From webmd.com: "Stress can affect all aspects of your life, including your emotions, behaviors, thinking ability, and physical health. No part of the body is immune. But, because people handle stress differently, symptoms of stress can vary. Symptoms can be vague and may be the same as those caused by medical conditions. So it is important to discuss them with your doctor. You may

experience any of the following symptoms of stress.

Obviously some of these symptoms can occur for reasons other than stress and anxiety. "Reduced work efficiency" might just be because you're bored! "Avoiding others" might just mean you're feeling introverted at the moment. But if you have multiple of these symptoms, maybe consider whether stress and anxiety is an underlying issue.

Emotional symptoms of stress or anxiety include:

- Becoming easily agitated, frustrated, and moody
- Overreaction to petty annoyances^S
- Excess anxiety, worry, guilt, nervousness^S
 - *Including excessive worrying about health ('hypochondria' or 'health anxiety'), about the future, safety, money etc.*
- Increased anger, frustration, hostility, irritability, edginess^S
 - *Includes "displaced anger" - taking out your anger on someone or something else, aka "stress rolling"²⁵*
- Sudden attacks of life threatening panic^S
 - *Commonly called "panic attacks". "Anxiety attacks" work in a very similar way. (Or other attacks of sudden, intense feelings of fear, dread, etc)*
- Feeling overwhelmed, like you are losing control or need to take control
- Sadness or depression^M
- Frequent crying spells or suicidal thoughts^S
- Frequent or wild mood swings^S
- Having difficulty relaxing and quieting your mind
- Feeling bad about yourself (low self-esteem), lonely, worthless, and depressed
- Little interest in appearance, punctuality^S
- Avoiding other people

²⁵ https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/18/anger-management-tips-martha-beck_n_4241174.html

Physical symptoms of stress or anxiety include:

About psychogenic physical symptoms

Many of the physical symptoms related to stress or anxiety are "psychogenic". Psychogenic symptoms are physical symptoms that are either induced or modified by the brain. Important: Psychogenic physical symptoms are real physical symptoms (they're not "just in the mind").

For example, for a good overview of psychogenic pain see <https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2018/5/17/17276452/chronic-pain-treatment-psychology-cbt-mindfulness-evidence>, which also explains the lack of training doctors get in pain medicine.

Why the brain creates psychogenic symptoms is yet fully understood (for more info, see [my article on unconscious stress](#)).

- Feeling faint, dizzy, or lightheaded; shortness of breath, or feeling that you can't get enough air
 - *These are often (but not always) symptoms of hyperventilation as explained [by webmd](#). Hyperventilation is one of the most common stress and anxiety symptoms.*
- Difficulty breathing, frequent sighing^s
- Low energy
- Headaches (*including migraines*)
- Upset stomach, including diarrhea, constipation, and nausea, *loss of control*^s
- Aches, pains, and tense muscles.
 - *Sometimes psychogenic pain replicates past pain caused by old injuries etc, or follows environmental 'cues' (such as being told your posture might lead to back pain). Back pain is particularly common, as is pain in the wrists and hands. Psychogenic pain is often diagnosed*

*as repetitive strain injury (RSI), fibromyalgia, or carpal tunnel syndrome*²⁶.

- Neck ache, back pain, muscle spasms^S
- Chest pain and rapid heartbeat
- Heart palpitations^S
- Heartburn, stomach pain, nausea^S
- Excess belching, flatulence^S
- Insomnia, nightmares, disturbing dreams^S
- Frequent colds and infections
- Loss of sexual desire and/or ability
- Nervousness and shaking, ringing in the ear, cold or sweaty hands and feet
- Frequent blushing, sweating^S
- Ringing, buzzing or popping sounds^S
- Tremors, trembling of lips, hands^S
- Dry mouth and difficulty swallowing
- Clenched jaw and grinding teeth
- Constant tiredness, weakness, fatigue^S. *Feelings of weakness sometimes selectively affect certain parts of the body.*
- Sleep problems^M
- Rashes, itching, hives, "goose bumps"^S
- Unexplained or frequent "allergy" attacks^S
- Frequent urination^S. *Also, prostatitis symptoms more generally.*

Cognitive symptoms of stress or anxiety include:

- *Emotional hijacking (including feeling 'out of control', with 'clouded' or impaired thinking, and perhaps a feeling that you're 'dissociated' and 'on autopilot')*
- Constant worrying
- Racing thoughts
- Difficulty concentrating^S

26 Sarno, John E. The Divided Mind. Gerald Duckworth. p18

- Difficulty in making decisions^S
- Forgetfulness and disorganization, *confusion*^S
- Inability to focus
- Trouble learning new information^S
- Poor judgment
- Being pessimistic or seeing only the negative side
- Obsessive or compulsive behavior^S (*includes OCD, which is classified as an anxiety disorder; and obsessive thoughts*)

Behavioral symptoms of stress or anxiety include:

- Changes in appetite -- either not eating or eating too much
- Weight gain or loss without diet^S
- Procrastinating and avoiding responsibilities
- Lack of motivation or focus^M
- Feeling overloaded or overwhelmed^S
- Increased use of alcohol, drugs, or smoking
- Excessive gambling or impulse buying^S
- Exhibiting more nervous behaviors, such as nail biting, fidgeting, and pacing
- Restlessness^M
- Angry outbursts^M
- Social withdrawal and isolation^S
- Exercising less often^M
- Stuttering or stammering^S
- Reduced work efficiency or productivity^S

Possible consequences of Long-Term Unhealthy Stress or Anxiety

(*Some long-term issues might be due to a weakened immune system caused by stress.*)

- Mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety, and personality disorders
- Cardiovascular disease, including heart disease, high blood pressure, abnormal heart rhythms,

- heart attacks, and stroke
 - Obesity and other eating disorders
 - Menstrual problems
 - Sexual dysfunction, such as impotence and premature ejaculation in men and loss of sexual desire in both men and women
 - Skin and hair problems, such as acne, psoriasis, and eczema, and permanent hair loss
 - Gastrointestinal problems, such as GERD, gastritis, ulcerative colitis, and irritable colon" *including irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)*
 - *Possibly psychosis in rare cases.*^{27"}
-

Also: Many of these symptoms have been categorised into several common "Anxiety disorders"²⁸, including:

- GAD - Generalised anxiety disorder
- Social phobia
- Panic disorder (panic attacks)
- Agoraphobia (including a fear of leaving the house)
- Phobias - including excessive fear of public speaking or of other social situations; fear of flying
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

In the experience of myself and many other therapists these issues tend to start after an extended period of stress. Read my article ["What actually is anxiety?"](#) to learn more about anxiety and anxiety disorders.

27 Griffin, Joe; Tyrrell, Ivan. How to Master Anxiety: All You Need to Know to Overcome Stress, Panic Attacks, Trauma, Phobias, Obsessions and More (The Human Givens Approach Book 3) (Kindle Location 1035). Human Givens Publishing. Kindle Edition.

28 How to Master Anxiety by Human Givens Institute; <https://www.calmclinic.com/anxiety-guide/main-types>

Remember, this is not an exhaustive list. Some specialists (including the late John Sarno, a US-based Medical Doctor who spent years exploring psychogenic symptoms, and his colleagues) suggest practically any physical symptom can occur psychogenically.

But as mentioned above, symptoms may be the same as those caused by medical conditions. That's why you should **start by seeing a doctor to rule out physical causes of a symptom first**. See the medical disclaimer at the end of this document.

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- Discover how you can overcome anxiety and stress by changing how your mind works
- Start treating stress, anxiety and related symptoms immediately, changing your relationship with stress so that it becomes a powerful resource to help you overcome whatever challenges you're facing.

Overcome Anxiety & Stress by Changing How Your Mind Works includes

- A 35 page mini ebook explaining how to treat stress, anxiety and related symptoms at the source (link provided inside)
- A 20 minute audio you can download and listen to daily, and at stressful moments, to calm and rejuvenate your mind and body – and improve your health and performance under pressure.

Discover how to change the way your mind and body work under stress to find a new calmness, good health, and high performance under pressure - more capable of handling whatever life brings.