



The
QuietMind
Series

Volume 1:

Reducing Anxiety

*Written by: Loretta Oleck LCSWR
Photography by: Linton Suttner*

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**WELLNESS
REPRODUCTIONS
& PUBLISHING**

A Brand of The Guidance Group

1-800-669-9208

www.guidance-group.com

The QuietMind Series: Volume 1: Reducing Anxiety
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ISBN: 978-1-893277-59-5

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Printed in the United States of America.

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About The QuietMind Series:

The *QuietMind* series grew out of the clinical work I have been doing in my private psychotherapy practice over the past 15 years. When clients of all ages used *QuietMind* exercises, visualizations, meditations, and affirmations, they were better equipped to manage feelings and control behaviors.

Who can use the QuietMind series?

- Children, adolescents, and adults with issues that include impaired self-esteem, Attention Deficit Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, anxiety, grieving, depression, and/or addictions.
- Professionals such as therapists, educators, counselors, and medical practitioners can utilize the *QuietMind* series with their students, clients, or patients.
- Parents and caregivers can use the *QuietMind* series with their children or adolescents.
- Individuals can use the *QuietMind* series on their own.

QuietMind works on:

- Exercising whole brain activity
- Strengthening healthy, positive neural pathways
- Deepening access to and from the conscious to the subconscious
- Balancing brain hemispheres

In more practical terms, it creatively helps to better deal with issues in an easy, effective, and timely manner.

As each person has a unique and different learning style, *QuietMind* utilizes a holistic approach in its aims.

Incorporating visual cues, kinesthetic/movement activities, and imagination, the series is successfully able to engage each person in the manner that best suits their style.

With the particular approaches in mind, Linton Suttner, a filmmaker and photographer, edited the arrangement and composition of each print to influence the experience of the person viewing the photo. Each photo is linked to specific visualizations, guided meditations, exercises, affirmations, or particular questions. The photos have been chosen to elicit communication, stimulate deeper dialogue, and enhance behavioral change. The goal is that each photo acts as a catalyst for deeper self-reflection and more open discussions resulting in healthier behavior.

The goal of the activities, visualizations, meditations, and affirmations is to more readily access an inner calm and confidence in both body and mind. By drawing out a greater sense of emotional strength and peace, *QuietMind* helps with a variety of processes and problems.

The activities, meditations, exercises, and visualizations can be used as suggested or more loosely depending on an individual's goals, or by the treatment objectives outlined by a therapist.

The *QuietMind* series was created with the intention of providing individuals, professionals, educators, or parents with a variety of interesting, creative, and helpful activities to better communicate and explore feelings as well as modify behaviors. The goal of the *QuietMind* series is that when used on a regular basis, the individual will more easily integrate the various goals of the visuals and exercises. This in turn will speed up the process of modifying targeted behaviors, relieving stress, and feeling a better sense of self.

How to use the QuietMind series:

There are different ways to use the *QuietMind* series. Much will depend on who is using it. A therapist working with a client will very likely choose to use the series in a different way than a child viewing the photos before bed with a parent. All of the uses, however, will be more effective if reviewed regularly in order to integrate the benefits. Using the series in a quiet, safe environment is key to its effectiveness.

Outlined below are some variations for use:

1. When used by a therapist or counselor:

- Choose a photo and exercise that is linked to the client's particular issues. These do not have to be used in any specific order.
- Allow the client to view the photo. While the client is viewing the photo, read the visualization/activity to the client. Keep your voice steady and gentle, emphasizing a sense of calm and acceptance. Read slowly so the client can clearly follow directions and not feel rushed.
- You may also choose to use the photo without the exercises by generating questions to the client regarding the photo.
- The therapist can also choose to use the exercises without sharing the photo.
- Avoid questions with yes/no answers. If the answer is yes or no, encourage further elaboration and reflection.
- Encourage explanations and exploration of feelings.

2. When working with children:

- Encourage use of imagination.
- When you view the photos, encourage the child to make up a story or write a poem about the photo, or draw their own picture of the same subject matter. The child can dictate their story/poem and you can write it down.
- Make colored pens and paper available.
- Make sure the child is comfortable and has a relaxing, quiet place to work.
- Record one of the visualizations in a gentle, accepting voice for the child to take home and listen to later.

3. When using the series for yourself:

- Skim through the photos and choose to work with one that naturally appeals to you.
- Do not judge yourself. There is no wrong or right way to use the series. Reflect on the photo. Read the exercise and try it out.
- Take your time.
- Be creative. Allow your thoughts to roam and see what spontaneously comes up.
- Be mindful of the moment while engaging in the exercise by trying to avoid distractions (both internal and external).

The QuietMind series includes:

Volume 1: Reducing Anxiety

Volume 2: Harnessing ADD/ADHD

Volume 3: Resolving Grief

Volume 4: Increasing Self-Esteem

Volume 5: Dealing With Addiction

The QuietMind Series:

Volume One: Reducing Anxiety

Whether you are personally suffering from anxiety, or you are a professional therapist, a parent, a caretaker, or an educator, *The QuietMind Series Volume I: Reducing Anxiety* will add to your repertoire of techniques to help alleviate stress, worry, tension, and anxiety.

WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety can be divided into four categories:

1. Generalized anxiety
2. Panic disorder
3. Phobias
4. Social anxiety disorder

Generalized Anxiety:

- This is characterized by a chronic and uncontrollable feeling of exaggerated worry even when there is nothing rational to worry about.
- Often characterized by “what-if” thinking and/or over generalization such as using words like “never” and “always.”
- May be accompanied by physical symptoms such as fatigue, difficulty concentrating, headaches, nausea, difficulty sleeping, heart racing, sweating, and/or other symptoms.

Panic Disorder:

- Characterized by panic attacks or the fear of having a panic attack.
- Are often accompanied by heart racing, feeling faint, shortness of breath, trembling, and/or other symptoms.

Phobias

- Are intense fears about specific places, situations, animals, or things that in reality pose very little or no threat.
- The most common categories of phobias include:
 - Animals:** triggered by animals and insects (examples: dogs, spiders, snakes, etc.)
 - Natural environment:** triggered by elements found in nature (examples: rain, wind, thunder, lightening, heights, water, dark, etc.)

Situational: triggered by specific situations (examples: enclosed spaces, flying, doctors and dentists, driving, etc.)

Blood, injection, medication, or injury: fear of medical procedures, doctor/dentists visits, blood, pills and injections, etc.

Social Anxiety Disorder

- Characterized by feeling nervous and self-conscious in social situations.
- Includes any interaction with at least one other person.
- Can include situations where there is possibility of being observed and judged. (Examples: public speaking, entering a room full of people, going to school, eating in front of others, etc.)
- Can include interpersonal relationships. (Examples: talking on the phone, dating, or meeting new people, etc.)

Additional Facts about Anxiety:

- It is one of the most common emotional disorders in the United States.
- It can cause physical symptoms such as stomachaches, headaches, nausea, rashes, difficulty breathing, sleep problems, etc.
- It can cause irritability, depression, attention issues, and more.
- It can be about school, family, travel, separation, divorce, health, friends, weather, darkness, terrorism, and war, among many other subjects.
- It can be treated in a variety of ways including medication, cognitive-behavioral therapy, exposure therapy and desensitization, hypnosis, biofeedback, counseling, and nutritional counseling.

Volume 1:
Reducing Anxiety

#1 HANDS



#1 Hands

Place your hands in front of you.
Open your palms and place your
hands together as if you are
scooping up water.

Tip your head down gently.
Be aware of your breath.
Inhale and exhale three times.
Breathe In through your nose
and out through your mouth.

On the third breath, allow all anxious
feelings and thoughts to fall softly
from your mind, tumbling out
with your exhale and into the waiting
open palms of your hands.

Feel your hands getting heavier
and fuller with the weight
of all these burdensome
thoughts and feelings.

Allow all of your anxiety
to weigh down your hands
as if you are holding a lead weight.

You are going to release the heaviness,
throw away the anxious inner voice
and tense feelings.

Focus on your cupped hands
that are holding the heavy pile of anxiety.
When you are ready, it is time
to toss them away.

Watch and feel your stress
being cast off, rolling away,
evaporating, or merely vanishing.

Be acutely aware of your hands.
Now, they are light and free.

Shake out your hands.

Concentrate on taking
three more deep, cleansing breaths.

Feel them entering through your nose and
expanding your belly.
Now exhale through your mouth.
Feel the stress leaving your body and mind.
You are more relaxed and lighter.

Discussion:

1. What did the anxiety look like in your mind's eye?
2. Was the anxiety like a lead ball rolling away?
3. Was it a light pile of anxiety that dispersed in the air?
4. Try to describe what the anxiety looked like when you flung it away.
5. What did the anxiety feel like in your hands?

Idea:

Hold objects of varying weights in your hands. Link a worry to each object. For example, if you are resting a feather in your open hand, imagine which of your worries or concerns feels this light. Pick up a heavy book. Feel how this weighs down your hands. Which worries or fears feel this heavy? How does it feel when you release the heavier objects? Imagine you are releasing the burdens of your anxiety.

#2 TRAIN TRACKS



#2 Train Tracks

Visualize a train.
See it in your mind's eye.

What color is it?

What kind of train is it?
Does it chug along or speed?

The train track does not wind around
in loops or circles but instead this train
is traveling on a straight track.

See the train slowing down in front of you
and opening its doors.

Choose to place some or all
of your anxious thoughts and feelings
in a large suitcase or box.

Close your eyes and imagine
lifting this box or suitcase
filled with your worries.

Feel the box or suitcase in your arms.

Reach out and place the suitcase or box
onto the train.

See the doors of the train shut.

Your worries are now on the train.

You are standing at the station
watching the train leave,
heading away from you.

You stand quietly watching the train
travel into the distance
down the long train tracks,
appearing smaller and smaller
until it is no longer visible to your eye.

You might hear a faint rumble
or even see a bit of smoke in the distance
but the train has disappeared.

The train, carrying your anxious
thoughts and feelings,
is gone.

Allow yourself to feel more relaxed
and less anxious, more present
and ready to experience the day.



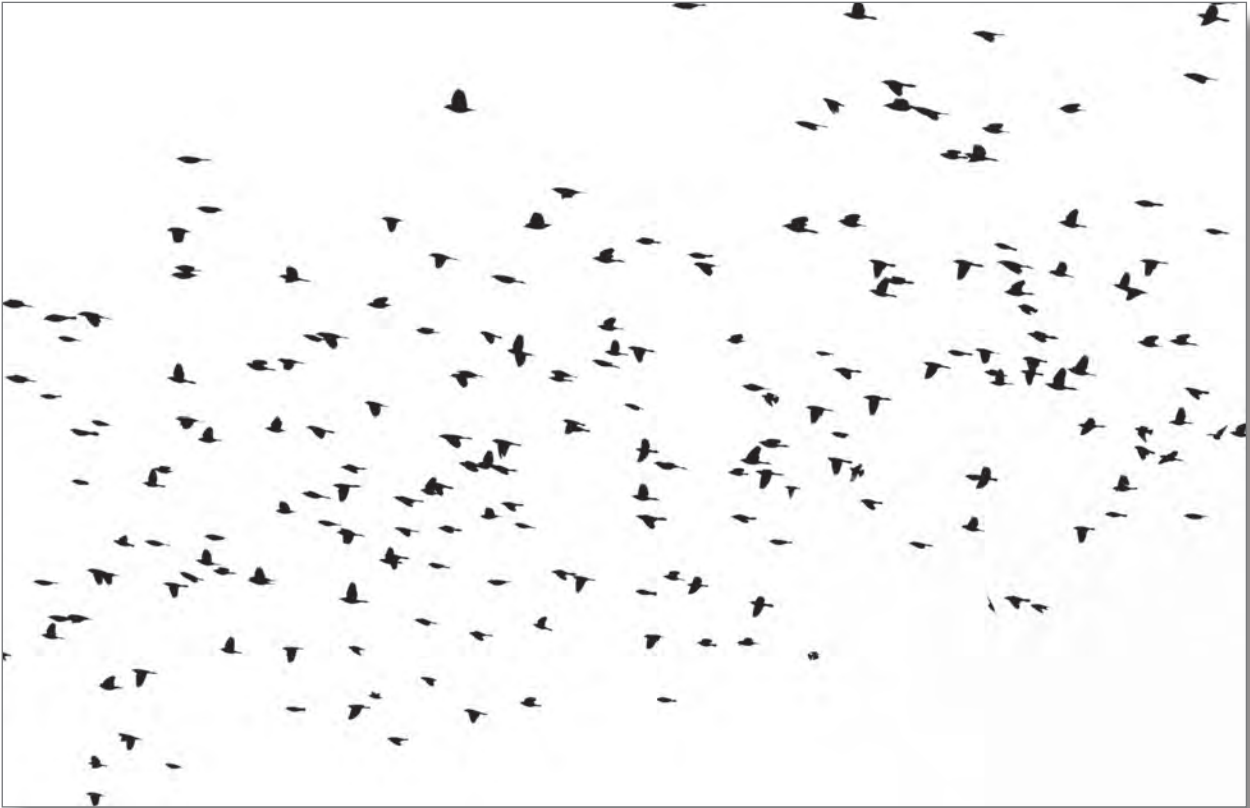
Discussion:

1. Were there any particular worries or concerns that you did not want to put on the train?
2. Which worries or concerns do you feel the need to hold onto? How long have you held onto these particular anxieties?
3. Reflect on why you think they have been important to hold onto. What function have they served?

Idea:

When working with children, suggest making a worry box. Whenever the child is worried, ask him/her to draw the worry or name it on paper. Then place the paper into the worry box. Explain that once the worry is in the box, the child no longer has to carry it.

#3 BIRDS



#3 Birds

Imagine these birds are flying away to a special place, a place that you can see in your mind's eye.

Maybe you have been there or maybe you are just creating it.

It is a place that makes you feel relaxed and at ease.

Maybe it is a beach at sunset, a mountaintop on a warm summer day, or cuddled up on your grandma's cozy couch under a soft blanket.

There are no right or wrong places. It is entirely up to you.

Spend a few moments remembering this special place.

As you view the photo of the birds,
imagine that as they fly,
they are traveling towards this place
that is free of stress and tension.
It is a peaceful sanctuary
where they do not feel worried or anxious.

Close your eyes and now imagine
that you are one of these birds soaring away
from all of your stress and anxiety,
flying to that special place.

Whenever you are feeling anxious,
allow the flying flock to remind you
to visualize an environment
that feels nurturing and safe.

Take a moment to close your eyes,
relax, and fly away
to your special sanctuary.

Discussion:

1. Can you describe your special place in detail?
2. What does it look like?
3. Describe the colors.
4. What does it smell like?
5. Imagine touching the environment.
6. What do you feel?
7. What do you hear?
8. Use all your senses to describe your special place.

Idea:

Draw a picture of your own special place or if you have a personal photo of this place, you can tape it on a wall where you can view it daily. Let it serve as a reminder of calm and relaxation.

#4 ROCK



#4 Rock

Look at the photograph of the rocks.

Be reminded that like a rock,
there is a part of you that is
strong, solid, and secure.

Like the photograph where one rock
balances securely on top of the other,
you are able to find your own
balance and equilibrium.

Put your hands on your belly.

Breathe in and out three times.

Be conscious of your breathing
by breathing deeply and slowly.

When you inhale, feel your belly expand.

Imagine that the breath nurtures your strength
and expands your ability to tolerate stress.

Allow the photograph to serve
as a visual reminder of your strength
and your stability.

You are stronger than you think you are.
Whatever happens, you can cope.

Ideas:

Sometimes keeping a small stone in your pocket is a tangible way to remind yourself of your inner strength. When you feel anxious, rub the stone between your fingers and feel it's solid composition.

This can become your touchstone, a reminder of your personal resiliency and strength.

The stone can also symbolize mindfulness. Whether you are looking at the photo of the rock or holding a stone in your hand, be mindful of how it looks or feels. Is it rough or smooth? Is it grey, brown, or speckled? Is it cool or warm?

Be mindful of yourself in the present moment touching the stone.

Give yourself permission to be in the moment and push away any "what-if" thoughts that may be creeping in.

Do not use this moment to dwell on the past or the future.

You are learning to be conscious of the present moment and mindful of reality as opposed to allowing for anxious thoughts that are often based in unreality.

Discussion:

1. Discuss what strategies and strengths you have used to better cope with your anxiety.
2. Look at the list below. How and when have you used these coping skills to help you?
 - Humor
 - Exercise
 - Being with loved ones/friends
 - Conscious breathing
 - Meditation

#5 LADDER



#5 Ladder

Imagine each rung of the ladder represents one of your worries or fears, with your greatest worry perched at the top and your least menacing worry sitting on the lowest rung.

Now, picture yourself standing on this ladder. Choose where you place yourself on the ladder.

You have the choice to climb down the ladder, away from the more tense and provoking worries, or you can climb higher, towards the more intense and intrusive anxieties.

Now, imagine yourself climbing down the ladder from where you pictured yourself, one rung at a time.

See yourself moving further away from your anxiety and closer to the solid earth where you feel centered and secure.

Idea:

Write a list of your worries from most intense to least intense. Writing them in this order will help you to see which worries you can begin to tackle more easily.

The hierarchy of worries will help you to more clearly see your progress and help you to decide which worry you next want to work on.

Discussion:

Reflect on your hierarchy of worries and then ask the question "Why?" after each worry. This will help to direct you to a significant feeling masked by the anxiety.

For example, if you are anxious about going to school, your hierarchy of fears may look like this:

I don't want to walk into a classroom.

Why?

I don't want to ask a stupid question.

Why?

I don't want to look dumb.

Why?

I don't want to feel like a failure.

Why?

1. Discuss and explore your feelings. What messages or influences in your life have impacted you to carry this negative view of yourself?
2. Discuss how your core beliefs and feelings perpetuate your anxiety.
3. Discuss ways to dissolve negative messages.

#6 TREE



#6 Tree

Like a tree swaying in the wind,
you are developing flexibility.

Anxiety often stems from an inability
to let go of certain thoughts and habits.

If we try to order everything in a very specific way,
we set our selves up for anxiety and frustration.

Like a tree, stand firm
but allow for flexibility.

Now, stand up and feel your two feet
firmly planted on the ground.

Imagine feeling the earth below you.

Relax your body and notice the natural
and necessary sway to your body.

This sway is important
because it clues you in

to your own natural ability
to let life flow more freely.

Like a tree swaying in nature,
sway from side-to-side.

You do not have to spend
energy trying to control
your inner and outer environment.

Lightly swaying back and forth
reminds you to be flexible.

A tree that sways is stronger
than a rigid tree.

A rigid tree may snap
and fall over in the wind
whereas a flexible tree will bend easily
and go with the flow.

Give yourself permission to let go of control,
have faith that things will be okay.

Allow yourself to feel your weight shift
from one foot to the other with a gentle rhythm.

Feel yourself swaying like a tree
thus being in touch with your own flexibility

and willingness to do things
and look at things differently.

Close your eyes.
Feel your feet firmly planted on the ground.
They are like roots being nurtured by soil.

Feel the energy of earth nurturing you,
giving you hope and courage.

Feel the natural sway of your body
moving gently from one foot to the other.

Like a tree, the goal in life
is to grow, evolve, and be flexible.
It is not to be rigid.

Discussion:

1. Can you remember times that you were too rigid or controlling?
How did this affect your life?
2. Can you remember times that you were flexible?
3. What was the outcome of the two vastly different ways of being in the world?

Idea:

If working with children:

Ask the child to make believe he/she is a tree. Have the child be a flexible tree swaying gently in the wind.

Now ask the child to sway more strongly as if he/she is in the middle of a storm.

Now ask the child to stand as a rigid tree that does not sway or move.

Tell him/her to stand as still as a statue.

Discuss how different rigidity and flexibility feels in their body.

#7 CLOUDS



#7 Clouds

View the photograph of the clouds.

Clouds are always moving.

They are always changing form and passing through the sky.

Like a cushion of soft clouds, you want to create a nurturing environment to buffer you during stressful times.

It is important to make yourself as comfortable as possible while you allow your anxiety to pass through you like a cloud.

Physically, sit or relax in a comfortable position.

Take off your shoes.

Wiggle your feet.

Stretch your arms over your head.

Breathe deeply in and out.

Allow the cloud photograph to remind you of the transient nature of anxiety.

Your anxious moment will pass.

Now using self-talk to calm yourself down, gently remind yourself that like a cloud, your anxiety will eventually float away and you will be okay.

You are okay even when you feel anxious.

You are safe.

Anxiety does not create any real danger.

Like a cloud, anxiety will sail away.



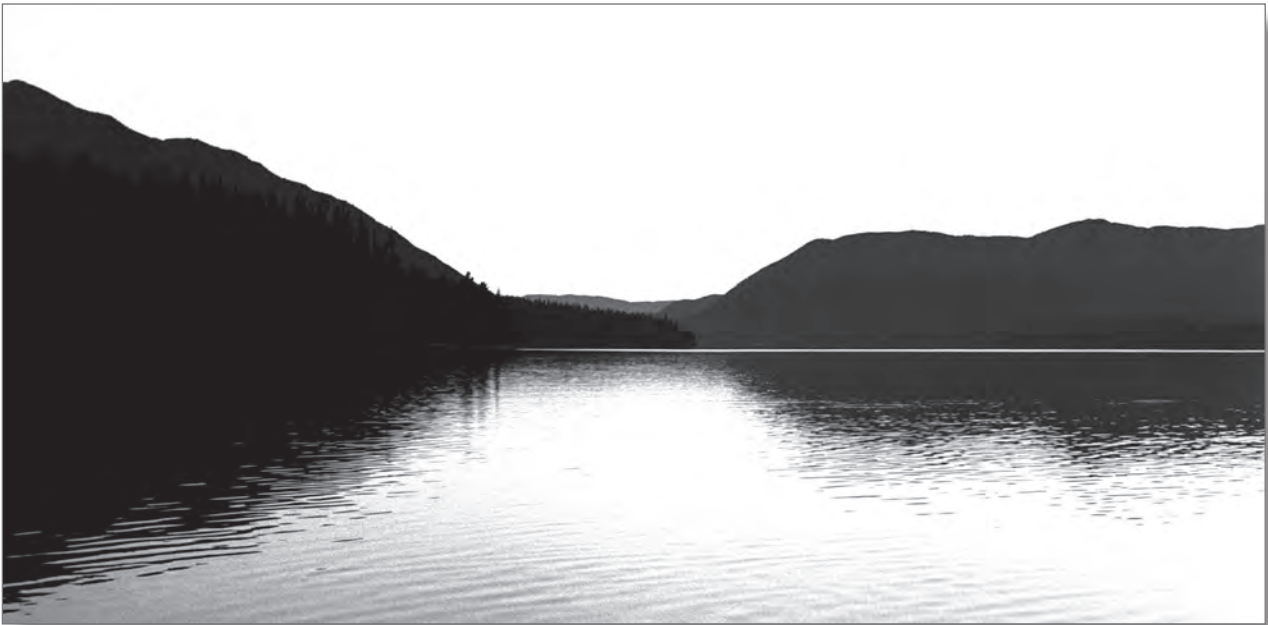
Discussion:

Think of a worry that you would like to see float away.

Idea:

Lie outside on a blanket and look up at the clouds in the sky. Imagine that their shapes are images of your fears. For example, if you are afraid of dogs, find a cloud formation that appears to be in the image of a dog. Watch how the dog cloud transforms and dissipates. Imagine that you can do this with your fears.

#8 WATER



#8 Water

Sometimes people feel anxious when they have too much clutter in their minds, too many thoughts and expectations, fears, or anticipation.

In order to simplify life and live with less stress, you will need to remove some of the clutter.

Reflect on the stillness of the photograph.

Imagine the healing power of water washing over and through your mind and body, washing away the accumulated clutter.

Take three deep breaths and sink into a more relaxed state with each breath.

Imagine pure, cool water flowing over all of your persistent anxious thoughts, diluting them and then washing them away.

If it helps, play with water.

Splash cool water on your face to remind you of this exercise.

Allow running water to flow over your hands.

Give yourself the permission to let your thoughts gently flow away from your mind and body.

Give yourself the space and room for quiet and peace.

Discussion:

1. If you had more internal space would you feel more active, energized, creative, and present?
2. If you cleared the clutter from your physical environment would you feel any differently?

Idea:

The "Water" exercise can remind you to de-clutter not only your internal jumble of thoughts but also to de-clutter your outside environment by more effectively organizing your room or home. Throw away unnecessary accumulations.

#9 MANTRA



#9 Mantra

Focus on the abstract photograph
and allow your mind to conjure up a word.

If you cannot think of a word, choose one from the
words below:

PEACE

RELAX

RELEASE

BREATHE

REST

STRENGTH

COURAGE

HEAL

FAITH

CALM

LOVE

LAUGH

BLISS

ABUNDANCE

BEAUTY

This word will be today's personal mantra or affirmation.

Practice saying the word at different times during the day.

See the word in your mind's eye.

When you feel anxious, repeat the chosen word in your mind or in a whisper.

Hear the way it sounds when you repeat it.

Feel the way it rolls off your tongue.

Try not to think of anything else but this word.

You are ridding yourself of stress and anxiety and filling yourself with the calmness and healing of the chosen mantra.

Do you see an image linked to this word?
What color is it?

Imagine the essence of the word's meaning entering you with each deep inhale of breath, helping you to feel calmer, less anxious, and stronger.



Discussion:

Words are powerful tools in helping with anxiety. Can you remember and discuss any literature, poetry, fables, stories, or quotes that made an impact on you?

Ideas:

Children often respond better to rhymes than words. Rhymes can serve as easy reminders of affirmations.

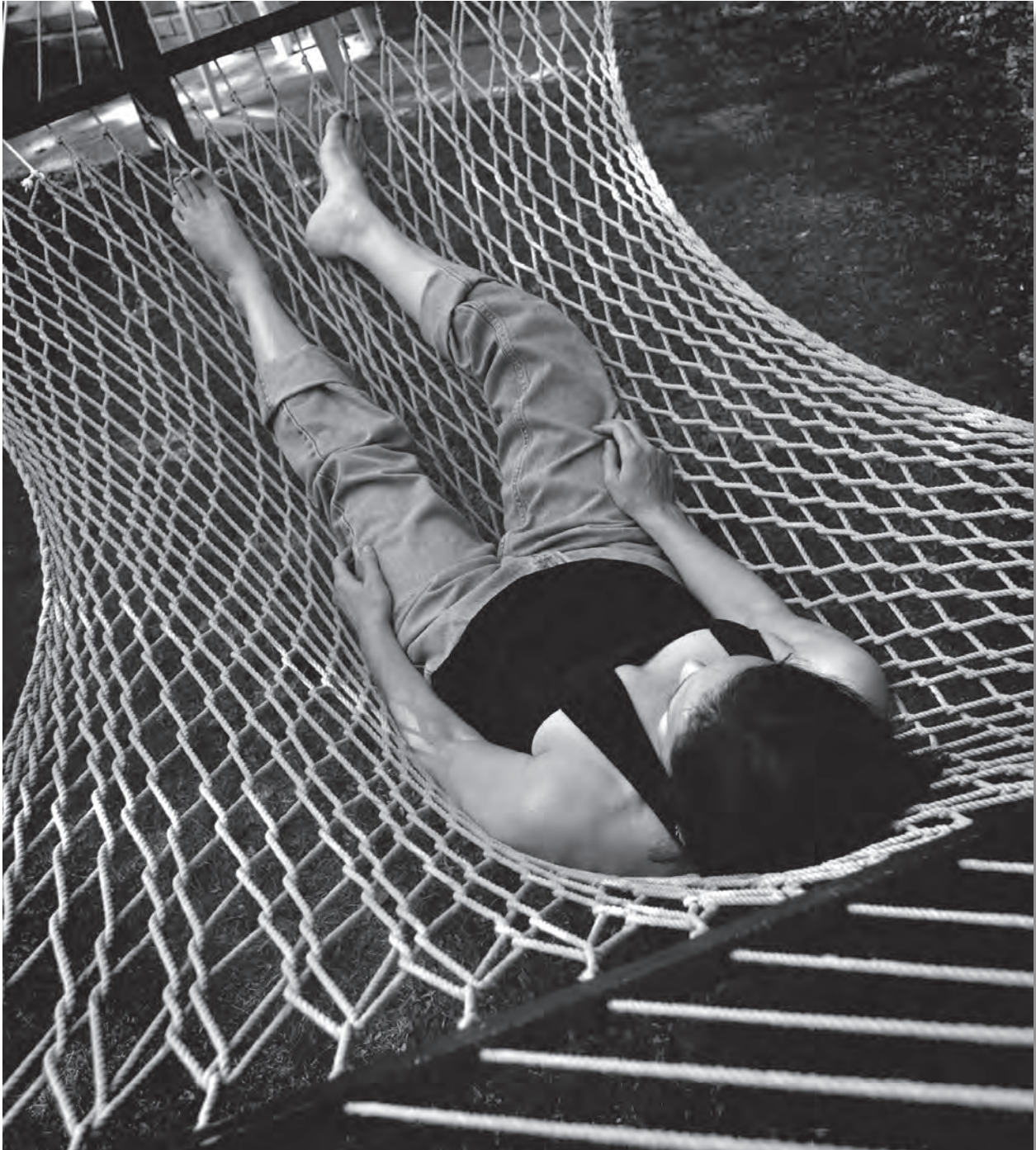
For example:

- One two three, I feel stress free
- Be right here, nothing to fear
- Breathing deep helps me to sleep

You can also ask the child to create their own silly rhymes such as:

- Ring-a-ding-ding, I can face anything!
- My fears are melting away so I can have a fun day.

#10 PROGRESSIVE MUSCULAR RELAXATION



#10 Progressive Muscular Relaxation

Progressive muscular relaxation is a two-step process.

One, you will focus on the tensing of specific muscle groups.

Two, you will release the tension in each muscle group allowing stress to dissolve.

Begin with your right side.

Focus on your toes on your right foot.
Tense your toes and hold for five seconds.
One, two, three, four, five.
Now, release the tension and feel your toes relax.
Wiggle them to relax and release the energy.

Next, focus on your left foot.
Tense your toes for five seconds.
One, two, three, four, five.

Now, release the tension
and again feel your toes relax.
Wiggle them to further relax
and release the excess energy.

Alternating from right to left,
take your time holding tense
and then relaxing your right and left sides,
your ankles, calves, knees, and thighs.

Take your time.

Slow down.

Focus on your body
and all the sensations that you feel.

After tensing and releasing
the tension in your legs,
focus on your stomach.

Move slowly up your torso,
to your chest and neck, shoulders,
and then your face.

When focusing on your face,
start with your chin, mouth, nose,
cheeks, eyes, and forehead.

Scrunch up your face.
Hold the tension.


Now relax all the muscles in your face.

Scrunch up your face again.
Feel the release of tension
when your facial muscles let go.

When you finally reach the very top of your head,
imagine all of your tension and anxiety
leaving you through the crown of your head.

Take three deep cleansing breaths.

Use the photograph as a visual reminder
to take time to relax your mind and body.



Discussion:

1. Was engaging in the muscular relaxation exercise difficult? If so, what made it challenging?
2. Did thoughts enter your mind and distract you from relaxing?
3. Did you find certain parts of your body more tense than others?

Ideas:

It is not easy to develop the patience to complete this exercise. Be forgiving. Do what you are able to do.

Use progressive muscular relaxation at bedtime to help you fall asleep more easily.

Practicing this exercise helps you to become more aware of your body and what it feels like in different states. You will learn to deeply feel the difference between a tense or stressed body and a relaxed one.

#11 RELATIONSHIP



#11 Relationship

Anxiety feels less acute and more hopeful when we feel connected to others.

Reflect on the photograph.
It is instinctual to reach out for a relationship.
Supportive relationships have the power to help you overcome many odds.

Think of someone that you feel secure and safe with.
Imagine his or her warm eyes and soft smile.

See his or her face and feel a calmness begin to settle over you.

Imagine that he or she reaches out their hand to hold your hand.

Feel the caring in the warmth of his or her hand.

Now, tell yourself that you are not alone.

Discussion:

1. Try to remember and then discuss various times in your life when others have helped you. What was it like to be the recipient of help?
2. Is it difficult or easy for you to ask for help? What does it mean about you if you need help from others?
3. Do you remember a time when you helped someone else with either an emotional issue or a physical task? What was it like for you to help someone else?

Ideas:

Write or keep a list of those people you can reach out to in anxious moments. Gather their telephone numbers or email addresses and keep them in an accessible place.

If you cannot think of anyone, is there someone new that you can create a relationship with? Maybe it's a family member, a friend, a counselor, or a teacher.

One or two supportive connections will go a long way in helping you to feel connected and less alone.

Looking at a photograph of a loved one will sometimes act as a calming trigger during anxious times.

Tape a photo of a loved one on a wall where you can be visually reminded that you are not alone. Let it serve as a reminder of whom you can call when you feel worried and anxious.

#12 THICK ICE



#12 Thick Ice

This photograph serves as a metaphor for all the fears built on unrealities, fears that are not really dangerous nor foreboding.

The thick ice represents all the anxieties that APPEAR dangerous but are really safe.

Thick ice may appear dangerous but in reality, it is not.

We all know that thin ice is dangerous but thick ice is steady and strong.

This photograph is a reminder that not everything that appears frightening is actually frightening.
Anxiety is created by fear,

fear of things that seem or appear dangerous and threatening but are actually harmless.

Now, take a moment to imagine stepping onto a block of solid, thick ice.

You may feel tentative or fearful.

Imagine taking each step slowly.

Do not judge yourself.

Keep imagining yourself walking and begin to feel the solid nature of the ice below your feet.

The ice is a strong and solid block. It will not crack or break.

Feel yourself being supported by the thick ice.

Although at first the situation appeared dangerous, you are feeling more assured that it is safe.



Discussion:

Can you think about, write, or discuss how your particular fears appear dangerous but in reality are safe?

Idea:

Look through magazines and cut out pictures of images that have the potential to be worrisome to you. Make a collage of these images and then write or draw on the collage to create a safer picture.

For example, if you are afraid of dogs, you may draw a leash on the image of the dog or a fence around it.

If you are worried about being in social groups and you have used an image of a group of people, you may draw bubbles above their heads and write welcoming, inviting, and inclusive phrases or words in the bubble, such as, "I hope to make a new friend."

#13 FOREGROUND/ BACKGROUND



#13 Foreground/Background

This exercise helps you to decrease the potency of your anxiety without resolving it or dissolving it. The idea is to take a worry that is foreground and make it background.



Look at the photograph.

It is possible to focus on the books in the foreground, the flowers mid-ground, or the sofa in the background.

Now allow yourself to track your focus to all the different images.

Notice that the background image of the sofa is blurrier than the mid-ground or foreground images.

Reflect on the idea that you have the control

to place your anxiety
into a background position
where it will be out of focus
and less powerful.

Instead of allowing
your anxious thoughts and feelings
to maintain the foreground position,
either pick a new focus
and make that foreground
or place your anxious thoughts
into the background position.

The anxiety does not disappear
but it becomes less potent.

Keep positive thoughts
and less anxious feelings foreground.

Discussion:

1. How do you decide if a worry or fear will be foreground or background?
2. If you are able to move it to the background, what will you replace in the foreground?

Idea:

Sometimes it is helpful to allow the anxious thoughts to be foreground for a certain length of time, about five minutes.

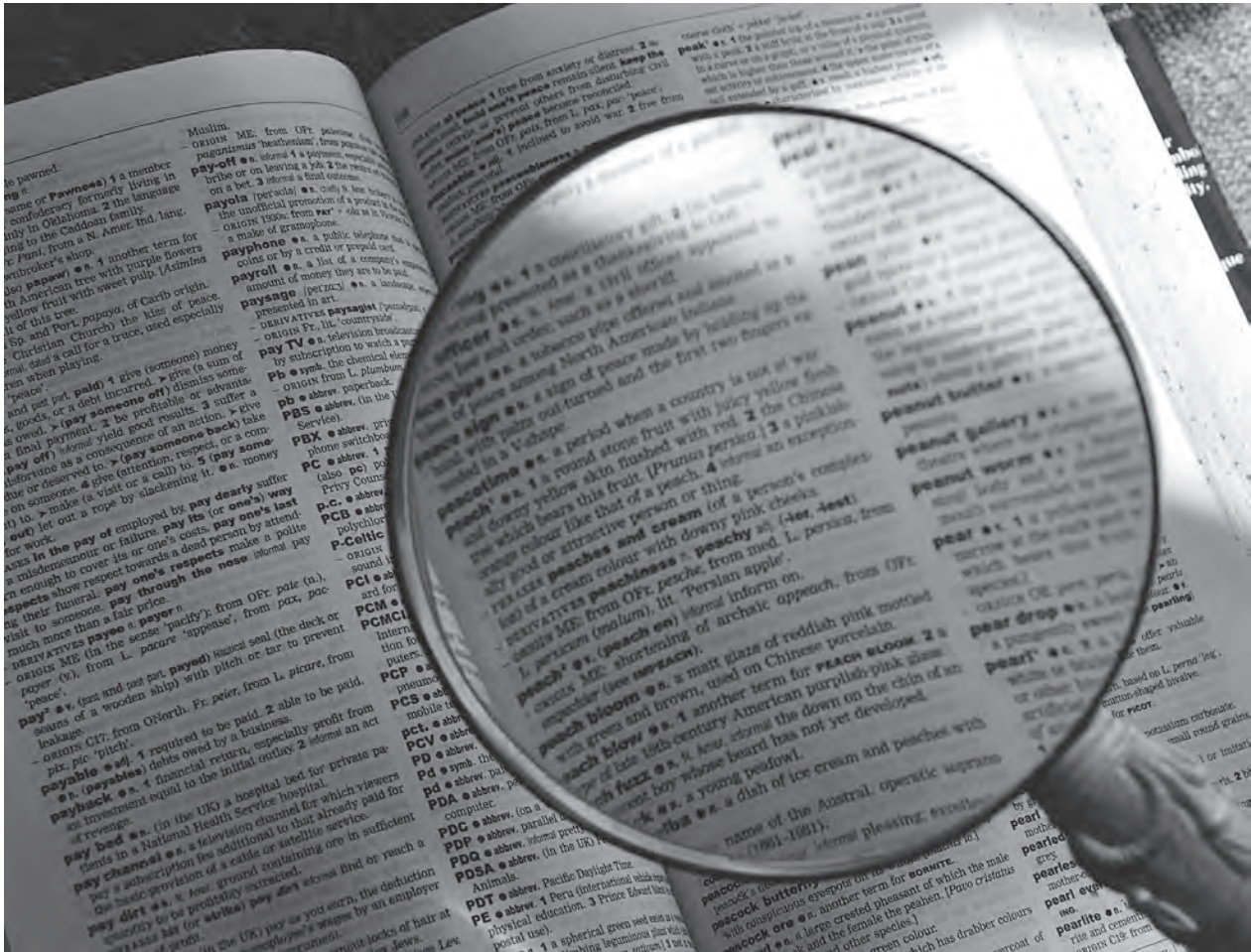
This gives you time to focus on your thoughts without feeling ashamed or guilty that you are experiencing them.

Time yourself with your watch or a clock.

For five minutes, the anxious thoughts are allowed to be foreground.

When the five minutes have passed, consciously move the anxious thoughts to a mid-ground or background position.

#14 CHANGE PERSPECTIVE



#14 Change Perspective

Changing your perspective means thinking less in “black and white” or “all or nothing” terms and more in the grey zone.

Changing your perspective means easing up on your perfectionism, being less hard on yourself, less judgmental, and giving yourself room for error or mistakes.

Changing your perspective means that you stop jumping to conclusions about yourself, your abilities, or other people or situations.

Changing perspective means you have the control over your anxieties to magnify them or decrease their power.

Reflect on the photograph.

The closer *you* place the magnifying glass to an object, the larger the object appears.

Depending on how *you* hold the glass, the object may look distorted or even unclear.

Think of one of *your* worries.

Imagine placing *your* worry under a magnifying glass.

In order to change your perspective regarding your fears or anxieties, you need to experiment with where and how to hold the magnifying glass.

Now you are ready to change your perspective.

Look at your fear from a different vantage point.

Reframe it.

Turn the glass in different directions.

Move the glass entirely away from your worry. The worry will immediately appear smaller.

When you move the magnifying glass closer towards your worry, the worry grows larger.

Turn your worry over to see what it looks like on the other side.

Don't hold onto a worry in its original form.

You are in charge of your worries.
They are not in charge of you.

Allow the photograph to be a visual reminder
that you can choose to use your mind's eye
like a magnifying glass
by either zooming in on the worry
or choosing to pull back your focus
so the worry becomes smaller
and less apparent.

Idea:

Write a worry on a piece of paper.

Write as small as possible.

Using a real magnifying glass, read the written words describing your worry through the glass.

See how the worry can appear larger or smaller depending on how and where you hold the glass.

This is a reminder that tiny worries can often be magnified under certain circumstances.

You have a choice to decrease the magnification of your anxieties.

Discussion:

1. Discuss the concept of *all or nothing* thinking.
2. Are you a *black and white* thinker versus someone that can see the *gray zone*?
3. Do you often use words such as *always*, and *never*? Discuss how using these words cut you off from possibilities.

#15 FLOODING



#15 Flooding

This *QuietMind* activity is difficult because it can cause some temporary emotional discomfort.

It is suggested that you engage in this activity with the support of a counselor or therapist.

The idea of flooding is to accept your anxiety and to stop fighting against it or distracting yourself away from it.

This exercise is about fully experiencing your anxiety, and in turn, realizing it is just a feeling or sensation and cannot hurt you.

Reflect on the photograph.
Imagine a rush of water.

For a few minutes, allow yourself to think of any anxious thoughts you may have.

Imagine an anxiety producing situation.
On a scale of 1-10, raise your anxiety to a 7 or 8.

Stay with your rushing anxiety.
Allow it in.
It will not harm you.

Now breathe deeply.
Inhale and exhale.

Now tell yourself that you are
exactly the same person
that you were before
you let in your anxiety.

Nothing has changed.
You are still you.

Take another conscious deep breath.
Inhale through your nose
and exhale through your mouth.

In this moment, nothing bad
is happening to you.

Despite the anxiety, you are safe.

Now, acknowledge and congratulate yourself
for being able to tolerate your anxious feelings
without any negative consequences.

Repeat some of the below phrases:

“Even though I am feeling anxious,
I fully accept myself.”

“Even though I feel worried,
nothing bad is happening to me.”

“Even though I am feeling anxious,
I know I am okay.”

“My anxiety won’t harm me.”

Exposure and flooding, paradoxically, helps to alleviate anxiety and helps you to become more aware of rational versus irrational thoughts.

The goals of flooding include:

- Learning to catch yourself when your thoughts seem irrational
- Learning to tolerate and cope with uncomfortable feelings
- Learning that although anxiety doesn't feel good, it cannot harm you
- Learning that anxiety passes

Discussion:

1. Discuss what you do when you are anxious. What happens to your body? Where do you tense? Do you get a headache? Stomach cramps? Do you sweat and feel light headed? Write a list or verbally discuss these physical symptoms.
2. Also discuss what happens in your mind. Do you begin to have a flooding of thoughts or do you think about one thing over and over? Discuss these internal sensations in as much detail as possible.

Idea:

Look at a photo or an image of your fear for five minutes. For example if you have a fear of stormy weather, look at a photograph of a storm. Be aware of what is going on internally when you view the photograph. What body sensations arise for you? What thoughts are going through your mind? Allow yourself to feel uncomfortable realizing that this discomfort will not harm you and it will eventually subside.

HELPFUL HINTS:

- The mind and body work together. Tune in to your body to preempt anxiety by learning triggers such as headaches, stomachaches, etc. Once you feel the trigger you can choose an exercise in the book to alleviate the stress.
- Anxiety is not an act of defiance. Don't get angry with yourself or others for being anxious. No one wants to feel this way.
- Anxiety often occurs before an event or situation, in anticipation. Catch yourself thinking "what-ifs." "What-ifs" will tear down your calm and make you more stressed. "What-ifs" project into the future. Strive to be mindful of the present. Be where you are in the moment and nowhere else.
- Remember that anxiety is an old pattern or habit that you have become accustomed to. Perhaps it even once served a purpose in your life. Habits and patterns are hard to change. The more aware you become of the peaceful, calm feelings inside of you, the more you can allow those feelings to grow and form new habits.
- If you can't turn your thoughts off, it is often helpful to make lists. This will relieve some of the symptoms of obsessing. Keep a pen and paper next to your bed for sleepless nights.
- Music can ease stress. Turn on music that makes you feel relaxed, calm, and peaceful.

Affirmations and Helpful Phrases:

HOW TO USE AFFIRMATIONS:

Repeat affirmations often in order to integrate them into your consciousness.

If you do not believe in the message or affirmation that you are repeating then it is important to first open yourself to their possibilities. For example, if you choose to say the affirmation "I am strong" but you feel weak, then you may need to add the following statements:

I am becoming open tomy strength

I am learningto be strong

I allow for...strength in my life

You can add these precursors (I am becoming open to, I am learning, I allow for) to any of the following affirmations in order to counter negative thoughts.

Ultimately, your goal is to let go of your counter statements. For example, if the affirmation is "I am lovable" then first you have to shed the embedded belief that you are "unlovable." This can be accomplished by identification and then release of negative beliefs and messages that you carry about your life.

For example, when using the affirmation "I am lovable," you may first want to say, "I release the belief that I am unlovable. I am learning that I am lovable."

AFFIRMATIONS AND HELPFUL PHRASES:

- I am strong
- I can cope
- I am stronger than I know
- I am part of something greater than myself
- Let go
- I know the difference between thoughts and reality
- I accept myself
- I don't have to be perfect
- I am stronger than my worries
- I am unique
- I love me
- Day by day
- Anxiety is not dangerous, just uncomfortable
- Breathe in and out
- All things are passing
- I am lovable

- I am safe
- I am loved
- I am brave
- I choose to be happy
- I am beautiful
- I choose to feel relaxed
- The anxiety will pass, it always does

The QuietMind Series includes five books combining clinically successful techniques, simple strategies, and creative visualizations. These are linked with unique photographs composed as visual prompts designed to encourage behavioral and emotional change. Although grounded in cognitive behavioral therapy, the books use a flexible and holistic approach. The series is suitable for any individual including parents, children, educators, and mental health professionals looking for practical and inspiring methods to modify or diminish negative symptoms.

Volume One: Reducing Anxiety provides creative opportunities to:

- Overcome fears
- Decrease feelings of apprehension
- Learn to relax
- Reduce triggers
- Build inner safety and calm

The QuietMind Series includes:

- Volume 1: Reducing Anxiety
- Volume 2: Harnessing ADD/ADHD
- Volume 3: Resolving Grief
- Volume 4: Increasing Self Esteem
- Volume 5: Dealing With Addiction

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ISBN: 978-1-893277-59-5



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