

a HeartMath e-Book



eliminating anxiety

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Eliminating Anxiety

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We appreciate and support your interest in the HeartMath System, and in learning how to use your own heart's intelligence as an efficient source of intuition and answers to apply to all areas of your life.

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Eliminating Anxiety

How would it feel to live with a lot less anxiety? Chances are you're curious about the topic of this e-booklet because you have some firsthand experience with feelings of anxiety that won't go away. Rest assured you're not alone in this predicament. Many people we train in HeartMath programs report ongoing high- to low-grade anxiety. It's possible that you may find yourself caught up in the same anxiety-producing lifestyle that others report: living in constant activity and stress, with too much to do, too much to juggle, and not enough time to do it all.

One person, we'll call him Matt, describes his experience like this:

"For a long time, my first experience of the day was a tension in my gut. 'Learn to relax more,' my doctor advised." Matt said he had finally decided to talk to his doctor after what seemed like years of waking up feeling like he never went to bed. "As soon as I opened my eyes, I would feel the accumulation of concerns and anxiety about the coming day. Often the discomfort would be because of some uncomfortable conversation I needed to have with someone. Just as frequently, it would be because I knew that no matter how much I could get accomplished that day, it wouldn't be enough, and new projects and obligations would come pouring in and piling up. Honestly as I look back on it I had an uncomfortable, edgy feeling going on almost all the time. One day I realized I was living with a general, anxious feeling that would never completely go away."

Matt is typical of many who suffer from a constant sense of anxiousness and dread. Anxiety like Matt's has become an epidemic. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, one in eight Americans between the ages of 18 and 54 now suffer from an anxiety disorder. Most people have some anxiety about themselves, their family or their future, which is understandable. Anxiety about the world's problems, climate changes, terrorism, and diseases is also understandable. But as people experience *unremitting* anxiety about these and other issues, the condition often turns into an anxiety habit that drains their energy and reduces their quality of life.

Part I: When Anxiety Becomes a Habit

One of the biggest problems with anxiety is that the more you experience it, in any of its common feelings or symptoms, the more these anxiety reactions become etched in your neural circuitry. Anxiety then becomes an *automatic response* to stressful thoughts and feelings. What happens is that your emotional system – your feeling world – can't stay balanced against the constant barrage of anxious feelings. This creates emotional oversensitivity and reactivity, which then contribute further to anxiety. As this process continues, anxiety becomes a habit that's hard to control.

Another problem is that when you experience chronic anxiety, it affects your body, as well as your mental and emotional state. Anxiety keeps the body flooded with stress hormones, which drain energy. This is what we call anxiety fatigue, and it is one of the most common reasons for chronic low energy or general fatigue that just won't seem to go away. Like so many people these days, you might find yourself

feeling “sick and tired of feeling sick and tired.”

Anxiety is a feeling, a type of emotion. One useful way of looking at feelings – emotions – is that they are *energy in motion*. Feelings can change quickly, and you have more control over your feelings than you may realize. One of the most hopeful new discoveries about emotions is that they don’t just “happen to us.” In fact, a growing body of research indicates that we have the ability to learn how to choose and direct many of our emotions, in the same way that we can choose and direct our thoughts. Our mental, emotional and physical systems all work together and we can learn how to synchronize the whole process for positive results. In fact, that’s what our heart’s intelligence is designed to do. This booklet is an introduction to show you how.

Whether you suffer from occasional or chronic anxiety, you can use the information in this e-booklet to help you lessen feelings of anxiety. As you will learn, HeartMath solutions for addressing anxiety differ from the usual interventions. This being said, it’s important to note that the material herein is not intended as medical advice, and by all means consult your doctor to see if your anxiety is related to a medical condition that needs treatment. Whether you are under the care of a health professional for an anxiety disorder or are just tired of having an ongoing feeling of low-grade anxiety, the HeartMath solutions can help. Through using some simple self-initiated techniques, you can learn to activate the power of your heart’s intelligence and increasingly release anxiety-provoking thoughts and anxious feelings.

Before proceeding, let’s take a few moments and relate the topic of

anxiety directly to you and your life right now. The following are common examples of mental or emotional anxiety symptoms. As you go through the list, see if any of these are common in your own experience.

- Ongoing or restless unease
- Chronic worry
- Free-floating anxious or fearful feelings
- Panic attacks
- Obsessive thoughts
- Phobias of any kind

Now, consider if you experience any physical symptoms. All of the following are commonly associated with chronic anxiety:

- Rapid or irregular heartbeats
- Tension headaches
- Tightening of chest or other chest pain
- Digestive problems
- Sweaty palms

It could be that simply by reviewing these lists of anxiety symptoms, you're sensing some discomfort as a result – that's not surprising. It can feel uncomfortable, at first, to get in touch with how you're really feeling inside. But take heart! As you use the HeartMath techniques for addressing your emotions and accessing your natural heart power and intelligence, you *can* transform a lot of anxiety.

HeartMath research conducted in the laboratory and through numerous clinical studies, shows that you can learn to harness the power of your own heart to change what you couldn't change before. You can learn to deal with the pressures of the moment so that stress and anxiety don't accumulate in your system. And, you can learn to release a lot of anxiety as it occurs and find more ease and security inside yourself. As you practice these solutions, you will start to rebuild your energy reserves and renew your hope and enthusiasm for life.

Part II: Managing Emotions

In learning to eliminate anxiety more often than not, you need to gain a new understanding of your feelings and how to manage uncomfortable emotions. A basic fact is that if you don't manage your emotions, then emotions will manage you. And when you feel like a victim of unwanted emotions, you can't find the ease you desire. As you learn how to develop the power of your heart's intent, you can progressively bring anxious thoughts and feelings under your management.

The place to begin is by sincerely wanting to shift out of anxiety patterns and habits. Some people prefer to hold onto anxiety because it's familiar and they think anxiety makes them feel more secure. But it doesn't. So wanting to get out of that trap is the first step. It's not as hard as you might think with tools and techniques to guide you and help you create a new place of inner security as you go.

Here's a simple tool to start with that often works wonders and quickly.

This tool is called *Notice and Ease*™. You can use *Notice and Ease* any time, night or day. It's easy to learn, remember, and practice. As with many of the HeartMath tools, the simplicity can cloak its power at first. So don't let simplicity keep you from giving it a try. Part of its effectiveness is that it *is* so simple.

Notice and Ease is a tool for admitting emotions and then easing them out of your experience. Using this technique can begin to release anxiety and other stressful feelings and stop their energy drain. Here are the steps.

Step 1. Notice and admit what you are feeling

Step 2. Try to name the feeling

Step 3. Tell yourself to e-a-s-e - as you gently focus in your heart, relax as you breathe, and e-a-s-e the stress out.

Notice and Ease – the keys to practicing the technique are right in the name. The first step is to really *notice* how you are feeling. You can't transform anxious emotions until you learn the power of noticing and admitting – to yourself, in the privacy of your own heart – *what you are feeling* and *how your body is responding*. By admitting a feeling, whatever it is—worry, anxiety, anger, hurt, resistance, numbness, or even a vague disturbance you can't put your finger on—you slow down the emotional energy running through your system. You loosen its grip on you, and this helps you regain control. Being honest about noticing

and then naming what you are feeling helps regulate your emotional energy and gives you more power.

This sounds simple, and it is, but it takes some objective self-observation. It requires slowing down a little and being open and honest with yourself. It's also important to recognize that no matter what you are feeling it's not bad. You don't have to be afraid to slow down and take a look. All of our emotional experiences are important to learn from.

Noticing, admitting and then naming what you're feeling is an important step in understanding and releasing anxiety. Here's why.

By not really honestly evaluating what you are feeling and then taking action to try to address disturbed emotions, the issues behind them will stack up. When issues are unresolved, it leads to anxious feelings and preoccupation, drained energy and a lack of luster in life. Here's an example of what can happen when people don't admit and address their disturbed emotions.

John calls his wife from work and has an anxious reaction to something she said. Afterwards, he goes to a meeting with his project team, but the disturbed feeling lingers. John can't focus and can hardly hear what is being said. He keeps up with the meeting agenda, yet, inside, his thoughts keep surging back over the things that bothered him about the call with his wife. He keeps trying to fight the troubling feelings and quell the disturbance so he can be present for the meeting, but the anxious feelings keep disturbing his internal world.

Soon he feels dull and drained inside. That one conversation creates an emotional churning that John drags around the rest of the day. When he gets home that night, his wife seems happy to see him, as if nothing had happened. Not wanting to cause an argument, John plops down in front of the TV to try to forget the whole thing. He goes to bed exhausted, still bothered inside.

John's unresolved feelings don't just magically go away. They fade into the background but they become stored and still continue to drain him unknowingly.

In looking at John's day, it's easy to see how differently it might have been had he used Notice and Ease either during or immediately after the phone call with his wife. But, as with so many things, it seems easier to try to just brush feelings aside. When we do that, we just make things harder for ourselves.

By pausing to admit and name what you're feeling, you begin regulating your emotional energy. Then you can redirect your emotional energy to work for you instead of draining your entire day. Feelings are like a code that contains information. By naming and admitting feelings to yourself, you can start to decipher the code. The steps of Notice and Ease slow down your emotional energy so you can listen to your heart. This allows intuitive perceptions to come to you. This is such an important point that it bears repeating. Feelings are like a code that contains information. By naming and admitting feelings to yourself, you start to decipher the code. As you practice Notice and Ease, you slow down your emotional energy so you can

listen to your heart. This allows intuitive perceptions to come to you.

Many people who suffer from anxiety have difficulty admitting feelings. So feelings back up in their system, causing more anxiety. Maybe you can relate to this from your own experience. As the turbulence of anxiety churns in the subconscious and plays out in thoughts and actions, it's called *emotional processing*. You can try to suppress it, but the processing – the stuff that's going on under the surface – still runs in the background of your thoughts and feelings, and the drain of energy goes on and on. This festering “understuff” can cause fatigue, sleep disorders, hormone imbalances, health problems and premature aging. You might even find yourself going into a state of resignation that things won't change, and your self-worth suffers. You might feel like a victim of circumstances beyond your control. But you *can* take control. You just need to know what to do to regain it.

Maybe the idea of admitting your emotions makes you feel vulnerable. You might worry that you'll be engulfed by them. But the opposite happens. As soon as you honestly admit you're feeling anxious, you start to diminish its power. But then you don't stop there. As you use Notice and Ease, you can neutralize anxiety and ease out the disturbing feelings or attitudes.

The third step is to use your heart intent to ease or move the anxious feeling out of your system. Here's how it works.

E-a-s-e – doesn't it sound soothing, just hearing it said in that elongated way? Think of it like easing into a hot bath... just a little at a

time. Oh, that feels good! Or maybe like easing out a splinter... slowly, as you take nice deep breaths, and there! It's out!

In this case imagine taking the anxious feelings into your heart. Just focus your attention in the area of the heart. As you breathe, feel the anxiety slowly releasing. Just feel it gently easing it out of your system.

These three steps—noticing, naming and easing can start to release you from the clutches of anxiety. With practice, which we'll do in the next session, you can gain more control of this unwanted emotion.

Before we go through the steps again, where you will begin practicing the tool, consider the list of disturbed feelings below. Note which ones you experience frequently. This will make it easier for you to identify and then name your anxious feelings as you're practicing Notice and Ease.

Common anxious feelings include:

- tense
- worried
- confused
- edgy
- overwhelmed
- blaming
- fearful
- resistant
- numb

Practice becoming more conscious of anxious feelings as they come up. Even if you can't name a feeling exactly, do the best you can to identify it and name it.

Now we'll go through the steps of Notice and Ease again. See if there's a particular anxious feeling you have felt recently, and use it in the practice session.

Here are the three steps of Notice and Ease:

Step 1. Notice and admit what you are feeling

Take stock and observe what is going on right now in your emotions. What are you feeling?

Step 2. Try to name the feeling

As you observe what's going on in your feeling world try to name the most prominent, unwanted feeling you are experiencing.

Step 3. Tell yourself to e-a-s-e - as you gently focus in your heart, relax as you breathe, and e-a-s-e the stress out.

Now, focus your attention in the area of the heart, and as you relax and breathe, ease the unwanted feeling out of your system. Take your time with this step as you feel the unwanted feeling dissipating.

By practicing the Notice and Ease tool throughout your day, you can reduce the intensity of many unwanted emotions and especially of anxiety. With a little practice you will begin to eliminate the tendency

to easily become anxious in response to change or challenges. Use Notice and Ease as soon as you begin to feel anxious, so that it doesn't have a chance to build up and become more significant. As you master the tool, you will feel an uplifting release as your anxiety decreases. You won't eliminate all anxiety, but you can eliminate the habit of anxiety.

Part III: Shifting Attitude

There's another HeartMath tool called Attitude Breathing® that is also helpful in releasing anxiety. Attitude Breathing bootstraps the power of your heart intent to quickly shift a mood or attitude. Learning how to shift attitudes more quickly is a valuable skill that can save you from draining emotional reactions that often lead to chronic anxiety.

Attitude Breathing is designed to help you shift out of a negative emotional state into a positive one (psychologically and physiologically). You learn to clear and replace negative attitudes with one's that are more regenerative, right in the midst of stress or anxiety, to gain a more intelligent perspective. Here are the steps:

1. Recognize an unwanted attitude: a feeling or attitude that you want to change. This could be anxiety, self-judgment, guilt, anger, anything.
2. Identify and breathe a replacement attitude: Select a positive attitude, then breathe the feeling of that new attitude slowly and casually through your heart area. Do this for awhile to anchor the new feeling.

Often the appropriate replacement attitude to breathe can be obvious, like balance, non-judgment or appreciation. It takes breathing the *feeling* of the new attitude to make it real. For example, if you are anxious, you may want to breathe calm. This requires breathing the feeling of calm for a while until you actually feel calmed. Then you have made what we call the energetic shift. This means that the turbulent emotional energy in your subconscious has shifted.

As you breathe replacement attitudes, tell yourself to take the significance out of whatever is making you anxious. Continue the Attitude Breathing until you feel a shift or a change. Even when a negative attitude feels justified, the build up of negative emotional energy still drains your system. Have a genuine “I mean business” attitude to really move those emotions into a more coherent state and shift your physiology. It could take a few minutes, but it’s worth the genuine practice.

Sometimes strong anxious feelings are hard to shift, no matter how much you try. Attitude Breathing will help by anchoring your power in the heart. It will take the “fire” out of negative thoughts and emotions so they have less fuel.

The main thing to remember is, even if it takes a little practice, *you do have the power in you to make this work*. Don’t give up even when you have a setback. Everybody has them. They are just curves in a road, not the end of the road. Many challenges are not about what to do - they are about taking the time to go to your heart and then doing what you know. Keep remembering to have compassion for yourself

along the way.

These *Notice and Ease* and *Attitude Breathing* tools do work to help eliminate a lot of anxiety, but of course you are the one who makes them work. It's important not to look at these tools as quick fixes, as if they are magic, as that can lead to idealistic expectations. If you over-expect from a tool, you are likely to forget the part that *you* have to play to make it work. Periodically, review the steps of the tools as if you're learning them for the first time, so they don't become just conceptual to you. Practice regularly, and practice genuinely from the heart. Renewing your heart intent each time you practice will give you the most mileage.

Now you have some new insights and simple, solid skills to use whenever you find yourself feeling anxious. And with all HeartMath tools and techniques, you can use them any time, no matter what you're feeling. If you're feeling great, use these tools then and help keep the momentum of positive emotion going – it's like building a positive energy bank account to draw on when you need it. Remember that you have more power over your feelings than you realize – including feelings of anxiety.

Next Steps

In this e-booklet you've learned two HeartMath tools that can help you reduce the anxiety in your life. You've also read about what typically causes anxiety so you can better understand how to address it. For many people, anxiety has become a habit. In order to provide the best

help we can, we would like to share other resources that can be valuable in eliminating an anxiety habit.

Much of the material in this e-booklet is from Doc Childre's and Deborah Rozman's book, *Transforming Anxiety* (New Harbinger, 2006) which can provide you with more in-depth information, techniques and a step-by-step program to transform anxiety.

To learn more about tools, techniques, technology, training programs and other resources that can help you reduce the anxiety in your life and cultivate increased coherence and emotional balance, please visit our web site at www.heartmath.com or call us toll free at 800-450-9111.

All the best and take care!