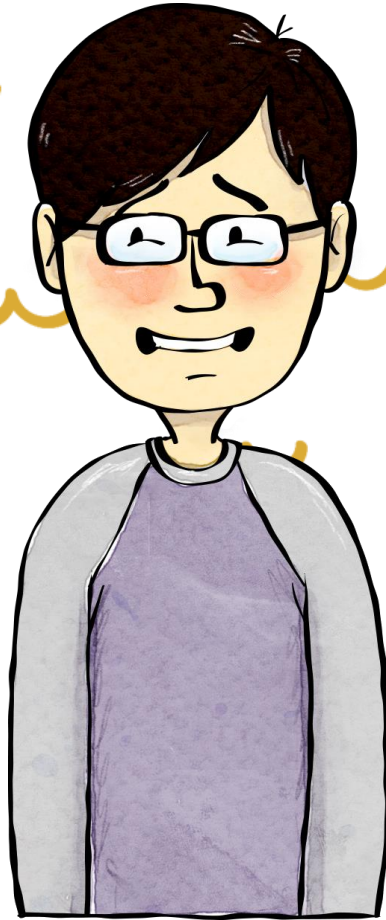




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MY ANXIETY



WORK

through

BOOK



Illustration of character provided by Sarah Pecorino Illustration & Design
www.sarahpecorino.com

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a strong feeling of worry and fear that happens when you're nervous about a situation, when you feel unsafe, or when you're not sure what is going to happen next. Just like with any other feeling, having some anxiety is normal. Anxiety can even be helpful at times. It can let us know that something may be wrong. It makes us prepared and tells us that we should be careful or more cautious about certain situations.

A little bit of anxiety is okay, but when the feeling starts to grow, it can become a problem. Anxiety can start to make you think and believe that bad things are really going to happen. Anxiety works by trying to get you to only focus on *all* the things that could go wrong. As it gets worse, it might even keep you from wanting to go places or be around others. People who are really anxious spend a lot of time worrying about the bad things that *might* happen in the future instead of focusing on what is going on now.

When you're filled with anxiety, you'll notice that your body will start responding. Your body might react the same way as if you were in a dangerous situation. You could also experience a lot of other feelings along with anxiety such as sadness, anger, or hopelessness. With all of this going on, it can be quite difficult to cope with anxiety.

As you work your way through this book, you will learn more about how anxiety can impact your thoughts, body, and emotions. But not to worry - you'll also learn how to cope with it in a positive and healthy way!



Is My Anxiety a Problem?

Do you think that your anxiety is becoming a problem? Place a check next to each statement that is true for you. Answer as honestly as you can!

- People tell me that I worry way too much
- I spend a lot of time thinking about things that may never happen or that I can't control
- I have a hard time changing my thoughts when I'm anxious
- It's hard for me to fall asleep most of the time because my mind is always racing
- I've talked myself out of doing something I *really* wanted to do because of my anxiety
- My anxiety is hurting my relationships with my friends and family members
- There are places that I don't go or things I don't do because of my anxiety
- When I get really anxious, I sweat, shake, can't breathe, and my heart races
- Small things seem like a really big deal to me sometimes
- When I get really anxious, I feel like I'm losing my mind and going crazy
- I worry about the same things over and over again
- I have a hard time concentrating sometimes because of my anxiety
- After worrying all day, I feel *very* tired
- I worry a lot about what other people might be thinking or saying about me
- I get really anxious when things don't go the way I planned or things aren't in order
- I always feel like I'm "on edge" or that something is about to happen
- If I have an upcoming event, I worry about it for days or weeks ahead of time
- When I'm anxious, my behavior changes i.e. I become more grouchy and "snap" at people

If you checked most of these statements, then your anxiety is becoming a problem for you.



Anxiety Questions

Answer the questions below to explore more about your anxiety.

What are some things my anxiety has kept me from doing?

What would be different if I wasn't anxious?

Where and when do I feel anxious the most?

How does my anxiety affect other people?

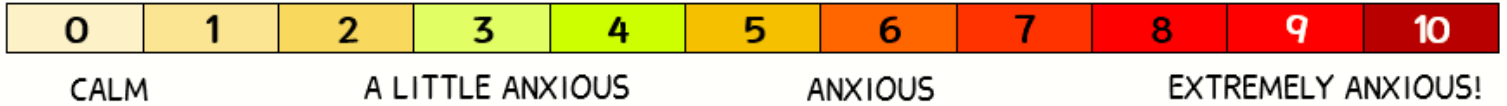


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My Anxiety Triggers

An anxiety trigger is something that happens that makes you feel anxious. Take a look at the list below to figure out which ones are triggers for you. Place a number between 0-10 showing how anxious each situation would make you. In the blank spaces, write in three anxiety triggers that are a 10 for you. Talk about why you rated each one the way that you did.



- _____ When I think someone might be mad at me
- _____ Trying new things, meeting new people, or going new places
- _____ Having too much work to get done
- _____ Talking or performing in front of a lot of people
- _____ Something happens that I wasn't expecting
- _____ Not knowing what is going to happen in the future
- _____ Being away from home/family/loved ones
- _____ Being around certain people (Who? _____)
- _____ Taking a test or a quiz
- _____ Going certain places or doing certain things alone
- _____ Going to school

10!

10!

10!

Are there other places, people, or situations that make you feel anxious?



Anxiety and My Body

How does anxiety affect your body? Read the different *body* responses below, and color in or check the ones that happen to you whenever you start to feel anxious.



**WHAT ARE SOME OTHER
BODY CHANGES THAT YOU
EXPERIENCE WHEN YOU'RE
ANXIOUS?**



Anxious Thoughts

Our thoughts play a big part in making us feel less or more anxious. When we're anxious, we usually can't help but to think about all the bad stuff that might happen. Our anxiety can trick us into believing that the some of these negative thoughts are actually true! It can even make some situations seem worse than they really are.

When we're anxious, we can also have *all* of these thoughts happening at the same time. This can be exhausting! Have you ever experienced this? Think of a few situations that make you feel anxious, and write down some of the anxious thoughts that you have below.

The form consists of four large, empty thought bubbles arranged in a 2x2 grid. Each bubble is a simple black outline with a small tail at the bottom. Surrounding the bubbles are several smaller, colorful thought bubbles in shades of blue, orange, yellow, and green, some with small circles leading to them, scattered across the page.



Stinkin' Thinkin'

A *thinking error* happens when we think about things or situations in a way that is unhelpful and only make us feel more anxious. This is also called *stinkin' thinkin'*. Read the examples below to learn more! Which ones do you do? Share examples of times when you've done *stinkin' thinkin'*!

Catastrophizing

Thinking that the worst possible thing is going to happen.

I'm late to swim practice. I'm going to get kicked off the team!

Mind Reading

Believing that you can tell what others are thinking about you.

No one said anything about my haircut. They must all hate it!

Labeling

Calling yourself a name because you didn't reach a goal or because you made a mistake.

I didn't put my name on my homework. I'm so dumb!

Filtering

Only focusing on the bad things that happen, even if good things happened too.

We got first place, but remember when I missed all those shots?

Black or White Thinking

Thinking that things have to be perfect or else it is a failure.

I got a B on my math quiz. It might as well be an "F"!

Personalization

Taking something that happens and making it about you.

Mom looks angry today. I must have done something wrong!

Anxiety & My Feelings

Anxiety can also bring up more uncomfortable feelings. Take a look at the feelings listed below. Color in the ones that come up for you when you're feeling anxious.

Use the blank circles to write in some other feelings that aren't listed.

ANGRY

SAD

SHY

GROUCHY

RESTLESS

HELPLESS

MOODY

AFRAID

STRESSED

WORRIED

NERVOUS

OVERWHELMED

LONELY

PANICKED

AWKWARD

EXHAUSTED

HOPELESS

EMBARRASSED



Coping Skills

A coping skill is the way that you choose to deal with whatever feeling you are experiencing. So far we've seen how anxiety can affect your body, thoughts, and feelings. A *good* coping skill for anxiety is one that can get rid of negative thoughts, calm your body down, and help you feel better!

A *poor* coping skill usually just makes you more anxious and isn't very helpful at all. Below, share about good and poor coping skills that you use or have used to cope with your anxiety.

GOOD COPING SKILLS I USE

These coping skills help me feel happier and less anxious!

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

POOR COPING SKILLS I USE

These coping skills don't really help and they make my anxiety worse!

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Let's start learning about helpful ways to cope with anxiety!



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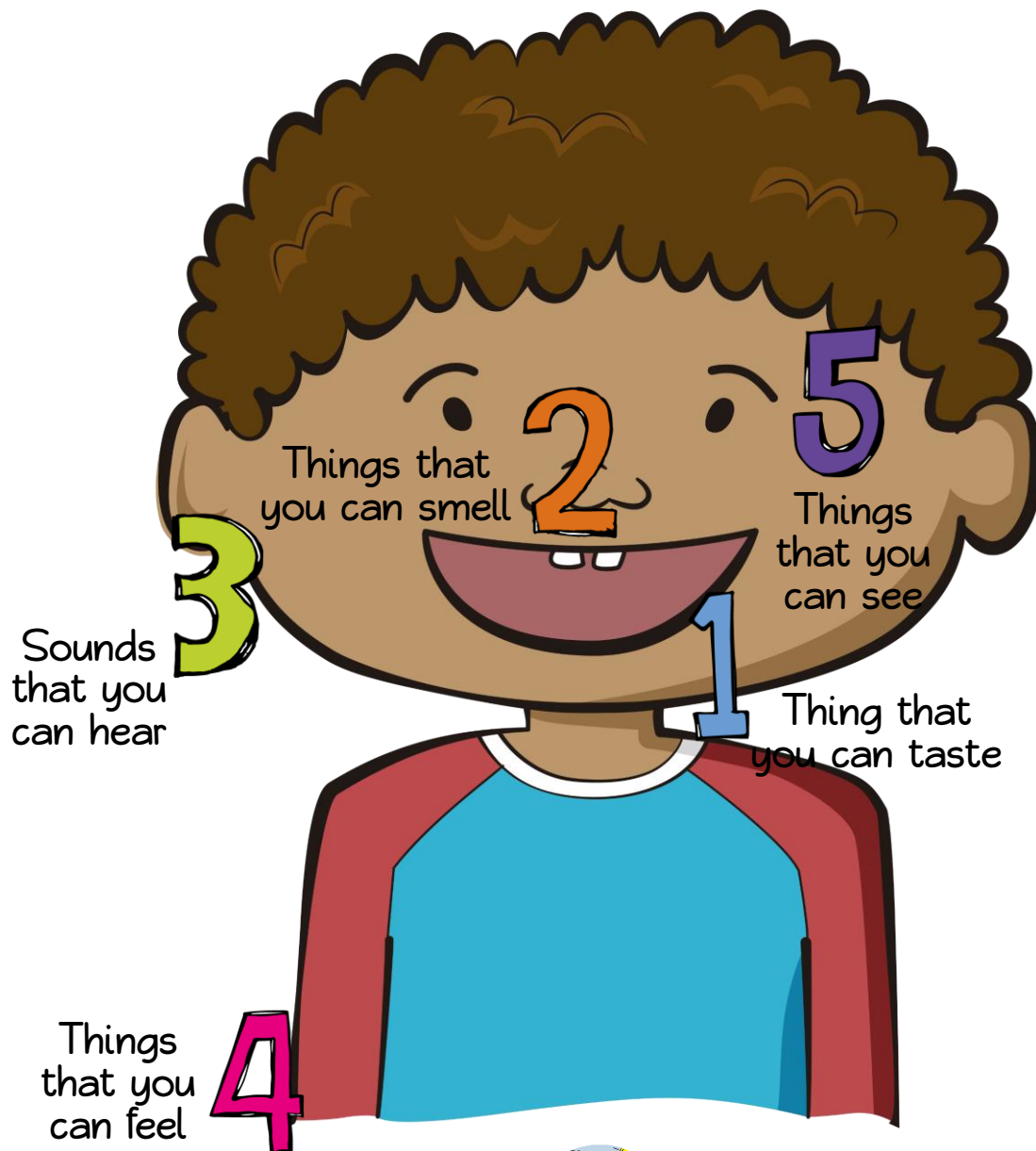
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Mindfulness

When you're feeling anxious, it is usually about something that you think might happen in the future. *Mindfulness* is a way of changing your thoughts away from future worry and instead focusing on the things that are happening in the moment – right now! The next time you feel yourself becoming very anxious about a situation, try out these mindfulness exercises.

5 senses

Use your five senses to refocus on the present. See if you can name...

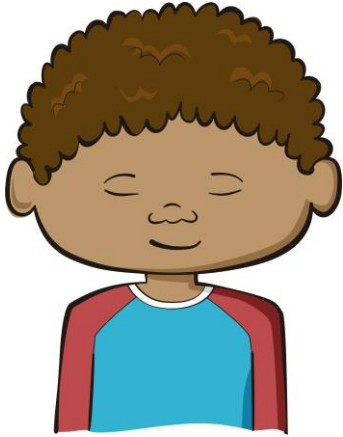


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Mindfulness

Focus on Breathing



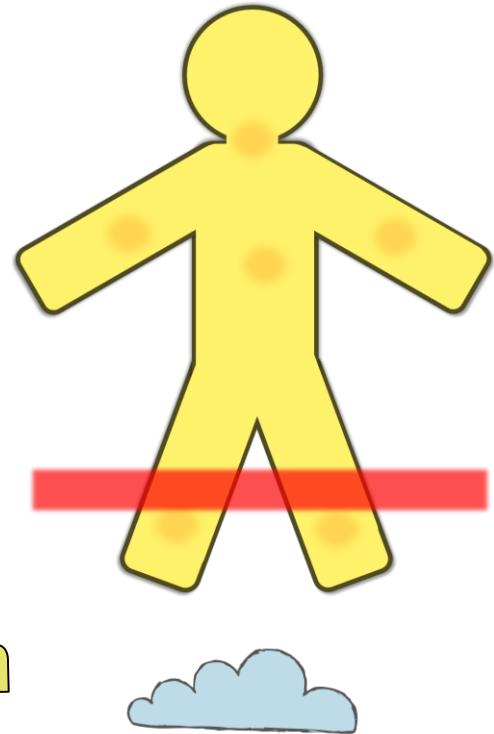
When you're anxious, it can feel like it's getting harder to breathe. Your breaths become shorter and quicker. A helpful way to calm your body down is to *focus* on your breathing. Take deep and slow breaths. Imagine the air going in and out of your body. Pay attention to your belly and chest getting bigger as you breathe in. When you breathe out, imagine that you're breathing out all your negative thoughts and feelings.

Body Scan

A body scan is something that can be done while laying down or sitting up. You are focusing your attention on the different parts of your body.

Start by thinking about your feet. Do they hurt? Are they tingling? How about your ankles?

Continue to move your way up your body just focusing on how each part is feeling in the moment.



Visualization

Visualization is a type of daydreaming where you use your imagination to help you calm down and feel less anxious. By closing your eyes, you can picture yourself standing in a place that you find to be relaxing, such as a beach. Try to focus on what is going on around you. Imagine that you can hear the waves and feel the warm sun on your skin.



Challenging Your Thoughts

You've learned that sometimes your anxiety might try to get you to believe things that may not be true and can make small things seem like a big deal. Instead of letting your anxious thoughts take over, fight back by challenging them! Use the questions below whenever your mind starts to focus on the bad things that might happen.

Am I *stinkin' thinkin'*? Which one?



Yes, it *could* happen, but what are the chances it will?

Will this be a big deal to me next week?



Is there anything that I can do about it? Then do it!

Are these thoughts helping me feel better?

Is there anything that proves that something bad will happen?



When was the last time what I fear might happen actually *did* happen?

Is it a fact/true or is it anxiety? How do I know that it's true?



What happened the last time I had these same thoughts?

What's a better outcome that could happen?




How can I be prepared to cope if things don't go the way I hope?



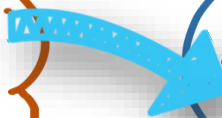
Positive Thoughts

Once you've challenged your anxious thoughts, you can try to change them into positive ones! Do this by thinking of what you could say to make yourself feel better about the situation. Read the first two examples of anxious thoughts and practice changing them into positive ones. Then do your own!

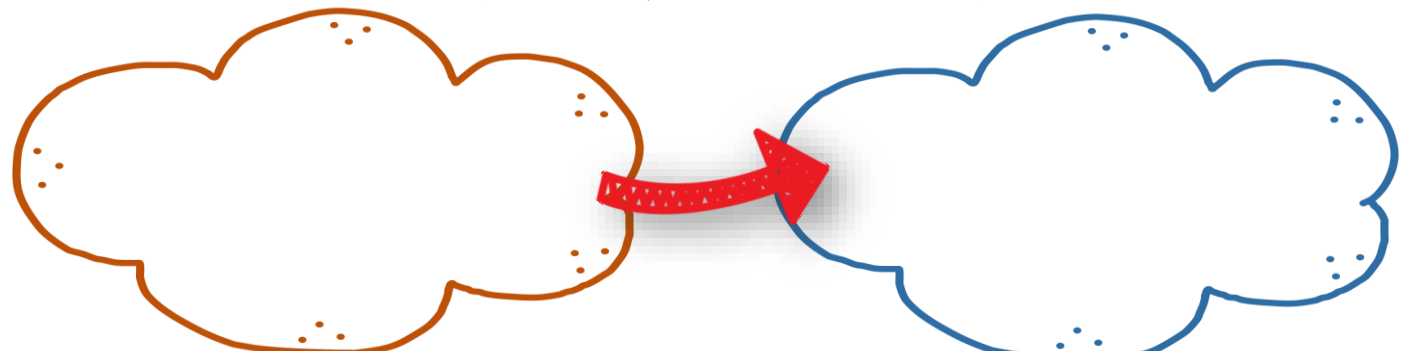
I'm so nervous about my game. I'm probably going to mess up and everyone will laugh!



Jasmine didn't turn around when I said her name. She probably doesn't want to be my friend anymore.



What are anxious thoughts that *you've* had? Change them into positives!



Thought Record

A thought record lets you keep track of your anxious thoughts and helps you practice changing them into positive ones. Use the thought record below to write down your unhelpful thoughts throughout the week. See if positive thinking works for you!

WHAT MADE ME FEEL ANXIOUS?	WHAT ANXIOUS THOUGHTS DID I HAVE?	HOW DID THOSE THOUGHTS MAKE ME FEEL?	WHAT POSITIVE THOUGHTS DID I TRY?	WHAT ENDED UP HAPPENING?
EXAMPLE Pop quiz in Science class	I'm not ready. I didn't get to study. I'm going to fail!	Sad Nervous Scared	Try your best. You're going to do great!	I stayed calm and passed the quiz!



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Anxiety Prep

Once you know what your anxiety triggers are, you can prepare yourself for any upcoming situation that you know might make you feel anxious. Being prepared means creating a plan of action on how to cope *before* you face your trigger. To get prepared, ask yourself the questions below! Read the example after, and then think of a situation *you* could prepare for.

What's my anxiety trigger?

How will I know that I'm getting anxious?

Which coping skills can I use when it happens?

How will I know if it worked?

Gillian is feeling anxious about the school play. It's her first time acting in a play, and she is worried that she will mess up and forget her lines. Gillian knows that her anxiety will probably get worse right before it's time to say her lines. The night before, she makes a plan! Gillian tells herself that before she goes out on stage, she'll picture herself doing a good job. When it's time to say her lines, she'll focus on her breathing so that she won't feel so anxious. The next day, during the play, Gillian puts her plan into action! She feels herself getting anxious, but she is able to calm down by using the coping skills she came up with the day before!

What's my anxiety trigger? _____

How will I know that I'm getting anxious?

What coping skills can I use when it happens?

How will I know if it worked?



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More Coping Skills!

Talk to someone

Talking to someone is often a good way to cope with feelings. It can be helpful just to have someone listen to what you're going through. Make sure to let them know if you want them to just listen or if you're looking for advice.

Laugh

Doing things that make you smile and laugh can help distract you from your thoughts and put you in a less anxious mood.

Eat, Sleep, and Exercise

Keeping your body healthy and active is a positive way of coping with anxiety. Make sure that you are getting enough sleep at night and eating healthy meals. Exercising can also help you feel better when you're feeling stressed or anxious.

Best Case Scenario

Cope with your anxiety by thinking about the best case scenario! Instead of focusing on the *worst* that can happen, picture everything going just as you'd hope. The next time you're feeling anxious, remember this image to help you feel better.

Go Out in Nature

Sometimes just being outside can change your mood. This is also a great way to practice mindfulness. Focus on the plants, trees, and animals around you instead of the things that are making you anxious.

Be Around Positive People

The people that you are around can help change your mood. Try to put yourself around others who are positive, not ones who are *stinkin'* thinkers!

Journal

Journaling is when you write down your thoughts and feelings. This helps with anxiety because you're able to get everything out of your head and onto the paper.

Clean Your Room

Listen to your parents when they tell you to clean your room! Sometimes when things around you are neat and cleaned up, that can help you feel calmer and less stressed.



Taking Steps

Learning to cope with the things or situations that make you anxious can seem hard or maybe even impossible. It can be helpful break your actions down into small steps you can take until you reach your goal.

Marcie gets anxious at school. She doesn't talk much to the other kids in her class because she's afraid of what they might say. Marcie decides to start taking steps to cope with her anxiety.

Step 1: Smile at a classmate.

Step 2: Start a conversation with someone during gym.

Step 3: Ask to sit next to a classmate during lunch.

What are some steps you can take to start coping with your anxiety?

	What will I do?	How did it feel after I did it?	What ended up happening?	Was it as bad as I thought it would be?
STEP 1				
STEP 2				
STEP 3				



What's Helpful?

Your friends and family members probably want to help you feel better whenever you're feeling anxious. But sometimes they might say or do something that makes things worse! It is important for you to let them know what you need them to do or what you need them to say that would help with your anxiety. Circle below or check what you need from others when you're feeling anxious.

When I'm anxious, I need someone to...

**GIVE ME
ADVICE AND
TELL ME
WHAT TO DO**

**STAY CLOSE
TELL ME
EVERYTHING
WILL BE OK**

**GIVE ME
TIME OR
SPACE**

**ASK ME
QUESTIONS**

**TELL ME TO
"CALM DOWN"**

**TELL ME A JOKE
OR TRY TO MAKE
ME LAUGH**

**SAY
NOTHING.
JUST
LISTEN.**

**TRY TO
DISTRACT ME
FROM THE
PROBLEM**

**TELL ME
HOW THEY
WOULD
HANDLE IT**

**HOLD ME OR
PUT THEIR ARM
AROUND ME**

**BE ANXIOUS
WITH ME**

**TELL ME
THAT IT'S
NOT A BIG
DEAL**

**HELP ME CHANGE
MY THOUGHTS**

What else do you need from others?



Remember

Feeling anxious is normal and can even be helpful. It becomes a problem when it starts to keep you from doing things that you need or want to do.

It is important to remember that anxiety will try to make you believe things that may not be true. It can make a situation seem worse than it really is. It can be hard to cope with anxiety because you might believe these things to be true in the moment. This is why it is important to know that you're feeling anxious and to start challenging these thoughts right away!

You can use your body changes as warning signs for your anxiety. If you start noticing any of the changes happening in your body, use these as clues to tell you that something is making you feel anxious. This is the best time to use any of the coping skills you learned in this book. You may need to use different ones depending on what is triggering your anxiety. You should always keep a coping skill in mind if you know you are doing something that might make you anxious.

The best way to beat your anxiety is by continuing to practice these skills. The more you practice, the easier it will be to keep the unhelpful thoughts out of your head. Use your family members and friends to support you. Start by taking small steps, and hopefully you will reach your goal of conquering anxiety soon!

Use the skills that you've learned in this book to help you start making changes today!

