

Anxiety : psychological & practical guide

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1 : Introduction

Anxiety is part of the human experience. It sometimes arises for no apparent reason, like a tension that runs through the body and clouds the mind.

We would like to push it away, numb it, disappear with it.

However, if we approach it differently, it reveals something deeper: a unique way for each of us to encounter reality.

We often talk about “emotions” to describe what we feel, but most of them are stories we tell ourselves after the fact.

Joy, anger, and sadness already carry an explanation. Anxiety, on the other hand, precedes words. It does not comment, it signals.

That is why it seems so raw and absolute. It does not lie: it testifies that something in existence is happening without us yet knowing how to describe it.

Faced with this intensity, many seek to withdraw. Some would rather fall asleep or lose consciousness than go through these sensations.

Yet the body can withstand much more than we imagine.

Breathing when your chest tightens, walking when your legs tremble, speaking when your voice wavers: each gesture becomes proof that life goes on despite the alarm. It is not a feat but a decisive experience.

Because it is when we see that anxiety does not prevent us from acting that another question can finally arise: what do we want to do now that anxiety no longer takes up all our space?

Many people see therapy as a means of eliminating anxiety. They think it will end when calm returns.

In reality, it is often the opposite: therapy begins when we no longer let anxiety decide everything.

When we can feel it, bear it, and still undertake a project, an action, a word. That is when the real work begins: the work that focuses on the life we want to lead.

This guide is for those who are not only seeking to silence their anxiety but to understand what it reveals.

It explores its different forms, from physical sensations to our relationship with time, from loneliness to encounters with others, so that everyone can recognize how this feeling, far from being an enemy, can become a stepping stone to creating their own path.

2 : When the body speaks

Anxiety often begins with a signal from the body. Even before the mind grasps it, the heart rate quickens, breathing becomes shorter, and muscles tense up.

These reactions are not accidents: they are the expression of an ancient vigilance, embedded in our bodies long before words existed.

The body speaks first, and it is through the body that the experience of anxiety takes shape.

This physical language can be surprising in its intensity. A simple increase in heart rate is enough to trigger a cascade of sensations: dizziness, sudden heat, a feeling of suffocation.

Yet each sign has its own logic. The heart beats faster to mobilize energy, breathing changes to prepare for action, and the senses become more acute to pick up details in the environment.

None of this is against us. These are remnants of ancient alarms that once ensured survival.

But modern anxiety does not always correspond to immediate danger. It is triggered in situations where flight or fight are impossible: an interview, a trip, an uncomfortable silence.

The body prepares to react, but the expected action does not come. This pent-up energy can feel like a blockage or an uncontrollable excess.

Rather than trying to cut off these signals, we can learn to recognize them and stick with them. Feeling the heartbeat, accompanying the breath without trying to correct it, walking slowly

when everything seems to be tightening up: these simple gestures show the body that it can ride out the wave.

This is not an exercise in control but a way of being present to what is happening, until the movement regains its balance.

Recognizing these signals also means restoring their role as messengers. An acceleration of the heart does not only predict a threat: it can signal that a decision is pending, that a step must be taken.

Rather than seeking to calm down at all costs, we can ask what this movement indicates: what desire or concern is trying to be expressed?

It is useful to observe how these manifestations unfold throughout the day. Some people notice a surge of anxiety when leaving the house, others during moments of pause, when silence replaces agitation.

These contexts reveal the places where we feel exposed. Identifying them is not about avoiding these situations, but about seeing more clearly the link between what the body is telling us and what we are actually experiencing.

This perspective transforms the way we deal with our sensations. Trembling, a tight throat, and sweating become less like enemies and more like signals.

By welcoming them as such, we regain freedom of action.

We can speak in public despite sweaty palms, continue a meeting despite shortness of breath. Each time we do so, the place of anxiety changes: it ceases to occupy the entire horizon.

Little by little, the body is no longer just the theater of a disorder. It becomes once again the ally through which an experience is transmitted.

Sensations cease to be a barrier and become living landmarks, open to what remains to be accomplished.

Many intense episodes that we call “anxiety attacks” arise less from the external situation than from the reaction to the first signs of anxiety.

The heart beats faster, breathing quickens, and the mind immediately concludes that serious danger is approaching.

This interpretation triggers a cycle in which each sensation amplifies the next. It is no longer the initial encounter that weighs heavily, but the fear of what is happening.

Recognizing this mechanism changes the way we deal with it. Instead of looking for an external cause or judging yourself for your distress, you can bring your attention back to what is happening now: your heart beating, the air going in and out, the ground beneath your feet.

It is not a matter of chasing away the thought, but of checking, at every moment, that the body remains capable of weathering the storm.

This return to the present interrupts the spiral that transforms a simple alert into a crisis.

It then becomes possible to experience the rise of anxiety without feeding it. The sensation may remain strong, but it no longer

overwhelms. The experience is no longer one of collapse, but of transition.

Each time we endure the initial wave in this way, we reduce the force of the following circles. The crisis is no longer a fate, it becomes a limited episode in time.

By discovering this gap between the initial signal and the reaction it triggers, we regain a freedom: that of not confusing the first alert with the catastrophe it seemed to herald.

3 : The circle of thoughts

When the body sends out a signal, the mind often takes over. It searches for a cause, lists possible threats, imagines scenarios.

This need for explanation is not a flaw: it reflects the desire to make sense of what is happening. But it can become a trap when each hypothesis reinforces anxiety instead of calming it.

One question leads to another: what if this symptom hides an illness? What if I lose control in public? Each answer fuels a new question.

Thoughts spiral faster and faster until they occupy all of our mental space. This cycle does not add knowledge, it maintains alertness.

Yet even in this spiral, a choice remains possible. We cannot prevent images from arising, but we can decide not to follow them.

Returning to a simple sensation, to an immediate perception—breathing, the body's contact with the ground—allows us to see that ideas are movements of the mind, not facts already accomplished.

This detachment does not make thoughts disappear. It puts them back in their proper place: as propositions, not verdicts.

By recognizing their temporary nature, we loosen the grip of the circle and find space to act.

As the circle of thoughts takes hold, part of us tries to fight it. We reason, we look for evidence to reassure ourselves. But this duel often reinforces the whirlwind.

Every argument finds its counter-objection, every explanation gives way to a new concern. It is as if the mind were endlessly searching for the point that would allow it to conclude, when that point does not exist.

It is possible to adopt another stance. Rather than searching for the right thought, we can observe the movement itself. See how one image calls up another, how one question splits into two.

This observation is not passive. It brings us back to the present, to what is happening here and now, without trying to settle the internal debate.

Little by little, we discover that these chains of thought are not infinite by nature. They run out of steam when we stop feeding them.

What seemed like an uncontrollable cycle becomes a series of mental propositions that we can allow to dissolve. The purpose of this way of looking at thought is not to stop it, but to strip it of the authority it claims in moments of anxiety.

This change in perspective opens up an unexpected space. The energy previously absorbed by controlling ideas becomes available for other gestures: a movement of the body, a word, a concrete action that brings us back to the shared world.

Once we recognize the self-perpetuating nature of these loops, it becomes possible to focus on what they prevent us from seeing.

As long as the mind remains caught up in calculating all the risks, it diverts attention from the simpler and more decisive question: what really matters now? What do I want to do, regardless

of these assumptions?

This shift is not an escape. It brings us back to the most concrete dimension of existence.

We can feel anxiety and, at the same time, decide to move forward, to meet people, to create. Thoughts no longer have the power to interrupt movement.

They may continue to flow, but they no longer control our actions.

Thus, the circle of thoughts reveals its dual nature. On the one hand, it can be confining. On the other, it signals what needs to be decided.

By ceasing to feed it, we free up access to what, deep down, requires a response. This is where anxiety ceases to be merely a burden and becomes the threshold to a new direction.

4 : Finding a place for anxiety

After observing body language and the circle of thoughts, a question arises: what place should we give to anxiety itself? Many hope to make it disappear, as if the goal of a balanced life were the total absence of tension.

But wanting to eliminate all anxiety often reinforces it. The more we push it away, the more it comes back in other ways.

The challenge, then, is not to suppress this feeling, but to recognize its function. Anxiety signals that something needs attention.

It indicates a point where a choice is looming, where a decision has not yet been made. In this sense, it is an ally, a reminder that life is not limited to acquired habits.

Giving anxiety a place is allowing it to exist without giving it all the power. We can listen to it, name it, and then continue to act.

This movement is already a form of response: it shows that existence cannot be stopped by fear. Anxiety then becomes a signal for vigilance, not a barrier.

This change in relationship transforms everyday life. We stop wondering how to chase away anxiety and start wondering what it reveals.

It is no longer a struggle, but a silent conversation with what is trying to be said through it.

To give it its rightful place, we must accept a form of inner dialogue. Not to seek the exact cause of each worry, but to listen to

what it stirs within us.

Often, what weighs most heavily is not the feared event, but the feeling that no path has yet been chosen. Anxiety signals that a passage must be invented.

We can then turn to what feeds the decision: a conversation that helps clarify a project, a concrete commitment that gives a first outline of what we want to do.

These gestures do not remove anxiety, but they do remove its blocking function. They transform a vague unease into movement towards action.

It is also useful to recognize that some anxieties belong to a broader history than the present situation. They reactivate old fears, unresolved issues.

Seeing them return does not mean that we are regressing: it is proof that they are still searching for their form. Welcoming them without haste, without seeking an immediate solution, allows them to gradually find a deeper meaning.

Thus, giving space to anxiety is not giving in to fatalism. It is opening up a space where the movement of life can continue, instead of remaining frozen in fear.

Little by little, this way of experiencing anxiety changes the very quality of time. What seemed urgent ceases to govern every action.

The mind remains attentive but is no longer a prisoner of expectation. Anxiety regains its function as a signal, comparable to a bell announcing a passage, rather than an alarm that prohibits all movement.

From this perspective, even the return of anxiety is not a failure. It reminds us that psychic life is not a straight line but a succession of beginnings. Each

jolt invites us to pick up the thread again, to clarify a choice, to adjust a direction. Nothing is ever fixed, and that is precisely what makes it possible to create a unique path.

Giving anxiety a place is therefore recognizing that it contributes to the construction of a freer life.

It does not disappear; it changes roles.

It ceases to be an obstacle and becomes a traveling companion, reminding us at each stage that a decision can still be made and that a new beginning is always possible.

5 : Encountering others

Anxiety rarely manifests itself solely within one's inner space. It is intertwined with the presence of others. Many people find that the most distressing moments arise at the thought of an encounter, of having to say something, of a judgmental gaze.

It is as if the mere proximity of others becomes an ordeal. This reaction is logical.

Meeting others always involves the risk of losing some control: not knowing how we will be perceived, what will be said, what will change. Anxiety can then serve as a screen.

It takes up all the space, delays the encounter, protects us from an experience that we sense could upset our usual balance.

This protection comes at a price. By avoiding contact, we also deprive ourselves of the vitality that only connection can bring: an unexpected word, a gesture of support, a creative conflict.

Human relationships are one of the places where life is renewed. What we gain in security by retreating, we lose in opportunities for transformation.

Becoming aware of this mechanism does not mean forcing encounters at all costs. Rather, it means noticing how anxiety tries to come to the fore to avoid the unknown of exchange.

By gently shifting our attention from fear to the real issue at stake in the encounter, we begin to restore the essential place of connection.

Approaching others despite anxiety does not mean hiding your reactions. Rather, it means giving them their rightful place, not letting them dictate your actions.

Simply saying that you are tense, asking for a moment of silence, choosing a place where you feel supported: these concrete gestures create an opening that makes the encounter possible without violence.

In many situations, fear stems less from the exchange itself than from the idea that one must present oneself in a certain light.

The mind constructs an ideal persona, then fears not living up to it. Recognizing this internal scenario alleviates the pressure.

It is not necessary to play a complete role: a simple presence, even if it is tinged with hesitation, is enough for a real dialogue to begin.

Each time we take this step, however small, anxiety changes its function. It does not disappear, but it ceases to be a wall.

It becomes an indication that a real encounter is taking place, that a threshold has been crossed. This experience reinforces our confidence in the possibility of remaining connected even when fear arises.

Little by little, the relational space is freed up. We discover that the other person is not expecting a performance, but a living presence. This discovery, repeated in various exchanges, builds a confidence that is more solid than any mental preparation.

As we move forward in this way, we discover that encountering the other is not just about talking or sharing activities. It involves the ability to allow oneself to be affected, to let words from elsewhere

change what one already thought.

It is precisely this openness that makes the presence of others irreplaceable.

What we gain is not the absence of anxiety, but the possibility of remaining in the exchange even when emotion arises.

Anxiety then loses its character as an obstacle. It becomes a sign that a real shift is underway, that an encounter goes beyond a simple exchange of words.

This shift also transforms one's perception of oneself. Through looks, questions, and contradictions, one discovers oneself capable of new positions. Identity ceases to be a fortress and becomes a space for dialogue.

In this way, the presence of the other ceases to be feared and becomes a resource for continuing to create oneself.

Far from threatening integrity, the encounter ultimately reveals a strength that isolation could not bring out. Anxiety, once recognized and overcome, then opens up a broader form of shared freedom.

6 : Desire, choice, the unexpected

After experiencing the body, thoughts, and encounters, a new dimension opens up: that of desire. Anxiety is not only a reaction to threats.

It also arises when what we deeply desire comes into contact with the unknown. Every important choice reveals this mixture of fear and enthusiasm that accompanies desire.

We often believe that deciding means eliminating uncertainty. In reality, every authentic decision involves an element of the unexpected. We never know exactly what the future will bring. It is this openness that gives strength to the act.

Desire is not the search for a guarantee, but the ability to commit despite the absence of certainty.

Thus, the anxiety that precedes a choice is not a sign of error. It marks the transition from an idea to a lived existence. It indicates that something new is in the making, that life is no longer content to repeat the old.

The challenge is not to eliminate this tension, but to recognize it as the price of real commitment.

In this movement, desire becomes visible. It is not a whim, but a deeper orientation that manifests itself when we agree to risk the unknown.

Each decision thus assumed, however modest, opens up a space where existence can be renewed.

It is by following desire, not certainty, that existence truly

unfolds. Certainty reassures but freezes. Desire, on the other hand, opens up. It pushes us to move forward where no proof guarantees the outcome.

It is in this gap that what is truly human manifests itself.

We do not live only to reproduce what is safe, but to invent what does not yet exist.

We see this in big decisions, but also in everyday actions: choosing a career, starting a relationship, moving house, but also initiating a conversation, daring to try a new idea.

Each time, anxiety accompanies the transition. It reminds us that we are leaving the familiar behind. This presence is not a hindrance: it indicates that the movement touches something alive.

When we accept this role of desire, the need to understand everything before acting becomes less pressing. We can take the plunge with the means at our disposal, learn as we go, and correct our course along the way.

This is not recklessness but fidelity to what calls to us from deep within. Uncertainty is no longer an obstacle; it becomes the very space where freedom is invented.

Thus, living guided by desire does not mean ignoring risks. It means recognizing that the real risk would be to let fear decide for us.

Every time we choose despite doubt, we affirm a capacity that defines humanity: creating possibility where nothing was planned.

By letting desire guide our actions, we discover that life does not follow a linear path. Each decision opens up a field of events

that we could not have foreseen.

The unexpected is no longer an accident; it becomes part of the journey. What we did not anticipate reveals hidden resources and encounters that enrich the journey.

This way of living with uncertainty also transforms our relationship with anxiety. It ceases to be a sign of danger and becomes a sensitive trace of this creative movement. It reminds us that existence is built on a constant dialogue between what we choose and what happens.

Far from being a sign of fragility, this tension is evidence of vitality in action.

Little by little, we learn to welcome this interplay between desire and the unexpected as the very heart of human experience. We no longer have to wait for fear to disappear in order to live.

The essential thing is to continue to choose, to invent, to respond to the calls that arise, even when there are no guarantees before we act. It is in this space that freedom takes shape.

7 : Concrete ideas

After exploring the internal and relational dimensions of anxiety, it may be useful to outline some concrete practices that support this movement of life.

These are not recipes for eliminating anxiety, but ways of giving it its rightful place so that it no longer prevents us from acting.

The first source of support is found in the rhythm of the body. Walking regularly, breathing mindfully, and alternating periods of concentration and rest allow us to feel that we are inhabiting time rather than enduring it.

These simple actions, repeated without any pressure to perform, remind us that we can continue to move forward even when emotions are running high.

Another source of support comes from the diversity of experiences. Varying locations and activities and meeting new people broadens our perception and prevents anxiety from becoming entrenched.

It is not a question of running away, but of introducing the unexpected, which rekindles interest and opens up unexpected perspectives.

Finally, preserving moments of voluntary silence—a break from screens, an evening without plans—provides a space where desire can be reformulated.

This is not withdrawal, but a way of letting the inner movement find its next direction.

Other support can be found in the way daily commitments are

organized. Rather than seeking the perfect schedule, we can create flexible benchmarks: a few fixed appointments that structure the week, slots reserved for what truly nourishes desire.

These anchor points provide continuity that protects against the overflow of the unexpected while leaving room for spontaneous initiatives.

Relationships can also be adjusted. It is possible to inform loved ones of your need for quiet time before an important meeting, or to suggest ways of sharing that reduce pressure, such as walking side by side rather than face to face.

Such adjustments facilitate connection without denying sensitivity to tension.

Finally, cultivating creative activities—music, free writing, drawing, gardening—provides a place where the energy of anxiety can be transformed into expression.

These practices are not aimed at technical mastery. They serve to translate into a tangible form what would otherwise remain blocked in the body or mind. Each creation, however modest, becomes a gesture of continuity between emotion and the world.

Little by little, these practices create a living framework that supports freedom rather than limiting it. They allow us to keep moving even when anxiety arises.

It is not the elimination of the disorder that marks progress, but the ability to continue to create, to meet, to decide despite it.

This orientation transforms the way we judge our days. Success is no longer measured by the absence of discomfort, but by the quality of the actions accomplished, the relationships nurtured, and

the choices made.

Anxiety may return, but it no longer prevents the construction of a coherent and open life.

Thus, concrete paths are not temporary solutions. They become sustainable ways of inhabiting time. They remind us that the essential movement is not to eliminate anxiety, but to invent each day a form of life that gives it meaning and transcends it.

8 : Conclusion

Walking this path has allowed me to encounter anxiety in a different way. It is no longer just an obstacle or a flaw, but a living component of existence.

It speaks in the body, extends into the mind, influences relationships with others, and accompanies choices and desires. At each stage, it reveals something about the unique relationship that each person has with reality.

Living with anxiety is not about waiting for it to disappear, but about continuing to create in the midst of it. Concrete actions, living connections, and decisions made despite uncertainty show that we can move forward without demanding certainty.

The essential thing is not the absence of fear, but the ability to act in its presence.

This guide therefore offers not an end but an opening. It invites us to recognize in every moment of anxiety the possibility of a new beginning.

What appears to be a limitation becomes a place of invention. In this sense, anxiety is not the enemy of freedom; it is one of the paths to it.