



Six Habits for Conquering Anxiety and Depression

MY STORY

I used to feel like the empty shell of a person just going through the motions of life. People jokingly referred to me as a robot and described me as overly logical without any apparent emotions. On more than one occasion, I was compared to Vulcans, the alien race on Star Trek known for spending their days in meditation with the goal of purging all emotion and embracing logic as a way of life instead.

I was depressed, anxious, and didn't understand the point of being alive. Nothing really seemed to matter at all. In my childhood I frequently made trouble and during my teenage years and early twenties, I mostly just isolated myself. I spent holidays alone, didn't put much effort into developing friendships, and overcompensated for the emptiness inside of me by embracing workaholism and consuming recreational drugs such as alcohol, weed, and nicotine.

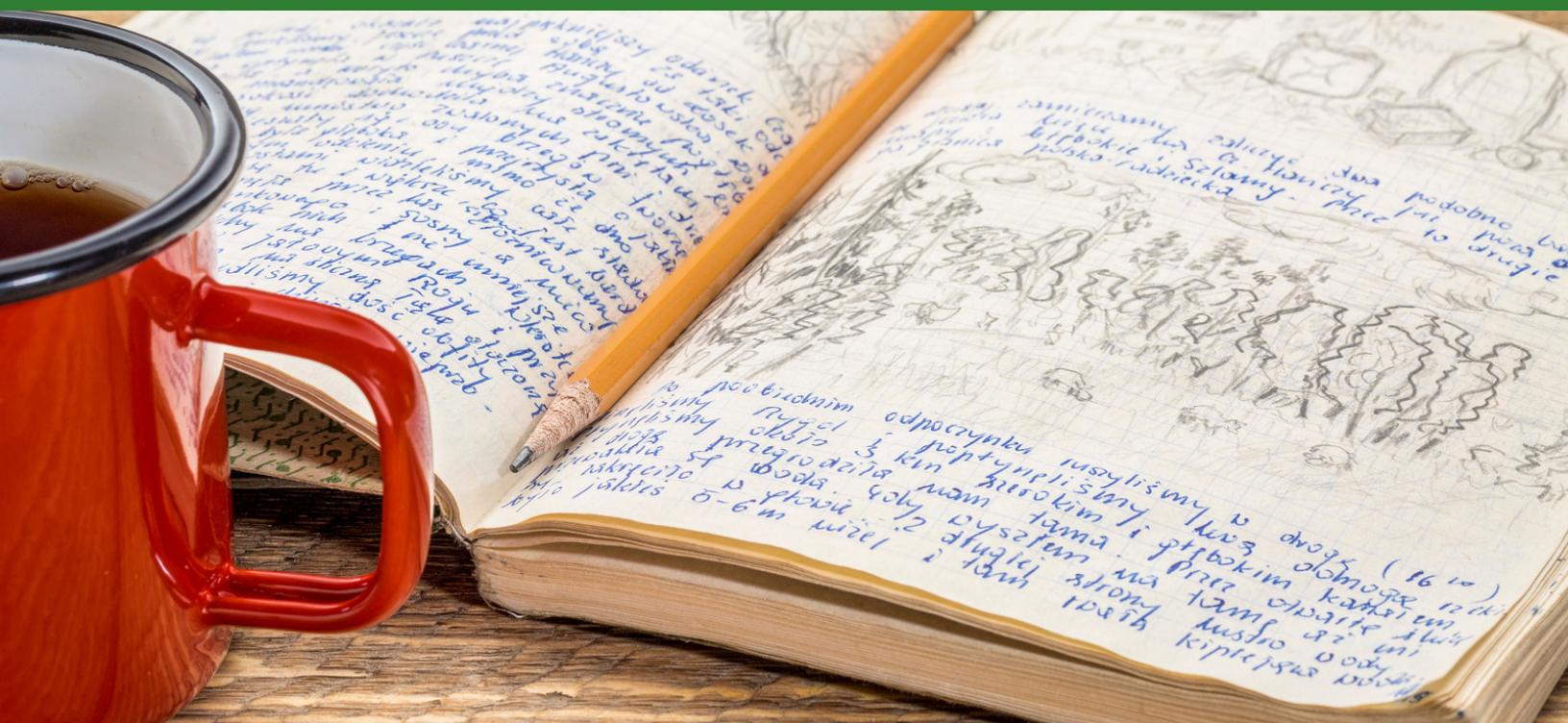
Each of us goes through challenging times in life. I had no doubt that the trauma from my childhood was the root cause of so many of the issues I was experiencing. But I was alone and I saw no way forward. Everything changed when I found the courage to be myself and I started attracting the right people.

I learned the importance of analyzing my needs and wants, consuming information and resources that got me excited about life, doing what needed to be done to close the gap with where I wanted to be, and finding rest within myself to be free from anxiety and disturbances. I also learned how to trust myself and to rely on a solid group of friends allowing me to tap into an enormous amount of strength.

Nowadays, instead of waking up with dreadful fear of what is to come, I get out of bed with excitement and full of gratitude. I spend my time doing things I enjoy, with people that make everything more meaningful.

I have summarized everything I learned into the following habits in order to help you make the same journey. I perform these habits every single day and on the rare day that I don't, I can feel something missing.

HABIT 1: JOURNAL



Why

Writing in a journal allows you to record lessons learned, insights, ideas, accomplishments, failures, and opportunities for future development. It helps you clarify your thoughts, reinforce what you are learning, and chart a direction for the future.

The most value from keeping a journal is being able to reflect on your writings a few months, years, or decades down the line. Reflecting on past entries helps you feel gratitude for your accomplishments and identify lessons learned to do better in the future.

How

1. Decide where you will write. You can use a traditional paper format like a journal or an app like Day One.
2. Decide when you will write. You may prefer writing in the morning after waking up or in the evening before going to bed. Find a time that works for you, and try to be as consistent as possible.
3. Decide what you will write. You can take a completely unstructured approach or use a template such as what you're grateful for, your intentions for the day, and what things you learned recently.

HABIT 2: READ



Why

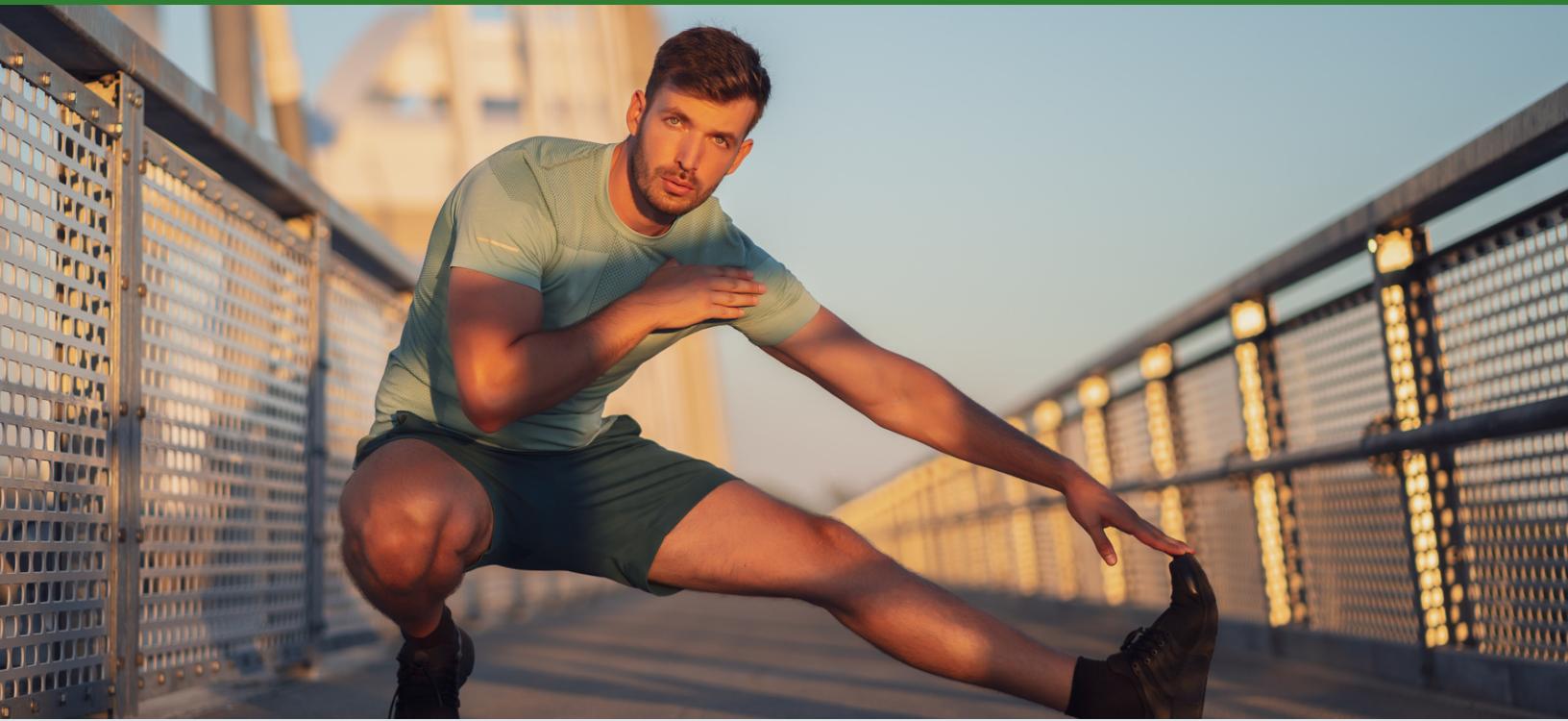
Reading provides you with the knowledge, strategies, ideas, and techniques you need to achieve your goals and dreams. The quickest way to get somewhere is by learning from and emulating people who have already done what you aspire to do without having to reinvent the wheel.

Books such as Think and Grow Rich by Napoleon Hill, Secrets of the Millionaire Mind by T. Harv Eker, and Total Money Makeover by Dave Ramsey can help you transform relationships, become a better communicator, exercise effectively, and increase self-confidence.

How

1. Decide how much you will read. You can either set a fixed number of pages per day (like ten) or allot a certain amount of time (such as 30 minutes).
2. Understand why you're reading a particular book. Think about what you want to learn and keep that in mind as you read.
3. Take notes and highlight useful passages. Doing so will increase your focus and help you retain the information better, and you'll be able to review the information later on.

HABIT 3: EXERCISE



Why

Exercise is a powerful medicine against depression for several reasons. First, it releases endorphins which are powerful neural chemicals that energize and make you feel good. Second, exercising promotes all sorts of changes in the brain by reducing inflammation and creating new neural patterns that make you feel calm and improve your well-being.

Research indicates that moderate exercise is the most effective at reducing heart disease, improving sleep and cognitive function, driving weight loss, and reducing mental health disorders. Moderate exercise is characterized by anything that gets your heart beating faster and gets you breathing harder than if you were inactive yet still able to speak.

How

1. Decide when you will exercise. Scheduling will make exercise more likely to happen, and working out when your energy is highest will require less motivation.
2. Decide how you will exercise. Remember that anything that gets your heartbeat up and gets you breathing heavily counts as moderate exercise; I personally prefer yoga.
3. Reward yourself after exercising. When you end exercising with a reward, your body will start craving it the next time.

HABIT 4: MEDITATE



Why

Our modern-day world is filled with distractions rooted in instant gratification and low-impact activities. In order to rewire your brain towards productive solitude and away from the control of others, you must become comfortable being alone with nothing but your thoughts.

The benefits of solitude include calmness and clarity, increased focus and creativity, better problem-solving, self-discovery, and increased empathy. Solitude helps you get to know yourself, plan for your future, and become more resilient to daily stressors. The easiest way to access solitude on a daily basis is by meditation.

How

1. Decide when you will meditate. Try experimenting with meditation after you wake up and before going to bed and seeing which works best for you.
2. Find a quiet and comfortable place to sit. You can use a chair, couch, pillow, or the floor.
3. Sit upright with your legs crossed. If this is uncomfortable for you, laying down works fine too.
4. Close your eyes and focus on breathing. The goal isn't to eradicate all thoughts but rather to refuse to get caught up in any particular thought.
5. Count to four as you breathe in and again to four as you breathe out.

HABIT 5: EXECUTE



Why

Planning and executing daily intentions give you an opportunity to remind yourself of what's truly important and what it is you want to focus on. They make you more conscious and aware of your thoughts and actions throughout the day.

Daily intentions can be a source of inspiration and motivation, steering you in the right direction toward your goals, however big or small they may be. They help bring more positivity into your life by encouraging your brain to filter out negative thoughts and energy.

How

1. Decide when you will set your intentions. You can set them for the next day before bed or in the morning.
2. Choose where you will record your intentions. Anywhere you can return to them during the day will do, but writing them in your journal will enable you to reflect on them in the future.
3. Write down 2-3 intentions. Ask yourself what the smallest step you can take towards your primary goal is by breaking it down as much as possible.
4. At the end of the day, reflect on your accomplishments. You may need to carry over intentions to the next day, but make sure to show yourself appreciation for what you did get done.

HABIT 6: CONTRIBUTE



Why

Contributing improves your physical and mental health and overall social well-being. Research has shown that helping others can improve life satisfaction, lower the amount of stress you experience, and improve mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression.

Getting involved with others helps strengthen social connections and gives you a sense of feeling needed, which in turn boosts your confidence. Feeling well-connected and confident will allow you to move through difficult times with more ease and support.

How

1. Find opportunities to help. As you move through your day, ask yourself if you're presented with any opportunities to help others. This help can range from taking a few minutes to mentor a coworker to calling a family member.
2. Ask yourself if the interaction will energize you. The key to contributing is discovering opportunities where you feel your time will have the biggest impact. Again, this doesn't have to take more than five to ten minutes of your time.
3. Reflect on the help you provided. Ask yourself if you'd like to have a similar interaction in the future and how it made you feel.