

KATY STEVENSON

OVERCOMING ANXIETY

**A GUIDE TO HELP YOU FEEL
CALM & HAPPY AGAIN**

www.hypnofife.co.uk

Overcoming Anxiety

Foreword

A huge amount of people who seek help from their doctor have a psychological problem, which causes them to feel unhappy, anxious or depressed. They often struggle on for months, or years, without asking for help, causing them to get more and more anxious or depressed about the issue.

There are many different reasons for feeling like this, sometimes it can be quite clear what the issue is, other times, less so.

It could be from a childhood or recent trauma or due to the stress of daily life, or perhaps isolation and loneliness. It could also be something they are born with, part of their personality.

A discussion with your doctor will help to establish the underlying causes, if possible.



As a practising therapist since 2009, I have noticed that the majority of people that come to see me for anxiety issues, have been prescribed, or at least offered tablets from their GP. This can help for some people but often can be just a sticking plaster for an underlying issue.

By this I mean that antidepressants could be helpful in the short term but if the underlying cause is not dealt with, there will always be a symptom.

This could mean many, many years taking medication with no actual real change in sight.

I also say this as someone who was prescribed medication for anxiety and depression, and was then left on them for years. I had a real battle to get back off them and get my own life back on track.

The tablets numbed me, helped me through for a while but didn't fix the issue.

This is not ideal; the preferable action is to get the relevant help to deal with whatever is causing the pain in the first place.

The kind of treatment a person requires depends on the seriousness of their issue. There is not a "one size fits all" tick box, as each person is an individual.

Psychosis or Neurosis?

If someone is struggling with their mental health, there are 2 types of conditions that they may fit into: Psychosis or Neurosis.

If they have a psychosis, they will need treatment from their **Medical Doctor**.

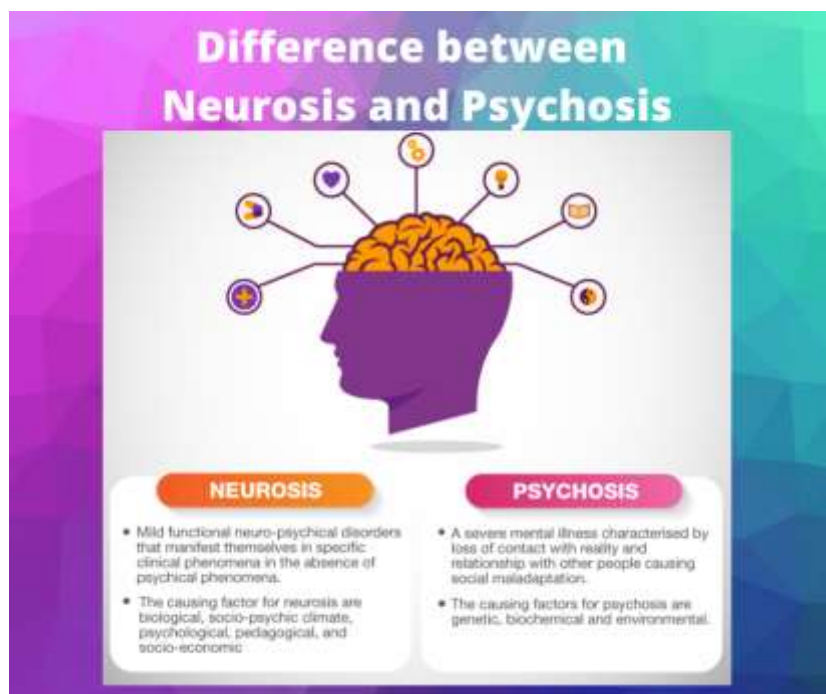
Psychosis is a term to describe when you experience reality in a different way to other people. This could be Schizophrenia, Bipolar disorder, Schizoaffective disorder or Personality disorder.

It's a severe mental illness characterized by loss of contact with reality and relationships with other people, causing social maladaptation.

The causing factors for this are genetic, biochemical and environmental.

Neurosis refers to a group of mental disorders including: anxiety, depression, phobias OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder) and hysteria.

Neurosis is not a specific mental disorder.



The next page will give you some information on Psychosis. In the event that you are suffering from it, please **get in touch with your GP**.

What is **Psychosis**?

Psychosis is a symptom of a mental illness or brain disorder which entails a person losing touch with the real world.

People with a psychosis process the world around them differently to other people. This can include how they experience, believe or view things.

For instance, they might see or hear things that others do not. Or believe things other people do not. Some people describe it as a "break from reality".

Common examples of psychosis include the following.

Hallucinations

These are when you see, hear or feel things that other people don't. For example:

- seeing things which other people do not see
- hearing voices
- smelling things which other people can't
- feeling someone touching you who is not there



Hearing voices or other sounds is the most common hallucination.

Hearing voices is different for everyone. For example, voices may be:

- ❖ female or male
- ❖ whispering or shouting
- ❖ in a different language or different accent to your own
- ❖ someone you know or someone you've never heard
- ❖ negative and disturbing.

You might hear voices sometimes or all of the time.

Delusions

These are beliefs that are not based on reality. Even though they feel real to you. Other people are likely to disagree with your beliefs. (A delusion is not the same as holding a religious or spiritual belief which others don't share.)

For example, you may believe:

- that you are being followed by secret agents or members of the public
- your food or water is being poisoned
- that people are out to get you or trying to kill you. (This can be strangers or people you know)
- that something has been planted in your brain to monitor your thoughts
- you have special powers, are on a special mission or that you are a god

You may not always find these experiences distressing, although people often do. You may be able to stay in work and function well even if you have these experiences.

Cognitive Experiences

Cognitive experiences are ones that relate to mental action. Such as learning, remembering and functioning.

Some cognitive experiences associated with psychosis are:

- Concentration problems
- Memory problems
- Unable to understand new information
- Difficulty making decisions



Psychosis can be a one-off experience or linked to other conditions. There is no single cause of psychosis.

Researchers believe that environment and genetics may affect who develops psychosis.

You should be offered medication and talking therapy to help with your experiences.

⇒ To access treatment for psychosis, you usually need to have an assessment by a specialist mental health service, such as the Community Mental Health Team.

You may need to go to hospital if you are experiencing very distressing psychotic symptoms.

If you are not suffering from Psychosis, it's likely you have Neurosis.

What is **Neurosis**?

People with neuroses do not handle stress well and have developed unhelpful responses to it. The extent and severity of neuroses is very variable.

It does not include hallucinations or delusions, and people are well aware of reality but they tend to react and respond in very maladaptive ways to their environment.

This can include lashing out at close friends and family (inappropriate levels of aggression either physically or verbally), drinking too much, taking drugs, perfectionism, obsessions, negativity and extreme anxiety.

The causes for neurosis are biological, psychological, and socio-economic.

This means it could be how they've been brought up, what levels of stress hormone the mother had whilst pregnant with them and their current environment; home life, work stress, financial worries, relationships etc, or past trauma, (whether recent or childhood).

Unlike Psychosis which is a symptom of an underlying disorder, Neurosis is a group of disorders.



SIGNS OF NEUROSIS

Understanding Worry, Fear and Anxiety

If you are still reading this, then mostly likely, you are suffering from Anxiety. I am guessing this due to the fact that I am an Anxiety Specialist and you've come to me for some help! (Not because I'm a Dr or that I am psychic!)

So, what is it that causes us to feel this way?

The Stress Response

Worries, fear and anxieties are common to us all and are the normal reactions to stress or danger. They are not physically or mentally damaging and, on most occasions, these responses are reasonable or even necessary to our survival.

They only become a problem when they are exaggerated or experienced out of context.

As an example: A dog is walking towards you; you start to panic; your heart beats faster and faster in your chest; you begin to get hot, you start sweating; your mouth dries up.

Now, if the dog was growling and gnashing it's teeth at you, if it was showing signs of aggression and running towards you, off a lead, this would be a perfectly normal FIGHT/FLIGHT/FREEZE response.

However, if the dog is on a lead, walking calmly alongside its owner, paying you no attention whatsoever, then you are having an unhelpful reaction to the situation.



Can you see the difference?

Normal responses to stress

You are walking along a quiet country lane, the birds are tweeting, the sun is shining. It's so very peaceful, you are smiling as you carry along your picnic basket.

The next minute passes in slow motion, from out of nowhere, a motorcyclist roars around the corner, across your path and almost hits you. You feel the adrenaline sweep through your body, you drop your basket and dive out of the way, to safety. Your heart is racing, and you are shaking, but you made it to safety.

Afterwards, you feel jittery and exhausted but this eased off with time.

Both of these examples show an experience where the hormone adrenaline is released, in order to give you the energy to deal with a **perceived** dangerous situation. I say perceived, as it may be a real or imagined threat, but the body/mind will still react in the same way.



Adrenaline pumps the blood through our bodies so that we can run towards a challenge and fight something or run away fast from something that could harm us.

This goes right back to when we were cave people and we had to hunt for our food.

If a dangerous animal appeared, our bodies would flood with adrenaline in order to cope with the situation. (FIGHT/FLIGHT). If we didn't respond in this manner, we would get eaten! Therefore, our very clever bodies knew how to protect us.

Worry, fear & anxiety are crucial to our survival as they prepare us for coping with stress or a dangerous situation. Once the stress or danger has passed, these temporary changes subside.

Nowadays, we are not faced with the same kind of challenges but we do still have the same response to what we **perceive** as a threat to our lives.

We still experience the same behavioural change in our minds and bodies just like our ancestors did.

Things that can cause our responses could be fear of losing a job, being harmed, someone shouting abruptly, almost being hit by a car, worry about an upcoming event etc.

In fact, there are many ways that we may automatically go into one of the FIGHT/FLIGHT/FREEZE modes.

Sometimes it can be due to the way we've taught our brains to behave; consistent behaviour changes the way that the neurons in our brains are formed.

Once you've learned a certain way of doing things, it's not easy to change, without practise. For example: once you've learned to tie your shoelaces, you don't forget how to do it.



Parasympathetic Nervous System - Ventral Vagal

When we are plodding along in life, happy enough, being mindful and present, we are in the Ventral Vagal, using our Parasympathetic Nervous System. This system allows us to do all the things in life that are required of it; digest food, excrete waste, fight off infections and reproduce, etc.

It uses the same parts as our bodies as the Sympathetic Nervous System but for opposite reasons. For e.g. our heart will beat at a normal rate when calm and using the Parasympathetic Nervous System.

The Ventral Vagal system is normally the dominant system, keeping the caged animal of the Sympathetic Nervous System in check.

Sympathetic Nervous System - Fight/Flight

When we are using the Sympathetic Nervous System, our heart races, blood flow increases and our bodies release adrenaline.

This could be in reference to a threat or an excitement... perhaps being on a fairground ride, or when we are about to take part in some sort of physical activity, or in a real threat/dangerous situation allowing us to move quickly out of danger.

When we recognise what we perceive to be a dangerous situation from previous experiences, our Sympathetic Nervous System will also fire off, making us angry, worried, scared for example. Whether the threat is real or not.

Parasympathetic Nervous System - Dorsal Vagal

If we are in the Dorsal Vagal system on the Parasympathetic Nervous System, our heart rate reduces in order for us to still our bodies. It slows us down, quietens our bodies in order to keep safe. For e.g. if we were hiding from a predator (sabre toothed tiger) we would want to stay still and quiet in order to not be detected!

In life nowadays, this could occur when frightened in a situation and you have tried fight or flight and it didn't help, therefore your body tried FREEZE mode.

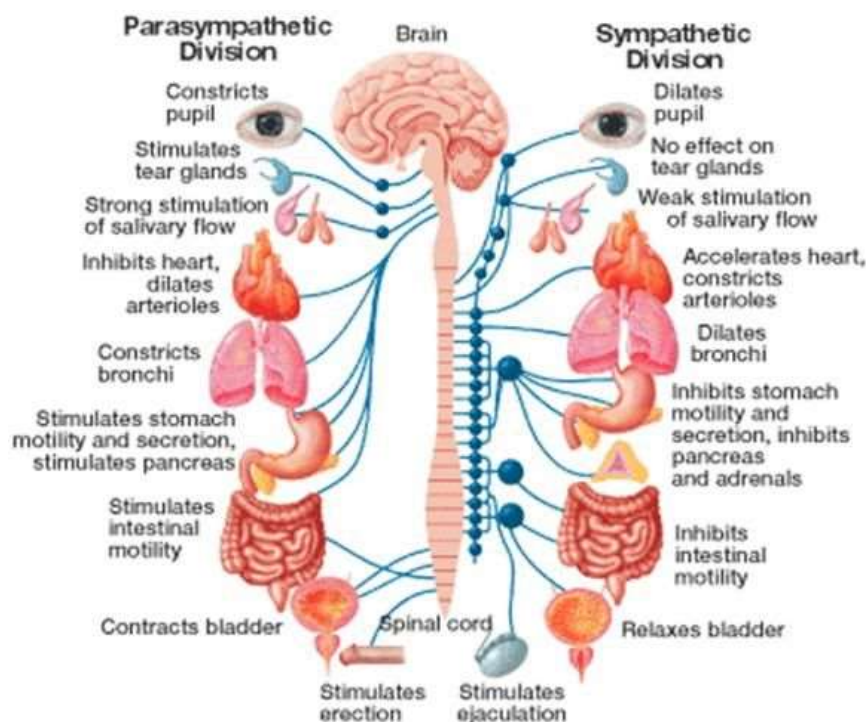
You may suffer a situation and survive it, therefore in any future threat situations, your body/mind goes to the most effective mode, which is freeze.

This is often how people survive very serious situations and get stuck in them, like emotionally or physically abusive relationships. They almost teach themselves how to respond and cope, to keep themselves safe.

They may shut down and become numb to the threat, in order to stay alive. Depression can occur when the person feels helpless and hopeless and cannot deal with things anymore.

The person is using the Dorsal Vagal system.

When the threat is eliminated, they go back to using the Ventral Vagal System once more.



Perceived threat vs real threat

If you have been living in a heightened threat situation, perhaps living with an abusive person or working in a job with a boss who always shouts at you or criticizes everyone, you are constantly living in fear.

The adrenaline, insulin and endorphins will slowly be dripping into your body causing you to be in FIGHT/FLIGHT/FREEZE (F/F/F) mode regularly. You may feel scared and jumpy at every given opportunity.

(If this is the case for you, you must assess how you can get yourself out of this situation, speak to someone you can trust to talk it through.)

HOW TO OVERCOME ANXIETY

As you can see, these reactions in our bodies allow us to take action and keep us safe. They are very primal and allow us to get out of a dangerous situation or complete an activity which requires adrenaline, like a physical activity. Without these physical changes, we would be sluggish rather than primed for action.

So how can you change the responses in your body, in order to regulate them to their normal state? How can you move away from being in the F/F/F mode if it is unhelpful for you?

As already mentioned, you need these modes in order to protect yourself from real danger, so you must be careful to leave them in place for when they are really required.

If, however, you are just trying to get out of the negative response and get back to a normal life, there are many things you can do for yourself, before reaching out for help from a professional therapist, like myself.

Panic Attacks

If you are experiencing a panic attack, it may feel like the world is ending. You may have heart palpitations, sweating, difficulty breathing, feeling disorientated or like you are going to pass out.

You may even feel chest pains and think you are having a stroke or a heart attack. This can be incredibly scary.

You will most likely be focussing inwardly and concentrating on how you are feeling within your body and therefore need a distraction technique to take your focus outwards.

Here are some strategies to help you get through it and allow the feelings to pass.

One way of focusing your mind and calming down it to do the **5 senses exercise**;



All you need to do is name things that you can see, hear, touch, smell and taste.

Repeat this over and over again until you have calmed down.

If you are feeling detached from reality, this exercise is particularly helpful, as it will ground you to your surroundings.

If you are still struggling, you can move onto some breathing exercises.

Breathing exercises

As previously mentioned, when you are in Fight/Flight mode, your heart rate increases and your breathing will become faster.

In order to change this, first you must notice your breathing and where it is coming from. You will probably be breathing high into your chest, so you must take breaths from your diaphragm instead.

4-7-8 Breathing technique

- To start with, exhale all your breath out
- Then breathe in deeply for 4 seconds
- Hold for 7 seconds, then
- Breathe out for 8 seconds.

Do this a few times until you have calmed your breath to a slower rate.

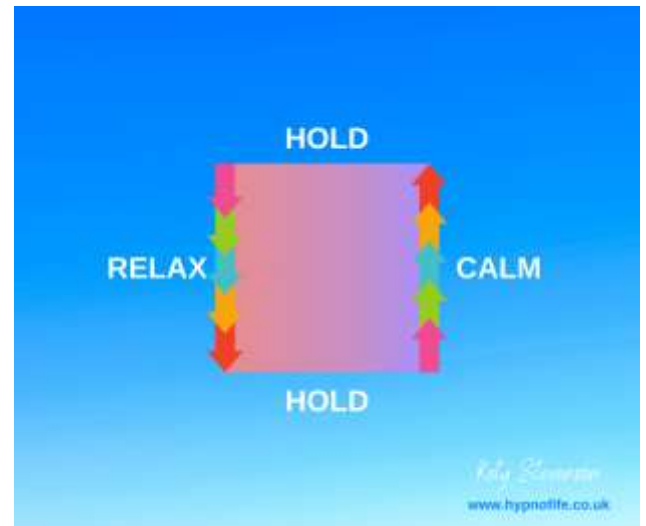


Square Breathing

This can be used any time to settle your breathing down to a nice and calm rate.

- Breathe in for 4, thinking the words “Calm”
- Hold for 4
- Breathe out for 4 thinking the word “Relax”
- Hold for 4

Repeat 3 times



The Infinity Sign



This is a great little exercise to do (kids especially love this). It soothes you whilst you settle your breathing and gives your hands something to do too!

The sensation on your forehead will feel incredibly calming and you can use this anytime you want to feel calm and comforted.

- Simply draw the infinity sign on your forehead, slowly moving your finger from side to side, above your eyebrows.
- Breathe gently and slowly, whilst enjoying the sensation on your skin.

So, these are a few little techniques that can help you with coping with an anxiety or panic attack when they occur. You must remind yourself that whatever you are currently feeling will pass, it's not constant.

But how can you help yourself in order for them not to happen in the first place?

Home life

1. Is there something happening at home that you need to give a little more attention to?

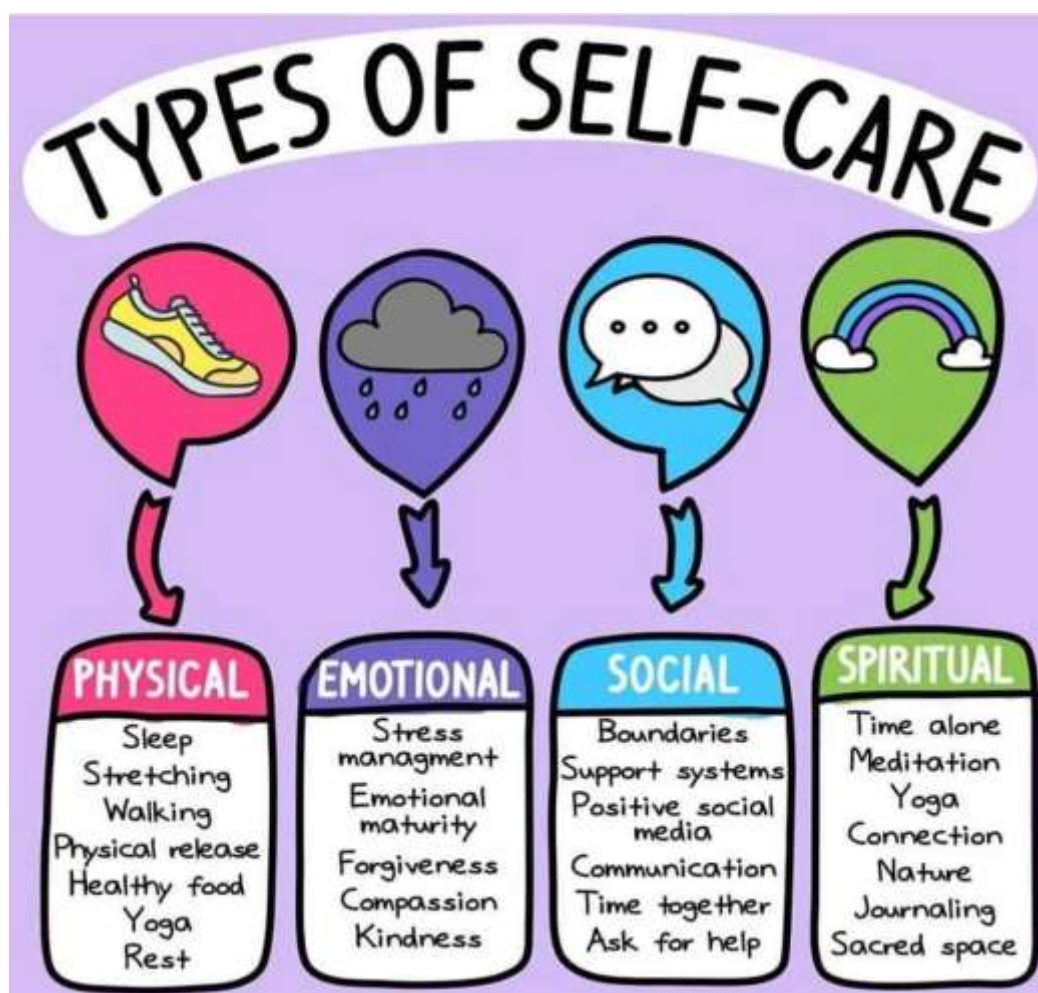
Have you been neglecting your own self-care by looking after others so much?

Quite often we get swept up in the rat race of life, work and family, that we can forget about looking after ourselves.

If this is the case, try and make a slot of time every day/ every few days that is just for YOU!

- Time to read
- Exercise
- Chill out
- Have a bath
- Whatever you like doing

It doesn't need to be long, just some time allocated to doing something for YOU!



2. If you are in a relationship, perhaps it is just not working for you anymore but you have kept on going just for the sake of it?

- Are you living to the same values you always had, or are they somebody else's now?
- Are you being true to yourself and living the way that makes YOU happy?
- Do you feel that you are plodding along without any part of your day making you feel happy?
- Have you drifted apart so much that you no longer connect?
- Are you being taken for granted?
- Are you taking your partner for granted?
- Do you have any quality time with your partner?

Try sitting down with them and see if there is a compromise you can come to, to make sure you are both getting the same value out of your relationship.

Make sure you both get the opportunity to talk and to listen properly. If one of you is constantly overtalking and not hearing how the other feels, that can be extremely detrimental to their mental wellbeing. It should be a 2-way street.

Remember, your happiness matters too!



3. If not a personal relationship, perhaps it may be something at work. Sitting down and really evaluating what is going on, causing you to feel so anxious in the first place can really help, if you feel that it's possible.

I understand though, brain fog can really get the better of you and cause you to have no clue what is really going on!!! This is where I can help you.

4. Maybe you are struggling from lack of confidence and self-esteem, which is keeping you where you are, as you do not feel strong enough or capable enough to move away from it?

Or perhaps you don't have the feelings of self-worth, to enable you to go forward and get that job or promotion?

This **DOES NOT** have to be a forever feeling.

- You **can** have a choice in how you feel
- You **can** learn to forgive yourself
- You **can** learn to make better choices
- You **can** learn to love yourself

These are things that can be worked on and helped. I can help you change your whole mindset and help you love yourself again.

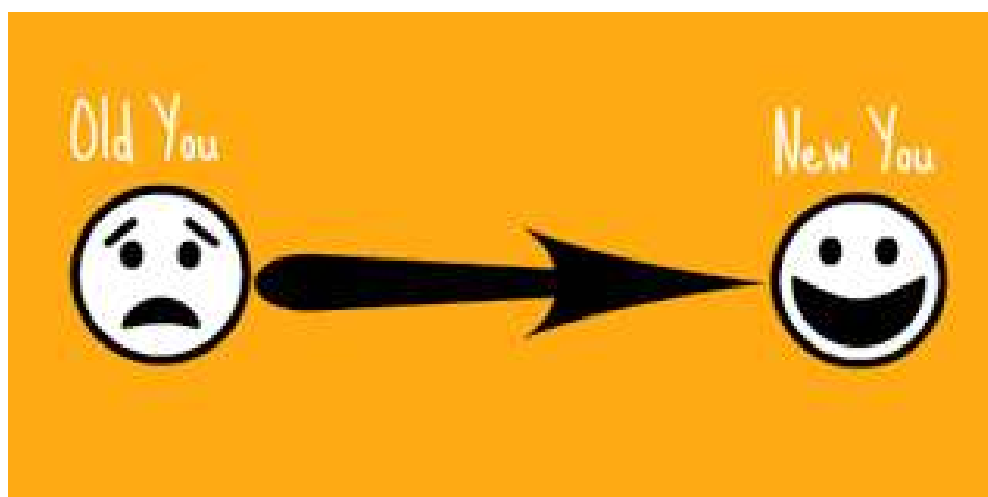


- How would it feel to actually feel positive every morning?
- What would each day look like when you wake up feeling great?
- How different would every day be if you looked forward to it?!

I can help you get back your **confidence** and **self-esteem** in order to make this happen!

Imagine having the **self-confidence** to make that big change in your life you've always wanted!!!!

Or even to just be **content** with what you already have.



If you'd like my help to make this happen, contact me now and we can have a chat about where you're at and what you need to be able to move forwards into a happier life.

YOUR NEXT STEPS

Anxiety Treatment Program

My Anxiety Treatment Program has helped hundreds of people over the last decade to release their anxiety, for good.

Not just trying to control their anxiety but for it not to be there anymore... GONE!

Imagine just going about your day feeling calm and "normal". Not overanalysing things or worrying about everything, just feeling GOOD.

What is it?

A 4-week program with Thought Retraining, daily tasks to complete plus some amazing hypnosis that you WILL LOVE! You will enjoy each session and will be amazed by how **quickly** the change will happen, even after the first session!

Who's it for?

Anyone who is fed up of struggling through life, trying to keep their heads above the water. If you've had enough of feeling rubbish, stressed, anxious or depressed, then this is for you!

How do I know if the Anxiety Treatment Program is any good?

Don't just listen to me, listen to my clients! I have reviews and testimonials all over the internet on Google, [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#) and on my [website](#) too. Please click on the links and see for yourself.

How can I find out more?

Watch my [FREE WEBINAR](#), to find out more about how I can help YOU.

Click [HERE](#) to register for my next webinar slot.

Once you have watched it, you can go to my online diary and book in for a **FREE** telephone consultation, to discuss how I can help you best.

I really look forward to hearing from you, and helping you get your life back on track, once and for all.

Best wishes and speak soon,

Katy Stevenson

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