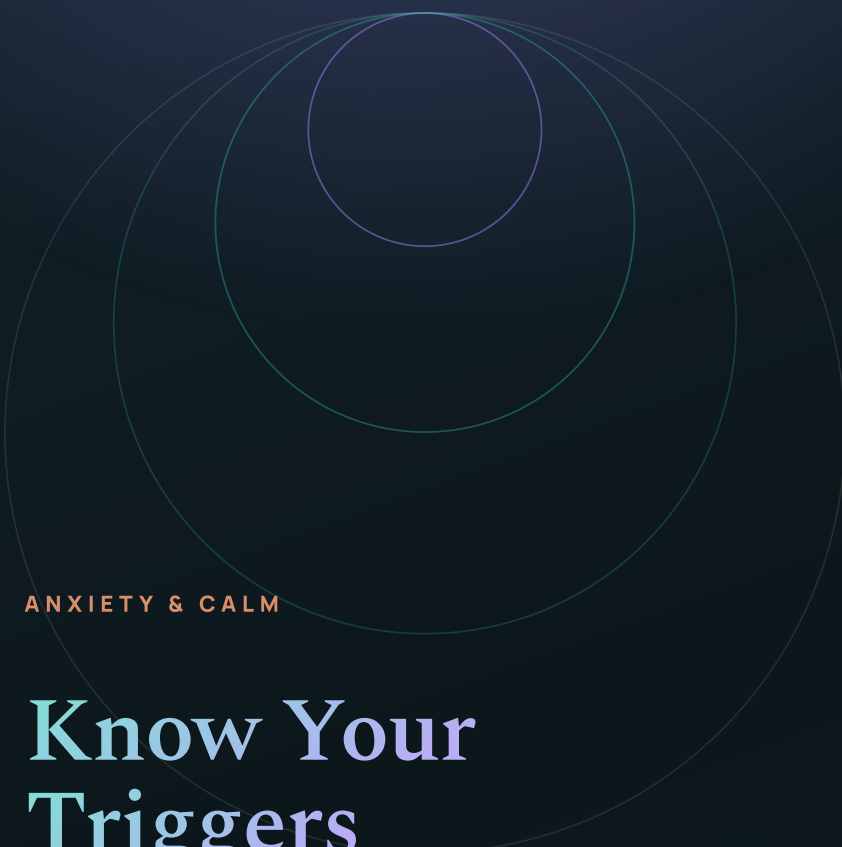




ANXIETY & CALM

Know Your Triggers

Map the situations, thoughts, and old stories that fuel your anxiety.

Stillpoint

DIGITAL SELF-HELP GUIDE



Know Your Triggers

*Map the situations, thoughts, and old stories that fuel
your anxiety.*

STILLPOINT

An educational self-help guide. This book is for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional medical or mental-health advice. © 2026 Stillpoint. All rights reserved.

WELCOME

Before You Begin

Anxiety feels random. It arrives without warning, attaches to whatever's nearby, and leaves you convinced you're simply an anxious person — that this is just how you're built. It almost never is. Anxiety has patterns, and patterns can be found. This book is a guided investigation into your own. You'll track it, map the situations that reliably set it off, trace anxious thoughts down to the beliefs underneath them, and look honestly at the older stories still shaping how you read the present. The approach here is curiosity, not combat. You're not trying to defeat your anxiety; you're trying to understand what it's responding to. That shift alone changes things. Anxiety you can see coming is a fundamentally different experience from anxiety that ambushes you — and understanding is what turns one into the other.

— *The Stillpoint Team*

Getting the Most From This Book

This is a short book by design — but it isn't a race. The ideas here work best when you let them settle and put them into practice, one at a time. Here's how to get the most from the pages ahead.

1

Read actively.

Every chapter ends with a *Try This* exercise and a set of *Key Takeaways*. The reading plants the idea; the exercise is what makes it yours.

2

Start small.

You don't need to apply everything at once. Choose a single practice, let it become genuinely easy, and only then add another.

3

Keep what works.

Anxiety is personal. Some tools will click for you and others won't — keep the ones that help and quietly leave the rest.

4

Be kind to yourself.

Progress is never a straight line. A hard day isn't a failure or a reset to zero — it's simply part of the path.

Whenever you're ready, turn the page and let's begin.

CONTENTS

What's Inside

01 The Case For Curiosity

Why understanding anxiety beats fighting it.

02 The Anxiety Log

A simple tracking method that reveals your patterns in a week.

03 Mapping Your Situations

Find the reliable external triggers hiding in plain sight.

04 Tracing The Thought

Follow an anxious thought down to the belief underneath.

05 The Old Stories

How past experiences script today's worries.

06 From Insight To Response

Turn what you've learned into a calmer next move.

The Case For Curiosity

Most people relate to their anxiety as an enemy: something to suppress, defeat, or get rid of. It's an understandable stance and a losing one. This chapter makes the case for a different posture — treating anxiety as information about something, and getting genuinely interested in what.

Fighting it makes it louder

When you treat anxiety as an intruder, you add a second layer on top of the first: anxiety about the anxiety. Now you're not just uneasy about the meeting, you're distressed that you're uneasy at all, and frustrated with yourself for not being over it. That second layer is often larger than the original feeling.

Curiosity dissolves the second layer. "Interesting — something about this situation is registering as threatening. What?" You're still anxious, but you're no longer at war with yourself about it, and a surprising amount of the intensity was living in that war.

Stop asking why you're like this. Start asking what this is responding to.

Anxiety is always about something

Anxiety can feel utterly random, but it's a response, and responses have inputs. The input might be obvious (a difficult conversation tomorrow), physiological (four hours of sleep, three coffees), or historical (a situation that resembles something old). It's rarely nothing.

The reason it seems random is that the input is often invisible from where you're standing. You feel the effect hours after the cause, so the two never get connected. Tracking is simply the process of making those links visible.

You are the only expert on this

General advice about anxiety can only ever be general. What actually sets you off, in what combinations, at what times, with what recovery — nobody has that data but you, and mostly you haven't collected it either.

This is genuinely good news. It means the most useful information available to you isn't in a book; it's in the next two weeks of your own life. Your job is to become a fair, unsentimental observer of yourself — noticing without immediately judging what you find.

Try This – Swap The Question

The next time anxiety appears, change the question you ask about it.

1. Notice the usual question: "Why am I like this?" or "How do I make this stop?"
2. Replace it with: "What is this responding to?"
3. Write whatever comes, even if it seems unrelated or trivial.
4. Resist evaluating the answer — you're collecting data, not judging it.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Fighting anxiety adds a second layer that's often bigger than the first.
- Anxiety is a response with inputs — it only looks random because they're delayed.
- The most useful data about your anxiety exists only in your own life.

The Anxiety Log

This is the engine of the whole book. A simple written record, kept for a week or two, will reveal more about your anxiety than months of thinking about it. Memory is unreliable — it remembers the worst moments and quietly discards the pattern. Writing catches what memory drops.

Five columns, thirty seconds

Keep it brutally simple or you won't keep it at all. Five columns: time, situation, intensity 0-10, what you thought, what you did. Thirty seconds per entry, three or four entries a day. Phone notes are fine; paper is slightly better because it's slower.

Log the small ones too. The 3/10 moments are actually more informative than the 9/10 ones, because they're more frequent and their triggers are less obvious. A log of only your worst moments will just tell you that bad days are bad.

You cannot see a pattern from inside a single moment. Writing is how you get above it.

Include the boring context

Add a daily line covering sleep hours, caffeine, alcohol, food, movement, and hormonal cycle if relevant. This feels unnecessary and is often where the biggest discovery lives.

It's extremely common to find that your worst anxiety days cluster around five hours of sleep, or the day after drinking, or the afternoons you skip lunch. These physiological inputs are invisible from the inside — the anxiety feels psychological and specific, and you invent a story about the meeting that's worrying you, when the real driver is arithmetic.

Reviewing without judgement

After a week, read the log in one sitting with a highlighter. Mark repeated situations, repeated times of day, repeated thoughts, and any relationship between the context line and the intensity ratings. You're looking for clusters, not certainties.

Do this as a researcher, not a critic. The point isn't to discover you've been handling things badly; it's to find the pattern. If you notice self-criticism rising as you read, that's worth logging too — it's part of the picture.

Try This — Start Your Log Today

One honest entry is enough to begin. Don't wait for a fresh week or a proper notebook.

1. Set up five columns: time, situation, intensity 0-10, thought, what I did.
2. Add a daily context line: sleep, caffeine, alcohol, food, movement.
3. Make one entry right now for how you feel at this moment.
4. Set two phone reminders — midday and evening — to prompt an entry.
5. Commit to seven days before reviewing anything.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Memory keeps the drama and discards the pattern — writing catches the pattern.
- Log low-intensity moments; they're frequent and far more revealing.
- Track sleep, caffeine, and food — the biggest discoveries often hide there.

Mapping Your Situations

With a week or two of data, real patterns start to surface. This chapter is about reading them — identifying which external situations reliably spike you, and finding the specific ingredient that's doing the work.

Find the common denominator

Take your three highest-intensity entries and look for what they share. It often isn't the obvious category. Three spikes at a work presentation, a dinner party, and a phone call to a utility company aren't really about work, socialising, or admin — they might all be about being evaluated, or about not being able to leave.

Getting to the actual ingredient is what makes the pattern useful. "I get anxious at parties" gives you nothing to work with. "I get anxious when I don't know anyone and can't leave early" gives you two specific things you can change.

*"I get anxious at parties" gives you nothing.
Specificity is what makes a pattern usable.*

Common trigger families

Most triggers cluster into a handful of families: evaluation (being judged or watched), uncertainty (not knowing what will happen), loss of control

(someone else driving, being trapped), conflict (potential disapproval or anger), and overload (too much input at once).

See which family your entries fall into. Most people find one or two dominate. Knowing yours is genuinely useful — you can then predict which upcoming situations will be difficult, which converts an ambush into something you can prepare for.

Watch the timing

Note when anxiety peaks relative to the event. Some people spike hardest in anticipation and feel fine once it starts. Others are fine until they're in it. Others do fine throughout and crash afterwards, replaying everything.

This changes what actually helps. If your anxiety is anticipatory, the intervention is reducing the run-up — booking things sooner, preparing earlier. If it's in the moment, you need in-situation tools. If it's the aftermath, the work is around rumination. Same trigger, three completely different solutions.

Try This — Extract Your Pattern

Use your log to move from a vague category to a specific, workable ingredient.

1. Pull out your three highest-intensity entries.
2. Write what all three have in common — keep going until it's specific.
3. Name the trigger family: evaluation, uncertainty, control, conflict, or overload.
4. Note when the peak hits: before, during, or after the event.
5. Write one sentence: "I spike when _____, and it peaks _____."

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Look past the category to the specific ingredient doing the work.
- Most triggers fall into evaluation, uncertainty, control, conflict, or overload.
- Whether you peak before, during, or after determines which tools help.

Tracing The Thought

Behind every anxious moment is a prediction, and behind that prediction is a belief. Surface thoughts are easy to dismiss and easy to argue with, which is why arguing rarely helps. This chapter goes underneath them.

The downward arrow

Take an anxious thought and ask, repeatedly: "And if that were true, what would that mean?" Keep going until you hit something that feels raw rather than reasonable. That's the real belief.

For example: "I'll mess up the presentation" → "people will think I'm incompetent" → "I'll lose their respect" → "I'll be exposed as a fraud" → "I'm not actually good enough and everyone will find out." That last one is what your anxiety is genuinely responding to. Arguing about presentation slides was never going to touch it.

*You are not fighting a hundred anxieties.
You are meeting the same two or three, in
different clothes.*

Core beliefs are few

Do this with several different anxious thoughts and something striking usually emerges: they converge. Dozens of surface worries about work,

relationships, health, and money often trace back to two or three core beliefs — typically some version of "I'm not enough," "I'm not safe," or "I'll be abandoned."

This is enormously clarifying. You're not fighting a hundred separate anxieties; you're meeting the same two or three old beliefs wearing different clothes. Recognising the costume mid-worry — "ah, this is the not-good-enough one again" — takes a surprising amount of the charge out of it.

Meet it, don't argue with it

When you find a core belief, the instinct is to disprove it. That rarely works — these beliefs were formed by experience, often early, and they don't yield to logic. Debating them tends to strengthen your focus on them.

A better move is to acknowledge and widen. "There's the belief that I'm not good enough. It makes sense that I learned it. It isn't the whole truth, and I don't have to resolve it right now to get through today." You're not defeating it; you're declining to be run by it — and that's both more achievable and more effective.

Try This — Run The Downward Arrow

Take one recurring worry and follow it down. Stop when you hit something that stings.

1. Write a current anxious thought at the top of a page.
2. Ask: "If that were true, what would that mean?" Write the answer below.
3. Repeat four or five times, going deeper each round.
4. Stop when you reach something raw — that's the core belief.
5. Write one accepting line about it, without trying to disprove it.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Ask "and what would that mean?" repeatedly to reach the real belief.
- Dozens of surface worries usually trace back to two or three core beliefs.
- Acknowledge and widen rather than argue — these beliefs don't yield to logic.

The Old Stories

Core beliefs came from somewhere. This chapter looks — gently, and without requiring you to excavate anything painful — at how earlier experiences wrote the rules you're still reading the present through.

Your rules were reasonable once

Every core belief was, at some point, an intelligent adaptation. If disagreement led to conflict, learning to be agreeable was smart. If love felt conditional on achievement, working relentlessly was a rational strategy. If things changed unpredictably, staying alert made sense.

This reframe matters enormously. You're not carrying a defect; you're running a strategy that once worked and has outlived its usefulness. That's a much easier thing to hold — and much easier to update — than a flaw in your character.

It was a reasonable rule when you learned it. That doesn't mean it still fits the life you're living.

When the past reads the present

Trouble arises when the old rule gets applied to situations that don't warrant it. A manager's neutral email reads as disapproval. A partner's quiet

evening reads as withdrawal. A friend's slow reply reads as rejection. The present event is ambiguous; the old story supplies a confident interpretation.

The tell is intensity mismatch. When your reaction feels bigger than the situation objectively warrants, you're usually responding to the story rather than the event. That gap — between the size of the trigger and the size of the response — is the most reliable signpost you have.

Separating then from now

When you catch a mismatch, try a simple separation. Ask: "What's actually happening here, in the plainest possible terms?" Then: "What am I adding?" Actually happening: a colleague replied briefly. Adding: they're annoyed with me and I've done something wrong.

You don't need to resolve where the story came from to use this. Simply naming which part is observed fact and which part is interpretation restores a great deal of choice. If you find that deeper material surfaces and feels heavy, that's genuinely worth exploring with a qualified therapist — this kind of work is exactly what they're trained for.

Try This — Then And Now

Use a recent overreaction as your material. Be gentle with yourself here.

1. Recall a moment your reaction felt bigger than the situation warranted.
2. Write what objectively happened, in plain factual terms.
3. Write what you added — the meaning, motive, or prediction.
4. Ask: "When did I first learn to expect that?" Note whatever comes, without digging.
5. Finish with: "That rule made sense then. I can check whether it fits now."

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Core beliefs were intelligent adaptations that have outlived their usefulness.
- Intensity mismatch is the clearest sign an old story is doing the interpreting.
- Separating observed fact from added meaning restores choice.

From Insight To Response

Understanding your anxiety doesn't automatically reduce it. Plenty of people can describe their patterns in detail and still get swept away by them. This final chapter is about converting what you've learned into a different response in the moment.

Insight is a starting point

Knowing that you spike around evaluation, driven by a not-good-enough belief formed early, is genuinely valuable — but it isn't self-executing. Insight without a changed response tends to become a more sophisticated way of narrating the same experience.

The bridge is a pre-decided plan: given what you now know, what will you actually do differently? Not in general — specifically, in the situations your log identified. That's what converts understanding into change.

Understanding is where the work begins, not where it finishes.

Build your early-warning protocol

You now know your main trigger, your usual timing, and your typical thought. Turn that into an if-then plan. "If I'm heading into an evaluation situation, then I'll do X the night before, Y in the hour before, and Z if it spikes during."

Choose tools that match your timing. Anticipatory spikers benefit most from shortening the run-up and writing predictions down in advance. In-the-moment spikers need grounding and breathing. Aftermath ruminators need a defined closing ritual — a walk, a written debrief, a firm cut-off time for replaying it.

Keep updating the map

Your triggers will shift as your life shifts. What spiked you at twenty-five may be irrelevant at forty, and new patterns will appear with new circumstances. Treat this as a living map rather than a finished document.

A useful rhythm: run the log again for one week every few months, or any time anxiety noticeably changes shape. It takes very little effort once you've done it, and it catches new patterns early — while they're still small enough to address easily. Curiosity isn't a one-off project; it's a way of relating to yourself over time.

Try This – Write Your If-Then Plan

Turn everything you've learned into one concrete, pre-decided protocol.

1. Write: "My main trigger is _____ and it usually peaks _____."
2. Write: "The belief underneath is usually _____."
3. Write your if-then: "If _____, then I will _____ before, _____ during, _____ after."
4. Pick your next likely trigger situation and apply the plan to it.
5. Diarise a one-week log review three months from now.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Insight alone doesn't change anything — pair it with a pre-decided response.
- Match your tools to your timing: before, during, or after the event.
- Re-run the log every few months; your patterns change as your life does.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Your Action Plan

Your investigation on one page. The log is the foundation — almost everything else depends on having real data about your own patterns.

- ☐ Swap "why am I like this?" for "what is this responding to?"
- ☐ Set up your five-column anxiety log and make the first entry today.
- ☐ Add a daily context line: sleep, caffeine, alcohol, food, movement.
- ☐ Log low-intensity moments, not just the worst ones.
- ☐ After seven days, review the log in one sitting and highlight repeats.
- ☐ Find the common denominator across your three biggest spikes.
- ☐ Name your trigger family and whether you peak before, during, or after.
- ☐ Run the downward arrow on one recurring worry to find the core belief.
- ☐ Practise separating what actually happened from what you added.
- ☐ Write your if-then protocol for your most predictable trigger.
- ☐ Diarise a one-week log review three months from now.
- ☐ If old material surfaces and feels heavy, work through it with a qualified therapist.

FINAL WORDS

Where You Go From Here

You've done something genuinely valuable here: you've stopped treating your anxiety as a random affliction and started treating it as something knowable. That shift matters more than any single technique. Anxiety you can see coming — that you can name, predict, and prepare for — is a fundamentally different experience from anxiety that ambushes you out of a clear sky. Keep the log going a little longer than feels necessary. Stay curious about what you find, especially the unflattering parts, and try to hold it all with the same fairness you'd offer a friend describing their patterns to you. You're not looking for a verdict on yourself. You're drawing a map. And a map, unlike a verdict, is something you can actually use.

Breathe. Begin. Return.

This guide is for educational and self-help purposes only and is not therapy, diagnosis, or medical advice. If you are in crisis or experiencing severe or persistent anxiety, please contact a qualified health professional or a local crisis line. Payments are processed securely by Digistore24. © 2026 Stillpoint.