



4

THINGS YOU CAN DO WHEN

anxiety

GETS IN THE WAY

(From someone who sits with it every day)

BY STEPHANIE SANZ, LMHC-D

Founder and Clinical Director, Cognitive Reset Counseling

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DISCLAIMER

The information in this guide is for educational purposes only and is not designed to diagnose, prescribe, or replace treatment by a qualified clinician.

Certain mental health concerns should be addressed within the clinical framework of mental health counseling. If you are experiencing clinically significant symptoms that are causing distress, we encourage you to reach out to a mental health professional or visit your local hospital.

If you're in crisis or having thoughts of harming yourself, you're not alone. Call or text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) any time, day or night.

Let's be honest. Anxiety is exhausting to live with.

It can show up anywhere. In the social gathering you almost skip. In the raise you don't ask for. In the "yes" you don't let yourself say, because you're afraid of disappointing someone else.

It can make the unfamiliar feel unsafe, the unknown feel like a threat and over time, that turns into isolation. Not because you chose it, but because anxiety made avoidance feel like safety.

It can make it hard to say no when you need to, or hard to say yes to something good when saying yes feels too risky.

It can be **paralyzing**.



Anxiety can block you from things that feed your soul. From sharing your uniqueness with others. From stepping into your full potential.

We've all felt anxiety at some level. Sometimes it even works in our favor, sharpening our focus or pushing us into motion when we'd otherwise stall. But it becomes a problem when it starts running the show, blocking the goals you actually care about.

And if anxiety ever got to the point where you reached out to a mental health professional for support, that's not weakness. That's the first real step toward getting your life back.

"Working with a mental health professional or therapist can help you dig deeper to understand how past experiences have conditioned your anxiety responses in the present.

Knowing the "why" matters. It opens the door to real change. But here's what a lot of therapy clients discover: understanding why isn't the same as knowing how to move. That's often where the real work begins.



That's not a failure. It's not you doing therapy wrong. Sometimes there are more layers to work through. Sometimes you understand the why, and still don't know what to do differently.

So here are four places to start. Not a replacement for therapy, but four things you can practice starting today.



Let's Get Into It!

01

TAKE A LOOK IN THE MIRROR



Self-reflection, including a willingness to look honestly at the parts of yourself you'd rather not see, tends to be part of working through anxiety. That might mean noticing beliefs or emotional patterns you haven't fully acknowledged, like a tendency to blame outside circumstances, or a habit of avoiding your own role in a repeated pattern.

It can also be worth asking yourself something less obvious. Is it possible that anxiety, uncomfortable as it is, has also become familiar in a way that feels safer than the unknown? Sometimes anxiety functions as a kind of protection from change, even when that change is something you want. That's not something to feel bad about. It's simply useful information. The more clearly you can see your own role in the pattern, the more there is to work with.

None of this is about blame. It's simply useful information. The more clearly you can see your own role in the pattern, the more there is to work with.

Don't get me wrong, the unknown can be scary, and not knowing who you might be on the other end of anxiety might terrify you. But ask yourself, is the fear of the unknown worth the debilitating anxiety if you stay where you are now?

Or is it possible you're working against your own progress without meaning to? Skipping rest, not putting yourself first when you need to? Those aren't failures. They're the self-care behaviors that help recharge the energy this work actually requires.



Remember

Sometimes you have to fill your own cup before you can fill up others.

A major part of anxiety relief is recognizing your own role in the pattern: your thoughts, beliefs, emotions, and behaviors. Once you start looking honestly at that role, there's real room to work with.

02

Stay Open To Something New



If what you've tried so far hasn't shifted your anxiety, it may be worth trying something different, even if it feels unfamiliar or uncomfortable at first. A tool or approach can have real evidence behind it, and you can still doubt it'll work for you specifically. Being open means setting that doubt aside and trying it anyway.

Openness can be the difference between walking through a door that's already open and having to force one that's locked. Resistance creates friction. It slows you down and drains energy you could be using elsewhere. When you meet something new with resistance, you're not just spending more energy, you're working against the very thing that's supposed to help you. Openness removes that interference. It gives the approach room to actually work the way it's meant to.

It's common to feel open to change and still find yourself resisting it without realizing. That's not a character flaw. It's just how change works. Naming that gap honestly is often what makes room for something to actually shift.

Being open doesn't mean the discomfort disappears. It means you stop letting the discomfort make the decision for you. That's often the real difference between staying stuck and finding your way through.



03

Notice What's Getting in the Way



It's worth noticing how many different reasons we can find for not doing the things that might help. Time. Energy. Exhaustion. The list is long, and it's real. Life does get in the way sometimes. But often, the reason is less about life and more about a thought that talks you out of it.

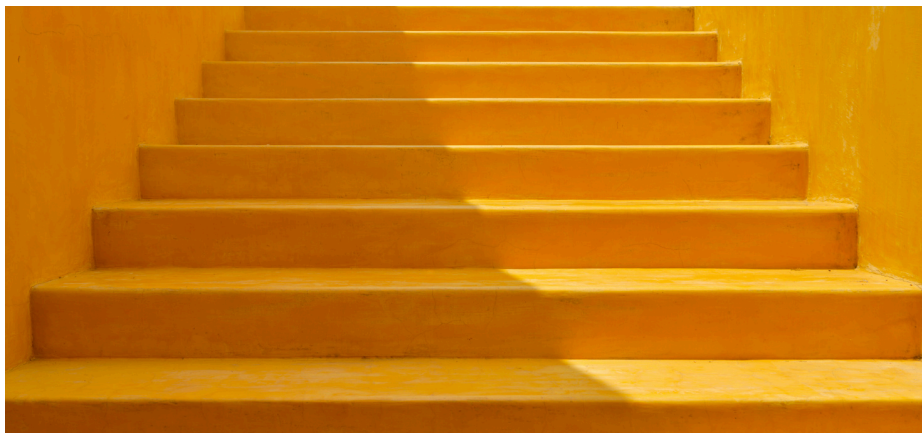
It might sound like, I'll start when things calm down. I'm too tired tonight. I don't have time for this right now. Each one sounds reasonable in the moment. That's what makes them so easy to reach for.

But the more you reach for a reason, the easier it gets to reach for it again next time.

So notice it. Without judgment. When you catch yourself reaching for a reason not to do the thing, just notice that it's happening. You don't have to fight it or explain it away. Noticing it is often the first useful step. What you do with it after that is a choice.

04

Take the Next Small Step



Do you find yourself planning to do the work, like a journaling practice or a breathing exercise you were taught, and then not following through? You don't need the perfect moment or all the answers to begin. That need, to have everything figured out before you start, is often anxiety talking. It shows up as 'I can't,' and it can be the very thing that stops you from taking the first small step. Small, repeated steps tend to matter more than leaps.

Every time you think 'I can't,' you're reinforcing that pathway in your brain. Every time you choose 'here's one small way I can,' you're building a different one. That's not a metaphor. It's how neuroplasticity, the brain's ability to change, actually works. And this is exactly the mechanism behind your anxiety response too.

Changing your brain's baseline anxiety response isn't about willpower alone. It's about which thought you practice most. The more you reach for 'how can I,' the more that becomes the default your brain reaches for too.

So the question isn't whether your brain can change. It can.

The question is which thought you're going to practice today.



Remember

The more you do something, the more hardwired it becomes. That's what it takes to shift your baseline anxiety response.

Bottom line: working through anxiety tends to involve looking honestly at yourself, staying open to trying something new, noticing what's getting in the way, and taking small steps consistently.

You don't have to have this figured out today. You just have to take the next small step.

And if part of you is ready to do this work alongside someone, rather than alone, that's what therapy is for.



*I wish you healing, light, and love.
And I wish you the courage to take the next step.*

Stephanie Sanz

About



Cognitive Reset Counseling is a Brooklyn based group therapy practice founded by Stephanie Sanz, LMHC-D. We work with NYC creatives, entertainment industry professionals, and entrepreneurs navigating anxiety, depression, stress, burnout, and complex trauma.

Stephanie also offers qEEG Brain Mapping, used before and after psychotherapy treatment, and Brainspotting for therapy clients. Our team of therapists and graduate counselors brings an integrative, neuroscience informed approach to individual and couples therapy.

We offer in person sessions at our Greenpoint, Brooklyn office and telehealth across New York State.

To learn more or book a free consult, visit
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[@cognitiveresetcounseling](https://www.instagram.com/cognitiveresetcounseling)



hello@cognitiveresetcounseling.com



www.cognitiveresetcounseling.com