

Lesson 02 Workbook

An Anxiety Management Protocol

A self-guided, evidence-informed protocol to help relieve anxiety and restore calm.



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An Anxiety Management Protocol

What to Expect

An Anxiety Management Protocol is a compassionate, self-guided, and therapy-informed framework designed to help you gently understand your unique anxiety patterns, navigate hyperarousal and worry loops, and cultivate sustainable inner steadiness over time. We recognize that living with persistent anxiety can feel exhausting, which is why this protocol is structured to offer a safe, encouraging space for psychological and educational growth—serving as a grounded supportive resource alongside your broader journey rather than a replacement for professional clinical care.

Our goal is to help you demystify the behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and physical drivers behind your anxiety. By bridging the gap between practical psychological insights and the protective, biological alarm systems of your nervous system, we invite you to move away from self-criticism and step into a more informed, compassionate, and empowered way of living.

How It Works

Anxiety affects the entire system—altering your thoughts, physical arousal, threat perception, and daily choices. Rather than treating these experiences as permanent identity traits or signs of personal weakness, this protocol treats anxiety as an overactive protective alarm and self-reinforcing loop that can be interrupted through targeted, evidence-informed skills:

- **Somatic Regulation:** Learning to downshift physical hyperarousal using paced breathing, muscle release, and sensory grounding to communicate safety back to your nervous system.
- **Cognitive Restructuring:** Spotting “what if” spirals and protective thinking traps, treating anxious thoughts as hypotheses rather than absolute facts, and widening your view to build balanced perspectives.
- **Mindful Decentering:** Stepping out of the spin of worry and rumination by practicing aware observation, allowing you to notice thoughts without fusing with them or getting dragged into endless mental debates.
- **Uncertainty Tolerance & Gentle Action:** Gradually loosening the grip of safety behaviors and avoidance using structured ladders, building true confidence and psychological flexibility by making room for discomfort while choosing actions aligned with what matters most to you.

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An Important Safety Reminder

This protocol is educational and supportive. It is not a substitute for psychotherapy, medical care, or crisis intervention. If your symptoms are severe, rapidly worsening, or involve immediate concerns regarding your safety, please reach out to qualified professional services or local emergency care alongside these self-guided materials.

A Word from Our Director

If you're reading this, there is a good chance that anxiety has been shaping your days for far too long. Perhaps it has narrowed your world, interrupted your sleep, strained your relationships, or left you feeling as if your own mind has turned against you. ***Chronic stress may be wearing down your body and mind, and past experiences—even traumatic ones—may still echo in your nervous system.*** First and foremost, you are not alone here—and this protocol was created with you very much in mind.

Anxiety has been a companion in my own life at various stages. There were many seasons when my thoughts would race, my chest would tighten, I would bite my fingernails to the quick, wake six or seven times a night, and even simple decisions felt overwhelming. It often seemed as if there was no relief. As a psychologist, I have also sat with many people whose anxiety and stress left them house-bound, exhausted, and hyper-alert—especially those whose nervous systems were shaped by earlier trauma. I have seen, up close, how debilitating this can be—and how misunderstood it often is.

The Anxiety Management Protocol grew out of those personal experiences and years of clinical practice. It brings together evidence based strategies, gentle mind-body practices to calm an overactivated nervous system, and practical tools you can use in the middle of everyday life—not just in ideal conditions.

While this protocol is not a substitute for trauma therapy, it is designed to be trauma sensitive. My intention is to help you build a new relationship with anxiety and stress: one where you have skills, perspective, and support, rather than fear, shame, or self-blame.

As you move through these modules, you will be invited to slow down, to listen more kindly to yourself, and to discover that who you are is much larger than any thought, sensation, or mood. There is a steady, wise part of you that anxiety, stress, and even trauma can never damage. This protocol is designed to help you reconnect with that part—so you can meet your days with more clarity, steadiness, and self-respect, even when anxiety shows up.

Thank you for trusting us to walk alongside you. My hope is that the material you're about to explore becomes a companion you can return to again and again—a quiet reminder that relief is possible, that change is gradual but real, and that you do not have to navigate this path on your own.

Gary Pike
Clinic Director, [wisemind.com](https://www.wisemind.com)

Companion Guide Notes for Audio Lesson 02

From On Edge to Grounded: Calming Your Nervous System

When: After Listening to [Audio Lesson 02](#)

Purpose: To help you understand and regulate the physical side of anxiety by learning evidence-based, body-based tools—paced breathing, muscle release, and sensory grounding—so you can downshift nervous system hyperarousal, regain steadiness, and create room to act rather than react.

Overview: From Hyperarousal to Steady Ground

[Audio Lesson 02](#) focuses on the body side of anxiety: racing heart, tight chest, restlessness, muscle tension, and the feeling of being constantly “on.” Anxiety activates protective systems in the body, and body-based strategies such as paced breathing and muscle relaxation can help shift autonomic state and reduce immediate arousal.

You will learn three practical tools: paced breathing, muscle release, and sensory grounding. These approaches are supported by evidence suggesting breathing practices can influence autonomic nervous system activity and stress responses, while muscle relaxation and grounding-type interventions can reduce immediate anxiety states.

The purpose is not to force calm or make anxiety disappear on command. It is to help you regain steadiness and create a little more space between the body’s alarm response and your next action.

Part 1: What The Body Side Of Anxiety Is Like For Me

1.1 First reflection:

Use these sentences to begin putting your experience into words.

When anxiety shows up in my body, it often feels like:

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The hardest physical part for me lately has been:

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What I most want to understand is:

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What I most want help with is:

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1.2 Gentle reframe:

Complete these prompts without trying to force a positive answer.

Body-based anxiety may be affecting my:

- | | | | |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| ☐ mood | ☐ energy | ☐ sleep | ☐ motivation |
| ☐ thinking | ☐ concentration | ☐ appetite | ☐ relationships |
| ☐ daily functioning | | | |

What this tends to make me believe about myself is:

.....

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A kinder or more accurate reframe might be:

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1.3 My experience in four areas:

Area	What I notice in myself
Thoughts	
Feelings	
Body / Energy	
Behaviour / Daily Life	

Notes:

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Key Points to Remember: Audio Lesson 02

List the 6 *Key Points to Remember* as mentioned at the end of [Audio Lesson 02](#):

Key Point 1......
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Key Point 2......
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Key Point 3......
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Key Point 4......
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Key Point 5......
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Key Point 6......
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**THIS IS A PREVIEW ONLY OF
THE ANXIETY MANAGEMENT PROTOCOL
WORKBOOK FOR AUDIO LESSON 02**

wisemind.com members can access the full
workbook. [Sign up or login to access the whole
workbook.](#)

Journal References: An Anxiety Management Protocol

Lesson 2: From On Edge to Grounded: Calming Your Nervous System

[Audio Lesson 02](#) provides foundational evidence that understanding worry itself—what it is, what triggers it, and what keeps it going—is a powerful intervention, validating the Protocol’s focus on mapping the “worry cycle,” recognizing early warning signs, and beginning to distinguish between helpful planning and unhelpful repetitive worry.

1. Pathways from intolerance of uncertainty to worry

Citation: Mahoney, A. E. J., et al. (2025). Exploring pathways from intolerance of uncertainty to worry in adults with generalised anxiety disorder. **Cognitive Behaviour Therapy**.

This 2025 clinical study tested pathway models linking intolerance of uncertainty, cognitive avoidance, threat estimates, worry, and anxiety in adults with primary GAD. Threat estimates significantly mediated the relationship between intolerance of uncertainty and both worry and anxiety, highlighting how ambiguous situations become interpreted as threatening and sustain repetitive worry.

2. Intolerance of uncertainty and emotion dysregulation in GAD

Citation: Rossi, V., et al. (2025). Intolerance of uncertainty and emotion dysregulation as predictors of generalized anxiety symptoms. **Frontiers in Psychology** / open-access clinical study.

This 2025 study examined how intolerance of uncertainty and emotion dysregulation contribute to generalized anxiety symptoms. The findings support the view that worry is maintained not only by uncertainty intolerance but also by difficulty managing emotional responses, suggesting that cognitive and emotional regulation processes jointly reinforce ongoing anxious thinking.

3. Psychological mechanisms underpinning change in intolerance of uncertainty

Citation: Psychological mechanisms underpinning change in intolerance of uncertainty in anxiety-related disorders. **Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews**.

This 2025 review argues that intolerance of uncertainty is a fundamental trans-diagnostic dimension across anxiety-related disorders and examines mechanisms through which it changes in treatment. It situates uncertainty as a core vulnerability that influences anticipatory thinking, worry, and anxiety, and helps explain why uncertainty-related beliefs are central to anxiety maintenance.

4. A comprehensive review of generalized anxiety disorder

Citation: A comprehensive review of generalized anxiety disorder. **Cureus** / peer-reviewed review article, 2023.

This 2023 review summarizes GAD as characterized by excessive, uncontrollable worry and discusses epidemiology, risk factors, symptom patterns, and treatment approaches. It emphasizes that persistent worry is a defining feature of GAD and integrates biological, cognitive, and environmental contributors into a broad contemporary overview of the disorder.

5. WHO recommendations for management of GAD in general health care

Citation: Gray, B., et al. (2024). Management of generalized anxiety disorder and panic disorder in general health care settings: New WHO recommendations. **World Psychiatry**.

This 2024 paper presents new WHO recommendations for managing generalized anxiety disorder and panic disorder in general health care settings. It reflects the high burden and treatment gap associated with anxiety disorders and supports evidence-based identification and intervention in routine care, where worry often first appears as a presenting complaint. This wisemind.com lesson helps users recognize worry as a legitimate target for understanding and intervention, not just a personality trait.



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