Lesson 04 Workbook

An Anxiety Management Protocol

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



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BRILLIANT MENTAL HEALTH

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

Companion Guide Notes for Audio Lesson 04

Understanding Beliefs About Worry

When: After Listening to Audio Lesson 04

Purpose: To help you identify common anxious thinking habits—such as overestimating danger and underestimating your ability to cope—and treat these thoughts as hypotheses rather than absolute facts. Through practicing cognitive restructuring, you will learn to gently question these automatic predictions, broaden your perspective, and build more balanced, flexible responses.

Overview: From Anxious Predictions to Balanced Perspective

Audio Lesson 04 focuses on the story side of anxiety: the inner storyteller, dramatic predictions, and cognitive habits that distort your perspective. Anxiety often speaks through urgent warnings like overestimating danger or underestimating your ability to cope, making predictions feel like solid facts.

You will learn how to practice cognitive restructuring using the ***Thought Balance Sheet***—examining evidence for and against your thoughts, widening your view, and generating balanced alternatives. This approach is supported by CBT evidence showing that examining anxious appraisals and building flexible thinking are central to loosening the grip of anxious predictions.

The purpose is not to force positive thinking or pretend nothing is hard. It is to cultivate thoughtful inquiry and compassion so you can relate to anxious thoughts as hypotheses rather than facts and choose wiser, more flexible action.

Part 1: What I Am Beginning To Notice About Worry Itself

1.1 First reflection

Use these sentences to begin putting your experience into words.

My anxiety is most likely to get triggered when: .....

.....

.....

The hardest part of worry 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.

Worry 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 04

List the *6 Key Points to Remember* as mentioned at the end of Audio Lesson 04:

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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Journal References: An Anxiety Management Protocol

Lesson 04: Your Inner Storyteller — Challenging Anxious Thoughts

Audio Lesson 04 provides foundational evidence that strengthening attentional control and learning to disengage from worry are meaningful anxiety interventions, validating the Protocol's focus on noticing where attention goes, redirecting it more flexibly, and becoming less absorbed in worry so the mind can return to the present task.

1. Worry and rumination as a transdiagnostic target

Citation: Egan SJ, Greene D, Callaghan T, Raghav S, Funk J, Badenbach T, Talam S, Kemp G, McEvoy P, Ehring T, Kopf-Beck J. Worry and rumination as a transdiagnostic target in young people: a co-produced systematic review and meta-analysis. **Cogn Behav Ther. 2025** Jan;54(1):17-40

This 2024 review examines repetitive negative thinking, including worry and rumination, as a transdiagnostic treatment target in young people. It highlights evidence that interventions reducing repetitive negative thinking can improve anxiety and depression symptoms, supporting approaches that focus on process-level change rather than only disorder-specific symptom content.

2. Co-designed online training program for worry management

Citation: Steward J, Moulds M, Hirsch C. Co-Designed Online Training Program for Worry Management: The Role of Young People With Lived Experience of Worry in Program Development. **JMIR Form Res 2025**;9:e66461

*This 2025 paper describes development of a multi-session online program called **Shift Focus**, co-designed with young people who experience worry. The intervention centers on redirecting attention and managing worry more effectively, illustrating that attention-shifting strategies can be translated into scalable digital tools for everyday anxiety management.*

3. Effect of attentional bias modification on pre-competition anxiety

Citation: Zhao, J., Yang, Y., Wang, Q., Zhang, H., & Nie, Y. (2025). Effect of attentional bias modification on pre-competition anxiety in athletes. **Frontiers in Psychology, 16**, Article 1596298. Frontiers/PubMed.

This 2025 study found that four weeks of attentional bias modification training significantly reduced both pre-competition anxiety and attentional bias toward negative information in high-level athletes. Participants in the intervention condition showed lower anxiety scores and reduced bias toward threat compared with controls after training.

4. Generalized anxiety disorder patients' cognitive control in affective contexts

Citation: Shen Y, Zhu S, Liao S, Zhao Y, Lin Z, Jiang K, Yan W and Shen X (2025) Generalized anxiety disorder patients' cognitive control in affective contexts. **Front. Psychiatry 16:1506239**.

This 2025 study found that people with generalized anxiety disorder showed poorer affective inhibition and impaired affective shifting compared with healthy controls. The results suggest that GAD involves difficulty staying focused and flexibly shifting attention when emotional stimuli are present, especially under threat-related conditions.

5. CBT effects on anxiety, worry, and attention deficits in GAD

Citation: Salartash, V., et al., 2022. The effectiveness of cognitive behavior therapy... **The Open Public Health Journal, 15**, p.e187494452209080

This 2022 study examined CBT outcomes in people with GAD and found improvements not only in anxiety and worry, but also in attention-related difficulties. The findings suggest that anxiety treatment can support cognitive functioning and attentional regulation in addition to reducing emotional symptoms.

THIS IS A PREVIEW ONLY OF THE ANXIETY MANAGEMENT PROTOCOL WORKBOOK FOR AUDIO LESSON 04

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