

main thing to focus on with anxiety is how much you are fearful of the future. Anxiety is largely triggered by thinking about what is going to happen in the future and projecting negative thoughts about the outcome .... Even before it happens.

### Understanding your brain:

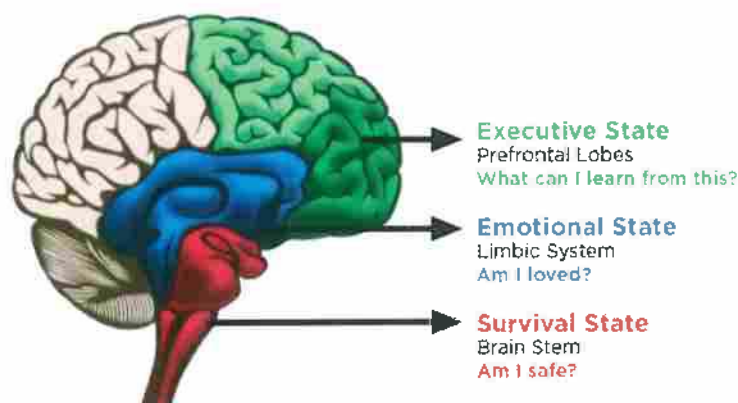
I believe that one of your greatest resources to help you avoid, deal with and manage anxiety is to arm yourself with useful information. Knowledge is power!

I hope this information is useful in helping you understand what is going on in your brain and your nervous system so that you are empowered to do something about it.

#### Understanding the brain:

When it comes to stress behaviour there are 3 general parts to the brain:

- 1. The reptilian brain** - this is where the fight / flight takes place predominantly. It makes swift decisions about what is going on, based on what has happened in the past. It has two options - fight or flee.
- 2. The limbic brain** - this is where emotional responses occur. Bonding with others and forming memories from past experiences.
- 3. The cortex** or the executive brain is the rational thinking brain where we come up with new ideas based on new information. When we are in fight/flight or when we feel judged and not good



enough the emotional brain and the reptilian brain get overwhelmed and dominate the brain function. It is important to re-establish balance between all parts of the brain and get rational thinking back on board.

### MY TOP 3 TIPS FOR MANAGING ANXIETY:

#### Tip One

Take a few long slow deep breaths. *WHY?*

Because when you breathe deeply, like when you are having a big sigh, you switch on the 'rest and restore' part of the nervous system

There are two parts to your nervous system:

- 1. The sympathetic nervous system:** this is the fight/flight response that we have been talking about.
- 2. The parasympathetic nervous system** also known as the rest and digest, or rest and restore system. This part of the nervous system directs the functions of digesting, sleeping, healing and recovery.

The two parts cannot function at the same time. So, when you are stressed or anxious you cannot rest/digest or heal. So, you can see why it's so important to restore that balance and a few big deep breaths really help.

#### Tip two

You want to integrate that whole brain I mentioned earlier and the



quickest way to do this is to hold your head, front and back as you breathe deeply until you feel calm. You can add in a simple and comforting affirmation such as "I am okay" or "I know this will pass" or "I am safe" etc.

#### Tip Three

Use your imagination;

Your brain does not know the difference between what is real and what you imagine. Remember, as I explained earlier, your anxiety is coming from imagining something negative happening in the future. Therefore, if you consciously imagine the future in a positive way then your brain and your body go along with that and create a positive reaction and you will feel good rather than nervous.

My greatest advice is to have faith and belief

- In yourself
- In your environment
- And in the world.

Yes, you are changing, and the world is changing but it's all progress. Our previous generation worried about new technology. There was so much fear that computers would ruin the world, rock and roll would corrupt the minds of the young but look how that turned out. We are all fine; there was nothing to worry about. Everything is working out.

Maureen Collister

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