

Excerpt from Anxiety Rx

Preface

On a muggy, late summer day in 1973, twelve-year-old me didn't know very much about what anxiety was, but I did know for certain I did not feel safe. My father had attempted suicide, and I was watching the ambulance drive off to take him away to the hospital. Even with the drama and trauma of my father's schizophrenia and bipolar illness, I knew my parents loved my younger brother and me, but the pressures were just too great to provide a stable home life. Looking back, I have often jokingly said my father was psychotic and my mother was neurotic, so my own psyche didn't stand much of a chance

If you are looking at this book because you have anxiety, chances are you have some old wounding stored in you from your past and you haven't found a way to heal it yet. Anxiety can be the biggest challenge in a person's life. If you had managed to heal from chronic worry and anxiety, you would likely be looking at books on overcoming much easier challenges like becoming a blindfolded bomb diffuser or an amateur astronaut.

If you suffered in your past and you are still suffering now, I *feel* you. I really, really do. For decades I suffered from crippling anxiety and looked to every type of therapy—and was disappointed at every turn. I know the deep frustration of being promised relief and walking away empty-handed.

I wrote this book as a way to turn my dad's pain and suffering (and the suffering of my mother, brother, and me) into something for good, to create a healing message for others arising out of our pain. When I was a boy, my dad told me of his plans for the future. Mental illness stole those plans and burned them right in front of him. He could only stomp out the flames so many times until he went up in them. Watching the ambulance take my dad away that late summer day in 1973, I swore to myself that his pain, and the chaos, confusion, and heartbreak we suffered as his family, was going to

stand for something. Although his potential was taken from him, I have taken that vow of my twelve-year-old self and rode the energy of his spirit and what he taught me to become a doctor. I told myself that if I was a physician, I could help others in a way I was never able to help my father.

My qualifications for guiding you on this healing journey:

University degrees in medicine and neuroscience.

Master's level training in developmental psychology at the Neufeld Institute in Vancouver.

Over a hundred thousand patient encounters.

Personal insights into anxiety from ayahuasca, LSD, psilocybin, and MDMA.

Hundreds of books on anxiety from highly spiritual to hard-core neuroscience.

Lived at a temple in India studying the science of spirit.

Certified yoga and meditation teacher.

Countless conferences on anxiety and mental health.

Many academic and spiritual retreats to explore mind-body mental and physical health.

Lived with anxiety every day for many years.

Overcame my own anxiety to become a professional stand-up comedian.

By the way, do you know what they call the person who graduates dead last in their medical class?

“Doctor.”

Despite my extensive academic experience above, probably my biggest credential in helping others with anxiety is that I personally suffered from the dreaded condition for decades. The unusual position of being both anxiety doctor *and* anxiety patient has given me a unique ability to see what works and what doesn't from multiple perspectives. I don't have to go back to the doctor to report my progress; I *am* the doctor!

What we are currently doing in psychology and psychiatry is taking two very separate things, the anxious thoughts of the mind and the alarmed feeling in the body, and reducing them to one diagnosis: Anxiety. Most anxiety treatments have limited success because most treat the anxiety of

the mind but neglect the bigger issue—the alarm signals of old trauma stored in the body.

There is a story about the organic chemist Friedrich Kekulé. He was struggling with finding a chemical formula for benzene, now known to be a six-carbon ring. Try as he might, he couldn't figure out how the six carbons would fit together. Chemical structures were thought to be linear, with the atoms fitting together like the boxcars on a train. Benzene was known to have six of these boxcars, but it was also known that the structure could not be linear. One night while dreaming, Kekulé had a vision of a snake biting its own tail, leading him to the idea that benzene's structure was not a linear but circular one.

In a similar manner, I had a vision while on LSD that went against conventional theory: much of my anxiety was not in my mind but rather in my body. Traditional therapies were looking in the wrong place! That psychedelic-induced vision has allowed me to develop the theory upon which this book is based.

While this book can't change the pain from your past, it can help you perceive it differently, both in your mind and in your body. When you change your perception of your past and especially of your "self," you change your future. This book is as unique as it is practical and not just a rehash of conventional therapies that do not work.

In my own healing from chronic worry, I have had to become my own doctor, therapist, and shaman. This book is exceptional in its amalgamation of the neuroscientific principles of the mind and the spirit of the body. I've used thousands of hours in scientific training to explain what I found unexplainable in my "out of mind" experiences in India and on psychedelics. What most approaches to treat anxiety miss, and this book addresses specifically, is the critical role of accessing the healing power and wisdom stored in the body. While more "medical" mind-based approaches are important and helpful (and I'll address those as well), you will only fully heal when you commit to a pointed focus on connecting to your body. Finding and soothing the alarm stored in your body is critical to you healing from chronic worry.

We need to know what we are treating to have the best treatments. Anxiety is an endless feedback loop of painful feeling in the body and anxious thinking in the mind. Each energizes the other. I'll show you how to break that destructive cycle so you can get back to living your life.

Leaving your anxiety behind requires a simple shift in your perception from mind to body, so you get out of the frightening predictions of your mind and into the grounded security of your body. Once you become practiced in this renewal of *perception*, you may well be able to talk to your doctor about the renewal of your *prescription*.

My father never got off medication, and in fact, it was medication that ultimately killed him, thirteen years after that summer day I watched the ambulance take him in 1973. It was me that found him, the first of many dead bodies I would see in my medical career. He left a note behind, beside his lifeless body that I found on January 12, 1987.

The note said "It's not your fault, it's no one's fault."

But I do feel at fault in a way. I could never help him; no one could. He was just too sick. I wasn't even a doctor while he was alive. He died five months before I could tell him that I gained admission to medical school.

I couldn't help my dad with his emotional pain, but I am fully committed to helping you with yours.