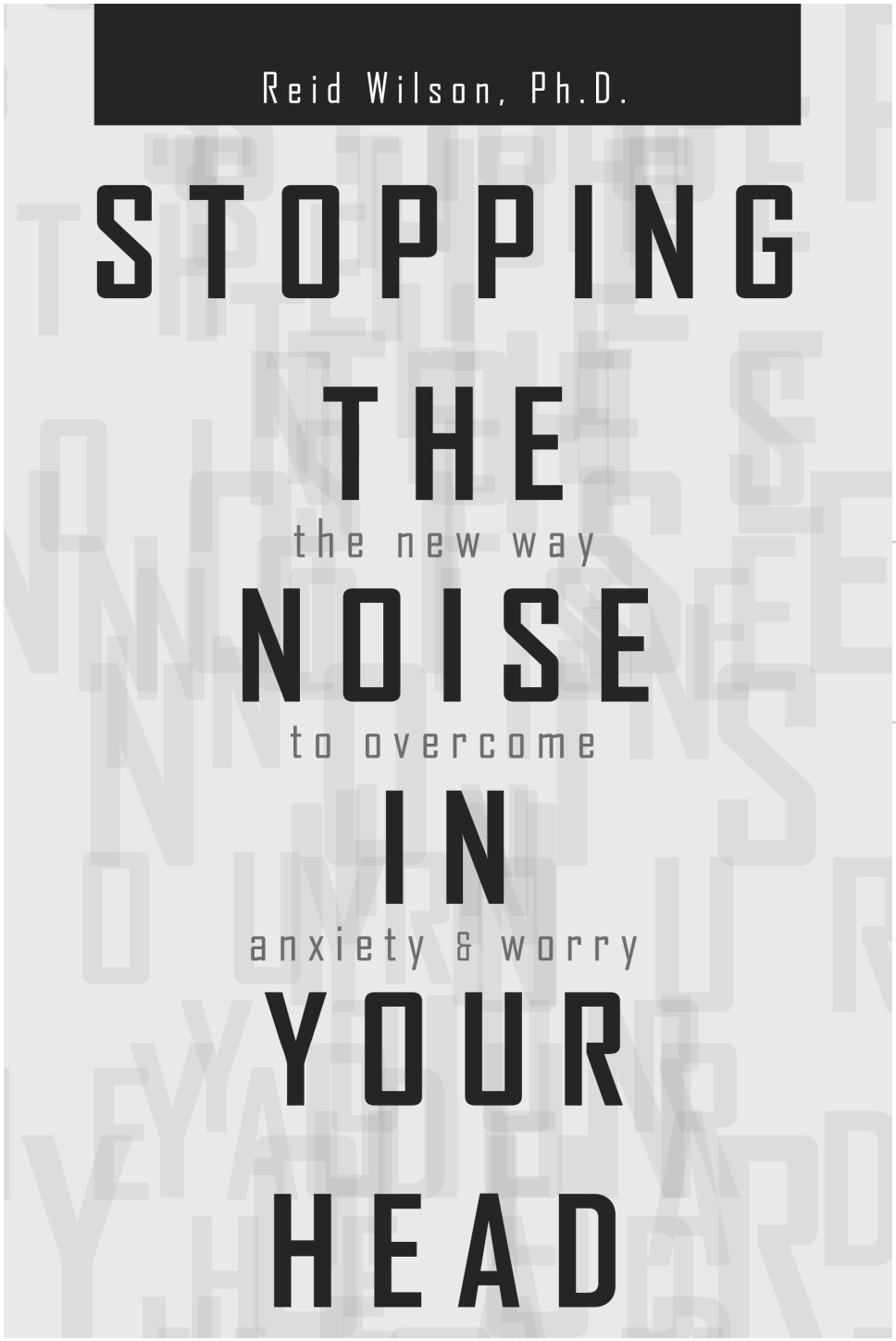

Tables & Figures

The Dominant Strategy of Anxiety

CHAPTER 3:

Ahhh... The Comfort of Certainty

Tables & Figures

Generating Worry

The common stances that can turn against you

- I need to know what the right decision this. There is a right decision – I've got to figure that out before I can act.
- How do I know what to do now? What's the absolute right decision here?
- Did I make the right decision? Will that decision cause harm? Am I going to be hurt in the future because of that decision?
- I've got to stay on guard. I can't let anything bad happen. There's a chance that something bad is going to happen.
- I can't handle that.
- Will I fail?
- I need to be careful. I need to watch out.
- Above all, I need to avoid the symptoms.
- I must relax, right now.
- I have to do it perfectly.
- I must be sure that there is no risk here.
- This is too much for me. I can't do it. I don't have what it takes.
- There's something wrong with me.
- I can't let anybody know.

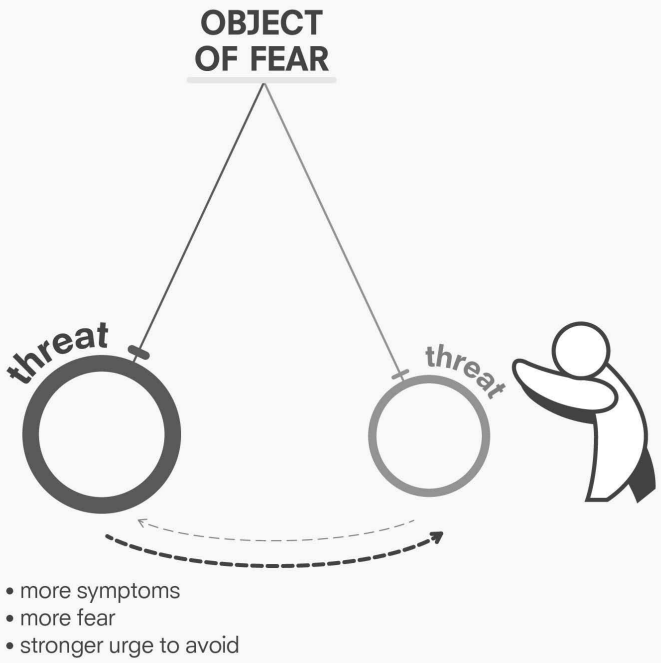

FIGURE 1: THE "GETTING RID OF" PROBLEM

Tables & Figures

Illustrations of Anxious Worrying

WORK OR SCHOOL

- I have to be sure that I succeed. What if I fail? What if I'm demoted?
- I can never make a mistake. But I think I made a mistake. It may be a big mistake.
- I have to figure it out. But I'm not smart enough. I don't think I can figure it out.
- I have to get an A on this test. But I didn't study enough.
- I can't do poorly in that presentation. If I do, I'm sure I'll be fired.
- I'm not going to have enough money.

RELATIONSHIPS

- Are they going to accept me? I'll never perform up to their expectations. I'll disappoint them. I can't let them discover how little I know.
- What are they thinking about me?
- I'm not sure whether he's the right one for me. I don't know what to do if he leaves me.
- I can't stumble over my words or making a mistake, they'll think I'm stupid.
- If my face turned red, I'll be humiliated.
- If my signature is shaky, I'll be so embarrassed.
- If I walk in now, everybody will stare at me.
- What if I can't think of anything to say?
- I might stumble over my words while I'm leaving the message, and I won't be able to erase it.

PANIC AND PHOBIAS

- What if there's a spider out there, and I don't see it?
- How can I be sure that dog won't bite?
- I have to know whether a tornado is coming.
- I can't let myself have a panic attack.
- If I don't know how crowded it's going to be, I'm not going to go.
- What if I start panicking while I'm on the bridge?
- If my heart starts beating too fast, I'll panic.
- How do I know whether he's going to get mad? If he gets angry, I won't be able to tolerate it.
- I have no idea when I'm going to start feeling trapped again.

OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER (OCD)

- Am I certain my hands are clean?
- I think that spot might've been blood?
- I felt a bump. I need to turn around and make sure I didn't run someone over.
- If I don't undo that, something bad may happen.
- There's a chance I just offended God. Can I gain his forgiveness?
- What if I did something terrible without knowing it?
- This doesn't feel right, and I can't move on until this feels right.

Your Winning Strategy

Step Back

CHAPTER 5:
Noise Pollution

Tables & Figures

Signal

"I have a final paper due before dinner on two texts I haven't read! And I haven't started!"

Signal

Your teenage daughter is out on a date. She was due home at midnight. It's now 2 AM.

Noise

You have OCD, and unnecessary "checking" is your thing. As you hear the hotel door close behind you, you think, "Did I lock the front door when I left home this morning?"

Signal

You & your partner had an argument at breakfast. You both said some mean things & then stormed off to work. Neither of you has apologized.

Noise

You called your partner at 10 AM, apologized, & scheduled to talk when you both get home. But you are still dwelling on the argument instead of focusing on your work.

Tables & Figures

Your Winning Strategy

CHAPTER 6:
Make it NOT About Your Content

"I can't handle that!"	"I don't like it, but I can handle it."
• humiliating myself in front of coworkers • allowing my children to be in danger at school • getting fired for a minor infraction • contaminating my family with salmonella • accidentally burning the house down • realizing that I'm a bad person • dying in a plane crash • suffocating in an elevator • causing my own heart attack • being bitten by an aggressive dog	A generic sense of uncertainty & distress

Tables & Figures

Your Winning Strategy

CHAPTER 7:
Content and Competition

The Rules of Anxiety's Game

1. If any fearful thought pops up, take it seriously.
2. Once you are scared and worried, try to get rid of those feelings.
3. Assume you don't have what it takes to solve this problem, so back away.
4. Any time you start feeling anxious, take that as a signal of danger.

FIGURE 2: STEP UP TO A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Your Winning Strategy

CHAPTER 8:
Move the Massive

Tables & Figures

How You Can Change According to the Laws of Motion

1. Every object in the world (including you and me) will keep doing what it's currently doing until something forces it to change.
2. **This explains why** your beliefs—the ones that have kept you from tackling this problem—will remain in place until you force them to change.
3. The more massive the body, the more it will resist change, so greater force will be required to move it in a different direction.
4. **Therefore**, if the beliefs that are in your way are strong, if they have big mass, then they're going to put up a strong fight against your efforts to change them.
5. To alter the direction that a body is moving, you have to use force as strong as or stronger than the force that's causing it. The body will then change in the direction of your force.
6. **This means** you have to act in a powerful way that is opposite of what Anxiety expects, so that you can force it to change direction. This same action is probably going to scare you, and a part of you is not going to want to get scared. Your courage and your determination must become equal to or larger than your scared feelings. And then you have to take action.
7. The most disruptive force is a sudden, hard push in a new direction.
8. **Therefore**, if you want Anxiety to change, you must practice changing your point of view at a moment's notice, for at least a few moments, so that you can welcome what you fear. That is NOT the direction Anxiety was taking you. Now you're suddenly pushing Anxiety in a different direction.
9. Once force is applied, how fast an object changes is inversely proportional to the mass of the object.
10. **So if** you have trouble applying the skills you learn in this book, or if you apply them but you don't make much progress, then explore the possibility that some of your beliefs are still keeping you from stepping forward.
11. For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.
12. **That's why** you should expect that Anxiety is going to resist your efforts. It's going to fight back. And a part of you that's vulnerable to Anxiety's messages, is going to resist your efforts; a part of you is going to fight against change because change is disruptive.

Your Winning Strategy

CHAPTER 9:
Be Mindful of the Moment

Tables & Figures

The Observer

The part of us that can detach from our worried, self-critical, or hopeless judgments in order to simply notice what we are thinking and feeling.

Observing the Signs of Resistance

Practice stepping back to notice these tendencies

- stalling or procrastinating
- becoming numb or feeling flat
- retreating to a safer place
- over-preparing
- continually researching
- continually seeking advice
- checking repeatedly
- seeking the "right answer"
- detailed thinking-through of all possible options
- worrying!

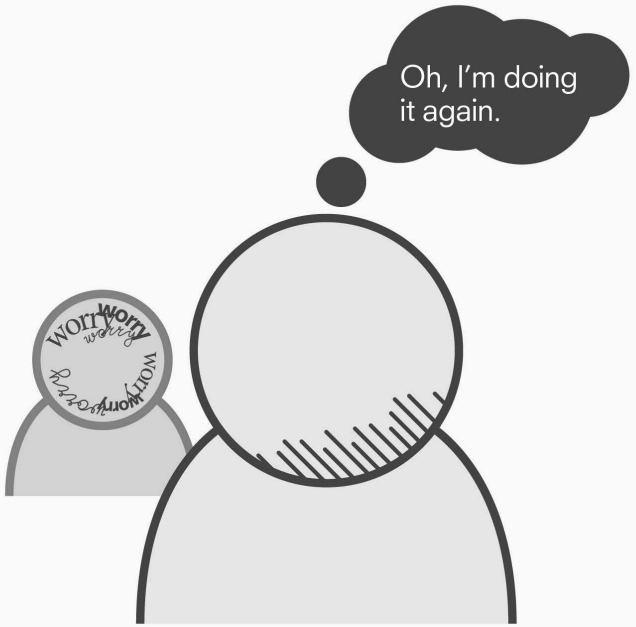

FIGURE 3: STEP BACK TO GAIN PERSPECTIVE

Tables & Figures

The Art and Gift of the Quiet Moment

- Cue yourself (for instance, “I think I’m stuck again”)
- Shift into a pause of quiet. Loosen the grip of that automatic, negative reaction to the present moment. Let go a bit.
- If you’d like, do it with a breath: a nice long inhale and a slow exhale. On that exhale, gently invite your mind to “quiet” or “let go.” Allow your mind to respond to your invitation.
- Slacken your jaw. Loosen your shoulders. Relax your eyes.
- Give yourself an added gift: a mere five seconds of self-compassion.

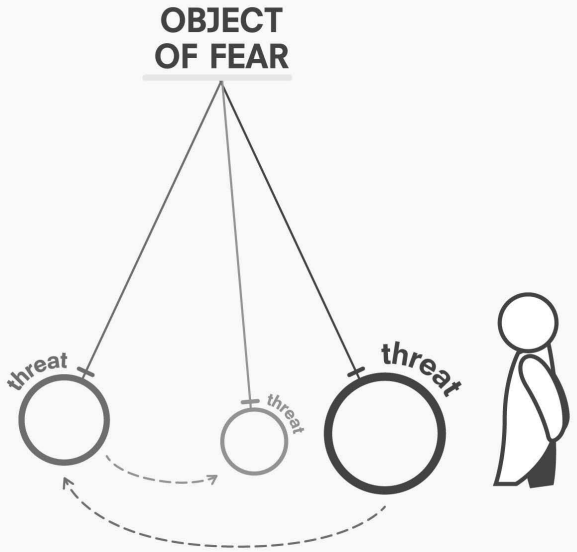

FIGURE 4: THE MINDFUL STANCE - STEPPING BACK WITH DETACHMENT

Want It

CHAPTER 10:
Taking the Paradoxical Point of View

Tables & Figures

Synonyms for Point of View

Frame of reference	Approach
Mindset	Position
Orientation	Perception
Disposition	Belief
Attitude	Standpoint
Stance	Perspective
Frame of Mind	Outlook

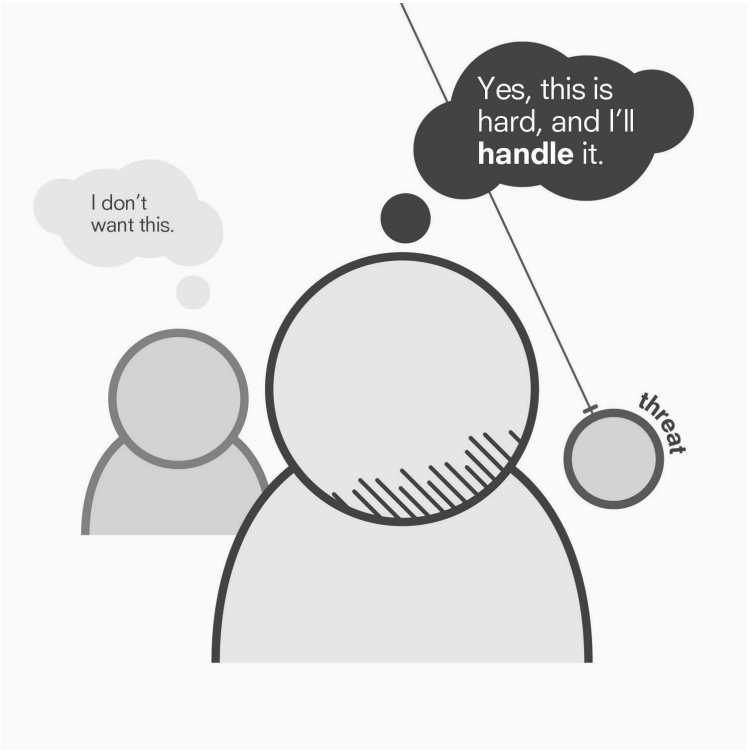

FIGURE 5: STEP UP TO EMBRACING THE MOMENT

The work is not going to be about your uncomfortable sensations, it is going to be about your response to the sensations.

Your Winning Strategy

CHAPTER 11:
A Profound Experience with the Toilet

Tables & Figures

Two Responses to a Tough Moment	
Resist It	**Accept It**
"Why can't this be over now? I can't stand this. Why does this always happen to me?!"	"Obviously this is happening to me. I accept that, even though I don't like it. Now I'm going to decide what to do next."

Change Your Response to a Tough Moment

You experience something unpleasant

↓

You mentally resist: "I don't want this!"

↓

You step back and notice your resistance

↓

You choose to drop your resistance & move to acceptance

↓

So you can focus on how to handle the moment

Tables & Figures

FIGURE 6: STEP BACK, NOTICE THAT YOU ARE RESISTING, THEN STEP UP TO EMBRACING THE MOMENT

"I'm Willing to Experience This at This Moment"

- You are accepting a situation that already exists.
- Becoming upset about a difficult state of affairs is like moving into shock.
- It's best to accept the present before we attempt to change it.
- When you stop fighting the present moment, you can turn all of your attention to ways to influence the next moment.

Your Winning Strategy

CHAPTER 12:
Message to Self: I Want This

Tables & Figures

Choose to Become Distressed and Afraid

- You have to voluntarily and purposely choose to generate distress if you want to learn to manage distress.
- Go after what threatens you, welcome the discomfort, and allow the occasional punch in the gut from Anxiety.
- Give yourself a paradoxical message similar to "I actually WANT this feeling."
- Choose to feel clumsy, awkward, unsure and afraid.
- Act on the mottos, "Love the mat" and "Run towards the roar."

Giving Your Amygdala a Chance to Learn

1. Step into a safe, reasonable facsimile of the traumatic scene

2. Let yourself feel threatened and get scared

3. Welcome the fearful sensations: "This is what I want right now"

4. Hang out

FIGURE 7: EXPECT THAT YOU WILL RESIST, AND THEN PRACTICE DETACHING, AGAIN AND AGAIN

Tables & Figures

Another Paradox

Only do what you want to do. And you need to keep finding ways to want to do the hard stuff.

A Paradoxical Twist to Habituation

- Want to step into your feared situation.
- If your doubt or distress shows up, then want it to show up.
- If your doubt or distress gets stronger, then want it to be strong.
- If your doubt or distress sticks around, then want it to stick around.

These Come Automatically - So Accept Them!

The Intimidation: A thought, image or impulse that makes you uncertain, anxious and at risk. *then* **The Urge:** Your insistence on removing the threat by something you do or say. It will take the form of, "I can't let that happen!"

Stepping Back and Wanting It

Notice the threatening thought, image or impulse.

↓

Name what you notice – "Oh, I'm worrying about that again."

↓

Want that – "Good! I want this doubt."

↓

Notice that you feel scared.

↓

Want that – "Good! I want to feel scared, too."

↓

Hang out while feeling uncertain and frightened.

Tables & Figures

Step Forward

CHAPTER 13:
Dangling by Fingertips

Facing the Challenges Ahead

1. Step toward – not away from – your challenges.
2. Have faith that you have the ability to master your anxious worry.
3. Willingly & voluntarily choose to feel clumsy, awkward, unsure, embarrassed, insecure & afraid.
4. Permit yourself to fail on your way to success.
5. Invest energy into this work.

The training occurs on the route. Get as close as you can, as soon as you can, to the event you fear. Practice your skills there.

CHAPTER 14:
An Olympic Attitude

Here's a secret that might come in handy: the biggest challenge you will face is your own personal high standards. Lower your standards and then act.

Your perspective must change, or you will focus too much on not losing instead of on winning.

CHAPTER 16:
"I Made It as Unpleasant As I Could, and Then I Waited"

To get stronger, you gotta do stuff you don't think you can do, and you gotta do that stuff while you simultaneously doubt that you can do it.

Tables & Figures

Be Cunning

CHAPTER 18:
Act as Though This Is Such a Clever Tactic

Don't wait until you are certain that this approach will work for you. Take actions now, while you are feeling doubtful, scared and insecure about my suggestions.

CHAPTER 20:
"Give Me Your Threats - Let Them Come"

FIGURE 8: WELCOME DOUBT AND DISTRESS THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR

Make Your Play

CHAPTER 21:
You're Going Where?

Tables & Figures

FIGURE 9: FACING THE THREAT CAN FEEL TOO FRIGHTENING

FIGURE 10: YOUR OUTCOME PICTURE WILL MOTIVATE YOU TO PUSH INTO THREAT

Your Winning Strategy

CHAPTER 22:
Plan Your Strategy

Tables & Figures

FIGURE 11: SWINGING OVER TO A NEW STANCE

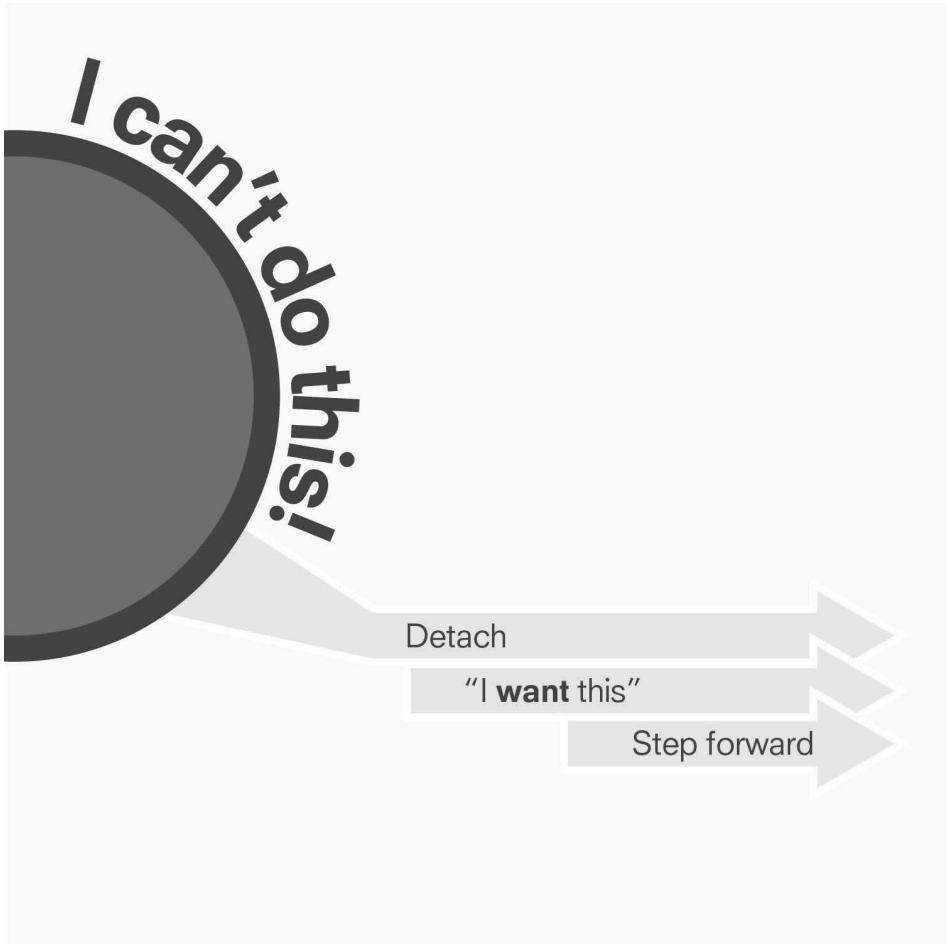

FIGURE 12: HOW TO MAKE YOUR PLAY

Tables & Figures

Mary's Principles

1. Face your fears in small ways that you have control over.
2. Gradually do these things longer.
3. Then do the harder things.
4. Talk yourself through it in a really strong, commanding voice.
5. And talk to your primitive brain. Let it overreact, and then say, "I like your expression, but you don't have to juice me up so much next time. I'm fine; save that for real situations."

Bob's Principles

1. Make a decision. Ask yourself, "Am I going to be depressed and think about how much of my life has been wasted by Anxiety, or do I have something to live for?"
2. Try something new. Take on the challenge. Do it. Don't hold back. If you never try it, you will never know whether it can help you.
3. Take some of those self-talk phrases and make them your own.
4. Remind yourself: "I know things are going to bother me, and they're going to continue to bother me. I'm okay with anxiety and uncertainty in my life. In fact, I invite them."
5. Keep moving. Don't let this problem take up any more of your life. Tell yourself, again and again: "Keep moving."
6. Talk to Anxiety: "Bring it on! Let's go. Game time. Come out and play."

The Game Strategy

- Thinking about this stuff is not going to cut it.
- Your actions are to be paradoxical.
- It's not how big or small a step you take; it's that you take a step toward the threat.
- Only do what you want to do.
- To get stronger, you have to want to do the hard stuff.
- There will be times when you must "act as though."
- When you don't know what you want, want that.
- Hold fast to your strategy as you step forward.

Your Winning Strategy

CHAPTER 23:
Change Your Voice

Tables & Figures

Examples of Self-Talk

PRINCIPLE	SELF-TALK
Anxiety needs you to avoid. To get stronger, take risks, including the risk of failing.	"I want to do this, even though it feels risky. I want to get stronger."
To step forward, you need to feel uncertain and uncomfortable. Anxiety needs you to avoid those feelings by not stepping forward.	"It's OK that I'm anxious right now. I can handle not knowing how this will turn out. I need to do this. I'm glad I'm doing this, even though it's hard."
The closer you get to the challenge, the more noisy worries will show up. They will feel as though they are signals of danger. You must learn to detach from those messages. Don't fall for that.	"I expected these worries would show up. I don't need to pay attention to them. But I do need to tolerate this anxiety that they're generating."
Want whatever doubt or discomfort shows up.	"Good. I want these feelings, even though they make me really uncomfortable."
Want to take on challenges; seek out the tough encounters. That's the attitude that gives you power.	"This is really scaring me right now, but I want to keep going. I can handle this."
You'll be dominated by Anxiety if you seek perfection. Willingly choose to feel awkward and clumsy as you engage in any challenging activity.	"I've got to feel awkward before I can feel competent. And I want to master this."

Tables & Figures

Examples: Self-Talk > Encourage OR Instruct

Notice the Noisy Worry	→ Then Encourage Yourself	→ OR Instruct Yourself
I didn't study enough. And if I don't get an A on this test, I'm screwed.	I can handle not knowing. It's OK to be anxious right now.	I'm letting that thought go now. I'm going to pay attention to question 3.
If my heart starts beating too fast, I'll panic.	I was looking for an opportunity to get scared like this.	There I go again: scaring myself. I'm going to focus on finishing this run.
Am I certain my hands are clean?	I want to not know right now. Plus, I get to be uncomfortable! That's what I'm looking for!	Don't answer that. Step away from the sink and walk out of the bathroom now!
What if there's a spider out there, and I don't see it? That's freaking me out!	This is exactly what I want: another chance to feel scared about spiders.	I expected those worries because I'm practicing now. Now let's see if I can find another web.
What are they thinking of me? I'm probably disappointing them.	This lets me practice feeling unsure. Plus, I get to score a point!	I'm not answering that question. I'm going to focus back on the presentation.

Tables & Figures

Motivating Messages

I'm willing to feel unsure right now.	I want this to feel intense.	I can handle this.	I want this to stick around.
I'm willing to feel anxious right now.	Gimme your best shot!	I can take the heat.	I want my life back!
Be scared & do it anyway.	This is a good opportunity to practice.	Seek out discomfort.	My job is to move forward.
Go toward what scares you.	Love the mat.	I want this.	Choose active over passive.
Do the opposite of what Anxiety expects.	Seek out uncertainty.	I must risk.	I'm willing to feel awkward & clumsy.

Tables & Figures

Examples of Talking to Anxiety

Notice the Noisy Worry	→	Then Respond in a Cunning Way
I'm afraid I won't have enough money.		Yes! I scored a point!
If my face turned red, I'd be humiliated.		Oh, thanks for that! Would you give me that thought again?
If I don't know how crowded it's going to be, I'm afraid to go.		Excellent! Could you scare me more, please?
I think I felt a bump. Did I just hit someone? I've got to find out!		Alright, OCD! Thanks for showing up. I was looking for another point. Keep them coming!
What if he's not the right one? Maybe my soulmate is still out there. But then what if I break up with him and I never meet anybody else and I lead a sad, lonely life?		Is that the best you can do? Can't you throw a little more fear of God into me? Come on...bring it!

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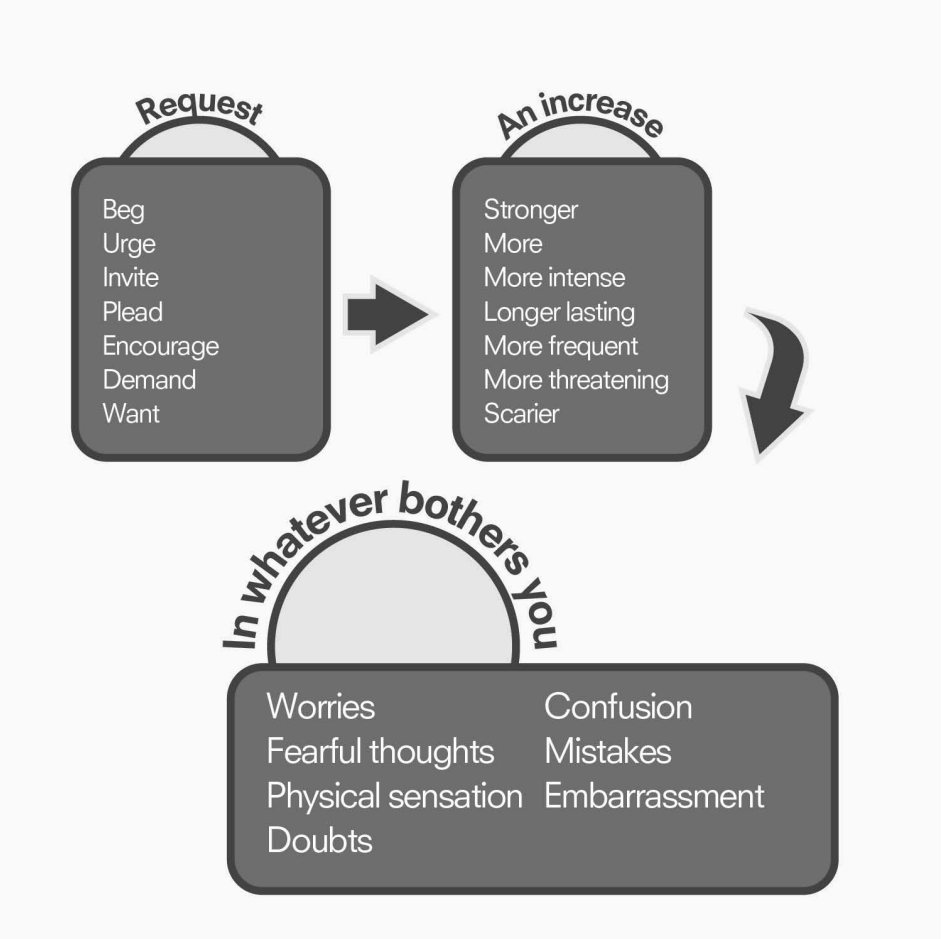

FIGURE 13: HOW TO TALK TO ANXIETY: THE FORMULA*

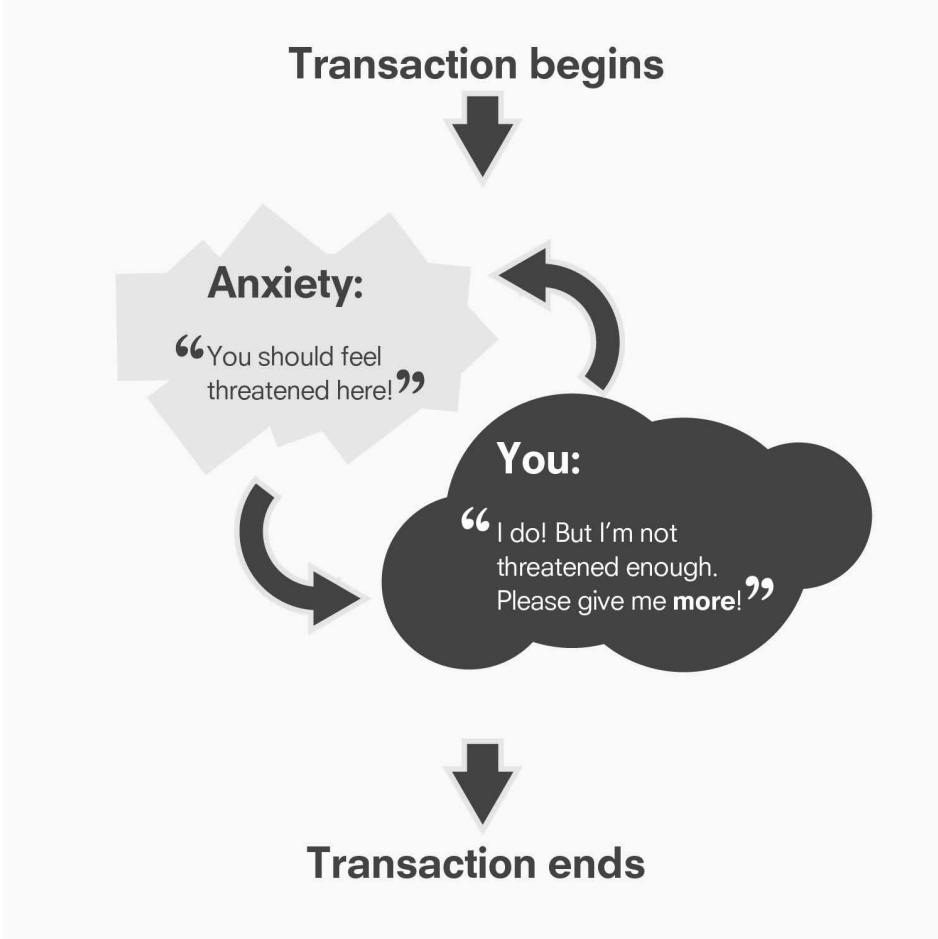

FIGURE 14: THE PARADOXICAL MOMENT - "PLEASE GIVE ME MORE"

* Adapted from Wilson, Reid, Don't Panic: Taking Control of Anxiety Attacks, New York: Harper, 2009

Your Winning Strategy

CHAPTER 25:
Make Your Play

Tables & Figures

The Rules of the Game - How to Play with Anxiety

- There's only one play in this competition, and only one point can be scored in that play.
- You complete each play by turning your attention back to your chosen task.
- You can score a point in 3 ways: sub-vocalize encouragement, instruct yourself to take action, or deliver a cunning message to Anxiety.
- You can only score a point when you're being bothered by Anxiety.
- You can score points even when you are anticipating a difficult task.
- You can score points back-to-back.
- Scoring a point may scare you, and that's okay.
- Don't look for the benefits of scoring a point.
- It's an attitude shift, really.
- In this competition, you win every time you score a point. Focus on scoring as many points as possible.

How to Score a Point

1. Move toward any task that you predict will generate at least some uncertainty or distress regarding your worried theme.
2. When you notice that you feel bothered by doubt or distress (whether before, during or after that task):
   - **a.** Step back and acknowledge that it's happening ("Ugh. This is hard.")
   - **b.** Welcome exactly what's happening ("Yes, and this is what I'm looking for.")
   - **c.** Sub-vocalize a message that helps you stay engaged in your chosen activity:
     - **1)** Encourage yourself ("I can do this.")
     - **2)** Instruct yourself ("Keep moving!"), or
     - **3)** Talk in a cunning way to Anxiety ("Give me more, please.")
3. Then turn your attention back to your chosen task, even while you still feel uncertain and uncomfortable.

SCORE!

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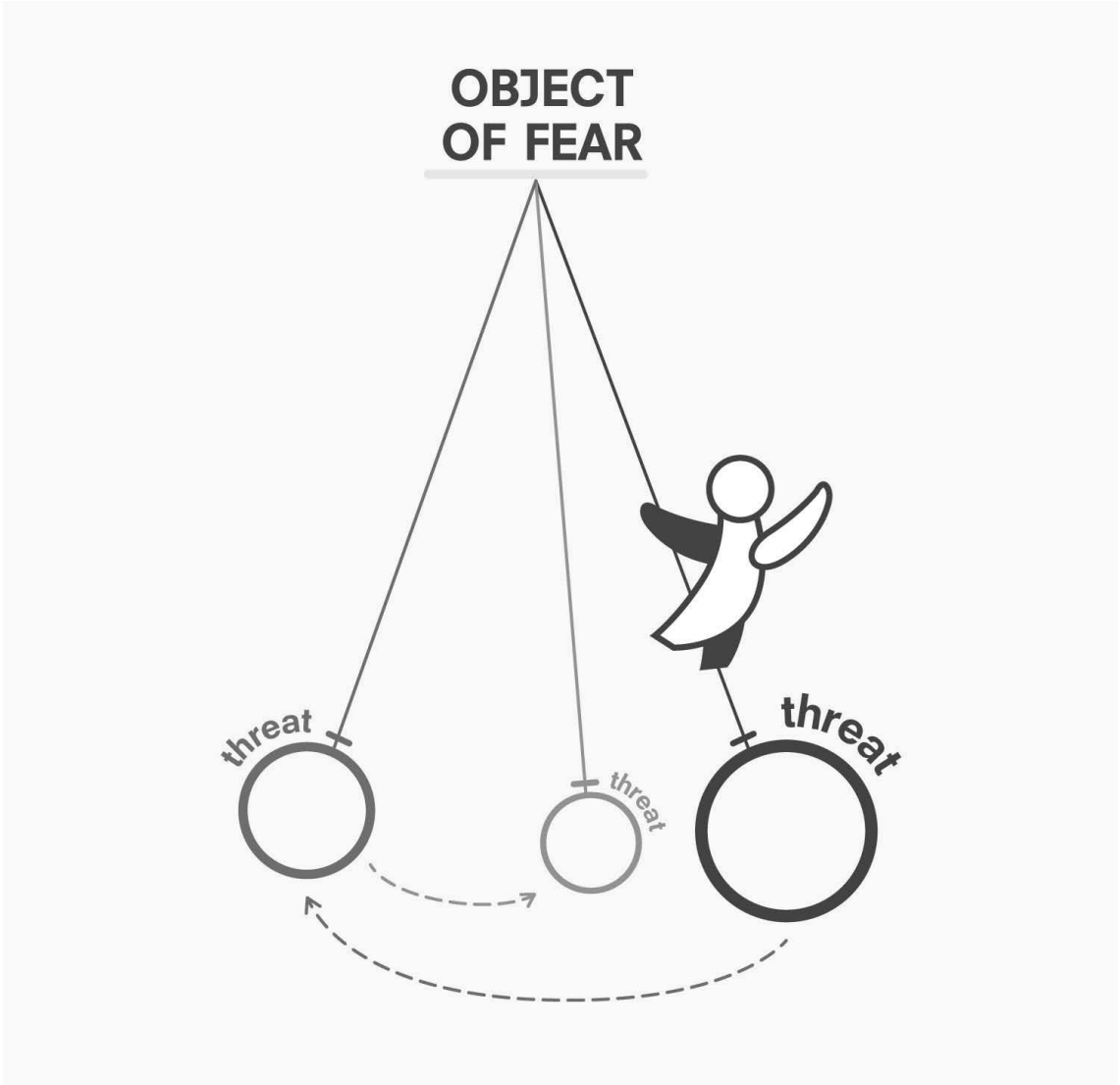

FIGURE 15: THE PROVOCATIVE STANCE - "I WANT EXACTLY THIS"