

HEAL YOUR ANXIETY IN

10 Days

BY CHARLIE HOEHN

(author of [*Play It Away*](#))

WELCOME TO THE COURSE

Over the next 10 days, I'm going to give you some easy tips on how to start rapidly healing your anxiety. Within two weeks, you'll be breathing a lot easier again.

It's my sincerest hope that this course will help you move toward better health and happiness. But before we continue, I need to lay down a quick disclaimer. Just so there's no confusion, please understand:

I am NOT a health care professional, and while this course contains actionable advice that you can use in your life, my suggestions might not work for you. But you'll need to figure that out for yourself *by using your own judgment*, not just by blindly following my advice (or anyone's advice, really).

All clear? Okay then, let's get started...

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I didn't realize it for a long time, but I was the creator of my own anxiety. I just didn't recognize how destructive my behavior was because I thought it was normal.

I wish someone had held up a mirror to show me I was the problem, but that never happened. It's worth taking a moment to ask yourself:

- ▶ Do I feel guilty or anxious when I'm not working?
- ▶ Have I stopped playing with my friends?
- ▶ Do all of my daily activities revolve around building a more successful career?
- ▶ Am I sleeping fewer than eight hours per night?
- ▶ Am I consuming stimulants multiple times per day to hide my exhaustion?
- ▶ Am I sitting still and staring at screens for most of my waking hours?
- ▶ Do I interact with people primarily through screens?

- ▶ Am I indoors all day long, depriving myself of fresh air and sunlight?
- ▶ Do I depend on alcohol or drugs to cope with social situations outside of work?

If you said ‘Yes’ to most of those questions, you are not alone. When I was at my worst, I was doing all of these things on a daily basis.

As a result, I was emotionally crippled by debilitating anxiety for a long time. I talk about what it felt like in [this video](#).

I tried EVERYTHING to get myself back to health and happiness, but nothing really seemed to work...

Until I had [my first big mental shift](#).

That shift helped me break free from my anxiety. It laid the groundwork that allowed me to heal. I started viewing the world as a playground, rather than seeing it as a prison. Every moment was no longer torturous, but an opportunity to have fun with my friends -- *to play*.

Before we really dive into the healing process, it's important to let this mental shift sink in:

- ▶ The people around you are playmates
- ▶ Life is a series of opportunities to have fun with the people you love
- ▶ How you approach the world determines how everything responds to you

If you start viewing your world as a playground, things will change. You'll be more trusting and loving toward others, and they'll reflect it back at you. Keep it up for a few weeks, and eventually you'll notice that you're surrounded by fun-loving people, all the time.

[Play can heal your anxiety](#). And that mentality is what ultimately lays your foundation to overcome debilitating anxiety. So really let that sink in...

I'll have more for you tomorrow. Talk soon.

- Charlie

DAY ONE: NUTRIENT DEPLETION

Welcome to **Day 1** of the "Heal Your Anxiety" course!

I don't want to waste any time, so I'm going to give you one of the most effective tips I have **FIRST**.

Here we go...

A HIDDEN SOURCE OF ANXIETY

For a few months, I was feeling unusually fatigued. I had no idea what was causing it. I was getting good sleep, I was eating healthy, and I was exercising regularly. I did some research, and found that I had a ton of symptoms for Vitamin B-12 deficiency: I felt mildly depressed, I had very little motivation, I was short of breath, my brain was foggy, and my fingers occasionally went numb.

Vitamin B-12 is in meat, fish, and certain dairy products. The normal range for B-12 is between 500 and 1,000 pg/ml (picograms per milliliter), and if your levels fall below 500 pg/ml, your brain ages twice as fast. In other words, if your body isn't absorbing enough B-12, your mind rapidly deteriorates and stops functioning properly. Yikes!

HOW I FOUND IT

When I got tested for B-12 deficiency at a local Any Lab Test Now, the results showed that my levels were **200 pg/ml** — less than half of the minimum amount my body required. Even though I was eating meat almost every single day, I was still massively deficient.

WHAT I DID TO FIX IT

I immediately began taking [Vitamin B-12](#) — 1,000 mcg every day, sublingually (under the tongue).

Within one week, I could already feel a difference. I was less foggy and more energetic. When I got tested again for B-12 a month later, my levels had risen to **529 pg/ml**. I was back in the normal range, and actually felt like a new person. My mind was clear, and my energy was up.

WHICH DEFICIENCIES AFFECT YOUR ANXIETY

Below is a list of three common deficiencies that *tend to amplify anxiety*. If one were so inclined, one could actively work on ingesting an ample amount of these nutrients for 30 days, while assessing their anxiety levels every week. That might prove to be a worthwhile experiment, but only if one were so inclined.

- 1. The Vitamin B club.** I was deficient in B-12 (methylcobalamin, found in meat), but other people might be deficient in B-2 (riboflavin, found in yogurt, spinach, almonds, and eggs), or B-5 (pantothenic acid, found in avocados, mushrooms, and sweet potatoes), or B-6 (pyridoxal phosphate, found in tuna, chicken, turkey, and cod). Fortunately, it's possible to get the recommended dose of all the B vitamins by taking a B-complex pill once per day. Check out the resources below for the brand I take.
- 2. Omega-3 Fatty Acids.** You can find omega-3 in salmon, fish oil, hemp seeds, flax seeds, and chia seeds. I take 2-4 servings of Nordic Natural's cod liver oil pills each day, which contains a solid dose of the three fatty acids: EPA, DHA, and ALA.
- 3. Potassium.** Easy deficiency to develop, but just as easy to fix. Good sources of potassium include sweet potatoes, bananas, oranges, tomatoes, potatoes, and beets.

Everyone should get tested for micronutrient deficiencies at some point in their life. There are plenty of reasons why this is a smart move, but for me, the most obvious reason is because of *our soil*.

The most nutritious foods we eat absorb their nutrients from the soil they grow in, and the purity of our soil has been severely compromised through hyper-aggressive agriculture and mining practices. So even if you are eating a natural and well-balanced diet, you could still be lacking in some of the key nutrients your brain and body need in order to function properly.

WHAT YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW

If you suspect you might be deficient in any of the above nutrients -- vitamin B, omega 3, or potassium -- then do some research. See if you're exhibiting any symptoms (magnesium is another common deficiency).

If you're ready to get a micronutrient test (and can afford the \$400 tab), visit anylabtestnow.com to find a nearby location. You can get tested for deficiencies in just a few minutes and have the results emailed to you within 48 hours.

You can get micronutrient tests at your doctor's office, but -- depending on which state you're in -- they will probably make you jump through a few hoops first.

RESOURCES

[Vitamin B Capsules](#) (not an affiliate link) This covers all the bases for the B vitamins, and I take one every morning. These pills are free from common allergens, like soy, yeast, barley, wheat, and lactose.

[Cod Liver Oil](#) (not an affiliate link) I take 2-4 servings of these pills per day. If you're looking for a cheaper brand than Nordic Naturals, then Coromega's squeeze packets are a good and convenient choice.

COST

About \$2 per day to take supplements. Costs obviously vary if you're getting your nutrients through food.

But to get a micronutrient test at Any Lab Test Now? That's about \$400 (yeesh). I took the B-12 deficiency test, which cost me \$80.

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Most of my suggestions during this 10 day course will be free, but I wanted to start with nutrient deficiencies because they can make such a huge difference. This is one of those areas that -- if you get it fixed -- can really alleviate how poorly your body and mind feel.

So that's day one. Do some research, see if there are any nutrients you might be deficient in. When I upped the dosage in the areas I lacked, I felt about 3X better in just a week.

Much more to come...

Charlie

DAY TWO: REMOVE STIMULANTS

Welcome to **Day 2** of the "Heal Your Anxiety" course!

Yesterday, we covered the importance of fixing nutrient deficiencies. Just a quick recap on that...

When you're super stressed over an extended period of time, some of your body's vital nutrients get depleted at a faster rate. If you start running low on vitamin B, fatty acids, potassium, or magnesium, your body and mind have a really hard time functioning properly. For me, I was massively deficient in vitamin B-12, so I started supplementing with that (along with quadruple servings of cod liver oil) for 30 days. My mind felt noticeably calmer within one week.

Today, we're going to talk about how to remove and replace harmful stimulants that are amplifying your stress levels.

Let's dive in...

STIMULANTS: THE ANXIETY DIET

My definition of "stimulants" is broad. A stimulant is *anything you consume that increases your body's nervous activity.*

I'm not just talking about physical stimulants, like energy drinks or drugs. I'm also including all the information you consume -- online news, reality shows, horror movies, porn -- even text messages and Facebook notifications.

If it's absorbed into your conscious awareness or hits your bloodstream, AND it stimulates your body's nervous activity, it can be classified as a "stimulant."

We all take stimulants in some form or another. The difficulty lies in our self-awareness -- how well we're filtering out the harmful stimulants, or even recognizing when a "normal" stimulant is actually making us feel terrible.

We tend to just focus on how awful our body and mind feels RIGHT NOW. We wonder "Why me?" instead of pausing to ask "What's causing these feelings to begin with?"

Very often, it's the stimulants.

When I was at the height of my anxiety, I was consuming all sorts of stimulants every day. I didn't even recognize how much harm I was doing to myself, just because I was so accustomed to taking in toxic substances and scary information all the time.

Here's a list of the stimulants that I was taking in on a near daily basis:

- Doom-and-gloom websites that talked about economic breakdown and the end of the world,
- 3-4 cups of coffee per day,
- Junk food that was unnatural and difficult to digest (pizza, ice cream, etc.),
- Countless cell phone notifications, all day long,
- Checking email a dozen times between midnight and 2:00 am,
- Alcohol and occasionally non-prescription drugs.

I rarely gave my body and mind a break from the constant intake of stimulation. What made matters worse -- I wasn't sleeping enough or exercising regularly. My brain rarely had any down time, my gut couldn't properly digest everything, and I couldn't sweat anything out.

As a result, I was a mess.

HOW I FOUND MY UNHEALTHY STIMULANTS

I did an honest assessment of all the things I was letting into my body -- seeing, hearing, and eating. I also wrote down everything that was causing me to worry, or making me feel bad.

I found there were a few particularly harmful stimulants that were causing me a disproportionate amount of anxiety:

1. **The news** (which [increases fear and unhappiness](#))
2. **Coffee** (which can [trigger feelings of panic](#))
3. **Bright screens past 9pm** (which [makes it harder to sleep](#))

WHAT I DID TO FIX IT

I made the commitment to REMOVE / REPLACE MY THREE MOST HARMFUL STIMULANTS for one week, just to see how I felt.

For the news, I ignored every headline. I stopped clicking news links. I replaced it with [happier "anti-news" content](#).

For coffee, I stopped drinking it. I replaced it with water.

For bright screens, I removed the temptation. I set a daily reminder that told me to put my phone away at 9pm, and plugged the charger in a different room so I wouldn't be tempted to look at it while laying in bed. (I also installed [Flux](#) on my computer.)

Within a week, my body and mind began calming waaaaay down. I felt noticeably calmer, happier, and I even started sleeping better.

WHAT YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW

Write down all the stimulants you're regularly consuming on a daily and weekly basis. Everything you take in that goes in through your eyeballs, ear balls, and mouth... balls. Sorry, got carried away.

But seriously, take stock of what you EAT, SEE, READ, and HEAR regularly.

How do you feel when you consume these things? Do any of them consistently make you feel anxious or worried?

Anything that's either (A) entering your bloodstream or (B) getting absorbed into your conscious awareness AND increasing your body's nervous feelings... is potentially a HARMFUL stimulant.

Try to go one week WITHOUT taking in your most harmful stimulants. To make the removal process easier, you can replace those stimulants with something healthy (like water, sugar-free gum, etc.)

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That's day 2. Take an honest assessment of what you're consuming throughout the day -- what you eat, what you drink, what you watch, and what you read. Remove or replace the harmful stimulants for one week. Assess how you feel at the end.

Seriously, DO THIS NOW! Make the effort to REMOVE the things that are causing your anxiety. This is a simple exercise that could have a tremendous impact on your health and happiness. But you need to give it at least a week to feel the effects. Give it a shot.

Much more to come...

Charlie

P.S. [Here's an "anti-news" mix I made for you](#) -- just hit Shuffle in the top right corner :)

DAY THREE: CHECK IN

Welcome to **Day 3** of the "Heal Your Anxiety" course!

Yesterday, we talked about removing your most harmful *stimulants* -- the things you consume that increase your body's nervous activity.

Stimulants aren't always things you eat or drink; sometimes stimulants are dramatic news headlines you just have to click, or email notifications you get every minute on your phone. For me, I had to remove caffeine (replaced coffee with water), doom-and-gloom news (replaced with fun content), and bright screens past 9pm. Those three changes made a HUGE impact for lowering my stress levels.

Today, I want to check in with you. This email is a gentle reminder to actually **DO** the exercise we talked about yesterday.

If you don't remember it, here it is:

- 1. Write:** Take out a pen and paper. Jot down every stimulant you're consuming on a daily and weekly basis. In other words, take stock of what you **EAT, SEE, READ, and HEAR** regularly.
- 2. Assess:** How do you feel when you consume these things? Do any of them consistently make you feel anxious or worried? Put a star next to your top 1 or 2 most harmful stimulants.
- 3. Take Action:** Go one week **WITHOUT** consuming these stimulants. To make the removal process easier, you can replace those stimulants with a healthy option (like water, sugar-free gum, etc.)

Before you move on to the next tip, spend the next 3 minutes doing this exercise. It could reduce your anxiety and change your life, but you have to make the effort.

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The whole point of this course is to help you start the healing process. If you consistently take action for the next week -- rather than passively reading this free information for your own entertainment -- you can actually start feeling better.

The truth is that you won't overcome your anxiety without making some changes to your lifestyle. You have to fix the key things that you're currently doing *wrong*. And believe me, I was doing a TON of things wrong when I was at my most anxious.

After you've done the exercise above, you can move on to my next tip:

[Consistent quality sleep and afternoon naps.](#)

That's all for today. Much more to come...

Charlie

DAY FOUR: QUALITY SLEEP

Welcome to **Day 4** of the Heal Your Anxiety Course!

So far, we've covered the importance of removing stimulants and fixing nutritional deficiencies. And today, we're going to go in-depth on one of the most critical areas to healing anxiety: [SLEEP](#).

ANXIETY IS FUELED BY CHRONIC SLEEP DEFICIT

Back in high school, I was obsessed with getting great sleep. I moved to the cool basement in my parents' house, covered the windows with layers of black construction paper, and ran a desk fan to drown out disruptive noises. My sleep was amazing every night.

For some reason, sleep became less of a priority as I grew older. I did a lot of all-nighters in college and got used to going to bed at random hours – usually between 3:00 and 7:00AM. My erratic sleep schedule continued long after graduating.

I worked around the clock, drank coffee all day, consumed junk food and alcohol late at night, and checked my bright cell phone screen while I was in bed. Then I'd wake up a few hours later and do it all over again. And what a shock: *I felt exhausted all the time.*

I was chronically in a severe sleep deficit, which took a major toll on my body. But I kept ignoring my fatigue because I felt guilty whenever I wasn't working. To me, sleep was a necessary evil that cut into my productivity.

The endless stream of digital information I was taking in every waking hour only compounded the problem. My mind never had enough time to shut down, relax, and digest everything that poured in during the day. No wonder my mental health was shot.

HOW I FIXED MY AWFUL SLEEP ROUTINE

During the month I cured my anxiety, I made consistent sleep one of my highest priorities.

The first thing I did was **optimize my bedroom for ideal sleeping conditions**. Here are the steps I took:

1. Plugged my iPhone charger in an outlet far away from my bed so I couldn't grab my phone while I was laying down. This little obstacle prevented me from checking email or Facebook before trying to fall asleep.
2. Cranked up the air conditioning so the temperature in my bedroom was around 68 degrees Fahrenheit.
3. Kept the curtains drawn and wore a [sleep mask](#) so that my room was as dark as I could possibly make it.
4. Downloaded the [Relax Melodies app](#), which played a continuous loop of ocean waves throughout the night.

Once my room was optimized, I committed to a consistent bedtime. I set a daily reminder on my iPhone called *Get Ready for Bed*, which went off at 10:00PM every night (i.e. nine hours before I wanted to wake up). As soon as it went off, I'd stop whatever I was doing, hit the bathroom, brush my teeth, and change out of my day clothes.

I was dead serious about obeying my phone's command. Even if I was in the middle of a conversation, I'd abruptly end it so I could get ready for bed.

After I finished getting ready, I would switch my phone to Flight mode, open the Relax Melodies app, and climb in bed to read fiction for 15 minutes. When I was done reading, I'd turn off the lights and focus on the rhythm of my breath until I fell asleep.

It took several nights to adjust to this change, but within a week, I was sleeping like a champion. I wasn't eating anything after 8:00PM, and I stopped drinking caffeine after 5:00PM. Those habits helped my body wind down earlier, but **the critical part was getting ready at the same time every night**. It set me in motion

toward getting in bed, and ultimately re-trained my body to crave sleep at a reasonable hour.

I really can't overemphasize the importance of consistent quality sleep. Every anxious person I've met has either been in denial about how little sleep they get, or they're overlooking the fact that they're going to bed at random hours every night.

ONE MORE THING... TAKE NAPS!

There was another aspect of my sleep routine that was critical for healing my anxiety: **I took a 20-minute nap every afternoon.**

Each day, immediately after I finished lunch, I would find a spot to nap – a couch, a bench, a reclined car seat, a carpeted floor, a friend's wedding...

I'd set an alarm on my phone for 20 minutes, lie on my back, close my eyes, and focus on the rhythm of my breath. I never tried to fall asleep; I just relaxed and focused on breathing in and out. Even if I didn't fall asleep (about 10% of the time), I always felt refreshed and calm when my alarm went off.

Take a quick nap in the afternoon, even if you have to cut your lunch break short. Then force yourself to get ready for bed at the same time every night.

You'll feel more relaxed and far less anxious.

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That's day 4. Tomorrow, we'll cover how to how to stop panic attacks.

Much more to come...

Charlie

DAY FIVE: PANIC ATTACKS

Welcome to **Day 5** of the Heal Your Anxiety Course!

Today, we're going to talk about my former nemesis: Panic Attacks.

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A lot of people struggle with panic attacks. I completely sympathize because, well, panic attacks are one of the most awful sensations a person can go through. When I was feeling my worst, I was having them on a regular basis. I thought I was going crazy, getting sick, and that I was going to die. It really, really sucked.

You're not alone if you're struggling with panic attacks. And fortunately, they're relatively straightforward to get under control. Your anxiety and panic attacks won't necessarily vanish right away, but there are a number of ways to effectively deal with them and prevent them from happening.

Here are my favorite suggestions, all personally tested by me, starting with the most simple...

1. Walk around with a big water bottle

I love this because it's cheap and easy. The next time you're worried that you might be on the verge of having a panic attack, drink a full bottle of water (or TWO full glasses of water) – one gulp every three seconds. This is a great way to slow down and normalize the pace of your breath, which will naturally calm down your heart.

2. Cut down on stimulants

A lot of people I've talked to who have panic attacks are either consuming too much caffeine (1 cup per day is enough to push you over the edge), too much aspartame (diet soda = poison), or smoking marijuana regularly (weed can crank

your anxiety up to 11). And of course, they overlook these facts and wonder why their body is freaking out.

When your body starts tweaking out, that's its way of signaling that something is wrong and you need to SLOW DOWN. I love coffee, but I had to cut it out of my system. I was drinking 3-5 cups per day, and wondered why I felt so awful. Within one week of removing caffeine from my system, my hands stop shaking. I stopped feeling jittery. I calmed the hell down. Now, I only have a maximum of one HALF cup of coffee (I pour the other half out), or I just drink water.

Take stock of what's going into your bloodstream every day. Are you consuming caffeine? Aspartame? Marijuana? Other drugs? If your body is freaking out, that means something is wrong. Kick that stimulant out of your system for a week. Assess how you feel at the end of the week, and then reintroduce the substance by taking a normal dose you're used to taking. If those panicky feelings return within 1-2 hours, you've found the culprit. Limit or eliminate that substance as much as you can.

3. Daily PLAY

Set aside just 20 minutes each day to move around, get your heart pumping, and have FUN. I like running around outside while playing a game with a friend (I love playing catch with the Aerobie flying ring – it's a fun, social toy that naturally forces you to exercise).

If you can't do that, go lift heavy weights at the gym for just 20 minutes (three sets of 8 reps -- deadlift, squat, or kettlebell). Or go on a fast run outside (no light jogging). Just do SOMETHING each day to get your body moving and your heart pumping.

It doesn't have to be perfect. It doesn't have to look good. You just need to MOVE and have fun for 20 minutes (that's less than 2% of your time during the day!)

4. Get better sleep!

Remember all the tips we covered for [optimizing your sleep](#)? Well, there's one more suggestion that's worth trying:

Stop looking at screens past 9:00 PM!

Seriously, the internet will still be around tomorrow. I know the temptation to be connected 24 hour a day is strong, but don't you truly want to overcome your anxiety? Well, it requires some sacrifice. That means **NO MORE SCREENS OR BRIGHT LIGHTS AFTER 9:00PM** (I use the [Commit app](#) to remind me, every night, to stop looking at screens).

Don't worry -- you're not going to miss anything important. No calls, no text messages, no emails are going to come through after 9:00pm that will change your life. Plus the light on your screen is just going to wake your right back up again if you check it at night. Value the good night's sleep more than being connected. Make the choice to take care of yourself.

5. Mock your worries

Ever notice how much you resist your "bad" thoughts? How much you want them to change into perfect silence, or perfect peacefulness? It's your **RESISTANCE** to your own thoughts that's making your mind seem like such a scary place. You're trying to run away from yourself, instead of leaning in and playing around with your thoughts!

It might be hard to remember this sometimes, but it's just **YOU** up there. And even though you're scared of bad things happening (going crazy, death, "the end is near"), the fact is that those bad things **ARE NOT ACTUALLY HAPPENING RIGHT NOW**. They are just a string of words and images swimming around in your mind. And you don't have to take them so seriously. How you respond to your own mind is a choice....

Your thoughts aren't "good" or "bad"; they're just *thoughts*. You don't need to resist them or make them perfect, or even assign them any value. You can treat them with *detached indifference*. They are background noise – a petulant child that's screaming and trying to distract you. And instead of frantically trying to get the child to shut up and leave you alone, you can choose to **PLAY WITH IT**.

This might seem crazy, but it worked for me...

Bring your worries out in the open and mock them. Say them out loud in the voice of the most ridiculous character you can think of – Ron Burgundy, or Ace Ventura, or the Swedish Chef from the Muppets. Or just a squirrel on helium.

Anything you can do to poke fun at yourself and laugh at yourself. Because that's the type of person you want to practice being – someone who CAN laugh at themselves, and realize how easy it is to choose to have fun and be light. And it really is a choice.

When I started practicing mocking my worries, my mind was no longer able to scare me. I stopped having panic attacks because my thoughts only had power when I granted them that authority. The incessant chirping in my brain that freaked me out for months was now background noise.

Think of it this way: If you were in a room full of people who were all laughing and pointing at you, and there was no way for you to escape, how long would it take before you stopped caring? How long would it take for your panic and shame to turn into apathy and annoyance?

That's how you should think about your stressful thoughts — as a room full of obnoxious people trying to wind you up. You can either let them harass you every single day, or you can make fun of them right back.

Don't resist your stressful thoughts or wish for them to change. Welcome them, observe them, then mock them. They aren't real. And you have every right to choose to have fun and laugh at yourself.

It's kind of tough, but 100% worth practicing.

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Hey, we're halfway through the course! So far, we've covered:

1. Fixing nutrition deficiencies
2. Removing stimulants
3. The importance of taking action
4. Getting better sleep
5. Preventing panic attacks

Are you enjoying these techniques? Do you feel like you could use more help?

Well, I wrote a book called [*Play It Away: A Workaholic's Cure for Anxiety*](#). It contains a 4-week plan for health and happiness, plus a bunch of other great techniques for reducing your anxiety.

You can buy the book on Amazon, and it only costs about \$10. That's the cost of a whopping three minutes with a professional therapist :)

Seriously though, the book is a good deal. [Grab a copy](#).

If you want to be a part of my private anxiety-fighting support group, where I'll personally hold you accountable and help you become healthier and happier, just [sign up here](#).

Finally, if you know anyone who could benefit from this free course, please forward them this PDF or send them a link to [playitaway.me](#). Give them the info, tell them how the course has helped you, then let their curiosity do the rest.

I hope it's been helpful so far. Some of the best stuff is yet to come...

Charlie

DAY SIX: GUILT-FREE PLAY

Welcome to **Day 6** of the Heal Your Anxiety Course!

Today, I'm super excited because I get to cover my favorite anxiety-fighting technique: guilt-free play.

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If you don't know my backstory, [I was an extreme workaholic](#).

My biggest problem -- which I didn't recognize for several years -- was *my state of mind*. I always mentally blocked myself from having guilt-free fun. I was extremely adept at rejecting everything that wasn't productive. I couldn't enjoy any form of leisure if it didn't earn money or help my career.

In other words: **I constantly deprived myself of play!**

People with anxiety tend to inflict this upon themselves. Even if they aren't workaholics, they'll still beat themselves up mentally for not getting anything done. Anxious people tend to take everything very seriously, and are so scared that something is going to go wrong that they unknowingly prevent themselves from enjoying life.

The source of their trouble is easy to see: [All work and no play makes Jack an anxious boy](#).

The world doesn't have to feel so intense. It CAN be fun again, and it's really not that difficult. You just need to acknowledge one of your biggest problems (play deprivation), and give yourself permission to fix it.

* * *

When I asked my mentor Tim Ferriss for his advice on overcoming anxiety, he said:

“Remember to EXERCISE daily. That is 80% of the battle.”

I completely agree. Exercise is scientifically proven to reduce [anxiety](#), [stress](#), and [depression](#). But what’s the best type of exercise?

- Running on the treadmill for an hour?
- Doing hundreds of sit-ups?
- Self-inflicted torture via P90X?

How about ‘None of the Above.’ All of those activities are miserable. People only do them because they think getting in shape has to be a punishment.

Exercise does not have to feel like *work*; it can be *play*. In other words, physical movement that gets your heart racing, causes you to sweat, and is legitimately FUN for you and your friends. You don’t have to track your time, measure your heart rate, or count your calories. Forget all that noise. Just focus on having fun while moving around with your friends.

In my experience, the best forms of anxiety-reducing play are *outdoor sports*. They are social (more than one person is required), mildly competitive, and cause everyone to break a sweat in the fresh air and sunshine. However, any fun play activity that you can do on a regular basis with your friends should work.

Almost every weekend, my friends and I play [home run derby](#) or go to the [driving range](#). For me, taking batting practice or hitting golf balls is the most rewarding form of play. Plus it gives me an excuse to move around outside for an hour or two.

I also take frequent trips to the park with an [Aerobie Flying Ring](#) (a flat rubber Frisbee that flies really fast). The Aerobie is perfect for playing because I have to call up a friend to join me, and we both end up running around chasing it.

Incorporating play into my weekly routine helped my anxiety and workaholism more than anything else. It was such a massive relief to hang out with my friends and have guilt-free fun again. Playing helped me decompress and unplug from work, which actually made me more productive.

After each round of catch or home run derby, I would return to my laptop feeling light and happy. And to my surprise, I was able to produce better work at a faster pace. My brain was operating at a higher level because it was joyful, playful, and recharged.

I also gained a surplus of happiness, which spilled into the rest of my day. Suddenly, I found myself teasing bored cashiers, being more flirtatious, and cracking inappropriate jokes. Just a couple hours of guilt-free play reduced my anxiety and increased my confidence.

TODAY'S ASSIGNMENT

Reach out to someone you care about. Pick up your phone and send them this message:

Life has been feeling too serious lately. I want to take a break and do something fun. Want to play?

Then get outside and play. Whether it's catch, or a pickup game, or just a long walk... go do something fun right now that will bring you together with the people you love. And when you're finished, tell them to play it forward by asking their friends to do the same.

Get off the Internet, turn off your screens, and go have guilt-free fun playing with your friends!

You'll be less anxious, less lonely, more relaxed, and a whole lot happier.

Much more to come...

Charlie

DAY SEVEN: YOUR ROUTINE

Welcome to **Day 7** of the Heal Your Anxiety Course!

Yesterday, we talked about the importance of having GUILT-FREE FUN.

In a word: *play*.

Before we get into today's lesson, I want to check in and make sure that you actually followed through on yesterday's assignment.

Did you reach out to a friend and ask them to play?

If you didn't, stop everything right now and DO IT.

Then schedule a daily reminder in your calendar / on your phone to *Go Play*. I know that sounds like it goes against the spontaneous nature of play, but it's important to schedule recreation in advance or it won't happen. If you don't schedule it, work will swell to fill your unfilled calendar.

Playing on a daily basis is an investment in your health and happiness. Not only does it allow you to have fun with your friends while exercising, it also turns your thoughts off for a while so your brain can recharge.

Reducing your anxiety through play only takes 2% of your total time each week (that's 30 minutes every day), but it's up to you to decide that your happiness is worth the effort.

[Hint: It IS worth the effort.]

You can take baby steps toward playing more, of course. You could invite a friend on a long walk, or play catch instead of drinking coffee, or take a date to the driving range. The important thing is to *schedule guilt-free fun with good people*.

And if you did play yesterday, great! Now you're going to want to make sure that you're playing on a regular basis -- 30 minutes per day or more.

Here's how...

* * *

Establishing a routine can help you get into a groove that facilitates your health and happiness on an ongoing basis.

The daily routine I've laid out below is the one I followed as closely as possible during the month I cured my anxiety (page numbers are in reference to [my book](#)):

7	Rise Meditate (10 min) - <i>p. 80</i> Workout, circuit training (1 hr)
8	Cold shower (5 min) - <i>p. 107</i> Fresh air and sunlight (15 min) - <i>p. 69</i> Skip breakfast, vitamin-B + fish oil - <i>p. 96</i>
9	Work
10	
11	Email
12	Lunch: Protein, vegetable, healthy side - <i>p. 92</i> Nap (20 min) - <i>p. 75</i>
1	Work
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	Play (1 hr) - <i>p. 62</i>
7	Dinner with healthy friends
8	
9	Turn off screens
10	Get ready for bed - <i>p. 72</i> Cuddling - <i>p. 77</i>

Create your own DAILY routine that's conducive to your health and happiness. Your routine should prioritize things that are important to you, such as playing with friends, eating healthy meals, and getting good sleep.

No one else is going to force you to do these things, so you need to take matters into your own hands.

Feel free to give my routine a shot. Just don't think of it as a surefire recipe for success. Your life could be very different from mine, so you might not be able to do everything I recommend.

Of course, it's totally fine if you have to adjust my schedule to fit your needs. If you prefer to just make a few small changes in your daily routine (rather than altering your entire schedule), here are the three I suggest:

- ▶ Set an alarm to get ready for bed at the same time every night
- ▶ Take a 20-minute nap after lunch every afternoon
- ▶ Play with a friend for 30 minutes every day

In other words: **sleep, sleep more, and play!**

* * *

That's day 7. Tomorrow, we'll cover how to release pent-up frustration, which is a classic symptom of people who are extremely anxious.

More to come...

Charlie

DAY EIGHT: HOW TO LET GO

Welcome to **Day 8** of the Heal Your Anxiety Course!

Yesterday, we talked about the importance of establishing a daily routine.

Today, I want to talk about how to release some of the pent-up frustration you've probably been building up.

Let's begin...

* * *

My anxiety changed my behavior. I usually joked around with people, but suddenly, I was walking on eggshells in every interaction. I was submissive, agreeable, and excessively nice. I didn't realize it until a couple friends told me I had to stop worrying about hurting their feelings.

This new behavior was partially caused by how isolated and lonely I felt (I couldn't stand the thought of my friends shunning me), but mostly, it stemmed from a fear of confrontation. I was trying to avoid an emotional breakdown because I knew if someone screamed in my face or tried to fight me, I'd probably fall apart on the spot.

I masked how I felt for months, always trying to maintain poise. Even when I was out with a group of friends, I just faked my enthusiasm by mimicking theirs, doing my best to hide my frustration. I didn't talk to anyone about how I felt because, for better or worse, guys don't really talk about feelings.

When guys hang out, we joke around and mess with each other. Our interactions are light and fun, and excessive displays of emotion (especially fear or sadness) are viewed as weak and emasculating. We usually don't discuss feelings because it's always been off-limits, so it makes us really uncomfortable. Almost every man has been raised to value how he thinks more than how he feels, and because a lot of our feelings aren't easy to rationalize, we block ourselves from expressing them.

While I was putting a clamp on the feelings I didn't want to show, I was unknowingly screwing up all the others. Every emotion I experienced felt clumsy and filtered. My face started twitching as my body begged me to release the frustration that was bubbling over.

WHAT YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW

The Easy Way

It's impossible to heal your anxiety if you're constantly scolding yourself for not feeling normal. You need to be loving and supportive. The best way to do that is by quietly venting to yourself and practicing gratitude through writing.

Whenever you get really stressed out, grab a pen and a few pieces of paper. Write down every single thing you're currently worrying about.

Don't filter your words or resist your feelings. Be brutally honest about what you are going through. Expose your fears and insecurities so you can see them outside of yourself.

Once you're finished, go back and read through everything you just wrote. Then take out another few sheets of paper, and write down one reason why you're grateful for every single thing you're worried about. It doesn't matter how awful or irredeemable that source of stress has been; come up with one reason why you're thankful to have experienced it.

This is the best method for transforming mental poison into spiritual nourishment. Writing unlocks the gates of your mental prison, which allows your brain to decompress and breathe. And practicing gratitude for each of your stressors helps you see your life in a more positive light.

The Hard Way

Go speak with the people who have been upsetting you. Be honest and vulnerable, hear each other out, and keep talking until you find a solution both sides are happy with.

Talking to a handful of people who were a big part of my life, face-to-face, was really tough. I had to admit that I'd been angry and depressed and terrified, but reluctant to speak up. I didn't verbally attack them; I just asked them to hear me out, explained how I felt and why I was upset, then asked how we could fix the situation.

I repeated this process over and over, having levelheaded conversations where we both tried to empathize and understand each other. It released a lot of the tension we both felt. And usually, we bonded and grew closer just by talking.

It was really hard to initiate those uncomfortable discussions, but it was completely worthwhile. It helped me realize that I was doing things that were upsetting those people too, which I needed to fix in order to make things right. Those realizations saved some of my most important relationships from falling apart.

* * *

You can't be happy and awesome and stoic all of the time. Period. It's just simply not possible. Life is not always great; sometimes it's really tough. That's why you were equipped with a full spectrum of emotions; they help you get through the hard times.

Stop resisting the expression of your being and listen to your body. Screw perfection, screw poise – just let go. If you're sad, give yourself permission to bawl. If you're angry, go beat something to a pulp (preferably a pillow or cushion), then yell at the top of your lungs. Keep doing it until you're exhausted.

Feel better? Good.

That's day 8. Now, go take care of yourself.

Charlie

DAY NINE: STIMULANT-B-GONE

Welcome to **Day 9** of the "Heal Your Anxiety" course!

Today, we're going to assess how you've been feeling since you removed your most harmful stimulants last week.

Not sure what I'm talking about? Here's a quick refresh...

On Day 2 of this course, we defined stimulants as *anything you consume that increases your body's nervous activity*. Stimulants can enter your bloodstream, or they can be absorbed through your conscious awareness.

The first part of your assignment was to write down all the stimulants you were consuming on a daily / weekly basis. Everything you were EATING, WATCHING, READING, and HEARING regularly that was associated with feelings of nervousness, worry, and panic.

The second part of your assignment was to go one week WITHOUT taking in your most harmful stimulants. You had to pick your top one or two most harmful stimulants, and attempt to remove them for seven days.

Today is the seventh day. If you've gone without your stimulants for the full week, ask yourself:

On a scale of 0 - 100%, how much did my anxiety drop this week?

If it dropped noticeably during the time you removed your harmful stimulants, try to keep those things out of your life, or replace them with a healthier substitute. Simple as that.

If you didn't make it a full week and were still consuming your most harmful stimulants, THAT'S OKAY! It's difficult to commit to this kind of change. So what I'd suggest is you make it easier on yourself. Here are a few suggestions:

- ▶ Use the [Commit app](#). Every morning, have this app ask you "Are you going to keep _____ out of your system today?" Then check off "Yes." This

simple reminder on your phone, along with the act of agreeing to do it, will increase your compliance.

- ▶ **Bet \$100 that you can remove it.** Loss aversion works. Either use Stikk.com, or tell a close friend that you want to keep your most harmful stimulant out of your system for a week. Give them the money, and say they can only give it back if you successfully get through.

As I said before, the difficulty lies in self-awareness -- recognizing when a socially acceptable stimulant (like caffeine or the news) is actually making you feel terrible. If you're constantly feeling anxious, you need to ask yourself: "What's causing these feelings?" Usually it's the stimulants.

Remove your most harmful for one week. Assess how you feel at the end. Rinse and repeat.

Your anxiety is almost certain to diminish through this weekly practice.

* * *

That's day 9. Remember: you're the only one who can make the daily effort to nurture your own health. So keep taking care of yourself, every day. It's worth the effort.

One day left! I hope it's been useful so far. Talk soon...

Charlie

P.S. Are you still playing? If not, call / text a friend right now. Ask them if they want to go do something fun today.

DAY TEN: UNPLUGGED IN NATURE

Welcome to **Day 10** of the "Heal Your Anxiety" course!

We've covered a lot of ground over the last week and a half...

On Day 1, you learned about the **nutrients** that are depleted when you're stressed out. Common deficiencies are vitamin B-12, omega 3 fatty acids, potassium, and magnesium. Replenishing these nutrients for 30 days straight can diminish your anxiety.

On Day 2, you learned about **harmful stimulants**. My biggest anxiety-inducing stimulants were the news, caffeine, and bright screens past 9pm. When I took them out of my system for a week, my anxiety was cut in half.

On Day 3, you committed to finding and removing your most harmful stimulants. This day was a **check in** to make sure you actually did the previous day's assignment.

On Day 4, you learned about the importance of **consistent quality sleep**. The steps you should take to improve your sleep: optimize your bedroom, commit to the same bedtime, and take a 20-minute nap after lunch.

On Day 5, you learned a few simple methods for **preventing panic attacks**.

On Day 6, you saw how critical **guilt-free play** was to your health and happiness. Playing outdoor sports with friends is one of the most effective (and fun) ways to reduce your anxiety.

On Day 7, you created a **daily routine** to facilitate your health and happiness. If nothing else, you committed to getting more sleep and playing every day!

On Day 8, you practiced **letting go of your frustration**. The easy way to do this is by writing down everything you're worried about, and coming up with reasons you're grateful for those sources of stress. The hard (but super effective) way is to initiate HONEST -- yet non-confrontational -- discussions with people you're frustrated with. Don't hold those thoughts in. Get them out in the open!

On Day 9, you **assessed your emotional state** after having your most harmful stimulants removed for one week.

* * *

Today, on our final day in the course, I want to leave you with one of my favorite anxiety-fighting techniques: **unplugged nature vacations**.

Whenever I'm feeling burned out, I force myself to take an unplugged nature vacation. I relocate to a scenic environment where the skyline isn't cluttered with buildings or human activity, surround myself with as much Mother Nature as possible, then I disconnect from every device with a screen.

No phone, no television, no computer. That means no texting, no calling, no email, no Facebook, no Instagram, and no Seinfeld. Only nature, face-to-face interactions, and books are allowed.

Unplugged nature vacations are incredibly refreshing. My mind always feels like a stuffy room that gets a sudden rush of fresh air. Instead of feeling tired all day long from a steady diet of internet content, I'm rejuvenated by real life again.

TODAY'S ASSIGNMENT

Schedule an unplugged nature vacation for this weekend. Block off a full day in your calendar, otherwise it won't happen!

Give yourself permission to stop working and unplug. Just like playing, you shouldn't feel guilty for taking time off. This isn't an escape from the real world – it's a chance to reconnect with it. Taking a break from modern living is the perfect opportunity to turn inward, breathe, and relax in quiet stillness.

* * *

And that's day 10! Congratulations, you made it through the course :)

Did you enjoy these techniques? Do you still feel like you could use more help?

Check out my book [*Play It Away: A Workaholic's Cure for Anxiety*](#). It contains a 4-week plan for health and happiness, plus a bunch of other great techniques for reducing your anxiety.

You can [buy it on Amazon](#) for just \$10. That's the cost two drinks, or three minutes with a therapist :)

If you know anyone who could benefit from this free course, please email them this PDF. Let them know how much it helped you, and just leave it at that.

Finally, if you want to be a part of my private anxiety-fighting support group, where I'll personally hold you accountable to become healthier and happier, just [sign up here](#).

To your health and happiness...

Charlie

P.S. Here's my site -- <http://charliehoehn.com>

P.P.S. I'm also on Twitter [@charliehoehn](#)