# Anxiety realisations and reminders

*Some thoughts, prompts, realisations and reminders emerging from a reading of “Anxiety: Panicking about Panic: A powerful self-help guide for people suffering from anxiety or panic disorder” by Joshua Fletcher, 2014.*

* Anxiety is ONE THING – the psychological worries, the physical symptoms, the avoidant behaviours. Don’t try to deal with each part – anxiety is trying to divide and rule.
* “It’s just anxiety!”
* The rest of you – the best of you – is still there.
* Let the ‘What if…?’s become the ‘So what….?’s. Challenge the ‘What if…?’s. Ignore them.
* “I’m going to do something productive today, regardless of how I feel.”
* “This will pass, I just need to give myself a chance.”
* “This is just a loop I have got caught in, I can break out of it.”
* “Adrenaline is just a chemical – it’s not *me*, it’s not who *I am*.”
* “What would I say to a frightened child, or animal?”
* “There are lots of times when my anxiety *doesn’t* get in the way!”
* “It’s scary, but I’m going to set myself a goal & bravely make my way towards it.”
* I *can* do this!”
* “What do these chemicals think they are up to? This is my life, I’m in charge.”
* Get smart: “Neuroplasticity is a real thing – I can learn to do this differently.”
* Get indignant: “Fear limits the potential and possibilities of my amazing brain, of amazing me.”
* Check out the evidence – is everyone really looking at me? Am I really having a heart attack?
* “Ha! I’m actually cleverer than this primitive part of my brain!”
* Anxiety is a bully.
* Anxiety is a condition, not an illness.
* This would be useful if I was being pursued by a bear…but when was the last time I met a bear?
* Catch yourself being brave – build a new story of you, don’t settle for less.
* It’s only anxiety – it’ll run out of fuel in a minute or two.
* Anxiety short-circuits the intelligent you. It’s still there, but anxiety has bypassed it and left the rest of you, the best of you, hidden in a cul-de-sac. Don’t stand for it. Reconnect the circuit and reclaim your brain!
* Collect your own circuit-breakers:
  + A deep breath
  + “It’s only anxiety, it’ll be gone shortly”
  + “Shut up, anxiety!”
  + Getting up and moving around
  + Music
  + “I can do this”
  + “It will pass”
  + “I’ll think about this when I get my whole brain back”
  + Remind yourself of the power of thought – good, happy thoughts
* “Don’t believe everything you think.”

*Enid Blyton*

* “When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.”

*Wayne Dyer*

* “What we focus on gets bigger.”

*Sasha Stephens,* *The Effortless Sleep Method*

* But did you see the gorilla…? Amazing perception experiment demonstrating just how the brain can blot things out:

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/but-did-you-see-the-gorilla-the-problem-with-inattentional-blindness-17339778/?no-ist>

* + - * *The Brain that Changes Itself,* by Norman Doidge – a very readable (and hopeful) overview of the concept of neuroplasticity

## Tackling your anxiety: some things to try

## Create a mind map of your anxiety

Put your anxiety in the middle. Add all the thoughts, feelings behaviours that it produces around the outside, all the things you do and feel, the thoughts, emotions, the way your body reacts. Where does it happen? When? The triggers? Safety and avoidance behaviours?

## Resource Sack, Safety Box, Emergency Bag

What helps when you feel anxious? Collect together a range of real and virtual items, resources and activities that you can quickly draw on in times of need. Use your senses when thinking about what to include, and think about things you can do that help. You might find the following ideas helpful:

* Touch – something soft and soothing to stroke (a scarf or a soft toy?)
* Scent – something comforting or uplifting to smell (a boxed soap or scented candle?)
* Sight – a photo of people who care or a place you love to be or a happy time
* Sound – relaxation tracks (music, waves, rain, etc)
* Breathing exercises
* Whole body relaxation exercises
* Visualisations using all the senses to recreate/explore (e.g. of a safe and loved place – but not bed)
* Writing in a journal – e.g. logging the exceptions to fearful times; listing your strengths and how you use them to counter your fears
* Reading affirmations you have collected/written/printed out
* Colouring in a mindful colouring book
* Lying in a warm bath
* Listening to the radio
* Walking or other exercise e.g. yoga

## Personify your anxiety

Anxiety is a crafty beggar – draw a picture – give it a personality – give it a name, a voice, a personality, behaviours – what are its tactics, its habits, where does it like to hang out? In what ways can you get one up on it? What do *you* know about it that *it* hasn’t realised yet that you know? What do you want to say to it? What do you want to do to it? Where will you put it? Who can help?