THE SCIENCE BEHIND OVERCOMING ANXIETY:

HOW TO RECONNECT YOUR MIND AND HEART.
HI, I'M VALENTINA

• **NEUROSCIENCE GEEK AND CHANGE EXPERT (MA)**
  With a shady past in the Corporate Management for a Fortune 500 Company. Business coach and Mentor.

• **FORMER ANXIETY AND BINGING QUEEN**
  That's how I went about my life until I was 35. Crippled by anxiety. Binging on food, TV series, Social media, Games and CATS!

• **NOW PURPOSE DRIVEN AND LIFE OBSESSED**
  And that's how I live now, in a lovely house with a nerd husband, 3yo twins and a dog.
IT'S ALL ABOUT SAFETY
ACCEPTANCE, AND OUR BEING WIRED FOR SURVIVAL.
WE DISCONNECT

When a dissonance between acceptance and authenticity shows, the former wins, every time.
WE FRAGMENT INTO PARTS

One is in PAIN (and is sent away). One protects us from the pain and ensures we are accepted.
... AND WE DON'T EVEN REALISE IT

We trade our intuition, our true voice, our essence, for acceptance and survival. We are wired like that.
ANXIETY IS A BYPRODUCT

- Avoidance
- Negative self-talk + rumination
- Restlessness
- Emptiness
- Disconnection
- Feeling stuck
- Physical and emotional pain
- Lack of clarity
#1 - DISCONNECTION

LACK OF CLARITY AND PURPOSE, SILENCED INNER VOICE, SELF-DOUBT, FEAR.
The totality of YOU is your higher self PLUS many parts interacting with each other.

Each with a different personality, needs and wants.

Each with a different VOICE.

ONE part of you is as scared as it gets, and is feeling anxious ALL the time. ANOTHER part of you is in charge of keeping you safe. TO protect you from any possible threats.
From ANXIETY to Connection

DEEPER MEANING
LOVING INNER VOICE
LIFE PURPOSE
FEEL WHOLE
REWIRE BELIEFS
BEFRIEND YOUR FEARS/DEMONS
GET CLARITY
RECONNECT TO INNER TRUTH/SELF
RECONNECT MIND AND HEART
THE ROOT CAUSE #1

EVENT/MODELING
Something in your life made you feel unsafe. A critical parent, a traumatic event, conditional love, school.

PATTERNS/BELIEFS
When a behavior is repeated over time, a pattern originates (a physical pathway in the brain). Beliefs align.

ONCE UPON A TIME
DEFENSE MECHANISM
Your mind creates a way to FEEL safe, no matter what (Ego-part: the protector).

ANXIETY
HABIT
The defense mechanism is a part of you. It runs in the background and affects your whole life.
ONCE UPON A TIME

LABELING
During childhood we are treated/labelled in a certain way, over and over again.

DISSONANCE
A dissonance originates. A struggle between authenticity and the need for acceptance.

TOXIC BELIEF
Acceptance is linked to safety. Acceptance wins over authenticity every single time. This is when disconnection happens.

INTERNALIZATION
The toxic belief becomes part of our identity and runs in our subconscious. Thoughts and behaviors align.

ANXIETY

THE ROOT CAUSE #2
**IN THE MOMENT**

**STRESS SOURCE**

**ACTIVATION**
Your belief and protector get activated.

**OVERWHELM**
Thoughts and emotions support the reaction: the loop is overwhelming.

**BEHAVIOR**
Negative stress reaction reinforced by beliefs and previous experiences.

**AVOIDANCE**
The emotional overwhelm inevitably brings to avoidance, therefore reinforcing the pattern.
WHAT IS ANXIETY

- A SYMPTOM
- A PATTERN
- NEED FOR SAFETY
- A LABEL
- ENERGY SUCKER
- DEEPLY ROOTED FEAR
- EMOTIONAL OVERWHELM
HOW TO ADDRESS ANXIETY

#1 - GROW AWARENESS
#2 - FEEL EMOTIONS
#3 - EVALUATE THOUGHTS
#4 - TAKE CONSCIOUS CHOICES
THE CORNERSTONES

AWARENESS: UNDERSTAND YOUR DEEPLY ROOTED PATTERNS AND BELIEFS AND MAKE YOUR UNCONSCIOUS CONSCIOUS

THOUGHTS: YOUR INNER OBSERVER - LEARN HOW TO EVALUATE YOUR THOUGHTS BEFORE BUYING INTO THEM

EMOTIONS: REWIRE YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH EMOTIONS TO HEAR, TRUST AND FOLLOW YOUR INNER VOICE/SELF
AWARENESS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BELIEFS</th>
<th>BEHAVIORS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One-line statements that describe how you perceive yourself, others and the world in a rigid and toxic way.</td>
<td>Negative behaviors that are the outcome of corrosive beliefs and patterns: procrastination, avoidance, rumination, negative self-talk...</td>
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<tr>
<th>PATTERNS</th>
<th>PERSPECTIVE</th>
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<tr>
<td>The sequence of beliefs--&gt; thoughts--&gt; behaviors that you have created over time and consolidated.</td>
<td>The understanding that our perception is not objective. And once again it's a reflection of our belief system.</td>
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<tr>
<th>THOUGHTS</th>
<th>BIASES</th>
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<tr>
<td>The negative thoughts generated by your mind to align with your beliefs and patterns. Humans avoid inner dissonance at all costs.</td>
<td>The very human biases we are born with, and which make it hard to shift our perspective, beliefs and behaviors.</td>
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**BELIEFS DIARY**

1-week diary/journal to keep track of your emotions and thoughts, recognise patterns, toxic beliefs, and coping mechanisms.

**THOUGHTS FLOW**

A short 2-minute meditation to repeat 2-3 times a day to grow your awareness about regular thoughts bubbling up from your subconscious.

**QUESTION IT**

Once you have some awareness about reoccurring thoughts and beliefs, start questioning them.

**THE SIMPLICITY FORMULA**

If you feel anxious, something's going on. Dig deeper! It may be painful, but it will never be as painful as living with anxiety for the rest of your life.
A belief is toxic when it's in the way of a joyful and meaningful life.

It's like an elephant in the room:

• Hiding in plain sight

• Running the show of your life from the safe place of your subconscious

• Responsible for the very core of your behaviors
THE WORST THING ABOUT ME IS THAT I'M _____________________
IF

WEREN'T SUCH A PROBLEM FOR ME, I WOULD
IF I DIDN'T HAVE/WERE NOT __________________________
I WOULD __________________________
THOUGHTS

Your inner observer
YOUR INNER OBSERVER

- Recognise beliefs and patterns
- Evaluate before you believe
- Shift your perspective
- Stop negative self-talk on its tracks
- Respond instead of reacting
- Consciously choose
HOW - THE EXERCISES

1 WORDS MATTER

A part of me is feeling anxious vs I'm having the feeling of being anxious vs I am anxious.
I'm having the feeling of being stupid vs I'm stupid.
A part of me is feeling she is never enough vs I'm not enough.

2 YOU ARE NOT YOUR THOUGHTS

Thoughts are generated all the time by your mind. Some are random. Some are evolutionary wiring. Some are internalised voices. Some are past experiences and emotions.
YOU are so much more than your thoughts.
YOU are everything you choose to be.
YOU are everything you choose to act upon.
YOU can choose to discard ANY thought that is not bringing you closer to what truly matters to your heart.

3 SPOT YOUR INTERNALISED VOICES

Chances are that your inner voice is either muted or whispering. Your inner voice is a loving, compassionate and supportive voice. If the loud voices of your mind are harsh, critical and put you down, then they are not your inner voice. Hear them with a critical mind.

4 LET THEM FLOW

Let your thoughts flow and go, without believing them, without judging them, without getting stuck and entangled in them.
Imagine you are sitting on the peak of a mountain and see your thoughts laying on the passing clouds. Let them flow. See how new ones always show up. Notice how absurd some of them are. See them with clarity as what they are. Accept them. And let them go.
THE ABC OF EMOTIONS

1. Acknowledge the emotion
2. Be with the emotion with a compassionate attitude
3. Listen to the underlying message and let it go
4. Evaluate its meaning from your inner observer
ACKNOWLEDGE

For some of us, avoiding our emotions is so second nature that we reject them in auto-pilot. We don't notice being triggered. Or the subtle irritation that poisoned in our baseline. The sting of pain in our heart.

It takes a bit of training to notice as soon as an emotion is arising. **Start by pausing a few times a day and ask yourself “how do I feel right now?” and looking inside for a minute or two.**

It may take a while before you reconnect to your heart and emotions. That's absolutely OK.

BE WITH YOUR EMOTION

When an emotion arises, be with it. Without judging, explaining, searching, exploring or looking for reasons why. The same way you would sit with a friend in pain. **Imagine sitting on a bench on your own side. In accepting and supportive silence.**

You may feel resistance (I know I surely did!). It helped me to imagine my heart open up to let the emotion in.

COMPASSION

Compassion is a true keyword here. Your emotion is an expression of something so important and so distressful that your WHOLE BODY is trying to communicate it to you.

It needs to be felt and accepted. It needs to be understood with compassion. A part of you is feeling like that. **Imagine showing love and support to that part of you, as that part simply needs love to let go of that pain.**

LISTEN AND LET GO

Soon enough your emotion will shift and transform. It may have a message for you, or not. It often does.

**When you hear this message, take the role of your inner observer before believing whatever it says.** Why? In the case of anxiety the emotion is often enough FEAR. A fear rooted in the past and in toxic beliefs. It's important to feel it, so that it can move on. It's as important not to get entangled in it, and be able to evaluate whether it's bringing you closer to the life you want to live.
**ESSENTIAL BRAIN-HACKS FOR EMERGENCY ACTION**

- **DEFFUSE TOXIC THOUGHTS**

  Whenever you hear hurtful and intrusive thoughts:
  - breathe deeply a few times
  - bring compassion to the part of you feeling so wounded
  - acknowledge it for what it is. A scared inner child or a part of you trying to keep you safe.
  - Stay with the feeling, but distance yourself from the thoughts coming with it
  - Choose an action, as little as it is (ie do the laundry, water the plants).

- **THE GET-UNSTUCK QUESTION**

  When you feel stuck, or you feel as something is an impossible task, ask yourself: “if it was easy, and I could not possibly fail, how would it look like?”

  Your mind will show you there IS a way, and it's even easy enough to follow!

  If you are still stuck, ask yourself the same question and add “what would be the first step to get there?”.

- **AWARENESS**

  Any kind of change is rooted in awareness. Train it as a muscle. Teach it as to a child. Love it as your closest friend.

  Explore the things that give you the most joy.

  Choose the ones that can be done in 5 to 20 minutes.

  Grab your calendar and add 2-3 slots x week.

- **THE ORANGE METHOD**

  This is a funny exercise, and a very effective one in rewiring our complex network of words and meanings.

  If you had to choose ONE WORD that summarizes a toxic belief, which one would you pick?

  Now repeat that word as fast as you can for a good 5 minutes.

  Observe how the word transforms, how it changes meaning, and how it loses its emotional charge. Believe me, its power will decrease significantly.
RESOURCES

1. GET OUT OF YOUR MIND AND INTO YOUR LIFE - STEVEN HAYES

2. I KNOW I'M IN THERE SOMEWHERE - HELENE BRENNER

3. WORKSHEETS / EXERCISES (DROPBOX)

4. QUORA
   https://www.quora.com/profile/Valentina-Manini

5. ANXIETY-REDUCING SONG
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JNM-xPZXgl
This story activates your wounded part. Feel it. Accept it. Nurture it.