

# DR. JOHN DELONY'S ANXIETY RELIEF *Checklist*

A close look at current data suggests that Americans are a frazzled, exhausted, lonely and anxious bunch. Almost one in five Americans are diagnosed with an anxiety disorder.<sup>1</sup> We wake up every day and scroll through a news feed of political strife, scary economic conditions, shocking unemployment rates, social justice battles and divided communities. We've replaced true community with electronic connectivity.

I want you to think of the world that surrounds you—your home, your community, the spoken and unspoken rules, the demands of work, and the culture you're living in—as your ecosystem. When you stop and think about how insane the world seems, it's no wonder that millions of people are feeling anxious and disconnected.

At its core, anxiety is simply an alarm system that goes off when it detects fear, loss of control, disconnection or social uncertainty. The anxiety alarms of *millions* of our friends, family and neighbors are desperately trying to get our attention. *It's time we started listening.* When your home is on fire, the alarm isn't the problem—the fire is.

If you or someone you love has found themselves crippled by anxiety, let these three important truths sink in:

- 1) You are not your anxiety.**
- 2) Anxiety does not have to be forever.**
- 3) You are not alone.**

Anxiety is a learned response to overwhelming situations. And any learned response can be unlearned or relearned. We can remodel our ecosystems and take control of our thoughts. And while healing anxiety isn't a quick fix, there are specific actions you can begin taking today to help calm and transform your body and your mind. My goal is that this checklist will offer you tools to help you face your anxiety, both for the short term and the long term.

*John*

Dr. John Delony



(short term)

# HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY



## WRITE DOWN YOUR THOUGHTS.

Write down the thoughts and feelings running through your head. Seeing your thoughts and feelings on paper helps you search them for truth or exaggeration. For example, does forgetting your work assignment really mean you're stupid and unlovable? Probably not. You can choose to replace negative and destructive thoughts with good ones. Taking control of your thoughts is like a mental workout. Take your brain to the gym. *You* are in charge.



## MAKE A LIST OF WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL AND WHAT YOU CAN'T CONTROL.

Anxiety often stems from a fear of the future and a lack of control. It's important to name what you *can* control, like your work ethic, screen time, exercise, sleep, diet and how you respond to others. It's equally important to name the things you *can't* control. You can't control other people's attitudes, insecurities, lack of boundaries, or behaviors. Control what you can and let everything else go. Choose not to carry unnecessary baggage.



## BREATHE, EXERCISE AND SLEEP.

**Deep breathing** lowers your body's state of panic by calming the fight-or-flight response in your brain. Close your eyes and take a deep breath in through your nose for four seconds. Pause and hold your breath for seven seconds. Then, slowly exhale through your mouth for eight seconds. Repeat for three minutes.

**Exercise** is a strong remedy for stress. It could be hitting the gym, lifting heavy weights, playing outside with your kid, or going on a long walk. Whatever it is, move your body every day!

**Sleep** is the most powerful tool we have to reset, heal and renew our bodies. Leave your screens in another room and get in bed as early as you can every night. Develop a rigid bedtime routine to wind down, and stick to it.



## CONNECT WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY.

Loneliness is *literally* killing us. It's a health epidemic that's more destructive than obesity or alcoholism. Reach out to a friend or family member that you can connect with *today*. Remember that true connection only happens when you're safe and when you can be honest.



## START A GRATITUDE JOURNAL.

I know—this might feel super cheesy and Pinteresty. But the truth is, giving thanks forces you out of obsessing over the past (which you can't change) or the future (which you can't entirely control) and brings your attention back to the *right now*. Practicing gratitude also improves happiness, health, optimism, mood, sleep and a sense of well-being. Start or end every day by writing five different sentences that all begin with: "I'm grateful for . . ."



(long term)

# HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO TOMORROW

Reimagining your environment, striving for change, and rewiring your brain are lifetime journeys. There is light at the end of the tunnel—you just might have to work hard to get there. If you're willing to commit to the work and you have a team of caring souls with you, these four actions can help transform your life.



## EXAMINE THE ECOSYSTEM OF YOUR LIFE.

Remember, when your life is on fire, the alarm is not the problem. Our lives have been hijacked by a tragically fast-paced, disconnected and demanding culture. We're weighed down by heavy expectations to be everything to everyone all the time. We're fed the lie that experiencing normal feelings like sadness, anger and guilt means we're broken. Many of us feel pressure to accomplish things beyond our current talents. We lack healthy boundaries. It all adds up—fast. It's time to take inventory of your life. What do you need to let go of? Where do you need to slow down?



## INVEST IN YOUR BODY, MIND AND SPIRIT.

Constant and intense stress wreaks havoc on your body, mind and spirit. And taking care of one is taking care of them all. A lack of spiritual discipline steals meaning, value and purpose. A lack of physical strength and health steals your motivation, your drive and your connection. A lack of mental health distorts reality and makes you the center of your world. Work on a long-term plan to connect and submit to God, eat nourishing food, and get plenty of physical activity, deep sleep, meditation and prayer.



## INVEST IN NEW OR EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS.

Your life will improve when your relationships do. I don't care how tough you think you are—you can't do life by yourself. Our relationships keep us grounded through the stress and difficulties of life. Before the day ends, call three people and set up a time for one-on-one connection. Join a group (church, counseling, music, etc.) for regular accountability and community. Show up for them . . . *and* for yourself.



## GET PROFESSIONAL HELP.

I've been on both sides of therapy—as a coach and as a client. Professional help changed my life, and it can change yours. You don't have to be in crisis mode to make an appointment, and you shouldn't be in counseling forever. Find a compassionate and qualified counselor (ask around and research online) who will help you learn more about yourself and what steps you need to take to be well.

*Let's connect!*

Visit [johndelony.com](http://johndelony.com) for more information  
on how to be well.