

# Now anxious people can help themselves

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People suffering from anxiety disorders can help themselves using approaches based on cognitive behavioural therapies (CBT), according to a new book by a University of Manchester psychologist.

Dr Warren Mansell spent over a decade studying cognitive behavioural approaches to psychological problems before writing *Coping with Fears and Phobias - a Step-by-Step Guide to Understanding and Facing your Anxieties*. He now believes that with the right guidance people can apply techniques from CBT at home, and possibly avoid long NHS waiting lists to see therapists.

Anxiety disorders affect around 20% of the UK population, and can lead to addictions, self-harm and inability to work or interact with others. Cognitive ('how you think') behavioural ('what you do') therapies approach them by looking at how people think about themselves and the world, and how their actions affect their thoughts and feelings.

Dr Mansell said: "Cognitive behavioural therapies focus on a person's current problems and difficulties, and look for ways to improve their state of mind now. With the right guidance this is something that people can work on without a therapist, enabling the approach to help far greater numbers of people."

The approach described in the book was developed after gathering detailed feedback on existing self-help books from service users with anxiety problems, and incorporates the most recent advances in CBT. It has already been endorsed by leading figures including Dr Daniel

Freeman of the Institute of Psychiatry and US psychologist Dr Bob Leahy (author of the bestselling *The Worry Cure*), and all 50 of a sample who read a pre-published edition said it helped them cope better with their fears, anxiety and phobias.

Dr Mansell continued: "Fear is a normal emotion that we all experience at times, but when it leads to phobias, panic and worry it can have a huge impact. But people can learn to cope better with their anxieties, and often overcome them completely, by developing helpful strategies and learning to accept uncertainties."

The book incorporates cognitive explanations of how anxiety problems develop and continue, and guidance on how to manage them differently. It offers a step-by-step way to understand anxiety, prepare for change, face fears and build on strengths and values; and each chapter ends with a self-check enabling readers to see if they have taken the information on board.

The book takes a 'transdiagnostic' approach, suggesting that whatever the source, diagnosis and severity of a person's problems, and whatever other mental health problems they may have experienced, a similar approach can be taken to coping with their anxiety. This is illustrated by the stories of five people suffering from very different fears who have learned to cope better and realise their goals.

According to Clinical Psychologist and Senior Lecturer Dr Daniel Freeman: "This book is impressively clear, comprehensive, and practical - a treasure for those who wish to understand and treat their anxiety."

Link: [www.oneworld-publications.com/fears/](http://www.oneworld-publications.com/fears/)

Source: University of Manchester

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