

## The Anxious Moment & How to Manage It

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Reid Wilson, PhD  
Chapel Hill, NC

*Reid Wilson, Ph.D.*

Anxiety Disorders Treatment Center  
421 Bennett Orchard Trail  
Chapel Hill, NC 27516  
[919] 942-0700

drwilson@anxieties.com  
www.anxieties.com  
www.NoiseInYourHead.com

## The Moment

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*Whenever I notice...*

Intrusive...

Distressing...

Unhelpful...

Noisy worry...

*That shows up as...*

Memory...

Fearful anticipation...

## My bias

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All therapeutic work should manifest  
moment-by-moment

*The beginning of*

## Objective 1

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to defend logically the therapeutic **benefits**  
of **embracing** doubt & discomfort

## How do we get to “embrace”?

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**while feeling** doubt & discomfort...

**elevate above** their immediate fear &...

apply new response...

based on **provocative** frame of reference

...and therein lay the **benefits**

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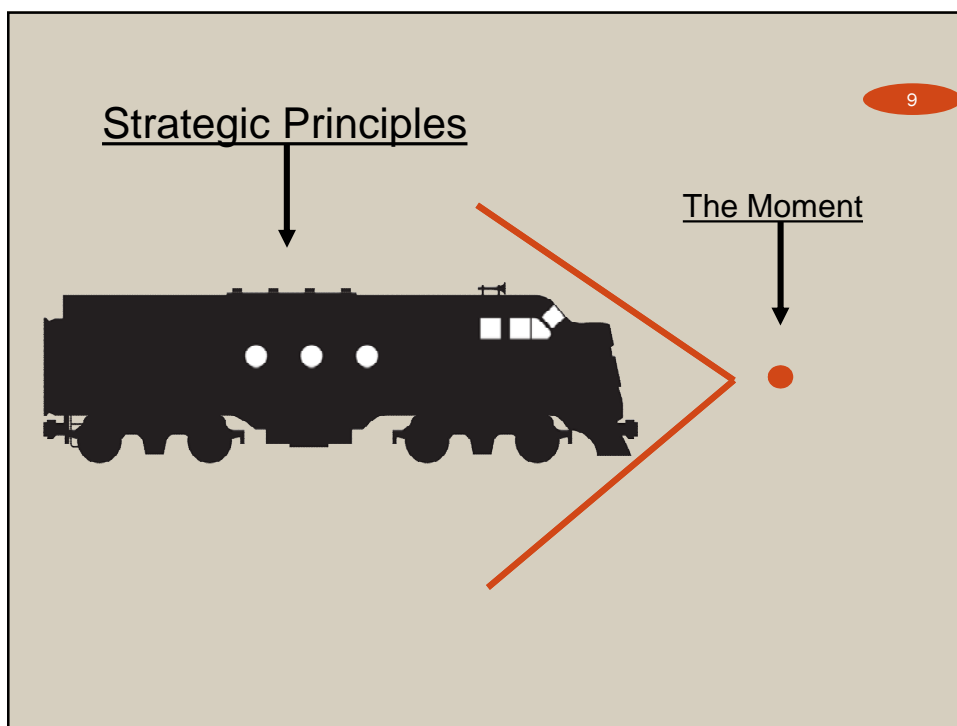
If they need to understand the way things are,  
don't give them a map

They don't need directions,  
they need to see the big picture

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“Asbestos is none of your business!”

# The Anxious Moment



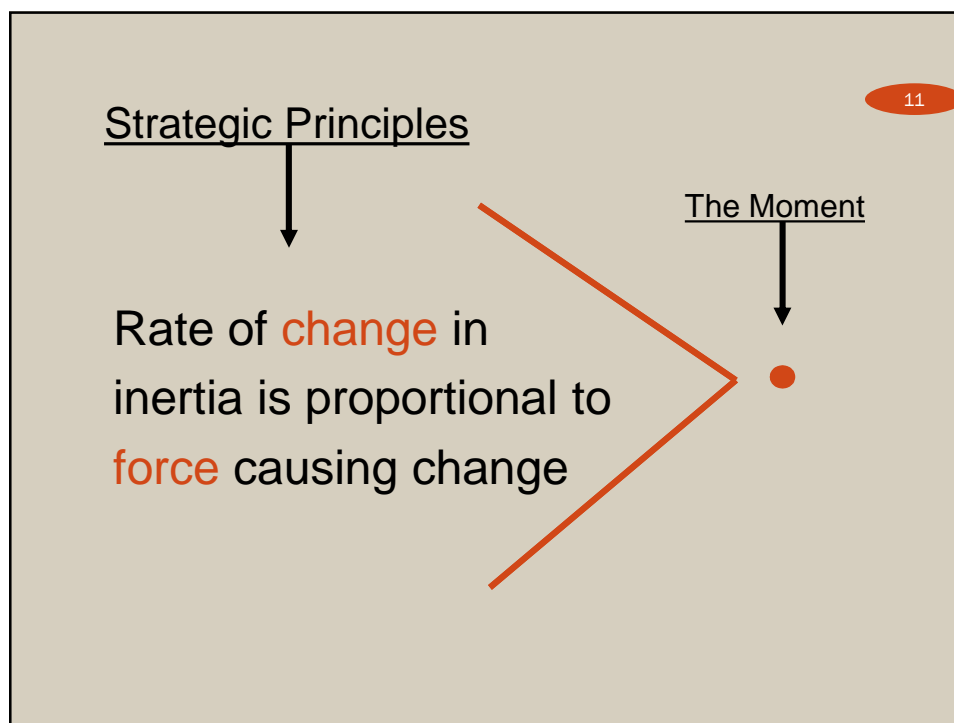
*The beginning of*

## **Objective 3**

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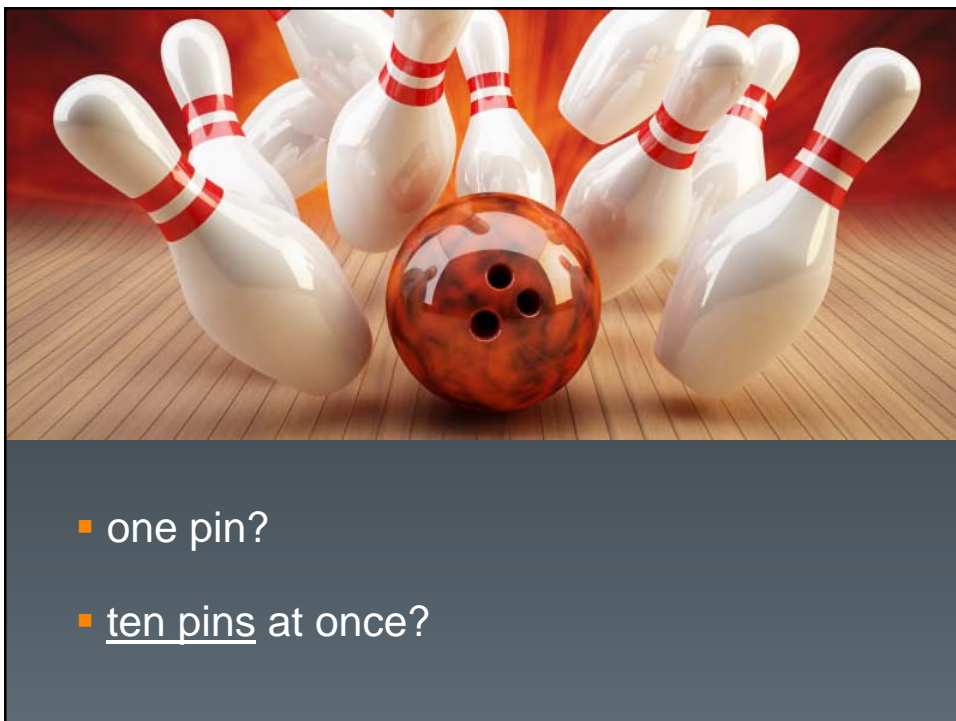
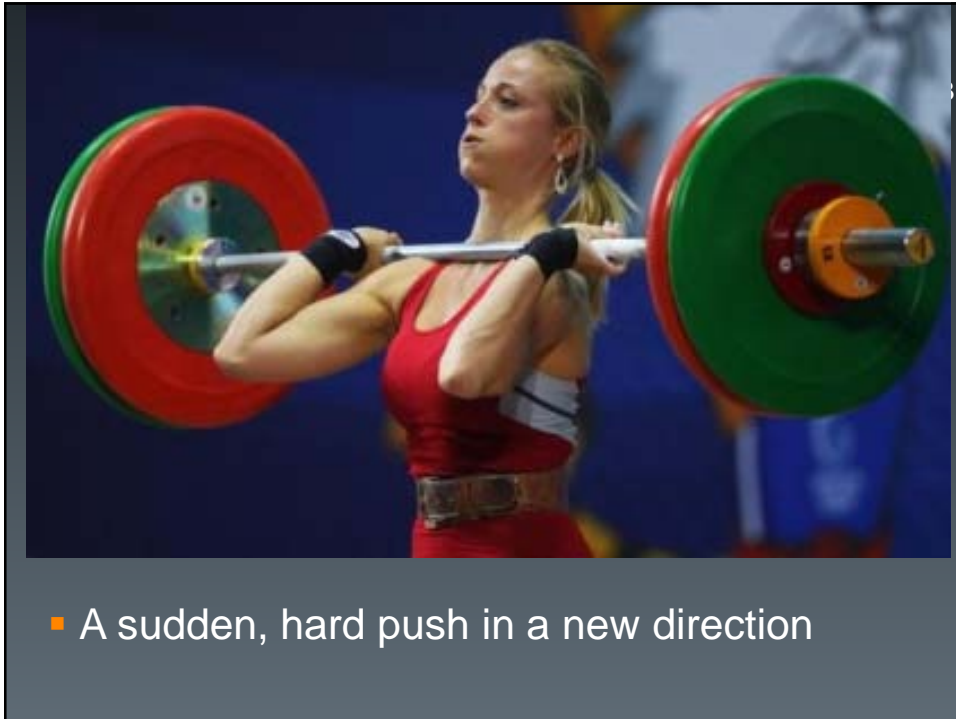
to persuade an anxious client of the benefits of **seeking out** distressing moments while simultaneously holding an incompatible point of view

# The Anxious Moment

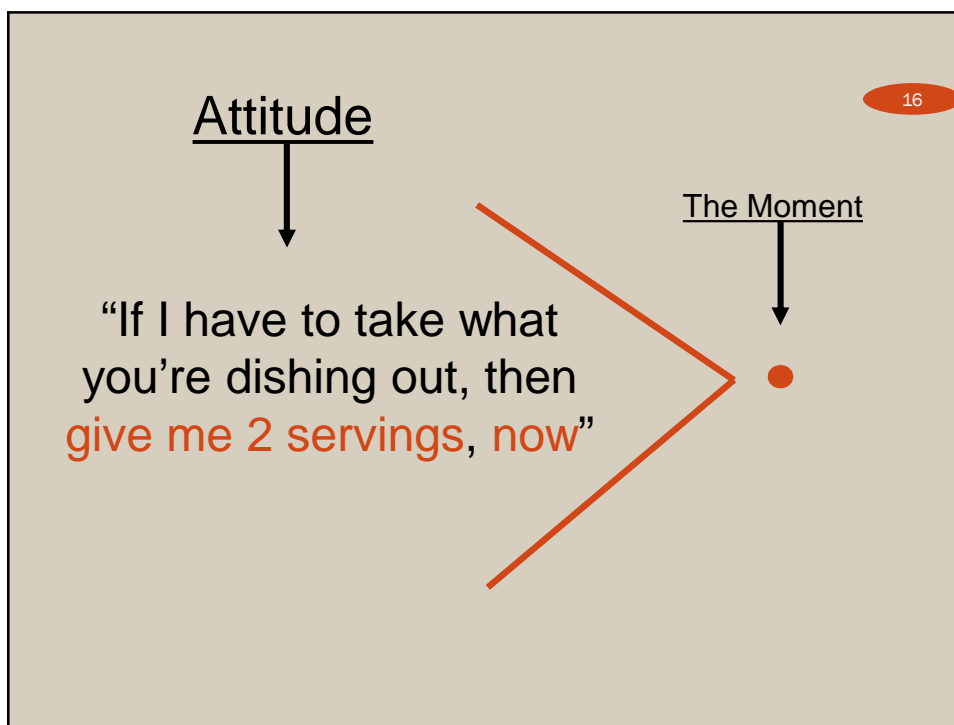
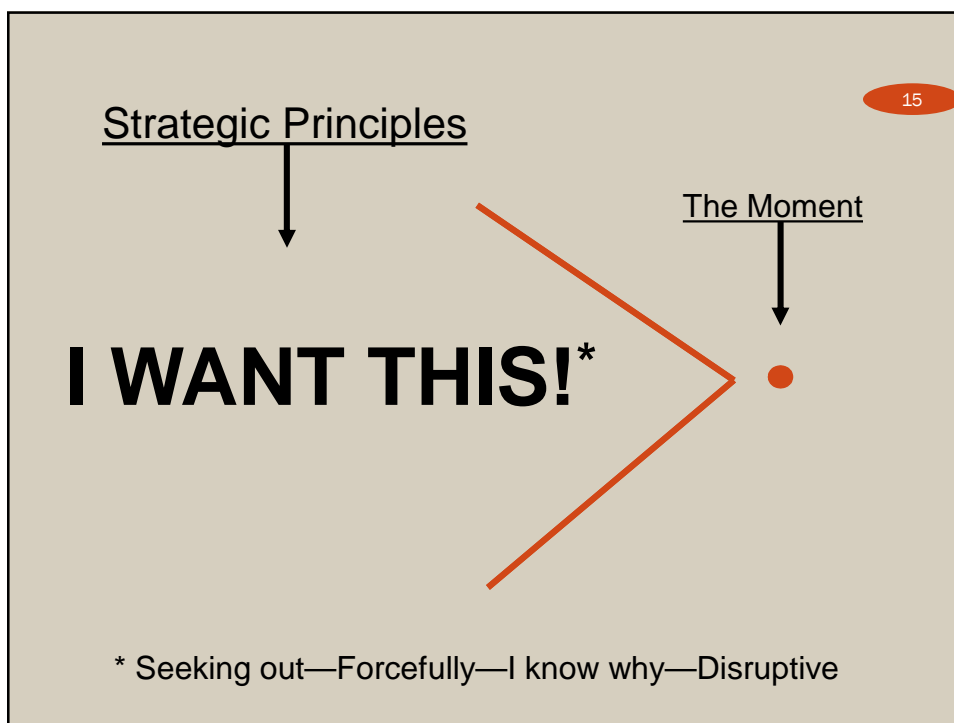


- hands to become hard surface
- that quickly punches ball up over net
- Disrupting speed & direction

## The Anxious Moment



# The Anxious Moment





## This is “Explosure-Plus”

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Don't step forward

Step forward with **attitude**

Be aggressive — Push into the  
Disorder's territory

## The Attitude Shift

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Protect & Defend

Courageously  
Step Forward  
& Risk

DETACH

A diagram illustrating an attitude shift. On the left, a yellow cloud contains the text 'Protect & Defend'. On the right, a dark grey cloud contains the text 'Courageously Step Forward & Risk'. A grey arrow with a dashed outline points from the yellow cloud to the dark grey cloud. The word 'DETACH' is written in the center of the arrow.

# The Anxious Moment



Negative emotions **narrow** our thinking 20

- “I can’t do this”
- “Tomorrow’s going to be just like yesterday”
- “what’s the point...”

Positive emotions **broaden** our thinking

**So...**

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## Arousal congruence

Move **valence** of distressing uncertainty  
from **negative to positive**

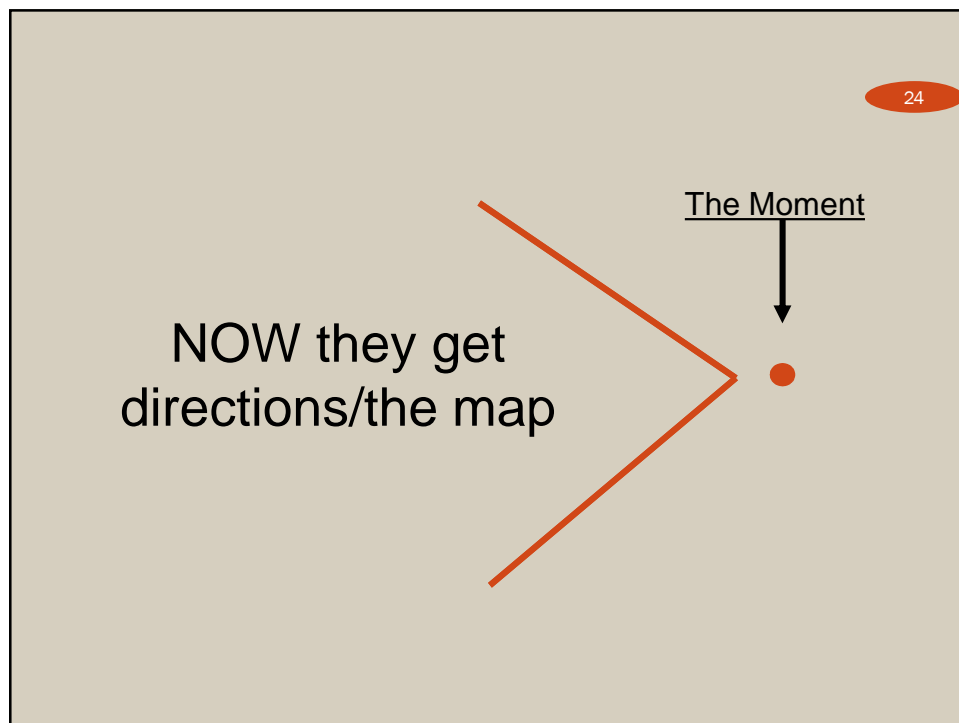
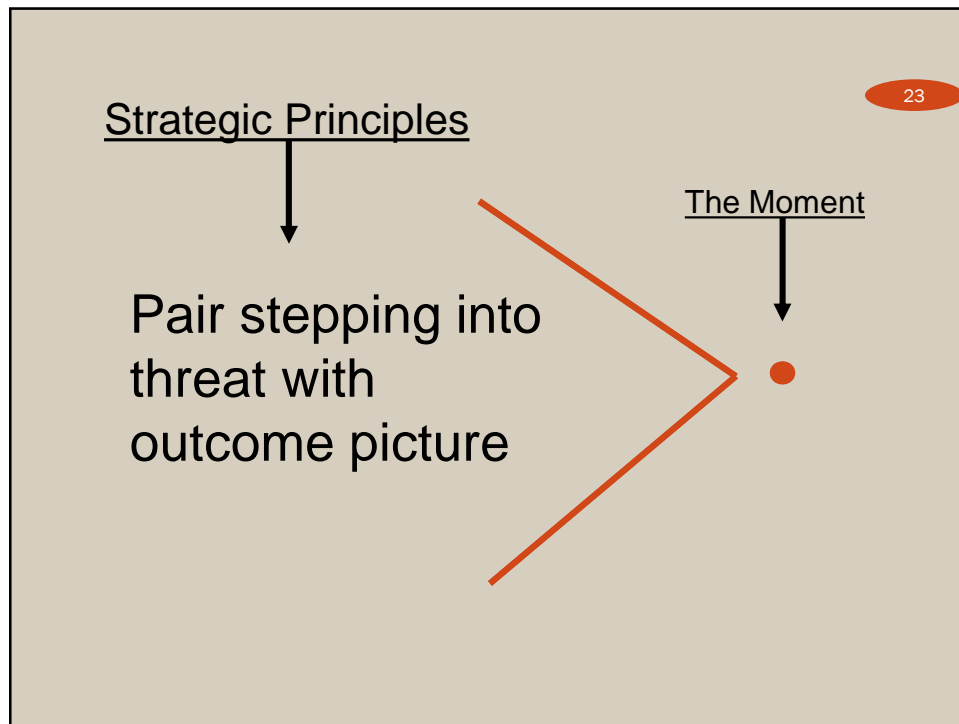
Make anxiety & doubt **ego-syntonic**

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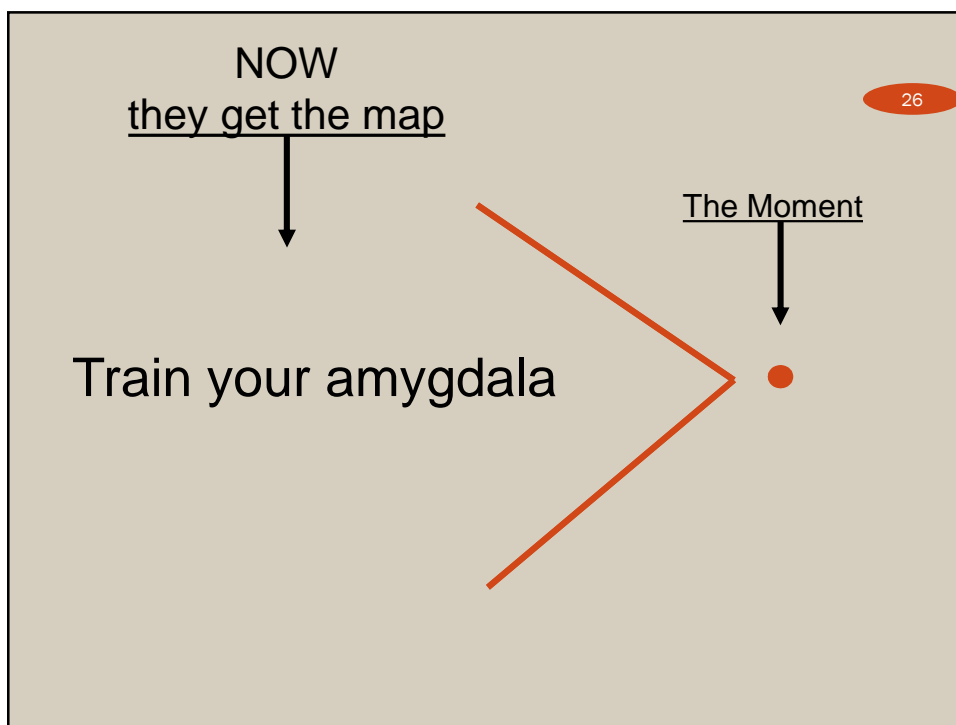
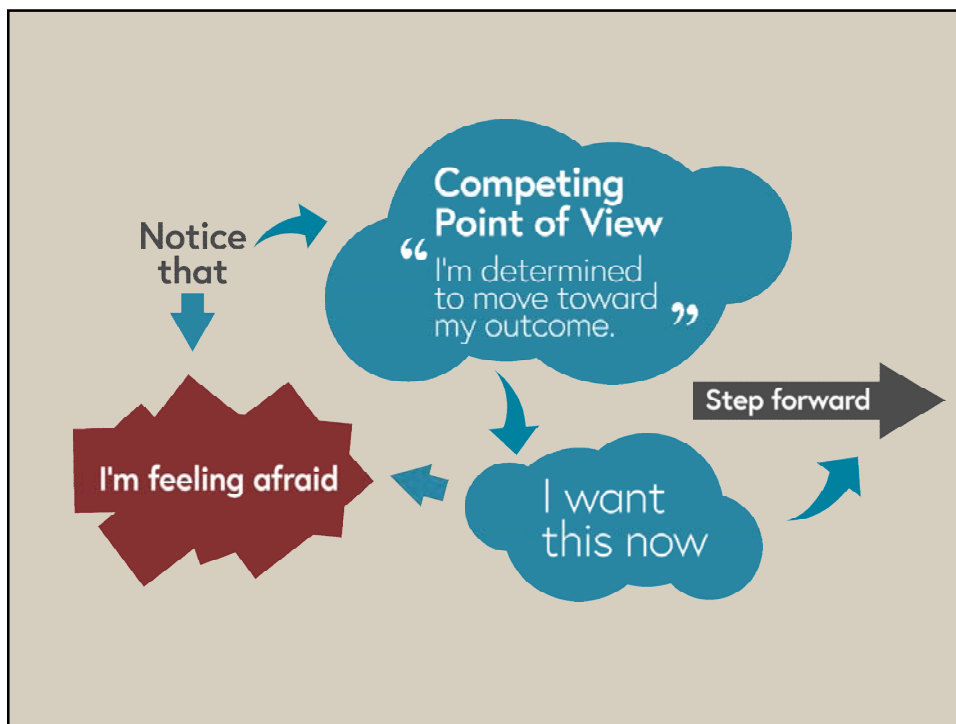
“Only do what you want to do”

“And if you want to get stronger,  
you have to want to do the  
hard stuff”

# The Anxious Moment

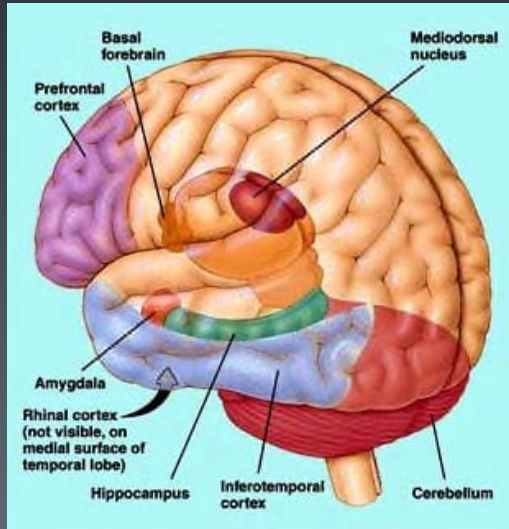


# The Anxious Moment

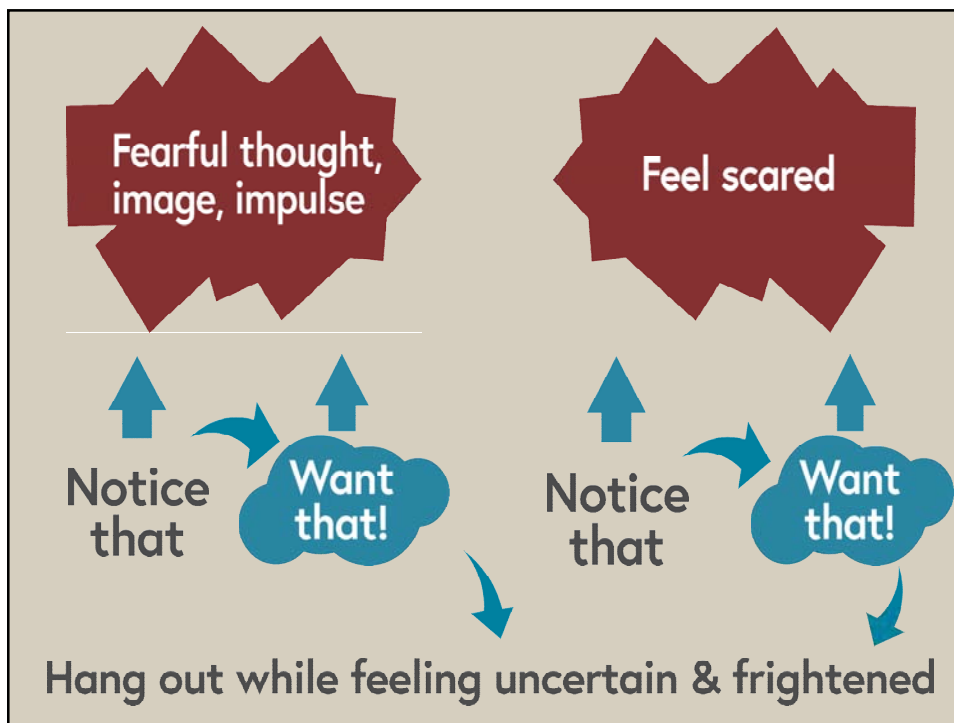


## The amygdala

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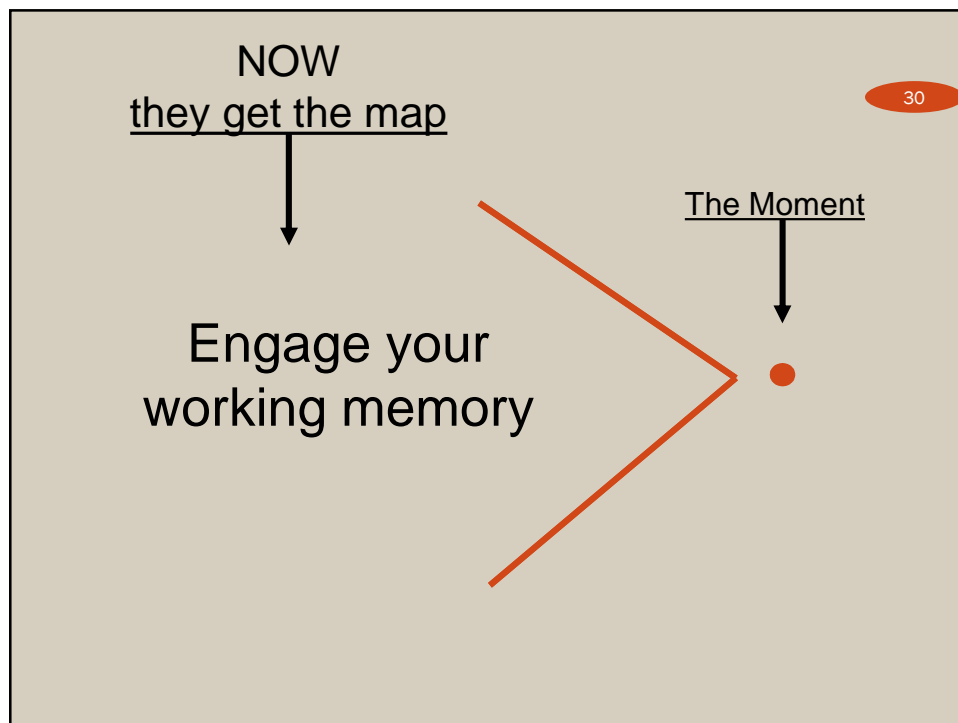


“I got this & I want this”



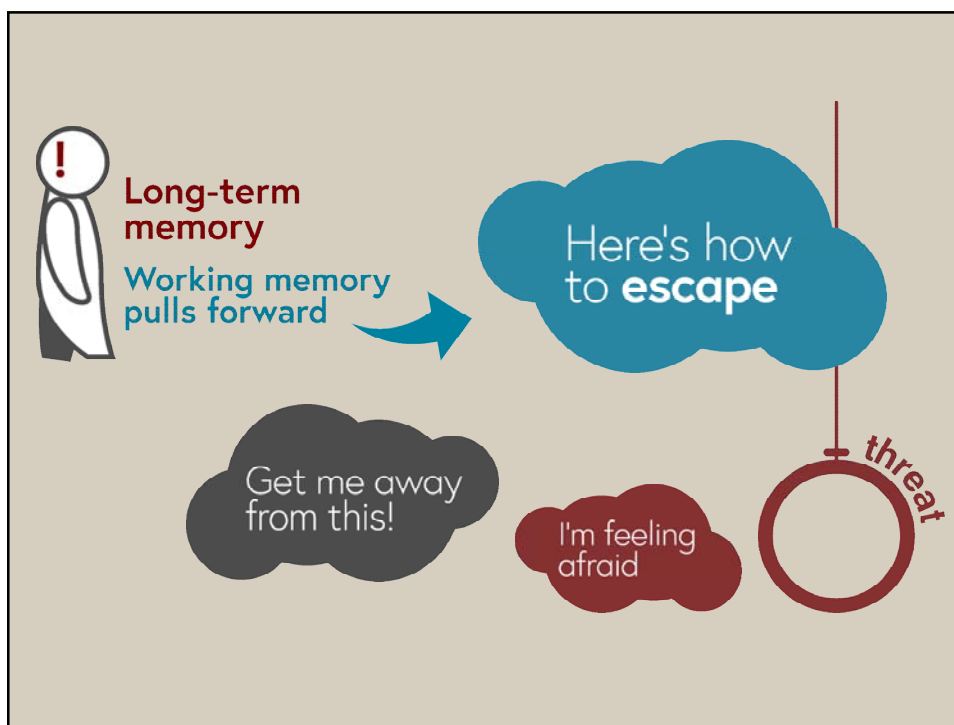
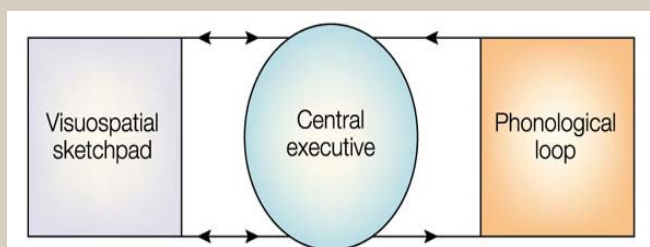
## Objective 2

to explain how to engage the **working memory** in service of therapeutically managing the anxious moment



## Working Memory

- Roughly 4 thoughts, images or feelings at one time
- Central Executive pushes away distractions



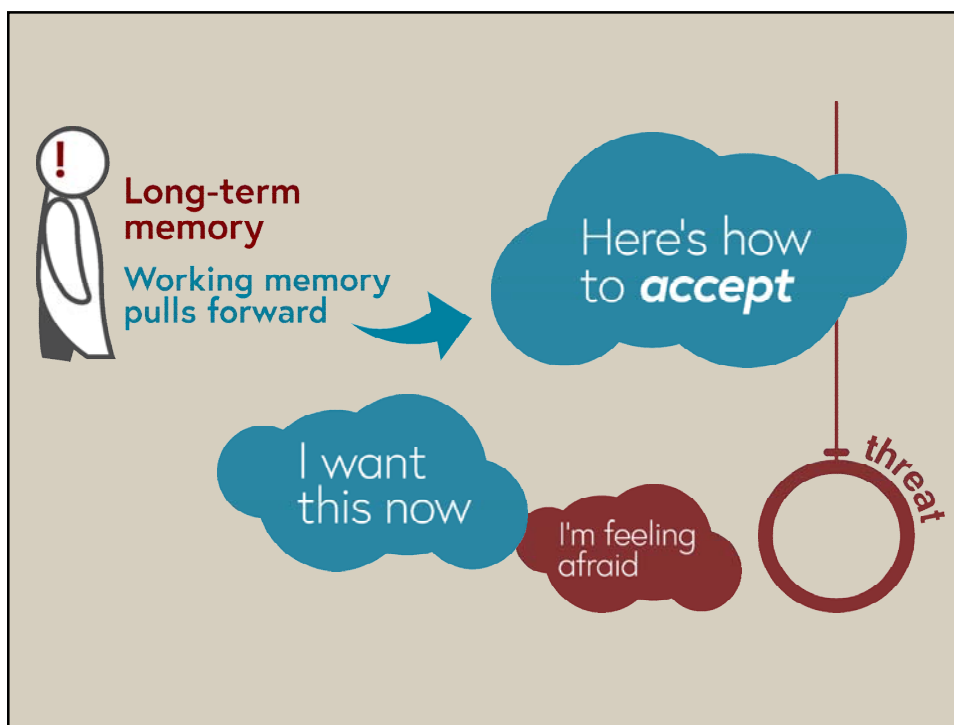


## Self-talk DIRECTS Working Memory Therefore, apply strategy...

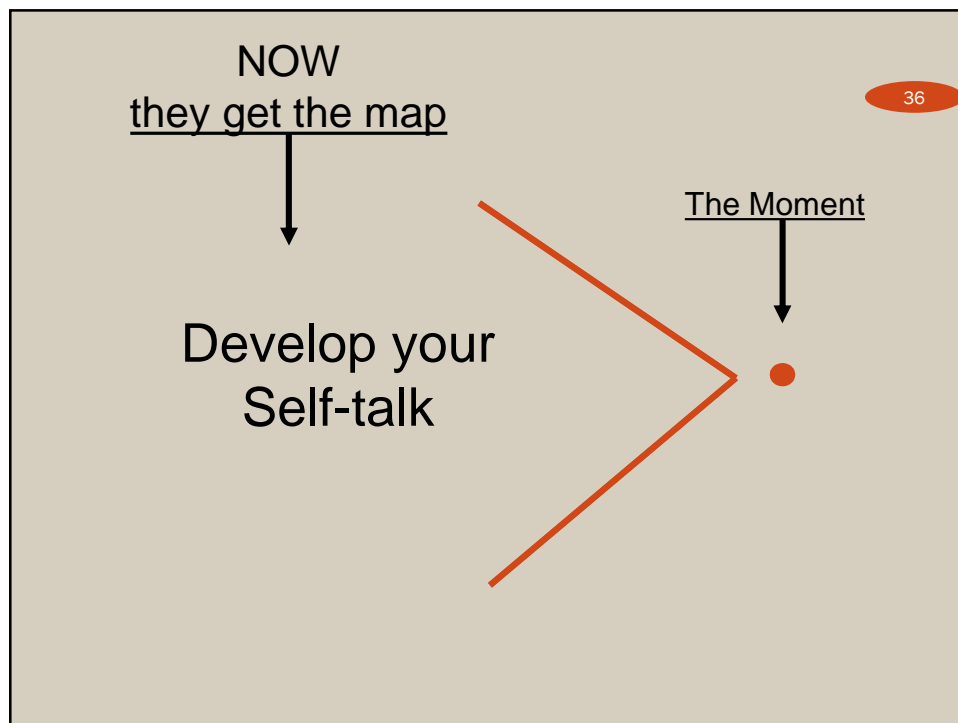
When you're anxious → ask for exactly what you're experiencing now

But you have to ask for it

- signals working memory to retrieve resource of “acceptance” from past



# The Anxious Moment



## Messages of motivation

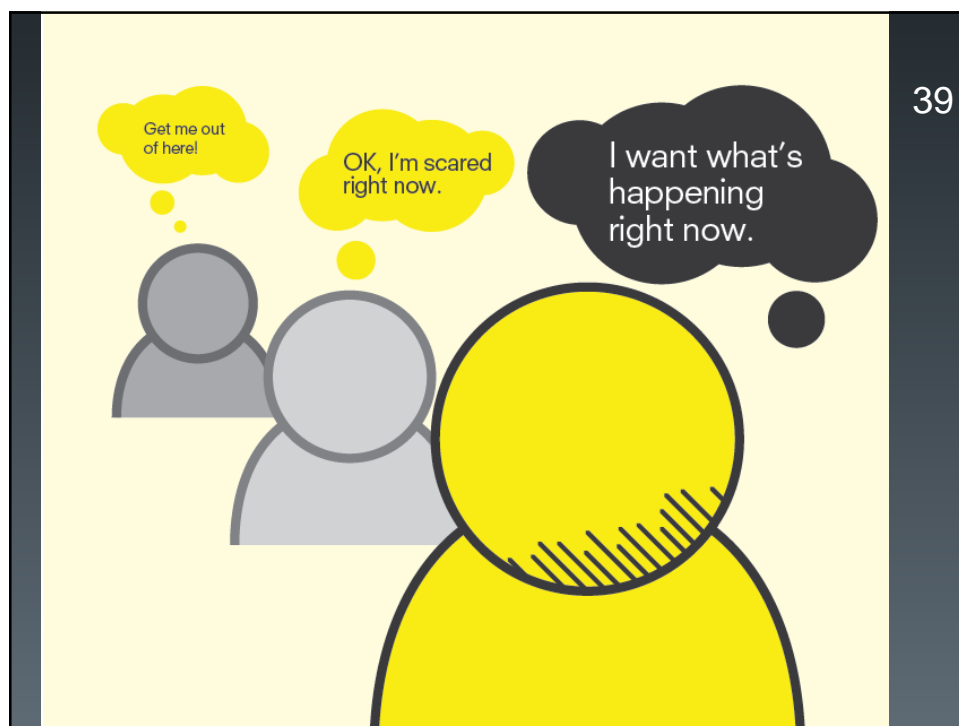
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- "... Good opportunity to practice"
- "I can take this hit"
- "I can handle this"
- "I want to be uncertain"
- "I want to be clumsy"
- "I gotta risk something here"

## Self-instructions/commands

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- "Leave the room now!"
- "Stop washing"
- "Call someone"
- "Take a risk"
- "Keep moving; don't pull over"
- "Don't figure it out"



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## Honest Stance toward symptoms/worry/uncertainty...

Purposely, voluntarily, choose...

- ✓ "I want it"
- ✓ "If it lasts, I want it to last"
- ✓ "If it gets strong, I want it to be strong"

## Self-Talk

Infuse it into treatment

It should represent **Attitude**

Apply strategy...

Attach self-messages to exposure



Keep repeating process



Your long-term working memory will link it all together



Then...

call up message → cue working memory



retrieves internal resources associated with message

Your work becomes easier over time!

## Teaching children to dive

- Brain → “water is solid object”
  - Urge to protect!
  - Picks up head as diving
- Coach creates strategy!
  - “chin tucked; hands flat, one on top of other...”
  - Repeat → sitting, kneeling, standing dive....
- Builds working memory to master diving for life



## “Run hills hard”

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### Step 1: Create Strategy

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- 1) get body forward by dropping head & raising arms
- 2) apply energy to task
- 3) push forward & up
- 4) get faster turnover of legs

### Step 2: Generate Commands

- “Look 5-6 feet ahead”
- “Raise arms”
- “Shorten stride”
- “Swing arms”
- “Pick up tempo”



## Step 1: Create Strategy

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1. Act as though the content is irrelevant
2. Accept the worry/obsession when it pops up
3. Seek out uncertainty
4. Seek out anxiety
5. Create rules if you need them

## Step 2: Generate Motivations or Commands

## Dr. Barb Frederickson

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[- narrows (“I can’t”); + broadens (“maybe”)]

If you will pull up a **positive emotion** on the heels of these negative feelings, you can literally **dismantle** all that **mental and physical preparation to run**

- Actively generate a **positive meaning** for why you are letting yourself generate feelings of threat
- Then step forward, **voluntarily**, because you know why you are stepping forward – because you can see it in the broader context of your life’s goals
- Then your intentions can **transform** your experience



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- Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56, 218– 226.
- Fredrickson, B. L., Mancuso, R. A., Branigan, C., & Tugade, M. M. (2000). The undoing effect of positive emotions. *Motivation & Emotion*, 24, 237– 258.

## Dr. Les Greenberg

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**Transform** your fear reaction: Let yourself become afraid, then call up a competing emotion

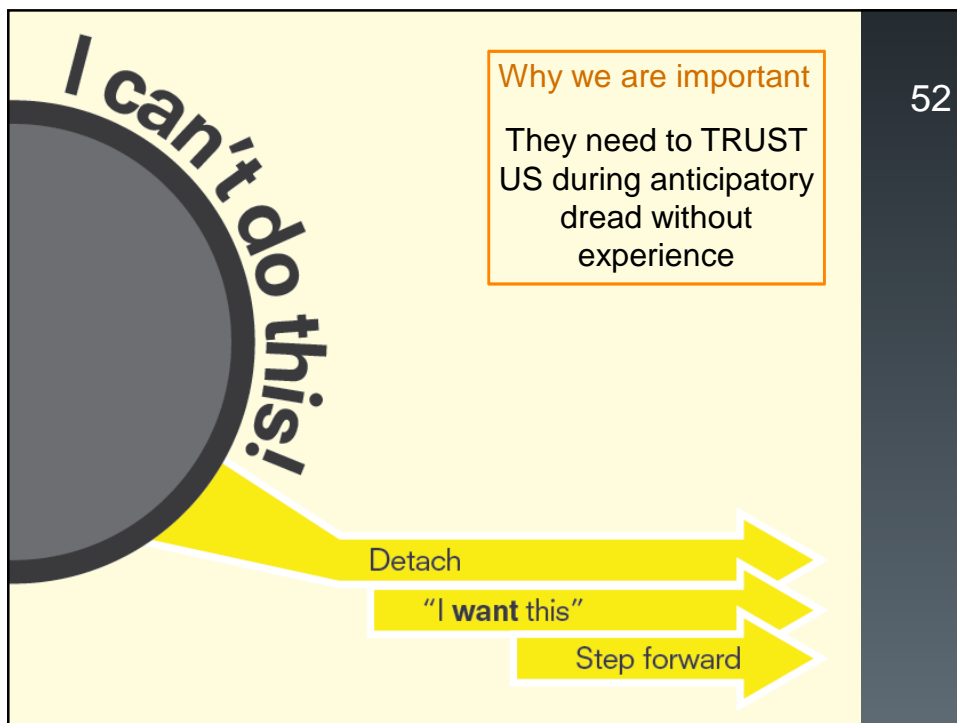
- **NOT** by thinking or reasoning, or allowing the feeling, or letting go of the feeling, or facing the feeling. **NOT** by exposure or extinction or habituation

But by activating a competing emotion that expresses a competing point of view

- *How? Elevate your willingness to embrace doubt and discomfort while you're feeling afraid*

51

- Greenberg, L. S., Rice, L. N., & Elliott, R. (1993). *Facilitating emotional change: The moment by moment process*. New York, NY: Guilford.
- Greenberg, L. S. (2010). *Emotion-focused therapy*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Greenberg, L. S. (2012). Emotions, the great captains of our lives: Their role in the process of change in psychotherapy. *American Psychologist*, 67(8), 697-707.



## Sandra

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- OCD 21 years
- Rabies, other contaminations, ordering
- 1 bottle Champagne per night
- Session 4 (5 weeks)
- CLIP 1 (30 sec.) her response to improving

## CLIP 2 (2:45)

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- **Essential placebo & rapport:** “I finally met someone who knows what I’m talking”
- **Generating 2<sup>nd</sup> voice (NOT dominant yet):** “I wanted to be optimistic, but I was very pessimist”
  - “21 years is too deep. I’ve tried over and over, and I have failed every time.”
- **Watch her light up.** “What you put on the board! That’s what you did! That’s what you do!”
- **Self-talk that manifests principles:** “...how I need to feel anxious and distressed for prolonged time. I had that memorize, and I still say that.”



- **2<sup>nd</sup> voice becomes dominant:** “I just made myself do it. 55 I said, ‘I’m going to do it.’”
- “The biggest thing was...”
- **Self-talk:** “It’s going to work. It can work me, too.”
- **Self-talk:** “I’d touch them, and I kept saying to myself, ‘You’re going to have to feel anxious.’”
- **TRUST!** “I said that over and over, ‘I hope that good doctor knows what he’s talking about.’”
- **Learning thru behavioral experiment:** “Some of the things, within 15 minutes, I just moved on...”

### Act as though...

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I want to take actions right now as though...

- ✓ everything is OK just the way it is unfolding
- ✓ this is exactly what needs to be happening right now
- ✓ I have enough skills
- ✓ The content of my obsession is irrelevant

Get big! — Change who is in charge

“Bad dog!”

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## NoiseInYourHead.com

*Free, short videos*

- How Anxiety Uses Basic Human Nature against You (5 min.)
- Why You Should Step AWAY from Your Worries” (5 min.)
- Why You DON’T Need to Relax to Get Control” (6 min.)
- How to Transform Fear” (6 min.)

[NoiseInYourHead.com/free-video-series](https://NoiseInYourHead.com/free-video-series)

*Thank you*