

Month 4 Workbook

# Coping with Stress & Anxiety

STR  BEL  
EDUCATION

# Lesson 1: Anxiety & The Brain

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We all experience stress and anxiety and we always will, but it's about having a set of coping skills that move us through it rather than let it limit us. Anxiety becomes problematic when it interferes with important aspects of our lives or controls us. The good news is that the brain has neuroplasticity, which means no matter what our age, we can modify it to respond differently so it doesn't steal so much joy from our lives.

## **Anxiety Goals Exercise:**

1. How does anxiety currently burden you? What kinds of things do you worry about incessantly?

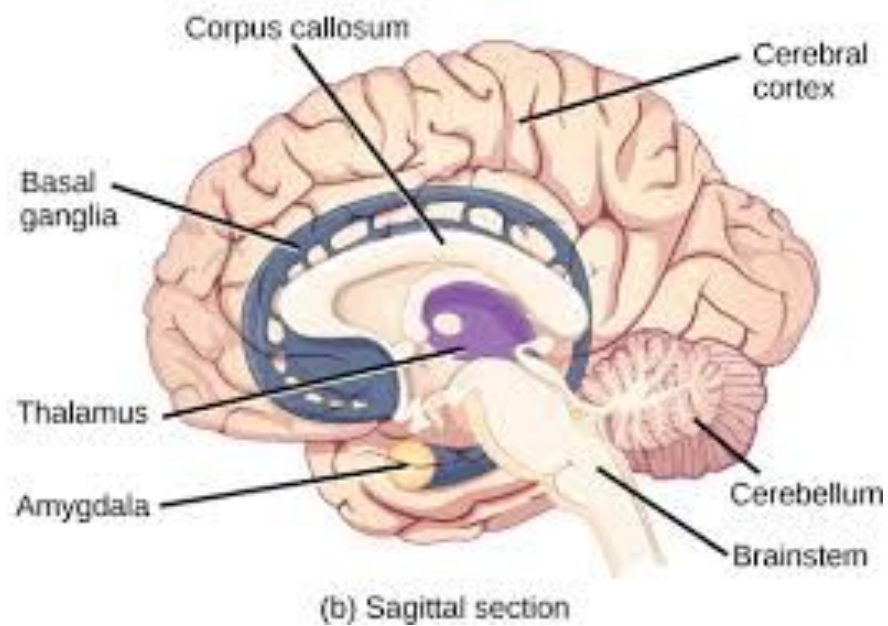
2. In the future, I'd like to see myself....

3. In one year, I'd like to .....

4. In eight weeks, I'd like to....

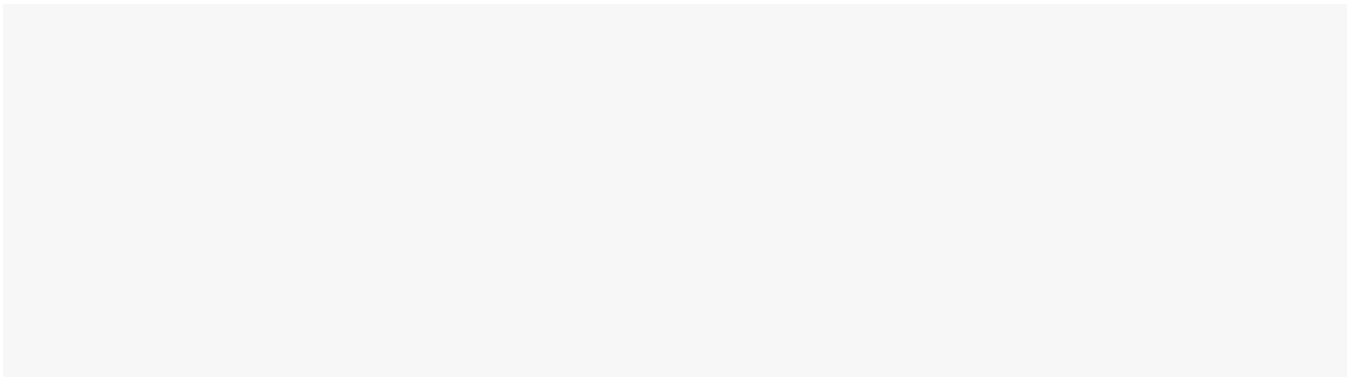
5. If I wasn't so concerned about \_\_\_\_\_, I would....

# Anxiety and The Brain

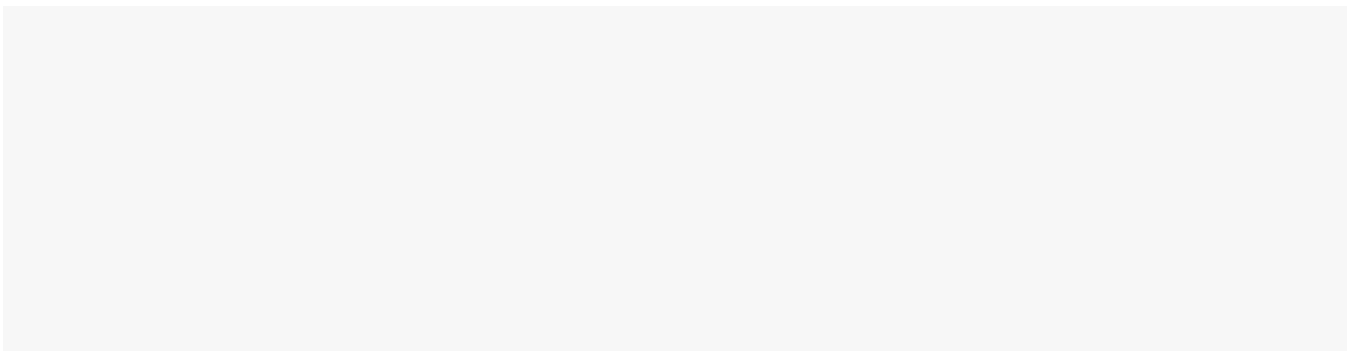


## The Two Pathways in the Brain that Create Anxiety

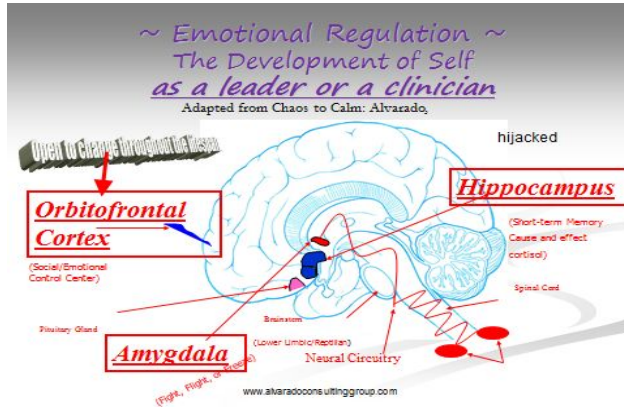
1. The cerebral cortex



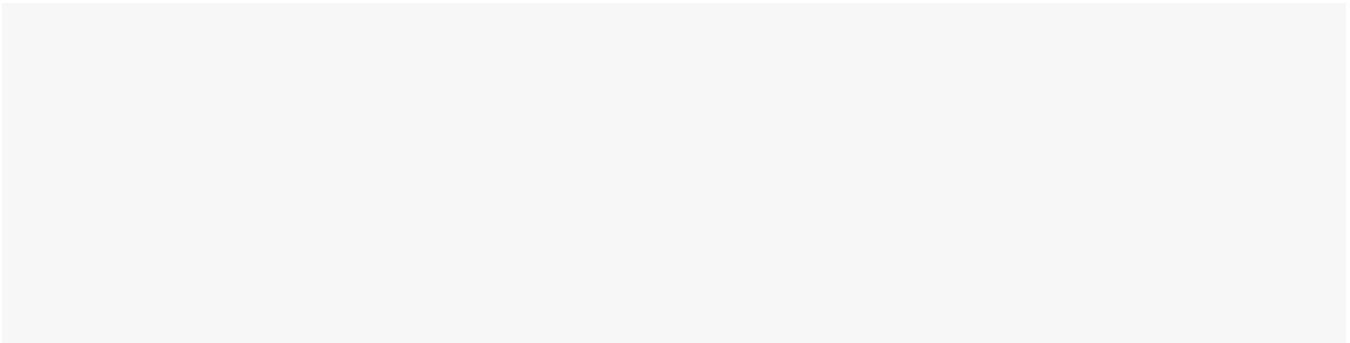
2. The amygdala



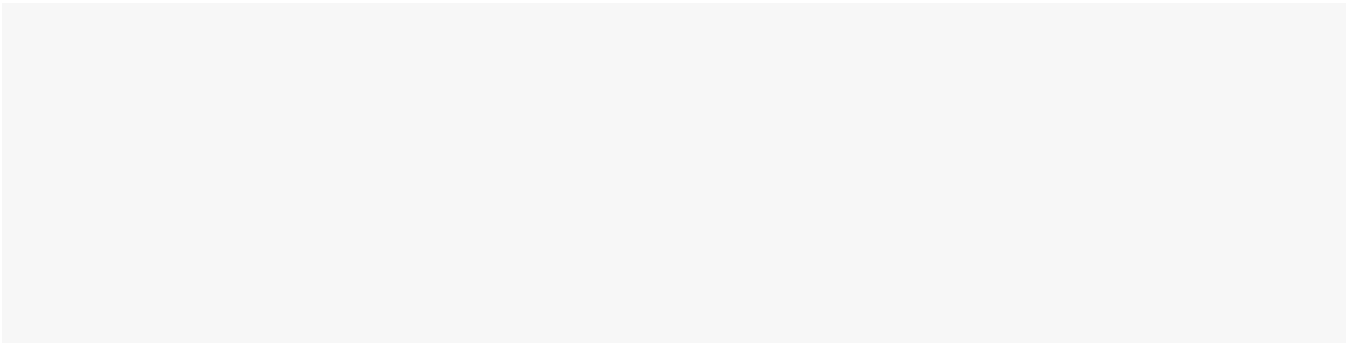
# The Stressed Brain in Children (and adults)



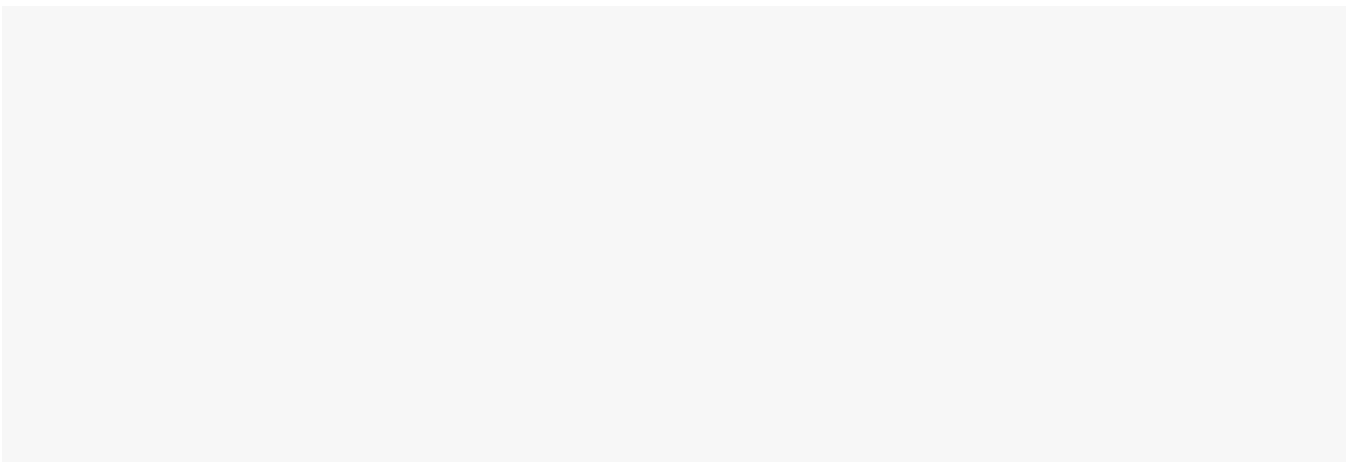
## The Job of the Amygdala



## The Job of the Hippocampus



## The Job of the Orbitofrontal Cortex



## The Promise of Neuroplasticity

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You can remodel your brain to respond different, no matter what your age. You can learn new behaviors and responses!

### Worry Exercise:

- \_\_\_ If I don't worry, I'm afraid things will get worse.
- \_\_\_ When a thought occurs to me, I find I need to take it seriously.
- \_\_\_ Anxiety is usually a clear sign that something is about to go wrong.
- \_\_\_ Worrying about something can sometimes prevent bad things from happening.
- \_\_\_ When I feel ill, I need to focus on it and evaluate it.
- \_\_\_ I'm afraid of some of my thoughts.
- \_\_\_ When someone suggests a different way to see things, I have a hard time taking it seriously.
- \_\_\_ If I have doubts, there are usually good reasons for them.
- \_\_\_ The negative things I think about myself are probably true.
- \_\_\_ When I expect to do poorly, it usually means I will do poorly.

## Lesson 2: Meditation/Mindfulness

Meditation has gained widespread popularity over the past decades and is one of the top five happiness habits. [Read this article](#) to discover its many health benefits and how training the mind can be a powerful habit to adopt.

Link: [www.scienceofpeople.com/meditation-benefits](http://www.scienceofpeople.com/meditation-benefits)



[Here's a great TED Talk](#) by Hedy Kober. She is an associate Professor of Psychiatry and of Psychology Ph.D. at Columbia University. Dr. Kober runs the Neuroscience. Link: [tinyurl.com/SFJ-Video-Mindfulness](http://tinyurl.com/SFJ-Video-Mindfulness)

### MEDITATION BENEFITS

- Reduces reactivity to stress
- Boosts positive mood
- Increases self-esteem
- Improves physical health
- Increases cognitive ability and creativity
- Lowers cortisol levels and blood pressure
- Improves immune response and maybe even gene expression
- Changes the structure or function of the brain—changes the baseline

### RELAXATION BENEFITS

- Higher brain function
- Increased immune function
- Lowered blood pressure
- Lowered heart rate
- Increased awareness
- Increased attention and focus
- Increased clarity in thinking & perception
- Lowered anxiety levels
- Experience of being calm and internally still
- Experience of feeling connected

## How to Meditate

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- Find a spot and make it cozy.
- Sit alone with your back straight.
- Close your eyes and focus on breathing in and out.
- As you breathe out, silently repeat a short word.
- Let your thoughts pass as they come and release them.
- Bring your attention back to your breath.

★ **TIP:** Make this a ritual. Do this about the same time each day and go through your routines for mediation (light a candle, say a prayer, do your gratitude journal, time to meditate).

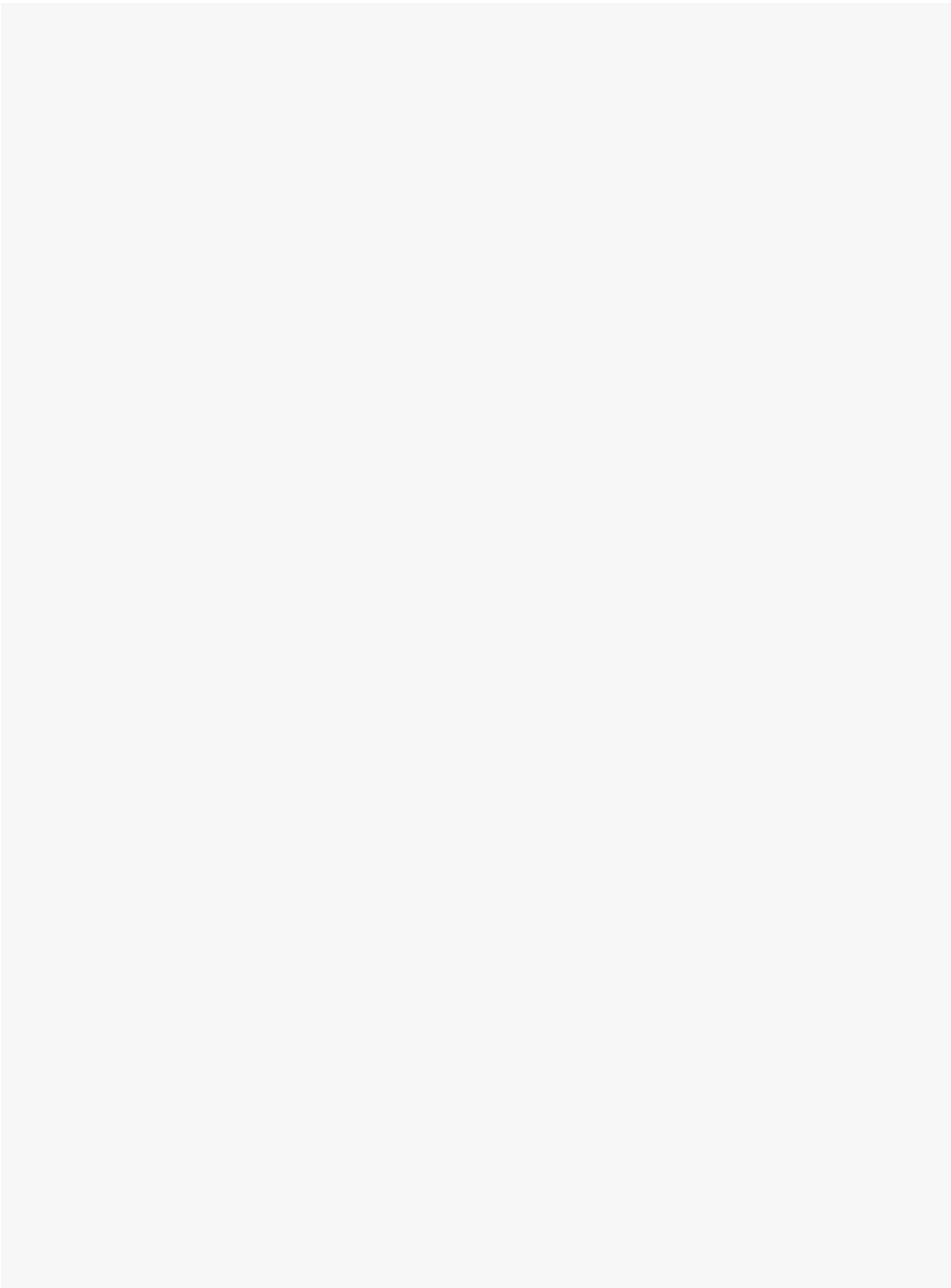
## Meditation Apps

Meditation can also be fun, as there are many options to meet people with various needs or lifestyles. Check out three of my favorite meditation apps.



# Notes and Reflections

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# Two Ways to Get More Joy

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She Finds Joy Podcast

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