

Harvest Calm

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21 Keys to Unlocking Your Peaceful Nature

This is where I was: terrified to be on my own in the house, on a bus, in town, constantly looking for safe places I could run if I got really bad. My chest would become tight, I couldn't feel my breath, my throat was closing in, and I had a strong sense that I was disappearing.

People with panic disorder, anxiety disorder, nervous dispositions, agoraphobia... the list goes on – experience

sensations that are truly terrifying, overwhelming and feel like the most condensed version of fear. Sometimes when they describe their symptoms to someone who hasn't directly experienced those feelings they can be faced with the feedback that they are nuts, it's all in the mind or that they are weak or neurotic. I have felt embarrassed to have to ask for help, especially when, yet again, the symptoms are so intense that I feel like I'm dying. Being told 'it's all in the mind' can increase the sense of fear, in that because the sensations are so physical, if it's 'mental' then it also suggests that I'm going mad, and being out of control of my mind adds to the fear.

Today, I am so grateful to say that my anxiety disorder no longer runs my life. There are still times when I have panic attacks, but I now notice when the physical sensations

start to arise, and by scanning through the 21 steps, I realign where I've come out of balance.

I've called this book Harvest Calm, as that is the image I've found useful to build a life where panic attacks don't rule my life. To harvest something is to collect the benefits of planting the seeds and cultivating something that we want in our lives. By starting with little steps and slowly building these 21 good habits into our lives, the rewards that we harvest is the gentle vitality that builds our calm from within.

To be super clear, I went and had a thorough medical checkup on my heart and lungs to be sure that the symptoms I was experiencing weren't a medical issue that needed attention. I strongly suggest that if you are experiencing chest pain, tightness, numbness, shortness

of breath or any form of chest discomfort that you get it checked out. This is to rule out any underlying medical cause for your symptoms, and if there is nothing that can be treated medically, then it initiates you taking the reins of your health back and working towards clearing the anxiety.

Harvest Calm can be treated as a 21 day course, each day there is something new to focus on and engage with. Any one of the following 21 aspects to living a good life may be the key to unlocking the pathway to freedom from the prison of anxiety.

Each one of these 21 steps can be treated as something that builds over time. As they become part of our automatic habits then the layers of old habits can be

peeled away allowing us to rest in our true peaceful nature.

Breathing

You own your breath. Each breath you take establishes how to be in this moment. It is the springboard to your next breath and is your moment to moment nourishment. The oxygen that is absorbed in each breath reaches every cell, fires up the metabolism, and supports the absorption of the nutrients available in your system.

The speed and rate of your breathing sends constant messages to every area of the body, codes that are read and acted upon in an instant. It tells every part of your being about how safe you are, how best to use the nutrients in your body, where to send the blood in the body, how you should hold yourself, where to be tense and where to relax, how fast to make the heart beat, how fast the metabolism should go, and what speed the digestion should be.

When your breathing is shallow and faster than eight breaths a minute – the stress response is triggered, which if maintained for over long periods of time, will reduce overall vitality, and put the body into a long-term stress mode. Between six to eight breaths a minute will make the ratio of oxygen to carbon dioxide in the body the right balance needed to sustain vital health, and sends a message to the brain to stimulate the reuse, renew, rest and repair body rhythm of the parasympathetic nervous system.

This encourages your body and mind to feel safe, to use the nutrients available in your body to replenish your system, to hold yourself in a relaxed and peaceful way, and allow the body to focus on general wellbeing.

Moving

Movement with pleasure boosts serotonin. Serotonin is the hormone that is released when we perceive abundance around us, and feel important enough to be able to access the abundance. Movement enhances muscle creation, and as muscles use very little serotonin, the more muscle we have in the body, the higher our natural levels of serotonin will be.

Movement sends a message to our deep selves that time passes, and that we can choose how we move through space. Whatever is going on, whether the stressor is internal or external, movement allows the body to move towards healing whether we feel like it or not. Whatever level of healing potential we possess, moving will allow us to optimise it. We move freely when we feel safe, and so

by moving it sends a message to our central nervous system that it is ok to start feeling secure.

When we move, we are expressing ourselves, and whatever movement we do, sends a message back into our system of where we are at. If we move in a polite way, or a way to appease others, then we send a message back into our system that we are subservient, and not safe to be true to ourselves, or to show our true selves to the world. This way of expressing ourselves probably took many years to build up, and there may be very good reasons why this way of moving of was established in the first place. It doesn't matter, there's no stress about changing established movement patterns. What can be done is to move to a space where the movement can be unchallenged and an expression of authenticity.

What is essential is that some place is found to have true freedom of movement, a space to practice how to move until it feels comfortable. It may take a while. It may feel silly or unusual. If you are experiencing anxiety then it may be that something is stuck somewhere in your body, and by generating freedom of movement, it calls out to that place to start to move in a way which feel right and true.

It can be useful to get curious about how you would move in the world if you were free of any restrictions. Using music to dance to freely and with abandon helps to loosen up ways in which we hold back. Get inquisitive about how you would walk if you felt relaxed and confident, enquire your spine and shoulders, how would you hold yourself if you felt secure in the knowledge that

everything is ok. How would you talk to people if you were certain that there was nothing to worry about?

Sometimes it takes very little shift in movement to send a signal back to your system that you are safe, happy and confident. How small do the tweaks need to be in order to have a significant effect on how we move through our day? Remind yourself that once a day, you are going to move for three minutes to music you love, in any way you want to. Make the intention that moving with pleasure and abandon will have an ever increasing ripple effect on how you move with freedom throughout your day.

Happiness is not something ready made

It comes from your own actions

Dalai Lama

Singing

Singing balances the left and the right brain, creating a larger and more active bridge between the two, between the part of the brain that deals in imagination and emotion, and the part that focuses on what things are and what we want to do about it.

Singing creates increased communication and understanding between parts of us that revel in the unity of existence and one love, the connection that we feel with the world, and the abundance and magic of creation, and the parts of us that glorify our unique gifts, that plan how to act in the world in order to be safe and make our

mark, and the calculations of how much stuff there is and how much of it we can get for ourselves.

One part craves solidarity and the other the solitary. Both are essential to our wellbeing and how we balance them goes a long way to creating the best versions of ourselves. When they are out of balance, it leads to an experience of ourselves that is negative, weird, and freaky. When they do not communicate the cruelties of human nature, towards others and towards ourselves, find it easier to manifest.

Depending on how our nature has been shaped by our nurture, some people may prefer one part of their brain over the other, and some have been trained to use one in preference to the other, whether it feels right and true or

not. This can lead to distress, and a mistrust of our instincts.

Singing helps to balance and restore connection to an authentic way of being with ourselves and with other people. Singing alone and singing in a group retrains our natural instinct of joy in our private and public lives.

We all sang a wild and true song at our birth, and for some of us that singing voice has been trained to silence, or censorship or support of a way that doesn't suit us.

Singing freely, as with any new habit, starts whenever it starts. It gains strength and meaning with every repetition. Sing the blues, sing nursery rhymes, learn a simple round and sing it with friends, sing along to the Hoover, harmonise with the Eastenders theme tune.

Whenever you feel out of touch with your peaceful nature, or out of sorts with the world, start singing however you want and keep singing until you feel some kind of shift in your state, this should occur within three minutes.

You can also use your freedom of movement practice to see where your singing voice wants to move to – start singing anything and then make it up as you go along.

Speaking

We learnt to speak from our primary care givers, who spoke from how they saw the world. The manner in which they expressed themselves, the language, the volume and the connection they had with the world taught us how to speak.

The training of how to think, move, feel, treat other people, what to expect from life, how to process anger, sadness, love, joy and hope, and how to live in general is intertwined with how we learnt to speak.

The language that we learned shaped the muscle structure of our throats. Restrained feelings create tightness in the area of the throat around the vocal chords. Learning to speak developed the form of our

thought-life, how much of what we think and feel to share with other people, and how to share it with other people.

If the training we received as young things does not match what we authentically feel, it can cause ripples of anxiety throughout the system, which can build into a sense of things 'not being right' and disconnection. It does not feel safe to be true to ourselves, and even if it did, there is no mechanism to do so.

And so what do we do about it? We start from the beginning. Every day, speak the truth as much as we are able. If we cannot speak it out, then acknowledge it inside and be satisfied with that. There is no point feeling rubbish about not speaking our mind, the stress will simply interfere with the expressive process and is a

waste of time, and even the sense of dissatisfaction with our progress is most likely a result of thought training as a young child.

Speech matters - every word has an effect on the system. We get instant feedback in our system if what we have said is not true or not good. The good news is that everything is healable.

Whenever possible, if something doesn't feel right, then put it right as soon as possible and in the closest means possible to how it was expressed and who it was expressed to. Any form of lie, fabrication, decoration or misrepresentation of the truth has an effect, which can be undone. Any form of speech that causes pain to others also has a stressful effect on our systems, which can also be put right. When we give voice to what is stuck inside, it

starts to unravel and heal it. The closest we can get to speaking directly to or about that which causes us the most pain, is the strongest healer of that pain. This is a bonus because it means that even if we cannot talk directly to or about that which causes us pain, we can heal it by speaking with someone or about something else, and then acknowledge that there are other things that could heal from our expressing ourselves. It is possible that by being gentle on ourselves in the quest for truth, we may gain courage to reach the parts that as yet we cannot find courage to reveal.

How we speak matters. If we do not speak the truth as clearly and honestly as we can, then the amount of disconnect between what we feel and how we express it

will be a factor in how connected we are to those we are speaking to.

It will also stimulate nerves and hormones in those we are speaking to and create part of who they are. When we speak the truth we are giving a gift as we encourage those we are speaking with to speak the truth too.

When we speak with disconnect or aggression, we are also creating that reality in those we speak to. Every word spoken is a little map onto how the physical world is changing in every moment.

While we are practising saying how we feel truthfully we can use other methods of training our voice by using other forms of expression. If we're aware that we cannot speak it out yet, which may take courage and time to work out what we really want to say, then any form of

expression, be it through movement, written words or creative work, along with the intention to find our true voice will be enough to start the ball rolling.

Walking

How we carry ourselves when we walk matters.

When we walk with tension in our bodies it reaffirms the tension with every step. Every little bit counts, and every step is an opportunity to change.

When we walk, we re-enact the huge change in our lives when we first learnt to walk. The way we carry ourselves as we walk echoes our history, and is established when we hauled ourselves from our supine position up into a totally new perspective on the world.

How we view our world and move about in it is reaffirmed in every step. Check the relaxation in your shoulders, the curve of your lower back, how heavy each step is,

whether the next step is onto the heel or ball of your foot. Do you tiptoe around at home? Do you fall heavily onto the heel of your foot? Do you give a little bounce with every step? Do your arms move a little? Does your chin sink down checking the floor for potential problems, or do you trust your sure footedness and look around you as you walk?

Try to send your focus of attention down into your feet and trust them to make the right move, while keeping your gaze alert and curious to your surroundings. Bounce a little with each step, rejoice in the motion.

Eliminating

In order for new nutrients to be able to be absorbed there needs to be space for that to take place. Good elimination is such a relief. When the gut is clogged up it affects thinking and feeling clearly.

New information or new feelings are layered on top of old crap, and are not seen for what they are. Whatever new comes along is stifled by what has gone before, even if that had its uses, it is not what is happening today.

Clearing the gut has a clearing affect on the mind, and on the emotions. If the habits of thinking and feeling seem over affected by the past, a gentle way to engage with

that is to clear the gut of old matter, and see if that helps to relieve matters.

Anxiety can be exacerbated by the body not absorbing enough nutrients, and absorption will only begin on a good level once the system is cleared. Simple ways of clearing are – a cucumber a day, vegetable soup, 1.5 litres of water a day, fennel tea, wheatgrass, green juice of cucumber, celery and ginger, belly massage, and walking.

Feeling

Feeling is reduced when the stress nerves are fired. This has its uses. In times of running away or fighting, the skin being a bit numb can help the system to cope for longer if it gets damaged.

The brain does not accept as many signals from the sensory nerve system, and the healing mechanism for the body is lowered and focussed on quick healing rather than long term repair.

It is a brilliant system, however in times of anxiety or panic, this sense of numbness can bring great distress, and a sense of imminent death.

Sometimes the numb feeling is accompanied by a weird tingling, which is quite freaky. The sense of numbness can also be felt in the feeling and thinking life.

It can be a key to helping anxiety to focus on physical sensations. By engaging the brain with any kind of physical sensation, it can short circuit the flow of hormones and nerves that are sustaining the panic by focussing on what something feels like. To reinforce this describe what it feels like out loud in an assertive voice.

It is useful to develop 'feeling training' outside of anxious times. For a minute a day, focus on what can be felt, right now.

Using any area of the body, notice the sensation of either the feeling underneath the skin, or a physical sensation in the body. Actively describe what those sensations feel

like. Put two textures close together and feel both of them, notice the difference. If you do this first thing in the morning, you can also make the intention – today I am developing my feeling sense.

By anchoring this in your brain, your natural curiosity will start to develop a feeling sense, which will have two affects.

You will begin to notice what you can feel physically more often in the day, which will send a message to your brain and being to stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system, and disengage with the sympathetic nervous system. It will also filter through to your emotional and mind life, and begin to connect you to what you are feeling and thinking, and to notice it and acknowledge it.

Discover who you are.

Learn to sense the world around you directly, and contemplate your impressions deeply. Cultivate and make trustworthy your intuition, build up your personal power, through your awareness and knowledge of the physical laws as they operate both in the universe and in the minds of others.

Then use that power to direct events, without resorting to force. Learn to achieve ends without means, by cultivating a strong vision of the way. Things must naturally resolve themselves.

Practise simplicity. Continue to grow.

Lau Tzu

Digestion

Once the gut is used to healthy elimination, the process of digestion and absorption is given more space to do its thing. Just as elimination is related to the emotion of letting go emotionally and mindfully, so digestion is related to acceptance of what is, and allowing abundance into our lives.

If we are struggling with acceptance or perception of abundance, then a gentle way to enhance those useful qualities, is to boost digestion and absorption. By developing a sense of what your digestion needs to absorb well, you can fire up your autopilot-choice mechanism - making good choices not too much of a chore.

Understanding what foods work well with each other and giving the digestion as much support by eating those combinations takes stress off the digestive process. Energy is focussed on breaking down the food into absorbable pieces, and the mechanisms of absorption function at their peak.

Grief can be the garden of compassion. If
you keep your heart open through
everything, your pain can become your
greatest ally in your life's search for love
and wisdom.

Rumi

Harvest Calm digestion support:

- use a food-combining chart to guide food choices
- eat the highest quality that you can afford
- eat food that is as close to nature as you can find
- use key nutrients that support good digestion (see the Eating chapter)
- don't eat when you feel stressed
- eat with good company
- don't eat too close to bedtime
- eat fast burning and sweet foods earlier in the day.
- savour every mouthful
- be grateful when you eat

If digestion is really a struggle – then these are extra measures that can help heal digestion:

First thing: 10 minutes of 'oil pulling'. This is where a large tablespoon of oil (a good quality cold pressed organic oil, the easiest one I've found on the pallet first thing in the morning is coconut oil)

Second: a large glass of warmish water with the juice of a whole /half a lemon.

Twenty minutes later: the tip of a teaspoon of bentonite clay mixed with a teaspoon of psyllium husk and a teaspoon of wheatgrass in a glass of water.

Two walks during the day and an evening bath with either Bentonite Caly or Epsom Salts

Two times five minutes of relaxed breathing exercise where the breath fills the stomach (the stomach moves in and out with each breath massaging the internal organs.)

Daily massage of the belly, five minutes of gentle, clockwise motion with a lightly scented massage oil.

Herb teas/ water around eight cups a day: fennel and ginger are good supports to digestion.

Standing

When all hell breaks loose in a panic moment, or even with the stomach churning underlying anxiety, thoughts skipping from one strain to another, a way to counter the power these things seem to hold over us is to train ourselves to stand still.

If you can find a chi-gung teacher, this is an incredible way to balance the body with the mind, and to engage with peace. If not, you may find the following useful, which is a simplified chi-gung exercise.

This simple practice has long reaching benefits, apart from teaching ourselves to stop engaging with anxiety, and start engaging with our stillness, it also is an empowering decision to take charge of the body and the

stressors that trigger stress and feelings of anxiety. Stop. Stand still. Don't move out of panic or stress. When you do this, remember to breath into the belly and relax the knees.

Posture 1

Feet close together, toes forward, hands relaxed by your sides. Posture upright and relaxed, chest soft and open, nose pointing forward

Posture 2

Palms face down towards the ground, fingers point towards each other. Arms straight and soft, look down towards hands, body upright and relaxed

Posture 3

Arms arc up smoothly reaching for the sky, nose follows movement. Chin becomes raised, arms comfortably straight, breathing soft and gentle

Posture 4

Arms float down, wrists straighten, breathe out gently as chin tilts down.

Solitude

Take time to be alone. Really alone. With the computer off, phone switched off, door closed and sit with what happens. There was a time in the height of my engagement with anxiety when even the idea of being alone triggered powerful feelings of terror. If this is a challenge for you I suggest you take it in small steps.

It is part of vitality to have some alone time. Alone so that anything would normally not emerge due to other people's interference has a space to come out. An unfettered voice, a free movement, silent fears that we are ashamed of. Time on our own where we can do whatever we want, even if that is staring at a wall. Time away from other people's interference and opinion.

Time to explore, those that have hurt us and invaded our quiet and peace, what can we do with that, how can we change it to our own advantage. What would we say if there was no one to challenge it? No one to judge or censor our speech? No one to laugh at our silly dance moves? No one to flirt with, or gain acceptance or acknowledgement from? No one to impress? No one to bounce ideas off to make the socially acceptable. No one's admiration to boost our ego, or make us behave in a way that was purely to get them to like/fancy/love/lust after us?

Relaxing into feeling safe with ourselves is a habit that brings out our authentic selves, and helps us to tap into our secret, and practice expressing that in a way that is clear and pure.

Swimming

While swimming we have the support of the water to allow us to move with greater freedom. We can float, lie on our backs, blow bubbles, feel the sensation of water on our skin, our bodies feel lighter, and our beings feel washed and renewed by being enveloped in water. As our body is made up of mainly water and our lives having started in water, swimming in water is freeing and reminds us of when we were fresh and new, and totally accepting and adapting, changing and supported completely in every aspect of our lives.

We are only energy. If we look at any cell in our bodies, enlarged to the point where we see the cell structure, enlarged beyond that, to where we see the atoms

bounding around, into the atom, enlarged to the point where we would see stars in a universe, enlarged beyond that, we would see only space with some sparks flying through it. In the centre of each cell there is space and energy, and that is the make up of everything around us.

We are energy swimming in energy. We can apply this swimming idea to our every moment, we are swimming around, experiencing whatever we meet, supported by it, using it, relating to it, engaging with it and moving through it.

We can call that energy love if we like, and imagine ourselves an ocean of love, swimming in love, with love behind us, love in front of us, love below us, love above us, going from love in love to love. Swimming.

Drinking

Water is our connection to life. We use 7 litres of water a day, 5 litres of which is taken from the food we eat, which is why we need to supplement with around 1.5 – two litres of water. Since anxiety can be triggered by low levels of any of the essential nutrients when we become dehydrated it can trigger feelings of stress. Focus of attention on the benefits of water as one is drinking can train the brain to notice that water is being drunk, and alleviate the anxiety triggered by dehydration.

Not drinking enough water may have an effect on anxiety for a variety of reasons. Hormones may be unable to reach their destination due to lower blood pressure. Muscles are slightly tenser when dehydrated, and as the

brain is 85% water, and the body is primed to protect the brain at all cost, a panic attack may be triggered in response to weakness or changes in brain due to low water levels.

While dehydration will probably not be the only trigger for a panic attack, it certainly may play a part and may be the precursor to other triggers for anxiety such as feeling weak, achy, faint and having an increased heart rate.

Having a glass of water is a good distraction technique when feeling generally anxious, or that a panic attack may be coming on. Rehydrate with a conscious decision that it is part of an interruption, and focus on the physical sensations of drinking the water.

Bach flower and homeopathic remedies can both be used in water, as with any therapy it is useful to see a professional to get advice.

If you cannot find a therapist some good Bach Flower Remedies are:

- Mimulus for fear of a thing that you know what it is
- Aspen for fear but you don't know what it is
- Red Chestnut for fear that something bad will happen to a loved one
- Rock Rose for someone who is frozen in fear
- Cherry Plum for fear of loss of control
- Elm for overwhelming fear
- White Chestnut for unwanted yet repeated thoughts or worries

I beg you... to have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don't search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday ... in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer.

Rainer Maria Rilke

Eating

Eating while stressed will automatically mean that not as many nutrients will be absorbed. Taking time to prepare for eating, especially when anxiety is present on a daily basis is a loving way to help relax the body before eating.

Our brains and beings like habits, and developing a ritual before eating, can train the being to relax into 'eating time'. Simple actions like washing the hands and face, lighting a candle, laying the table, saying a prayer or meditation before beginning the meal, putting a small bunch of flowers on the table, changing clothes or putting on makeup before the meal time, any form of preparation before the meal will be of benefit.

Chatting to friends while eating, keeping conversation light, being loving and supportive at the dinner table, savouring each mouthful, and feeling grateful for the food, being assertive about establishing these habits starts to create a new habit.

Choosing what is on the plate can have a long reaching effect on levels of anxiety – while different people digest things at different rates, the mix of things on the plate will affect how quickly the energy from the food is incorporated. A sharp spike in blood sugar may well be one of the most common triggers in anxiety attacks, and stabilising blood sugar is incredibly useful in managing stress. Eating protein with carbohydrates slows down the uptake of sugar from the carbs, however protein and carbs are broken down at different rates in the stomach, and some combinations have such different rates of

digestion that they cause pain, bloating and gas. Some proteins and carbs work well together, if you Google food combining for a strict chart there are plenty of charts available, however a brief guide is dairy on its own, meat with non starchy veg, carbs with any veg, pulses and grains are good, nuts and seeds on their own, fruit on its own before 2pm and leave an hour each side between eating so that the stomach can clear.

Oils are a really good way of slowing down sugar uptake. A good quality oil will also benefit the immune system, support hormones, have a great effect on nail and hair quality, and satiate the appetite. There are many good oils, the best quality are labelled as raw, cold pressed and organic. Even just a good quality cold pressed olive oil at around a tablespoon a day will be beneficial. My second choice is a raw coconut oil, which can be used instead of

butter, in smoothies, on your skin, and as a mouthwash in 'oil pulling'.

In many cases of anxiety there is an element of sugar imbalance, and this can be supported by eating regularly, leaving no longer than three hours between meals.

Getting a good night's sleep is important as sleep deprivation can be a trigger to sugar imbalance, so having something to eat that is light on the digestion yet slow to release sugar is a really good way of ensuring a good night's sleep. Soaking some almonds and having a few every now and then also balances blood sugar.

One really good ingredient to have in the diet is Chia Seeds. These are packed with nutrients, super easy to digest, work well in smoothies, and have a calming and clearing effect on the digestion.

Using a bentonite clay or Fullers Earth taken internally also has a clearing and balancing effect on the digestion, and remineralises the body, which is very calming.

Long term anxiety very often brings with it upset stomach – this on its own can be exhausting, and also limit the uptake of nutrients, making it vital to find an easily digested form of dense nutrition. Wheatgrass, Spirulina, Barley Grass, Chia seeds and Maca Root are easily digested and have a range of vitamins, minerals, amino acids and essential fatty acids and also have anti-inflammatory qualities, which all aid digestion and overall health.

Stress can also be attributed to low levels of serotonin. Serotonin is made of tryptophan which is found in chocolate, oats, dates, milk, yoghurt, cottage cheese, red

meat, eggs, fish, poultry, sesame, sunflower and pumpkin seeds, spirulina, chickpeas and bananas. In terms of supplements, magnesium and vitamin B are calming, and fennel, ginger, cinnamon, cloves, cumin, nutmeg, sage and thyme are useful both fresh and dried.

Finally a good probiotic really helps to restore the bacteria in the gut to aid digestion – there are many different brands but what you're looking for is one that contains at least 20 billion live organisms per dose.

Daily Harvest Calm Smoothie

1 tablespoon of milled chia seeds

1 teaspoon of raw cacao powder

half a teaspoon of lucuma powder

half a teaspoon of maca powder

1 pint of almond milk

1 banana – blend all and enjoy

Company

Keeping good company is a vital habit to well being. Of the people that surround us – there are those that feed us and those that deplete us. It is of utmost importance to have someone in our lives who we can be at ease with. A simple test is – how much do I naturally have my guard up/down with that person. It is crucial to maintain contact with people who we feel deeply at ease with, even if we don't see them that often. It is part of sanity to feel safe within a tribe. Physical contact releases the hormones that allow us to feel safe and connected, so regular contact is vital.

If there is any form of anxiety regularly in our lives, it is possible that the balance of nourishing versus vampiric

people in our lives is out of kilter, and that the vamps are too close to us. While it is not always possible to immediately withdraw from vamps and include all the nourishers, it is possible to organise ourselves internally and acknowledge who we need more of, and who we need less of. Being clear about who means what is freeing in itself, and will flick your body/mind on switch to begin making choices that include who you want and exclude who you don't want.

Focus of attention is a useful tool. When in the company of someone who is nourishing, I get the most out of the experience if I really drink them in. It is a trainable habit to find good company, and to create an 'auto seek' mechanism that invites good and worthwhile companionship, and to recognise quickly when a relationship is out of balance. To keep it simple, at least

once a day make a meaningful contact with someone who you can let your guard down with, and who you laugh freely with. Make it a regular habit to contact old friends and let them know that they matter to you.

If there are people in your life who it feels impossible to get away from, scan your whole being to see where you can create space between you. If physical space is not possible, how often can you take a break? And when you do take a break, try to completely immerse yourself in that space, and get every ounce of benefit from it. Create space in your mind from them, and create space in your heart. Hold firm to your purpose and be certain that you deserve the best, and focus your attention on being open to opportunities to get the best people for you in your life as much as possible.

Refreshing company is either by meeting new people, or by seeing old friends with new eyes.

We can bring new questions to longstanding friendships, and allow each other to grow and change with time. Conversations with old friends can become a habit, which may well need refreshing over time.

The key is to keep company only with people who uplift you, whose presence calls forth your best.

Epictetus

Writing

Anxiety about something is a quantifiable and seemingly logical response to stressful situations. An anxiety disorder is a huge stress all of its own, we don't know when a fear storm will happen or how strong and incapacitating it will be, which complicates and intensifies the anxiety which can build up into a crushing and devastating sense of powerlessness, loneliness and the feeling that something that controls us is cruel and unpredictable.

Writing is a way of taking back control, communicate our feelings and map what we experience, if only to ourselves. Writing it out can create a sense of being heard which is not fettered by any social difficulty, no one is

going to get bored, laugh, not take us seriously, correct how we should be feeling, tell us to get over it, or make us justify how we feel, or reshape how we feel to fit in with the social norm.

Writing a journal of when the anxiety happens and what happened just before can help us to identify what the triggers for a panic attack are. Writing poems or prose about what it feels like can help us to engage where the anxiety centres in our body, and what the sensations feel like. Writing about what it feels like can help us by acknowledging and affirming the suffering that we experience and validating what we're going through.

Letters to our families and loved ones about what we're going through can help us to express it clearly and openly. It can be embarrassing to admit to an anxiety disorder, and writing about it can help us to express it succinctly so

that we can share it with other people in a way which gives us self esteem by talking about it with clarity and confidence.

Writing about it helps us to move through it, and gives a private and safe outlet to what we're feeling. Writing on online forums helps us to share in a private way with other people who understand what it feels like. Writing about what we want to have happen helps us to focus on what our aims are. Writing with no focus at all, for three minutes a day helps us to tap into subconscious feelings that we didn't know we had.

Write to me, I'd love to hear about your experiences with anxiety disorder and what has worked for you to alleviate your symptoms – contact@harvestcalm.com

Every night, just before you go to sleep, write a note of one thing that really made your day, as you write it down go through the sensations of what that felt like.

First thing in the morning, write three things that you want from the day, really imagine how satisfying it would feel to have that happen in the day.

Once a week, write a note to someone you love, and write why they matter to you. It doesn't matter if you give the note or not – it is attaching the feeling with the expression that gets you flowing.

Noticing

It is possible that the anxiety response is triggered by hyperawareness of physical symptoms. That means that some sensations in the body may well be felt on a subconscious level in most people, however in hypersensitive people those sensations are given more nerve energy and more sense perception in the brain, turning what could be a minor response to a stimuli into a major reaction. This is due to an underlying perception of stress in the environment keeping the danger sensors on major alert.

This does not mean that the sensations are not real, of course they are real, they are very strong and not 'made up'. But there is a possibility that we can turn down the

volume and reduce the time span of the sensations by using our focus of attention.

At the beginning of a panic attack, or when feeling a low level of general anxiety, the last thing I normally want to do is pay it more attention, especially if I'm trying to use distraction techniques to interrupt a full panic attack.

However, to turn towards whatever is happening sends a signal to the brain that in fact the panic feelings are not dangerous but almost interesting. Spend time with those feelings, become curious about the details and begin to ask questions: where is building in tension? Is anywhere less tense? Where exactly in my throat feels numb? What do my legs feel like? What do my feet feel like? Is that all of my feet? Do the heels feel different than the toes?

By choosing where your focus of attention is, it can help to redirect the nerves from freak out mode – the fight or flight so called ‘sympathetic’ nervous system to the more sensory aware parasympathetic nervous system. By actively turning towards what is happening it creates a kind of interrupt, which suggests to the brain that in fact, whatever is happening is not so dangerous that it cannot be engaged with.

Its perfectly fine for me to be sitting here not in a panic attack saying that, I totally take that on board, but even by intending to start noticing details, you can start to develop the habit of engaging with how you are, right now, and becoming curious about what is going on.

If it is too challenging to focus on what is going on inside, a less intense approach is to engage with what is in the

immediate environment. What is just beneath the feet, what is right in front of you? By focussing your attention in the room around you, you can gradually move your focus closer to the body, and then check how your physical body responds to external stimuli by interacting with the environment.

Our brains, while being super organised on so many levels, find it difficult to differentiate between actual threat and perceived threat, and when there are layers of stress set down over a long time of having to process stress, the brain likes to organise and short circuit reaction time in order to protect your body from aggressors. It creates trigger buttons that can take your state from 0 – 60 in a very short space of time, making it

is hard to create enough brain space to still ourselves and take stock of the details of what is happening.

This is where developing a noticing habit outside of panic stations can start to take the edge off, and provide a steadily growing alternative brain pattern that can keep curious as to what is happening and how it is changing.

It is a huge threshold in managing anxiety once we move from total fear of unpredictable terrifying attacks, to being aware of what our state is and what we want to do about it.

While a panic attack feels like it comes out of the blue, it doesn't. There are certain processes that once they kick into motion it feels like a panic attack is inevitable. This is not true. At any point there is a choice being made, mostly on an unconscious level, to take the next step

through the state coming to our attention, taking hold of all of our attention and forward into full arousal. When a state becomes peak, it is hard to engage with another kind of state, and either lays down a new pathway in the brain, or more often reconfirms an old pathway that this is an inevitable process that once begun is in charge. This is not true.

States are interruptible and malleable. Even if at first it feels like they are in charge, by stating clearly, I am going to notice what is happening and take hold of it fully, and not judge it, and be aware as it changes, it gives the state permission to go through the motions, and reach where it wants to get to, and by resolving itself in this new way, it already creates a new form. While the process happened in a familiar way what is new is that I stayed watching it all the way through, and I took charge by giving it

permission to go on right ahead. By noticing how it develops, we can also begin to learn where the process has opportunities for interruption.

For some people, simply noticing and accepting without judgement that the state is primed, can take stock of the process enough to choose whether to go ahead or not, and take the perceived power out of the state. For others it may be necessary change something in order to take the reins of the state back, such as changing breathing patterns, drinking some water, moving with joy, adjusting the posture, eating something, changing the visual/aural stimuli or engaging with a creative process.

Becoming a pro at noticing what is happening, right now, is a way of engaging with life and is a key to unlocking all the benefits around us in this very moment. It is calming

yet vitalising, and as it stimulates the parasympathetic nerves, encourages our body to go through is rest-review-repair-renew cycle allowing our body to achieve its best health.

Imagining

The following questions can be asked of yourself either as an exercise or form of meditation.

If you're doing it as an exercise you'll need a pen and paper, and then answer each question three times, once silently to yourself, once said out loud, and once written down.

As a meditation, read each question, then shut your eyes and watch what comes up in response, what feelings, sensations, memories or images, and then watch them drift away. Whatever happens remember -

you are perfect

What do I want to have happen?

And if I felt that what would it feel like?

What would it feel like if there were nothing to worry about?

If I were guaranteed to have everything I wanted?

If I was told I had a thousand gold coins?

If I were guaranteed that my partner would always be faithful?

If I were guaranteed that I would always have two friends who loved me?

What would it feel like if I had more energy?

What would it feel like if everything was sorted, where would I relax?

Where would I feel warm?

Where would I feel clear?

What do I want today? This is a great question to ask ourselves, it opens up our minds and starts our brains trying to figure out ways to answer that question. It creates the space in our creativity to work stuff out on a subconscious level even when we are focussing on something entirely different.

It allows us to refocus on what feeds us and where we want to be headed. It suggests to the body/mind that we are in control of what we want in our lives and can develop resourcefulness in making our way towards a life we love. By spending even a couple of moments retraining ourselves to focus on our version of a good life, we create new brain patterns and hand it over to our naturally curious minds to find ways of implementing the goals we set ourselves.

He who would learn to fly one day must first learn to stand and walk and run and climb and dance; one cannot fly into flying.

Friedrich Nietzsche

Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms - to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.

Viktor E. Frankl

Who seeks shall find.

Sophocles

Quality is not an act, it is a habit.

Aristotle

Truthful Expression

When we speak the truth, we relax. We relax in a central place in ourselves and feel a sense of relief. Our brain likes order, and if what we say does not match how we feel, there is a stress reaction in the body. We may not always be aware of that reaction, but it exists whether we are conscious of it or not.

The great deal of harmonious living is achieved when what we say, feel, think and how we act all agree with each other. When one of those doesn't represent how we really feel, or if we're aware that we don't exactly know what we feel, or how to think or act in certain situations, this distress can build up over time and takes its toll on our hormone and nervous systems.

Anxiety disorders are complex and unique to each person; there is not one way that will be the answer for every person to achieve relief from their symptoms. Speaking the truth brings more harmony to our life, however much we do it and whenever we do it, and as with every habit, the more it is practised the more it takes root in our everyday lives.

Sometimes, and for some people allot of the time, it is hard and scary to be truthful. There are so many reasons why being truthful is tricky, and yet so many times when being truthful is the best resource for a good life. Stressful relationships can make it frightening to speak the truth, and the more time spent in compromising situations the more likely it is that we'll be severed from what we truly think, feel, what we want to say and how we want to act. Being an accepted part of a group, peer pressure, fear of

being harmed, fear of isolation or exclusion, fear of ridicule, fear of showing vulnerability, fear of loss of face, fear of sounding stupid or unclear -these are all strong drivers for saying what is socially acceptable.

If it is not possible, for whatever reason, to express what we believe to be true out loud, then we can still achieve the benefits of living truthfully by acknowledging to ourselves in our own private way what we believe to be true. There is no rule to say what we believe to be true is any better than anyone else's, it doesn't matter whether someone else has a different take on reality than us, what we need to do is be truthful to our central self and hold to that. If we're wrong about something then we can learn new ways later, but for now, it is crucial to arrive at a

place of defining what is truthful to us, and to be deeply satisfied with how we best feel we can express that.

By feeling satisfied with ourselves and enjoying this moment of our truth, we're rewarding ourselves for achieving something that will motivate us to take the next step when we're ready. Beating ourselves up about how small our steps forward may be in our eyes just slows the process down.

The stress of not expressing ourselves truthfully may be one of the reasons why we have anxiety storms, and the stress of having anxiety and the loss of control and the unpredictability of a panic attack are feelings that build up and complicate each other. One really frikin scary way of addressing panic attacks is to do something which I've termed dialoguing – speaking to the panic disorder as

though it were someone who wasn't very well, and giving them an opportunity to communicate exactly what they needed in order to get the best treatment. By saying to the anxiety – come on then, tell me what you need to say, show me how you need to feel, let me in on how you're thinking and do whatever you need to do to resolve yourself - I really gave my deep self permission to do what it needed to do. Of all the methods that I have tried, this is the one that unlocked the panic the quickest, and gave me a strong sense of resolution. By saying – bring it on!! to the panic attack, while being totally freaky and terrifying, actually did trigger a panic attack but totally not to the same level as they normally were, and the thoughts and feelings I had were deeper and spoke truthfully of my locked in grief, and sense of worthlessness. It wasn't

exactly pretty but it definitely allowed me to release things that seemed to be fuelling my panic attacks.

By allowing what I wanted to say to get out there into the world, it made me realise the feelings that were underneath my anxiety, that seemed ready to come out. Taking time to practice speaking the truth uncensored by fear may be scary, or it may bring such a relief that it is an enjoyable process, or for some it may be a habit they are well used to. Speaking the truth is harmony in action, and if it is a practised habit, it brings harmony to our inner world, and the world around us.

Processing

There are many therapies that can intervene in the engagement with anxiety, one or any combination or even all of the suggestions below might just be the tipping point the anxiety disorder needs in order to begin to unravel itself and allow life to be more enjoyable.

I love the idea of self-healing, and the majority of the suggestions in this book are things that are easily incorporated into every day life, with minimal time and that are easy to be consistent with.

I also spent a lot of time going 'out there' to get a diagnosis on what was wrong with me, and felt that I wouldn't rest until someone told me a definitive answer. I felt that once I knew what was wrong then I would be

able to identify what I could do about it. Extensive tests on my heart and lungs showed that medically there was nothing wrong – which was a relief - but also led to more anxiety... if there was nothing wrong, then was I mad? Did I have something so weird wrong with me that medical science couldn't pick it up? Had they just missed some vital thing on the scans? And also it came with a sense of embarrassment and humiliation, that I was making a fuss for nothing - that it was all 'in my mind'.

Except it wasn't. It was a bit in my mind, a bit in my heart and a bit in my body. They are not separate, they are one crazyarse immaculate complex of exquisite brilliance, and they work together in ways that my conscious mind does not have, nor require, the capacity to entirely understand. What 'alternative' therapies show is that it is not required to have a label on what is going on in order to start

healing. It is a wonderful thing to have access to modern day medicine, which I am profoundly grateful for. I'm also swimming in gratitude for access to medicinal practices that played a part in giving me my life back. I know I would have gotten there without them, as they came quite far down my healing path – however each treatment I had made me feel more in touch with myself and gave me an increased sense of trust and curiosity about who and how I am. I've found that its super important to find a practitioner that I can relate to, and sometimes I had treatments with one therapist, who while they were very good, and had lots of very happy clients, just did not click with me. I found Craniosacral Therapy, Shiatsu, Acupuncture, Homeopathy and Pilates to be the ones that did it for me, at different times and with different people.

If cost is an issue most mainstream therapies will have associations which can point you in the direction of therapists who run low-cost clinics, or schools that have nearly qualified therapists who need to gain clinic hours who may do it for free or at low cost.

What therapies can offer is a support in processing that may be needed to unravel a seemingly complex situation, and just as keeping company where you can let your guard down is vital, sometimes being with someone who has no social ties and no historical triggers that is entirely confidential can be the right environment to release ties that bind us to old anxiety habits.

Grounding

Taking charge of becoming peaceful is a habit. As with every new habit there is an integration stage between when the new actions start, when they become normal and when they become immersed into every day life.

It is very normal for any new actions that are not within the normal scope of activity to feel uncomfortable, and to bring up strong emotions. It can be confusing and even distressing that when we're feeling anxious, a new habit that is supposed to be helpful makes us feel even more uncomfortable.

One way to develop of regular practice of bringing stillness into our lives is to use the following four steps:

satisfaction, consistency, resilience, interruption and shifting awareness.

While it can feel frustrating to not get exactly where we want when we want, this can be reframed as a good thing, if it takes a while to get somewhere then we're more immersed in it, and it is more likely that we can rest in the new way of being. Using **satisfaction** for any level of peace that we achieve means that we attach meaning and value for every step that we take, which is a good thing. The fact that we attach meaning and value for every step that we take, however 'small' that step feels, means that we are using the most valuable version of validation – our own. It is useful if we really milk that sense of satisfaction to really anchor ourselves in that feeling. The more we enjoy it, the more we reward

ourselves and make it more likely that we'll do that thing again.

Overwhelm in anxiety can be because we have allowed the anxiety to build up to boiling point, and then feel powerless as it boils over. Being **consistent** with little and often moments of peace-seeking is one way of taking the edge off stress and retraining our body/mind to tap back into peace. Every engagement with our inner peace counts. Even thirty seconds of checking in with exactly where we are now, with no judgement but a patient watching, just twice a day will have long reaching results.

And here's the rub – it is our attitude towards the stress, the lack of peace, the busy over-thinking mind, our hyperawareness of every pain in the body – our attitude towards the stress is the factor that will determine

whether we are long term affected by the distress.

Allowing how we think about any form of distress in our body to melt from negative thoughts, however they form, to a more gentle view on them allows us to build **resilience**, which will protect us from the ravages of distress and anxiety. By softening our attitude we send a signal to our body/mind that it is ok to feel ok. Feeling distress is in itself stressful, and it can have a snowball effect if we are also worrying about how much being stressed is damaging us. This is not to belittle how devastating stress and anxiety is, rather it is creating space in our body/mind to feel peace as well as the sadness, and to not allow the stress as a reaction to what is going on to have a negative impact all of its own and become a self-fulfilling prophecy of disease. A practice of,

even though I have this pain, I also direct my gaze towards my peace.

We become accustomed to the busy-ness of life, and that has its benefits. With our body practically on autopilot for the majority of the processing we do, our consciousness can be focussed onto our environment to keep an eye out for dangers and excitement, distraction, pleasure, protection. This however can lead to automatically practising habits that are not contributing to our peaceful vitality. We can **interrupt** this by planning to have minibreaks during the day. The more often we have these, the more likely we are to prevent toxic build up, and retrain ourselves to become more at peace. To make it easy, it can become part of our morning intention to factor in a small number of breaks during the day, and to make the intention to be prompted by either our

subconscious, or to be triggered by something in our environment. In our intention, we can choose to remind ourselves to truly turn away from everything in the world, and to connect with our inner peace completely. We can also decide to be completely satisfied and even proud of whatever level of peace we arrive to, and reward ourselves with enjoying that satisfaction. If the feeling is not that strong, then it will build with repetition.

We can shift our **focus of awareness** away from the business of every day life, and turn fully towards the stillness that we carry around. This stillness is not an absence of movement, but a sort of relaxed vibrancy, energy moving at a pace which includes rest and repair along with renewal. Every cell in the body as a cycle of rest, review, repair, renew. This is always happening, we are always going through that cycle at speeds that we are

not aware of. Some cells are doing it every second, some every minute, some every hour and so on until we reach some cells that repeat that cycle every seven years, and a few, a very few that remain the same throughout our life cycle. We can bring this into our consciousness by intending to integrate that cycle of rest, review, repair, renew into our everydayness.

Even if we invest one minute a day to this, we will see results. This has to be an immersion, an active decision to engage with our peace, be grateful for what we receive when we engage, be consistent in our attentions, be graceful towards ourselves in our distress, interrupt our fascination with stimulation from outside of ourselves, and shift our awareness to include our peace.

By applying the 'feel, say, do' principle of immersing ourselves into new activity, it can help to embody it and allow it to become who we are.

Taking time to stop - acknowledge a connection with peace inside, say out loud, I feel peaceful, then write down, I feel peaceful; and then acknowledge something else that you feel, then say it out loud, and then write it down; and then peace affirm again - encapsulates an active connection with now, and connection with truth.

Hope

Even if there is no sensation of hope or gratitude, and no perceived reason to feel the need for hope or gratitude, being mercenary and faking it till you make it will be of great benefit.

When we feel hopeful, and assume that everything is going to be ok, it reduces the negative effects of any stress. It has been proven that it is not the stress itself that kills us but the attitude that stress will kill us that reduces our life expectancy. If we slowly but surely develop a relaxed attitude towards the stressors in our lives then we can actively mitigate the long-term negative effects of stress on our health and wellbeing.

That is not to say we are complacent – no – we are active about seeking a way of being that enables us to live as much as we can without fear and anxiety.

What it means is that we become curious and attentive to our wellbeing, and develop a joyful hope that while we may not be able to eliminate all of the sensations of anxiety in the body, that we'll also have times where we're relaxed, and when the panic storms arise, we can watch them from a safe place, sure in the knowledge that we have all we need to be well.

When we feel grateful, and notice the good in our lives, we naturally develop a good-sensor and notice more good in our lives, and that joy behaves like a stimulus to our brains work out easier ways to get more good in our lives. Being grateful makes us more able to get more stuff to be

grateful for, and more aware of what makes us feel good. Being grateful is not a reactive feeling after good stuff has happened, it is an active choice to notice what is good around us. Feeling grateful is such a good combo of feeling safe, calm, relaxed, warm, and hopeful and that we have stuff that is meaningful to us in our lives. It is a step above feeling that everything is fine, which is a great feeling. Feeling grateful is a habit that once begun creates ever-increasing energy patterns in the body, so that not only will instances of feeling gratitude increase in number, they will also increase in intensity. So today, feeling great and grateful may only reach a 2.5 on the Richter scale; whereas next week with practice, feeling grateful may be so intense you'll have to keep from scaring the neighbours.

The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with the heart.

Helen Keller

Always do your best. What you plant now, you will harvest later.

Og Mandino

I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought, and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder.

Gilbert K. Chesterton

Let the beauty of what you love be what you do.

Rumi

Practice

The 21 Days of Harvest Calm are basic needs that we must have for a good life, I'd suggest that if anything is out of balance in our lives then it is possibly one of those that needs addressing. Major change can be shocking, and especially in anxious or stressy situations can be overwhelming. I start with tweaks first, these little shifts can be enough to get things going. I encourage you, as I remind myself to write out what your needs are, and to focus every evening and every morning on what will bring balance and pleasure to our day. Writing these down will fix in our consciousness to make them a goal for the day, and will facilitate our natural wisdom to achieve what we want to have happen today.

For more resources on a calm life visit harvestcalm.com and keep in touch by signing up to email updates. I pray you the best life and your best self, and that you find calm in the storms, and support from what is around you, and that you find relief and solace easily within your reach.

*Throw your dreams into space like
a kite, and you do not know what it
will bring back, a new life, a new
friend, a new love, a new country.*

Anais Nin