



Attacking Anxiety

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The Summary

Introduction: I Need a Miracle

“Honey, what’s wrong?”

My wife’s voice rang through the speakers in my truck as she tried to calm me down. I could barely see the cars in front of me through the tears in my eyes.

I was having a panic attack and was quickly losing control. Although this wasn’t my first panic attack, somehow Jill and both knew this one was different. This was the big one.

“I’m on C-470,” I said between sharp breaths. “But I don’t think I can make it home. Please pray.” Then I hung up the phone.

In retrospect, that was not the best way to end a call.

Have you ever had such bad anxiety or depression that you wondered if you could keep going? Have you ever experienced the humiliation of people you care about seeing you at your lowest point? Have you ever felt like you would do anything in the world to change how you are or the way you feel? Have you ever just wanted to disappear or felt like the people you care about would be better off without you?

If you or someone you care about has ever felt anything like this, you are the reason I am writing this book. That’s where I was. This book is about my journey from that place to where I am today.

I'm not writing from a place of perfection. I'm not writing to you from an ivory tower, saying I am completely 100 percent free from all anxiety and worry. And I'm certainly not writing to tell you I know the simple fix, the key to unlocking complete peace and joy with a few simple steps. We are all broken people, living in a broken world, and we won't experience absolute perfection until we get to heaven.

There are days when I can feel anxiety and depression trying to creep their way back into my life, and on those days, I still have to battle for my own freedom. The good news is that now I know how to do that. But like every single one of us, I'm still on a journey, and some days are better than others. But I can promise you this: I may not be where I *want* to be, but I am certainly not where I *used* to be.

I am writing to you today as someone who is healthier, stronger, and better than I was that day on the side of the road. I may know the depths of despair, but I also know the joy of true transformation. I have experienced the miraculous power of God working in my life in ways that I can't even comprehend. Today, I am experiencing peace, joy, confidence, and freedom at levels I thought were impossible for me. And I believe the same is possible for you right now.

1. Live Free

This book is about learning to bridge the gap between being *set free* and actually being able to *live free*. Because if I've learned anything from the conversations, emails, DMs, and handwritten notes I receive every week—I'm not alone.

Statistically speaking, there's a good chance you or someone you know deals with anxiety or depression. And most counselors will tell you that if you have one, you have the other. Anxiety and depression go hand in hand.

Whether you feel like you are dealing primarily with one or are drowning in both, let's just agree that we are in this together and that it is time for all of us to head in one direction: toward new levels of *freedom!* We've been set free externally by what Jesus did for us, but we're unable to live free and walk in the peace, joy, and confidence we've been given.

Listen to me—that is not God's plan for your life. I promise.

God wants you to experience peace (Philippians 4:6-7). God wants you to experience joy (Psalm 16:11). God wants you to experience purpose (2 Timothy 1:9). God wants you to experience confidence (Jeremiah 17:7). God wants you to experience protection (2 Thessalonians 3:3). God wants you to experience victory (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Through my story, the hard lessons I've learned, and his timeless Word, I believe God wants to speak to you about your struggles, or the struggles of your friends and family. God is going to help you and your loved ones begin to stand, fight, and take hold of the very freedom Jesus died to provide for you. We've been set *free*, but now it's time to *live free*. And I can't wait.

Part 1: Know

2. You Are Not Crazy

After my wife and friends got me back into my house and I started to calm down, I decided to get serious about learning how to live free.

Through several difficult conversations and prayers, Jill and I decided I needed to take some serious steps. I was tired of putting Band-Aids over these massive wounds in my soul; I needed to get professional help. I stepped away from the church for five months and went through an incredibly challenging but helpful journey of counseling and therapy.

I came out the other side a different man. Eventually, I even went back to work. And today, I'm not just surviving—I'm experiencing joy and freedom at levels I wouldn't have even dreamed possible.

I know you may not have the luxury of doing all of that, which is why I'm writing this book. I want to walk you through my journey of from feeling panicked and afraid to being alive and free. And instead of holding back, I'm going to tell you everything I can about my journey because I believe it is going to help you on yours.

The starting point for dealing with anxiety and depression is *knowing* that three things are true:

You are not crazy.

You are not alone.

This will end.

3. You Are Not Alone

If you ask anyone who has been to prison what the worst punishment is, they will tell you solitary confinement is the absolute worst thing you could ever experience. It's torture. And I don't need to explain that to you, do I? We were created for community!

One of the reasons mental illness is so dangerous is because it tends to isolate us. Anxiety and depression feed us the lie that we are the only ones struggling, and if you are anything like me, you start to believe it. We become convinced not only that we are crazy but also that no one will ever understand. And so, instead of talking about it, we check ourselves into our own self-prescribed solitary confinement.

We'll struggle in isolation while our loved ones sit right next to us, frustrated that they can't check us out of our self-prescribed solitary confinement. Whether you struggle with anxiety and depression or love someone who does, the second thing you have to know is that *you are not alone*.

Seriously. The thought that you are alone is a lie from the pit of hell.

I know that is a lot to take in, but remember, we have a God of hope who plans to fill you with joy and peace. *"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit"* (Romans 15:13). The battle can feel helpless at times. Trust me, I know the feeling. But despite how we may *feel*, the *fact* is that God can completely replace that hopelessness with an overflowing hope. Your God is at work. He is going to do it.

4. This Will End

Picture your anxiety. Picture your depression. Picture the level of hopelessness you've felt at your lowest point. Got it?

Okay, now picture the God of the universe who knows you better than anyone on the planet, the God who knows exactly what you've been going through and precisely what you are facing.

Hear him saying this to you: *"With Me, nothing is impossible."* Read Matthew 19:26. That's what God is telling you today. *This is not the end*. This is not how your story is going to finish.

After I pulled the car over to the side of the road and spent two weeks with my pastor in Alabama, I headed off for seven weeks of inpatient, anti-anxiety and depression counseling.

My counselors helped me see the truth when I couldn't see it for myself. With the help of these outside voices of truth and reason, I continued to fight. I am so thankful I never did anything stupid when my emotions were lying to me that the world would be better off without me.

Our God restores our lives, and he uses the trials we've been through to bring us more purpose than we ever thought possible. This is not the end. Your story and

your life are not over. He has plans and a hope and a future in store for you that will absolutely blow you away.

Yes, you're in the middle of a test. Yes, it feels impossible. But yes, your God is at work. Don't you dare give up on God.

Part 2: Start

5. Fighting

Waking up the morning after a breakdown is a strange experience. The next day after my roadside experience, I lay in my bed and tried to wrap my mind around everything that had happened.

My friends were gone. My guns were gone. My pride was gone. And my wife was scared.

Since we were unsure what our next step should be, Jill decided to call Pastor Chris, who always seems to know the next move. He told her to get us on an airplane and come see him in Alabama.

The next day, Pastor Chris set aside everything he was doing to spend several hours with Jill and me. He looked me directly in the eyes and said, "Shawn, look at me. You're a fighter. It's time to start fighting."

"It's time for you to stop being mad at yourself and start being mad at the enemy. This anxiety is not about you. This depression is not about you; this hopelessness is not about you. There's a very real Enemy, and he wants to kill, steal, and destroy your life. It's time you got mad at him. It's time you blamed him. And it's time you started fighting."

When he finished, I didn't have any words. Something new was stirring in the depths of my soul. I realized it's important to know who you're fighting. You're not fighting anxiety; you're not fighting depression; and you're not fighting hopelessness. You are fighting Satan. The devil. The enemy.

We are broken people living in a broken world, and every now and then, we might have to fight to experience the very freedom that Christ has already provided us with. But the good news is *we can* fight back. So whether you're fighting for yourself or you're fighting for a loved one, it's time to fight.

6. Using Worship as a Weapon

"The rules are simple," Pastor Chris told my wife and me. "Take this Bluetooth speaker into that room, blast some worship music, and start worshiping and praying out loud together. You're both going to pray out loud for thirty straight minutes at the volume of the music."

We were in a battle, and the first two weapons we needed to use were prayer and worship. Pastor Chris told us, "Satan hates it when we pray like this. It destroys him."

Worship is a weapon. Sometimes we worship because we've had a victory. But sometimes we worship *until we see one*. Some years ago, when one of my sons was undergoing treatment in the hospital, I sensed the Lord saying to me, *When you're standing on my Word that says you don't have to be afraid, but you still feel afraid, put your foot down, and put your hands up.*

Worship is a weapon that destroys Satan's ability to mess with your mind, your will, and your emotions.

My challenge to you, even if worship music is not your genre of choice, is to ask around, get online, do what you need to do to find some songs that speak to your soul. Find songs that declare the goodness of God and talk about finding peace, joy, purpose, and freedom. Create a playlist and go to battle with it daily.

It's time to begin battling for the freedom Jesus has given you, and one of the best ways to fight for your peace, joy, purpose, and freedom is to use this weapon called worship.

7. Praying Like a Warrior

What would I tell someone who is feeling absolutely overwhelmed with anxiety right now? Put on some worship music. Start praising and start praying.

And as you do, talk to God real raw and honest. Don't hold back. Don't hold any punches. Don't talk formally. Don't try to make a speech. Talk to your Father and tell him exactly what you want and exactly how you feel. Tell him exactly what you need. Ask him for help. Ask him for strength. Ask him for courage. And most of all, ask him for peace. Then get real intentional about telling God the specific things in your life for which you are thankful.

I'm telling you, this combination of worship and prayer is deadly to anxiety and depression. But before we go any further, you need to hear that prayer is an intimidating topic. But the good news is, your Creator is in this with you. He isn't sitting off to the side with a timesheet, shaking his head at your inability to pray a long prayer with charisma. He is in this process with you. And that means you are a mighty prayer warrior.

I love this passage: *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:6-7). God says he will bring us a peace that doesn't even make sense in the situation. All we have to do is ask.

Petition is only half the weapon. Also tell God about how thankful you are. Asking comes easy. It's the saying thank you part that takes some intentionality. It's hard to be depressed and thankful at the same time. When I'm feeling down, gratitude changes things.

Every day for the next two weeks, Jill and I went to the war room to battle for thirty minutes at a time. Was it easy every day? No. Did we feel like doing it every day?

No. Did I feel immediate miraculous results every single time we did it? No. But after two weeks in the war room, taking ground a half hour at a time, I can tell you with all honesty that I left Alabama feeling better, healthier, and stronger than when I arrived. I was beginning to experience a new level of peace.

8. Remembering to Attack Back

Sometimes you have to get to the point of desperation before you are ready to put your foot down and say enough is enough. When you realize you aren't destined to stay stuck playing the victim card for the rest of your life, you are ready to get proactive and *fight*.

If I've learned anything about mental health over the years, it's that much of the battle begins in the mind. The Bible reminds us that we get to choose what we focus on. The key to obtaining peace is to start remembering all the amazing things God has already done in our lives. God has done so much for all of us over the years, but in the heat of battle, when we are in the middle of a storm, it can be easy to forget about all the good and focus on the bad. This is where making some lists can help.

List 1: Remember What God Has Brought You Through.

Begin by writing out a list of all the victories you've seen God help you win in your life. This will change your life. At least, it did for me.

List 2: Remember What God Has Promised You.

Then start remembering what God promised you. This is way easier said than done. I made a list of twenty verses to stand on. Here is my list, but you don't have to pick the exact same verses for yourself: Romans 5:8; Matthew 6:26; Romans 8:1; Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9; Psalm 121:7; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; Joshua 1:9; Matthew 28:20; Philippians 4:13; Psalm 119:105; Romans 8:31; 2 Corinthians 6:19; 1 John 4:4; Romans 8:37; Isaiah 54:17; Jeremiah 29:11; Romans 8:28; Matthew 19:26; Deuteronomy 20:4.

List 3: Remember God is Going with You. Write out all the things that are weighing you down, then compare that list with the other two. All you need to know is your heavenly Father is going with you every step of the way, and there's nothing in this world he can't handle.

When we remember those three things, it helps us focus our attention on our new reality. It allows us to put hopelessness, depression, and anxiety in their proper place: underneath all the things that really matter so we can focus on living out God's calling on our lives.

Anxiety is going to attack, but now you know how to attack back! Through worship, prayer, gratitude, and remembering where God has already taken you, we can attack anxiety, defeat depression and start to walk in brand-new levels of freedom.

9. Assembling an Army

If my breakdown on the highway taught me anything, it's that I am not strong enough to get through life on my own. When I tried, I ended up crying on the side of the road. And the same is true for you. Attacking anxiety is not a solo battle.

So, I'm going to ask: Who is fighting with you?

Step one is to get it all out, so share the real you with someone who will pray for you. There's freedom that takes place when you can stop hiding. There's a peace that begins to creep in when you know you can stop pretending around certain people and just be real. Be you.

Anxiety is a battle we can win, but it's not a battle we can win on our own. It's time to start letting some people go to war with you.

Just tell them what is really going on. Let them all the way in. Share the last 10 percent. Once they know the truth, they actually know how to be praying for you.

You don't have to tell the whole world what's going on with you, but you need to tell someone in this world.

Your family. Your friends. The right people at church. Doctors. Counselors.

Let them know that previously you've let them part of the way in, but now you are giving them access to the whole thing—to the depths of your anxiety and depression. We were created to pursue the plans of God with the people of God, so get the right people in your corner, let them in on everything, and watch what happens!

Part 3: Stop

10. Pretending You're Okay

Knowledge is only part of the battle. If we want to win this war, there aren't just things we need to *know*—there are also things we have to *start*. At some point, we have to decide that enough is enough, put our food down, and get to work. Anxiety and depression will attack, but eventually, we need to make the conscious decision to attack back. God has too much for us, and the day we decide to start fighting for it, the battle for abundant life begins.

The secret to winning any war is equipping ourselves with the correct weapons. Remember the four ways of attacking back that we've already looked at—worship, prayer, reminding yourself of all the victories in the past, and assemble an army to fight with you.

Now it's time to talk about what to *stop*. When it comes to battling anxiety and depression, there are some do's, but there are also a lot of don'ts. It's about the things in your life that you need to get rid of and subtract from your life. It's time to put some things to death so that you can begin to truly live.

When my life was spiraling, I didn't know why. Sometimes it is difficult to identify the items in our own lives that need to go. If it was easy to know what needs to go, we would've gotten rid of those things by now.

That's why rock bottom can sometimes be helpful. Rock bottom forces us to stop the show. It's when we realize we aren't good enough, strong enough, or smart enough to overcome anxiety or depression on our own. It reveals what needs to change in our lives and forces us to face the reality of our issues and get desperate enough to do something about them.

11. Holding On to Unforgiveness

We need to stop holding on to unforgiveness. Every one of us has pain in our past, and unless we do the difficult work to face it and forgive it, it will continue to fuel our anxiety and depression. Sometimes to move forward, we first have to go back and heal from past pain.

I have a past. You do too. And so do your loved ones. Believe it or not, the pain from your past is affecting your present.

It turns out, my pride was the first thing that needed to come to a necessary ending. I needed to stop holding on to unforgiveness. I needed to stop pretending my past wasn't affecting my present. I needed to stop ignoring it and trying to push it down. I needed to stop trying to outrun it. It was time to admit that I needed healing.

And maybe the same is true for you today. Remember, one of the reasons I'm writing this book is because you probably don't have the luxury of running off to seven weeks of counseling. So, I'm passing on as much insight as I can from my own experience. However, this book is not a substitute for counseling. You should absolutely talk to a professional if you can.

Forgiveness is the starting point for healing past wounds and became one of the main lessons I had to work through during my time in counseling. Holding on to unforgiveness requires so much anxiety-producing energy. We do it because we think we have the right—and

we do—but it causes us a lot of anxiety and depression in the process. Imagine how much precious energy we could save if we could learn to let go.

Forgiveness is not easy, but the results are profound. Let me walk you through the process. Start by owning your unforgiveness. Just tell God that you are now aware that you've been holding on to bitterness and that you are ready to repent. Declare that you are ready to get rid of all hurt, anger, and bitterness so that you can finally forgive in Jesus' name. Thank God for healing the wounds that the original incident caused and declare that you are giving up the right to judge and punish.

12. Performing for the Critics

One day during my seven weeks of counseling, one therapist just asked me straight up: "What are the actual things in your life causing you anxiety?"

"Opinions," I told him without skipping a beat. "It's all the people telling me how they think I'm doing at my job." Today, everybody with a keyboard and an opinion gets to publicly talk about how they think I'm performing on social media.

I'd go out to the church lobby in between services and hear fifty people say, "Thank you, God has been using this church to change my life." But if I heard one criticism or one critique, I would take it so personally. I would play that criticism, critique, post or comment over and over and over in my mind, and my anxiety and depression would spiral out of control.

As a result, I started performing for people. I began trying to be the person people wanted me to be instead of the person God created me to be. Pretending isn't the only thing we need to stop. We also need to stop performing for the critics.

We won't ever be able to perform our way out of criticism, but we don't have to. Christ already did that for us

by going to the cross to pay the price for our sins! According to the Scripture, Christ already perfected us, which means we get to stop performing!

During my seven weeks of counseling I had to face up to the reality that no matter how well I performed, criticism was going to come. It took me several weeks of counseling to realize that I didn't have to keep giving so much worth and value to my critics. When I listened to the critics, my anxiety skyrocketed. When I listened to my Creator, the result was peace, joy, and confidence—which is what every single one of us wants. You just have to remind yourself which voice you are going to listen to.

13. Comparing Your Calling

There aren't many things in this world that pour gasoline on the anxiety and depression fire in my soul faster than comparison. Comparison leaves me feeling insecure. Not enough. Insignificant. Void of purpose. All the things that make me spiral down into the depths of depression. "Comparison," said Theodore Roosevelt, "is the thief of joy."

One of the practical takeaways from my seven weeks of counseling was how important high-quality sleep is for mental health. My problem was, I wasn't getting any. Sleep matters. It helps us battle anxiety and depression in big ways. We need to clean up our sleep, and the first way to do it is to put down the screens and stop scrolling an hour before bedtime.

I can't tell you how many days and nights I've lost joy and had to deal with depression because I spent time on social media comparing every aspect of my life to everyone else's highlight reel—not their real life. And yet, I compared my real life and low points to their high points. That is a recipe for depression. I have fallen victim to it more times than I care to admit. And the worst part is, those people and their calling have nothing to do with me and mine.

The next thing we need to do is remember our calling because the more we focus on our calling, the less we feel the need to compare. You are here for a reason. You are uniquely wired. You were created on purpose for a purpose. Your job is not to keep up with everyone else. Your job is to be who you are and do what you are here to do. Remind yourself, I can celebrate the callings of others, but I will walk in mine.

Part 4: Remember

14. God Is with You

The good news is, even when you feel like you are losing some battles, we know that God's already won the war. The final step in your fight for freedom from anxiety and depression is to talk about the three things you need to remember when it feels like this whole thing isn't working for you.

When you can get these statements not just in your head but also in your heart, you'll head back into the battlefield with so much confidence it'll shock you!

Truth #1: God Is with You—Even if You Can't Feel it

We know the feeling, don't we, when your soul feels so heavy that you don't want to get out of bed in the morning, when your heart aches, your stomach hurts, you feel lethargic, and you wonder if the pain will ever end.

Those days when everything feels wrong. We feel wrong about our sadness. We feel wrong about our depression. And then, to top it off, we feel wrong about even feeling wrong.

But even if you are at your absolute lowest point, let the God of the universe speak these words to you: *"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord Your God will be with you wherever you go"* (Joshua 1:9).

No matter how bad your anxiety or depression is, when we know our all-powerful Father is with us and has our backs, it changes everything. When we remember God is going with us, it changes the entire game. Suddenly this battle becomes a battle you can win. Not because you're strong enough but because your God is.

15. God is Working

The second truth you need to remember and get in the habit of preaching to yourself when you feel like you are losing ground is that God hasn't stopped working in your life. In our lower moments, it certainly feels like he has, doesn't it?

Scripture reminds us, *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose"* (Romans 8:28).

Did you catch that? The Bible says that God is working all things together for good. I know that's hard to believe, especially in the middle of all your anxiety and depression. When your emotions are all over the place, it feels impossible that God is at work. But *all things* means *all things*.

Truth #2: God is Working—Even if You Can't See It

I called out for a miracle that day on the side of the highway, and guess what—nothing happened. At least from my vantage point. My friends still had to pick me up and take my guns. I still had to take a leave of absence and go to weeks of counseling. In that moment, I didn't feel like anything was happening.

But I can look back on my situation in the rearview mirror of my life and see that I was dead wrong. God was doing more miracles than I could've imagined. Don't you ever forget that God is on the move.

16. God Has a Plan

In the middle of the fight, when it feels like we are losing just as much ground as we are gaining, it can feel almost impossible to believe this final truth. But it's God's truth, so no matter how we feel at any given moment, we have to learn how to stand on it.

Truth #3: God Has a Plan—Even if You Can't Understand it

In his Word, God reminds us, *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'"* (Jeremiah 29:11).

But let's be honest—in the middle of the storm, it's so easy to lose sight of that truth. Hopefully by now you see why Paul put such an emphasis on us learning how to stand firm on these truths. Just because something is true doesn't mean we are always going to believe it. When anxiety and depression attack, they try to convince us to ignore God's truths.

This third truth isn't impacted by our circumstances. It doesn't change when we have a bad day. So sometimes we need to put aside our temporary feelings and stand on God's permanent truths!

I need you to see this right now. I need to encourage you or your loved one right now. *Just because you can't see what God is up to doesn't mean he doesn't have a plan.* Remember, you may not be able to see it, but his plan is in motion.

Anxiety and depression are going to attack, but now you are armed with some life-changing, freedom-finding, and God-given weapons to attack back. It's time to step into the arena and go to battle. Even if you've taken a few hits and want to give up, it's time to remember who you are and who is fighting with you. Don't you dare throw in the towel. Don't you dare give up. And don't you ever forget these three truths:

1. **God is with you**—even if you can't feel it.
2. **God is working**—even if you can't see it.
3. **God has a plan**—even if you can't understand it.

Conclusion

Your Time to Live is Now!

After two weeks of prayer and worship in Alabama and then seven weeks of intensive counseling and therapy out of state, I finally made it home to Denver. It felt amazing to get home and be with my family again, and I took a few more months off work to slowly reintegrate back into the real world.

One of the best decisions I made after returning home was to find an amazing counselor to meet with once a week. I felt so much healthier and stronger than I'd ever thought I'd be. However, I was still far from perfect. I still did (and still do) have bad days and moments where I felt anxiety and depression tugging on my shirttail. And every time those feelings crept back up, my only thought was, *I'm not fixed yet.*

The principles in this book will help you get healthier.

But notice the language I just used. I didn't say they will help you get *healthy*; I said they will help you get *healthier*. That may feel like a small change, but that small change made a world of difference for me.

When I was away, people in my life would say things like, "I can't wait until your done with counseling and you're healthy." And these statements would cause me

to panic. Healthy is an endgame. It's a finish line. And it was an unrealistic pressure for me. If I had to be perfect before I left inpatient counseling, I wouldn't have ever left. And if I had to be fixed before I returned to work, I would be unemployed.

When you talk to people who struggle with anxiety and depression, don't use the word *healthy*—use *healthier*.

Counseling will help you get *healthier*. The exercises in this book will help you get *healthier*. Putting in the hard work will help you get *healthier*. It is so important that we get this. You may not be where you want to be yet, but you also aren't where you used to be. You may be broken, but that doesn't mean you aren't getting better. If you are applying the principles in this book, you are getting *healthier* every day.

Whenever I go through a difficult season, I always remind myself that my pain will become my platform. Because anytime I go through a struggle, I also know I'm going to turn around and share the experience with those who struggle. That's the reason I wrote this book. God changes people's lives, and oftentimes he uses our stories to do it.

Don't let your pain become a prison—decide today that your pain will become your platform. And then watch as God opens up amazing experiences and incredible opportunities for you to help others by sharing your story and your life with the world. It's time to go live!

Appendix: Panic Attack Survival Guide

If you or your loved one is currently having a panic attack, putting together a long-term plan for freedom is probably not your top priority. Once things calm down, you can talk about winning the war, but first, you need to win the battle that is right in front of you.

I'm going to give you five things to do if you are having a panic attack and five things to do if you are trying to help a loved one through a panic attack.

For Yourself

The first thing you have to understand about panic attacks is that they happen in your mind and body. The body goes into fight or flight, and the mind spins faster and faster.

Step 1: Slow Your Breathing on Purpose.

I make my exhale slightly longer than my inhale.

Step 2: Change Your Scenery.

Go outside. Head to the gym. Pull over and get out of your car.

Step 3: Take Your Mind Somewhere Else.

If you can take your mind anywhere else, you'll stop feeling panic. Play a game on your phone. Read a book. My go-to is gratitude. I start telling God about all the things I'm grateful for.

Step 4: Stop Fighting.

When you attempt to fight off a panic attack, all you do is dig yourself deeper. So, *make friends* with it. "I understand you're here right now. I'm not happy about it, but I also know you're going to leave soon."

Step 5: Use Your Imagination.

Picture your panic as clouds in the sky slowly moving toward the horizon. Or as a train slowly passing you by. Tell yourself the anxiety you're not fighting against has decided to slowly leave, and then you're going to continue your day.

For a Loved one

How do you help a loved one through a panic attack? That's a skill we all should have. Because odds are, at some point in your life, someone you love will go through a panic attack. Here are five things you can do to help.

Step 1: Be Present.

Simply being there with them is of the utmost importance. The only thing worse than having a panic attack is having a panic attack by yourself. I call it *The Ministry of Presence*.

Step 2: Don't Pretend to Understand What You Don't Understand.

Don't give straight answers or quick-fix solutions that, in your mind, make sense. Because I promise you, that's not what they need. You don't have to know what they're going through to support them.

Step 3: Create a Safe and Judgment-Free Space.

Shame is one of the hidden enemies that will try to destroy your loved one during their attack. Let them know it's okay to struggle. Let them know panic is normal and it's not going to last forever. Let them know it's safe to express their feelings. They'll need to hear this over and over again.

Step 4: Remind.

There are three things they need to know: (1) They are not crazy. (2) They are not alone. (3) This will end. Repeat these three phrases over and over again. The CDC tells us that almost half of all Americans will struggle with something like this.

Step 5: Keep Showing Up.

Your presence is more valuable than you know. Your willingness to be present in the middle of your loved one's struggle can be a catalyst to helping them find more health, wholeness, and freedom than they ever thought possible.