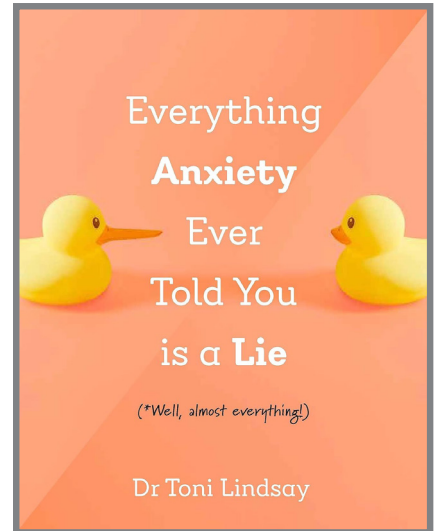


# Everything Anxiety Ever Told You is a Lie (\*well, almost everything!)

AUTHOR

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**RECOMMENDED FOR:** Lower to Upper Secondary

## SYNOPSIS

*Everything Anxiety Ever Told You is a Lie* is aimed at young people who are experiencing anxiety in their everyday lives, across the breadth of the anxiety spectrum. It emphasises that anxiety is completely normal, and something that can be managed by taking the steps that are right for you. The book contains practical, effective activities and exercises that each reader can apply to their own set of circumstances.

Experiencing anxiety can be overwhelming, especially at such a turbulent stage in life. *Everything Anxiety Ever Told You is a Lie* is specifically tailored for the stresses faced by the 14-25 age group, with concise, impactful chapters and strategies that can be realistically applied even in a busy and changeable time of life. Themes include management of uncertainty, values-based living and identifying meaning and purpose.

Anxiety affects a huge number of people, and it is not something that you have to ignore or push down. This guide is full of expert advice on not just coping with anxiety, but truly managing it, to minimise its symptoms and its effect on your everyday life.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Toni Lindsay is a qualified clinical psychologist who has been working with both adults and adolescents for over ten years. She works at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse in the Oncology and Haematology departments and has a special interest in the care of adolescents and young adults with cancer. She is an AHPRA approved supervisor and works predominately from an Acceptance and Commitment Therapy framework. Her first book was titled *Cancer, Sex, Drugs and Death* (Australian Academic Press, 2017) and focused on the psychological management of young people with cancer. More recent titles include *The Cancer Companion* and *The Certainty Myth*, published by Exisle Publishing.

During more than fifteen years spent working clinically with adolescents and young adults, (primarily in the health context) Dr Lindsay has developed a unique perspective and understanding of the challenges of managing anxiety. She was inspired to write *Everything Anxiety Ever Told You is a Lie* after hearing from so many of her young cancer patients that there is nothing out there that speaks to them on the subject. She observes, 'Through my clinical practice with young people, anxiety is showing up more and more frequently. It is now rare that I will meet a young person who has not identified that anxiety has been a concern for them in the past.'

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE NOTES**

Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright AM operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and is widely published on children's literature, publishing history and Australian fiction. In 2011, she was the recipient of the CBCA (Qld Branch) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Queensland, in 2012, the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Australia, and in 2014, the QWC's Johnno Award. She is President of IBBY Australia and Deputy-Chair of the Australian Children's Laureate Foundation. In 2021, she was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia.

**STUDY NOTES****HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION****Anxiety**

- 'Anxiety is a natural and normal part of being alive. If we didn't have any anxiety at all, well, we probably wouldn't get out of bed in the mornings.' (p 19). Discuss the implications of this statement with your students.
- Lindsay uses the metaphor of waves in the ocean (pp 15–18) to describe anxiety and the possible ways we might confront it. She also describes trying to get rid of anxiety like holding a ball under water (p 23) or a tug of war (pp 26–27). Discuss these metaphors with students as examples of understanding anxiety.
- Is anxiety bad? (p 19)
- Lindsay lists some of the things that cause anxiety (pp 20–21). Encourage students to make their own list of things that make them anxious and then to discuss.
- Conduct the exercise suggested on p 25. Does this visualisation technique offer students a useful way of engaging with or dealing with their own personal anxiety?
- How can you get comfortable with discomfort? (pp 28–31).
- Encourage students to try Lindsay's stillness exercise (pp 30–31).
- What was the Avoidness Trap pp 32–35? Invite students to articulate what they learned in reading this chapter.
- Explain what 'Taking the dirt path' (pp 36–38) means in the context of this book?
- The five functions of the brain are discussed on pp 41–41 and, in particular, the 'amygdala'. Ask students to explain what the amygdala does.
- Thoughts are mental representations (p 44) that help you to make sense of the world like a map. Practise, with the class, the exercises relating to this and to the 'rational switch' that appear on pp 46–47 and pp 48–49.
- We are all different and how we experience anxiety is different, as well. Make a list of how anxiety appears to you (p 55).
- Lindsay has created a list of the 'guys' who might turn up at a party as well as Anxiety Guy (pp 58–59). Ask students to suggest any other 'guys' that might turn up at a party to alter the dynamics?
- In the chapter 'Friends vs enemies' (pp 61–66) Lindsay asks readers to consider how we form opinions about friends or enemies, and then to apply that to their understanding of anxiety regarding friendships. Discuss this concept with students.
- We learn about anxiety from those around us and they fall into categories such as:
  - Fixers
  - Talkers
  - Avoiders
  - Compounders
  - Deniers.

Discuss these categories and how they relate to you and those around you.

- Tell your own anxiety story (p 72) based on the points offered here.
- Make a list of the things Anxiety Guy gives you, and of the things he takes from you (pp 78–79). Then compare those lists.
- What is 'confirmation bias'? (p 84)
- Consider how it feels not to engage with Anxiety Guy (p 91). Make a list of those feelings.
- What is 'secondary anxiety'? (p 94)

- Practise the exercise on p 98, and write down a hard thing that happened to you and what you did about it.
- This chapter 'Right here, right now' (pp 102–108) contains several really important practical exercises about mindfulness: being 'present' and breathing exercise (p 103); tune into sounds around you (p 104); the big 5 (p 105); practical things (p 108); build a picture in your brain (p 108); doubling down (p 108); things that are important (pp 107–112). Practise each of these with students and discuss the outcomes.
- Practise the exercise regarding writing a list of what's stopping you 'doing important stuff'. (p 115). Consider smaller steps as opposed to larger goals in dealing with anxiety.
- Try to recall the advice offered regarding sleeping (pp 122–124).
- Try the 'Thanks Brain' exercise (p 129).
- 'Time spent thinking about a task is way higher than the time it will take to just do it.' (p 132). How true is this statement, in your experience?
- Practise the procrastination exercise on p 134.
- Practise the perfectionism exercise on p 139. Then, read about how Lindsay overcomes her desire for perfectionism when it is impeding her finishing something on p 140.
- Think about how we often wait for things to happen and how this often prevents things happening at all!
- Discuss the idea of self-compassion and how it applies to your life.
- Discuss the concept of 'Kindness Guy' (p 146).
- Write a letter to yourself outlining who you are and where you are going as seen on p 147.
- Do the final quiz about how this book has changed your perceptions on p 148.
- Give students the checklist on pp 150–157, to recap on everything they've covered in reading this book.
- Lindsay reminds readers that 'You are awesome' (p 159). Discuss with students whether they feel awesome and if not, why?
- Reading fiction or graphic novels can offer another window into resolving anxiety through the eyes of fictional characters. Many young adult fictions deal with teenage anxiety. Read and discuss some of them with your class.

### Survival Skills

- This book is about surviving anxiety and making it a positive influence in your life. Make a personal list of survival strategies you've learned in this book.

### FOMO (Fear of Missing Out)

- Human beings are social creatures, but with social media there is even more pressure to form part of a group and 'work really hard to ensure that we aren't excluded' (p 11). The danger inherent in this is that we can't always fit into a group (due to being unsuited to its values) and sometimes we are actively excluded from that group (eg. cyber bullying, etc.) leading to further anxiety. FOMO is a term used to describe this type of anxiety. Sometimes missing out is a positive thing as it is missing something you don't necessarily enjoy or wish to be part of. Teenagers often feel that they have to participate in activities or to attend parties or to join social media groups when they don't actually want to. Discuss the concept of 'missing out'.

### Health & Nutrition (including Mental Health)

- How does nutrition or general physical health, including regular exercise, impact on mental health? Do some research before answering and discussing this topic.
- This book makes it clear that good sleeping habits contribute to lowering anxiety. It also suggests that screen time before sleep can be detrimental to a good night's sleep. Discuss sleep with students and how they ensure that they enjoy enough uninterrupted sleep each night.

### Mindfulness

- Discuss the concept of mindfulness with students.
- Conduct some simple mindfulness exercises with them.

### ENGLISH (LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, LITERACY)

- Consider the book's title and read the blurb on the back cover. Then write a new blurb and give the book a different title.

**Style and Structure**

- Expository writing can be structured to engage a reader in a very direct manner. Opening and closing sentences to chapters provides a structure and entices the reader to read on and engage with the text. How does the author use questions and rhetorical statements to cement her messages in both the opening and closing sentences, and in the body of this text?

**Literary Devices**

- Even in non-fiction, writers use literary devices such as similes, metaphors and humour to convey their messages. How does Lindsay use such devices to convey information?

**VISUAL ARTS**

- Examine the cover (featuring two rubber ducks) which might lead your students to form some perceptions of what the book is about.
  - Discuss the perceptions they formed before, and then how they changed after reading it.
  - Ask them to design a new cover for the book.
- Invite students to respond to some of the exercises visually, instead of with a written response.

AUTHOR OF NOTES

**DR ROBYN SHEAHAN-BRIGHT AM**