

MAKE 2026 THE YEAR YOU FINALLY

Get Control of Your Anxiety

The 8 Types of Self-Sabotage That Keep You Stuck in Anxious Patterns

(and How to Go Beyond Anxiety Once & For All)

A Guide from Dr. Jud Brewer

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GOINGBEYONDANXIETY.COM

The Core Shift: Anxiety as a Habit

As a reader (or app user) of Unwinding Anxiety, you know that most people think about anxiety all wrong.

“It’s not a defect. It’s a design.”

For decades, we've treated anxiety like a condition — something to be **medicated or meditated** away. Pop a pill. Download an app. Breathe through it. And when those don't work? Try harder. Keep searching for the magic fix.

But what if anxiety isn't a condition at all? What if it's a habit?

If you're reading this, you're familiar with the "Three Gears" and how they use the latest neuroscience to work with your brain instead of against it to manage your anxiety. But if the anxiety is still there, it's not because you're broken, weak, or doing something wrong. There are a few hidden habits that are keeping you stuck in anxiety.

Trigger → Behavior → Reward

This is the habit loop. It's how your brain learns everything — from tying your shoes to worrying at 3am.

When you feel uncertain (Trigger), you worry (Behavior). Worrying *feels* like you're doing something productive — like you're solving a problem or staying safe. That feeling of "doing something" is the Reward. So your brain keeps the loop running.

You don't need another treatment to fix you. You need to understand your habits.

My lab at Brown University has spent decades mapping how these loops work in the brain, and the simple, three-step framework that you know as "The Three Gears" has helped over 100,000 people break the cycle. But not everyone gets it right away...

The Science Behind the Three Gears

Quick recap of the gears:

"You have to engage the gears in order."

First Gear: Map the Loop

You can't change what you can't see. Most of us are stuck inside the loop, spinning. First Gear is stepping out and mapping the parts:

Trigger: What set this off? (A thought, a sensation, an email?)

Behavior: What did I do? (Worry, scroll, eat, procrastinate?)

Reward: What did I get? (Brief distraction? A sense of control?)

Mapping your habits also creates "psychological distance" between you and the habit, a key first step towards change.

Second Gear: Tap Into Disenchantment

Willpower fails because your brain only abandons a behavior when it stops finding it rewarding. Second Gear is about asking: **"What am I actually getting from this?"**

Don't think about the answer. *Feel* it. Does worrying actually solve the problem? Or does it just make your chest tight and your mind race? When you feel the "yuck" of the anxiety habit, your brain naturally starts to let it go. We call this disenchantment.

Third Gear: The Bigger Better Offer (BBO)

Your brain needs a better option. You can't just "stop" worrying; you have to replace it with something more rewarding.

Curiosity feels better than anxiety. Kindness feels better than self-judgment. Third Gear is about leaning into these expansive states. When you replace "Oh no!" with "Ohhh?!", you're giving your brain a Bigger Better Offer.

THE CLINICAL REALITY

In our clinical trials, this 3-step method reduced anxiety symptoms by 67%. It works. But only if you take your foot off the brakes.

The 8 Self-Sabotage Patterns

If the science is so simple, why is anxiety still here?

"We have the engine. What's stopping us?"

After working with thousands of people, I've found that it's rarely because the method doesn't work. It's like having a new car to drive, but unknowingly **keeping our foot on the brake**, sabotaging ourselves despite our best efforts. Here are the 8 most common traps.

01

SELF-CRITICISM

We judge ourselves for being anxious. "I should be better than this." or "I'll never change." But self-judgment contracts the brain and shuts down learning. You cannot shame yourself into changing, and it keeps you stuck in the same patterns.

02

ANXIETY AS IDENTITY

We say "I am anxious" instead of "I am having an anxious thought." When you identify with the feeling, you defend it. It may even be scary to think about life without worrying and fear, and that becomes sub-conscious resistance and self-sabotage.

03

BYPASSING SECOND GEAR

We may become more aware of anxious thoughts and feelings, but immediately try to force them away with new tools like RAIN or meditation. We reduce the anxiety in the moment but have not changed the habit — sometimes called the "First to Third Gear faceplant." What we resist, persists.

04

BODY DISCONNECTION

We often live as "disembodied heads," ignoring the physical signals of anxiety until they become panic. If the feelings of anxiety are too uncomfortable, or we don't practice exploring our inner sensations ("somatic awareness") we miss valuable information our brain needs to change.

The 8 Self-Sabotage Patterns (Continued)

05

CAUGHT UP IN THOUGHTS

"Metacognition" is the ability to observe our own thinking. Without it, we fuse with every worry thought that passes by, and we're unable to notice anxious thoughts as they pop up and before they wind us into a tight anxiety spiral.

06

OVER-INTELLECTUALIZING

The "Smart Person's Trap." You understand the concepts perfectly, but insight without practice never translates into wisdom (and behavior change.) You treat anxiety as a puzzle to solve rather than a feeling to feel. Anxiety exists at the deepest level, and we can't out-think it.

"You can't read the label from inside the bottle."

07

IMPATIENCE

We all want things to happen quickly - that's a normal human desire! But worry habits that have been building for years or even decades take time to unwind and change. And it's never a straight line; there will be good days and bad days, but every new day is an opportunity to practice and build your "disenchantment databank."

08

IMPERFECT PRACTICE

I've worked with people who have read the book cover to cover and used the app for months, but still miss one or two crucial concepts. That can lead to practicing the wrong thing (and pushing the "brakes") when a little bit of direct guidance would make all the difference and reinforce the right habits.

THE TRUTH ABOUT PATTERN #8

You can't read the label when you're inside the bottle. This is why books and apps often fail — they can give you the information, but they can't tell you when you're applying it incorrectly.

This is also why the gap between *understanding* and *doing* can feel overwhelming. You know the concepts. You've read the book. But applying them to your specific situation, in the moment, at 3am — that requires someone to help you see what you can't.

What's Beyond Anxiety?

Getting control of your anxiety is the first goal - but it's not the only goal. There is something that exists on the other side of anxiety: **flourishing**.

“Reclaim the energy you spend on worry.”

Anxiety is expensive. It burns a tremendous amount of cognitive fuel. It keeps your body in a state of high alert, exhausting your adrenals and clouding your thinking.

When you unwind that loop, you get your energy back.

I've seen people who came to me for anxiety discover that their entire lives shifted. When they stopped feeding the worry habit, other things started to change:

- **Confidence:** They stopped second-guessing every email and conversation.
- **Presence:** They could actually listen to their partner or play with their kids without mentally being somewhere else.
- **Creativity:** When your brain isn't scanning for threats, it's free to make new connections.
- **Joy:** Not the manic "happiness" of a good mood, but the deep, quiet joy of being comfortable in your own skin.



I came here to stop panic attacks. I didn't expect to fall in love with my life again.

— GBA PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

This is what is waiting on the other side of the work. Once you take your foot off the brake, everything starts to flow.

But that often requires a guide.

How to Actually Go Beyond Anxiety

Many of you started this journey with **Unwinding Anxiety** — whether the book or the original app. You learned the core concepts, mapped your loops, and perhaps even used the daily guidance. **That was the foundation.**

“The practice has evolved.”

But as we saw with Pattern #8, knowing the method isn't the same as mastering it. You need an environment that helps you practice correctly, gives you feedback in the moment, and holds you accountable.

My new program **Going Beyond Anxiety (GBA)** is that environment. I've taken everything that worked in the original program and rebuilt it for 2026.

Unwinding Anxiety is still a good program, and if it's working for you - great!

But if you're ready to take it to the next level, **Going Beyond Anxiety** has:

- **All new lessons** that include the latest research from the past five years (including curiosity, shame, predictive processing, and more) that you can do at your own pace.
- **Daily guidance** personalized to you and where you are in the program and in your anxiety-to-flourishing journey. Always know exactly what to do with a morning check-in just for you.
- **New practices and tools** targeted to your specific anxiety triggers and habits, based on what's worked for tens of thousands of others like you
- **24/7 support** via personalized Learning Assistants to address each of the "8 Brakes" and help you make consistent progress
- **Accountability Cohorts** for your specific anxiety habit loops
- And a new supportive online community and optional weekly calls

Ready for your 2026 reset?

Join Going Beyond Anxiety with founding member access — exclusively for Unwinding Anxiety users.

goingbeyondanxiety.com

Dr. Judson Brewer is a physician-scientist, New York Times bestselling author of "Unwinding Anxiety" and "The Craving Mind," and director of research and innovation at Brown University's Mindfulness Center.

Going Beyond Anxiety is not therapy — it's an evidence-based approach that gives you the skills to control your anxiety, not just talk about it.