



Syracuse Integrative Psychiatry

Comprehensive care. Transformative outcomes.

ANXIETY DEEP DIVE SERIES • PART 6

The Architecture of Avoidance

MAPPING THE SHRINKING WORLD

The Cost of Comfort

Avoidance is the fuel of anxiety. Every time we avoid a feared situation (skipping the party, not making the phone call, procrastinating on the email), we get a hit of relief. This relief reinforces the anxiety, teaching the brain: "That was dangerous, and I survived because I avoided it."

Over time, this builds an **Architecture of Avoidance**—a fortress of walls that keeps anxiety out but also keeps life out.

Identifying Your Walls

We avoid in many ways:

- **Overt Avoidance:** Not going places, not seeing people.
- **Subtle Avoidance:** Going, but staying on your phone, avoiding eye contact, or drinking to cope.
- **Procrastination:** Avoiding the discomfort of starting a task.

Mapping Your Fortress

1. What have you stopped doing because of anxiety?

2. What are your "safety behaviors" or subtle avoidances? (Things you do to just barely get through)

3. If these walls were taken down, what would you be free to do?