



Syracuse Integrative Psychiatry

Comprehensive care. Transformative outcomes.

ANXIETY DEEP DIVE SERIES • PART 9

The Courage to Be

EXISTENTIAL ANXIETY

The Dizziness of Freedom

Søren Kierkegaard famously called anxiety "the dizziness of freedom." He argued that anxiety is not just a biological glitch, but a fundamental part of the human condition. It arises because we are free beings who must make choices, and every choice carries the risk of being wrong.

This type of anxiety—**Existential Anxiety**—is actually a sign of your potential. It is the vertigo you feel when standing at the cliff edge of your own possibilities.

The Courage to Be

Paul Tillich wrote about "The Courage to Be"—the bravery to affirm one's own existence and make choices despite the lack of guarantees. Anxiety is the price of admission for a meaningful life. A life without anxiety is a life without risk, growth, or freedom.

Reframing Anxiety as Potential

1. Where in your life are you facing a "cliff edge" of choice or change?

2. If this anxiety was actually excitement about your potential, how would that shift your perspective?

3. What is one small act of courage you can take today to affirm your existence?

The Turning Point: Practice This Week

The "As If" Action

Existential anxiety often paralyzes us. We wait to feel "ready" or "confident" before we act. The turning point comes when we realize courage is an action, not a feeling.

The 5-Minute Courage Experiment

Choose one small action you have been avoiding because you don't feel "ready" (e.g., making a phone call, writing a paragraph, signing up for a class).

1. **Set a timer for 5 minutes.**
2. **Act "as if" you are confident.** For just 5 minutes, embody the version of yourself who is capable and decisive. Posture, breath, action.
3. **Stop when the timer goes off.** Notice: Did the world end? Did you survive the discomfort?

"We do not think our way into right action, we act our way into right thinking."

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