



Syracuse Integrative Psychiatry

Comprehensive care. Transformative outcomes.

ANXIETY DEEP DIVE SERIES • PART 10

Expansion & Willingness

MAKING ROOM

The Expansion Practice

When we feel anxiety, our instinct is to contract—to curl up, tighten, and make ourselves small. **Expansion** is the counter-instinctual practice of opening up around the feeling.

Imagine your anxiety is a drop of red dye. If you drop it into a shot glass (a contracted body/mind), the water turns deep red. If you drop it into a lake (an expanded body/mind), the dye is still there, but it disperses. The water remains clear.

Willingness Dial

Willingness is not wanting. You don't have to want anxiety. You just have to be willing to have it in order to do what matters. Imagine a dial from 0 to 10. If your willingness to feel anxiety is at 0, your life shrinks to 0. If your willingness is at 10, your life expands to 10.

Practicing Expansion

1. Current Contraction: Notice where you are tight or closed off right now.

2. The Breath: Take a deep breath and imagine your body expanding outward in all directions, making room for whatever sensations are present.

3. The Willingness Question: "Am I willing to feel this discomfort in order to live a rich and meaningful life?" (Yes/No)

The Turning Point: Practice This Week

The "Yes" Breath

We spend so much energy saying "No" to our feelings (tensing, distracting, worrying). This week, we practice the radical act of saying "Yes."

The Practice

When you feel a wave of anxiety or stress hitting you:

1. **Pause and Locate:** Find where the feeling is strongest in your body (chest, stomach, throat).
2. **Breathe INTO it:** Instead of shallow breathing, send your breath directly into the center of that sensation. Imagine the breath opening up space around it.
3. **Say "Yes":** On the exhale, silently say "Yes." You are not saying yes to the story (e.g., "I'm going to fail"), you are saying yes to the sensation (e.g., "I am willing to feel this flutter in my chest").
4. **Repeat 3 times.**