

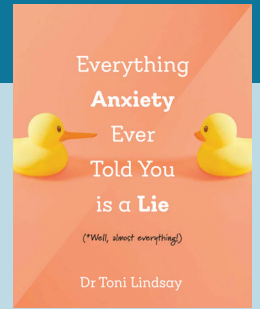


**Title:** Everything Anxiety Ever Told You Is A Lie | **Subtitle:** \*Well, almost Everything

**Author:** Dr Toni Lindsay | **ISBN:** 978-1-922539-99-1

**Key Curriculum Areas:** Health and Physical Education; English (Language, Literature, Literacy); Visual Arts

**Teacher notes by:** Robyn Sheahan-Bright



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## INTRODUCTION

*'Sometimes, the stuff that our brain tells us is a lie.*

*All those thoughts, all that stuff that happens in there, well sometimes they are lies.'* (p 1)

*Everything Anxiety Ever Told You Is a Lie* is a practical and therapeutic guide to managing anxiety, written specifically for those aged 14–25 by a psychologist with over 15 years of experience working with adolescents and young adults. It contains concise, impactful chapters and strategies that can be realistically applied even in a busy and changeable time of life. In this guide, themes include management of uncertainty, identifying purpose and values-based living – each section in this book will help young adults minimise anxiety's impact on their life.

*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. 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 10 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.'

## KEY STUDY TOPICS AND THEMES

### HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

In each chapter of this book, information is provided with key exercises to encourage students to put into action the information being conveyed. These notes offer a guide to how teachers might navigate a first reading of the book.

#### Anxiety

- **Discussion Point:** '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.
- **Discussion Point:** 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.
- **Discussion Point:** Is anxiety bad? (p 19)
- **Discussion Point:** 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.
- **Activity:** Conduct the exercise suggested (p 25) of describing how your anxiety 'looks' to you. Does this visualisation technique offer students a useful way of engaging with or dealing with their own personal anxiety?
- **Discussion Point:** How can you get comfortable with discomfort? (pp 28–31)
- **Activity:** Encourage students to try Lindsay's stillness exercise (pp 30–31).
- **Discussion Point:** What was the Avoidance Trap? (pp 32–35) Invite students to articulate what they learned in reading this chapter.
- **Discussion Point:** Explain what 'Taking the dirt path' (pp 36–38) means in the context of this book?

- **Discussion Point:** The five functions of the brain are discussed (pp 41–41) and, in particular, the ‘amygdala’. Ask students to explain what the amygdala does.
- **Discussion Point:** 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 (pp 46–47) and (pp 48–49).
- **Activity:** We are all different and how we experience anxiety is different, as well. Make a list of how anxiety appears to you (p 55).
- **Discussion Point:** 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?
- **Discussion Point:** 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 about friendships. Discuss this concept with students.
- **Discussion Point:** We learn about anxiety from those around us and they fall into categories such as fixers, talkers, avoiders, compounders and deniers (pp 68–69). Discuss these categories and how they relate to you and those around you.
- **Activity:** Tell your own anxiety story (p 72) based on the points offered here.
- **Activity:** 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.
- **Discussion Point:** What is ‘confirmation bias’? (p 84)
- **Discussion Point:** Consider how it feels not to engage with Anxiety Guy (p 91). Make a list of those feelings.
- **Discussion Point:** What is ‘secondary anxiety’? (p 94)
- **Activity:** Practise the exercise to write down a hard thing that happened to you and what you did about it (p 98).
- **Activities:** This chapter ‘Right here, right now’ (pp 102–108) contains several really important practical exercises about mindfulness: being ‘present’ and breathing exercise (p103); 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.
- **Activity:** Practise the exercise regarding writing a list of what’s stopping you ‘doing important stuff’. (p 115)
- **Activity:** Consider smaller steps as opposed to larger goals in dealing with anxiety. (p 118)
- **Activity:** Try to recall the advice offered regarding sleeping. (pp 122–124)
- **Activity:** Try the ‘Thanks Brain’ exercise. (p 129)
- **Discussion Point:** ‘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?
- **Activity:** Practise the procrastination exercise. (p 134)

- **Activity:** Practise the perfectionism exercise. (p 139) Then read about how Lindsay overcomes her desire for perfectionism when it is impeding her finishing something. (p 140)
- **Discussion Point:** Think about how we often wait for things to happen (p 142) and how this often prevents things happening at all!
- **Discussion Point:** Discuss the idea of self-compassion (p 145) and how it applies to your life.
- **Discussion Point:** Discuss the concept of 'Kindness Guy'. (p 146)
- **Activity:** Write a letter to yourself outlining who you are and where you are going. (p 147)
- **Activity:** Do the final quiz about how this book has changed your perceptions (p 148)
- **Activity:** Give students the checklist (pp 150–157) to recap on everything they've covered in reading this book.
- **Discussion Point:** Lindsay reminds readers to remember that 'You are awesome' (p 159). Discuss with students whether they feel awesome and if not, why not?
- **Discussion Point:** Reading fiction 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. [See Bibliography.]
- **Discussion Point:** Graphic novels are another form of reading that students might engage in with regards to anxiety. [See Bibliography.]

### Survival Skills

- **Activity:** 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 reading this book, based on the advice it has offered.

### FOMO (Fear of Missing Out)

- **Discussion Point:** 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) 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)

- **Discussion Point:** How does nutrition or general physical health, including regular exercise, impact on mental health? Do some research before answering and discussing this topic.
- **Activity:** 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

- **Discussion Point:** Discuss the concept of mindfulness with students.
- **Activity:** Conduct some simple mindfulness exercises with them.

## ENGLISH (LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, LITERACY)

This text might also be used as a model for English and creative non-fiction writing.

### Title and Blurb

- **Discussion Point/Activity:** 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

- **Discussion Point:** Expository writing can be structured to engage a reader in a very direct manner. Opening and closing sentences to chapters provide a structure and entice the reader to read on and to 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

- **Discussion Point:** 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

Visual Arts may offer another useful approach to the concepts explored in this book.

### Cover

- **Discussion Point/Activity:** 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. Then design a new cover for the book.

### Visual Responses

- **Activity:** Invite students to use some of the exercises in this book but to draw their responses instead of writing them.

## FURTHER READING

### Young Adult Fiction

These titles might be used selectively in conjunction with these Teachers' Notes.

Aoyama, Michiko, *What you are looking for is in the library*, Transl. by Alison Watts. Doubleday, 2020.

Betts, A. J., *One Song*, Pan Macmillan, 2023.

Fornasier, Kylie, *The Things I Didn't Say*, Penguin Books, 2016.

Gale, Emily, *The Goodbye Year*, Text Publishing, 2022.

Kenwood, Nina, *Unnecessary Drama*, Text Publishing, 2022.

Musgrove, Marianna, *The Worry Tree*, Random House Australia, 2012.

Salinger, J.D., *The Catcher in the Rye*, Penguin UK, 1994, 1951.

Weetman, Nova, *The Secrets We Keep*, UQP, 2016.

Weetman, Nova, *The Secrets We Share*, UQP, 2017.

Wood, Fiona, *Six Impossible Things*, Pan Macmillan, 2010.

Wood, Fiona, *How to Spell Catastrophe*, Pan Macmillan, 2022.

### Graphic Novels

Elliot, Ruby, *It's All Absolutely Fine Life is Complicated So I've Drawn It Instead*, Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2017.

Fung, Rosena, *Living with Viola*, Annick Press, 2022.

Hale, Shannon and Pham, LeYuen, *Real Friends (Friends 1#)*, First Second, 2017.

Hale, Shannon and Pham, LeYuen, *Best Friends (Friends 2#)*, First Second, 2019.

Hale, Shannon and Pham, LeYuen, *Friends Forever (Friends 3#)*, First Second, 2021.

Telgemeier, Raina, *Guts*, Scholastic, 2019.

Tung, Debbie, *Everything is Okay*, Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2022. (Memoir)

Tung, Debbie, *Quiet Girl in a Noisy World*, Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2017. (Memoir)

### Further Non-fiction Resources for Secondary Students and Teachers

[See List of References (pp 160–161) in this book.]

Goff, Sissy, *Brave: A Teen Girl's Guide to Beating Worry and Anxiety*, Bethany House Publishers, 2021.

Morgan, Nicola, *No Worries: How to Deal with Teenage Anxiety*, Walker Books, 2023.

### Internet Resources

['Anxiety' healthdirect](#)

[Australian Curriculum \(Version 8.4\)](#)

['Mindfulness' healthdirect](#)

['Mindfulness' Psychology Today](#)

['Mindfulness and Meditation Teaching Resources' Cool Australia](#)

['Understanding Anxiety – for friends and family' headspace](#)

['What is Anxiety?' Psychology Today](#)

['12 Anxiety Books for Teens \(Updated for 2023\)' Now Psych](#)

### 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.