

The Anxiety Cycle

How anxiety maintains itself — and the patterns that keep you stuck

What this workshop covers

- Workshop 1 answered: what is anxiety and why does the brain produce it?
- Workshop 2 answers: how does anxiety sustain itself — and what keeps the cycle going?
- Six modules covering stress vs. anxiety, avoidance, thought traps, reframing, perfectionism, and exposure
- Each module builds on the last — but if you're starting here, everything you need is in this workshop
- By the end, you'll be able to see your own anxiety pattern — not just feel it

Module 1

Stress vs. anxiety

They feel similar. They are not the same thing — and the difference changes everything.

Stress ends. Anxiety loops.

- Stress is a response to something real, time-limited, and external — a deadline, a difficult conversation, an unexpected bill
- When the stressor resolves, stress resolves with it. The nervous system returns to baseline.
- Anxiety is different: it persists after the event, loops through what-ifs and worst cases, and generates its own fuel
- You can be anxious about anxiety itself — and many people are
- This distinction matters because the strategies that help with stress often don't touch anxiety

What stress and anxiety look like

Stress tends to be...

- Tied to a specific event or situation
- Proportionate to the trigger
- Relieved when the situation resolves
- Energizing in short bursts
- Locatable — you know what's causing it

Anxiety tends to be...

- Diffuse — not always attached to one thing
- Disproportionate to actual risk
- Persistent even after the trigger passes
- Draining over time
- Self-generating — one worry leads to another

Chronic stress as an anxiety incubator

- When stress is sustained over weeks or months, the nervous system loses its ability to return to baseline
- The body stays in a low-level alarm state — which is experienced as anxiety even when nothing specific is wrong
- This is extremely common in high-achieving, high-demand environments — work, caregiving, academic pressure
- The goal is not to eliminate stress — it's to recover faster and build the capacity to reset
- Recovery is a skill. Workshop 3 is where you build it.