

ANXIETY

CAN BE YOUR

SUPERPOWER



MARK D. OGLETREE, PH.D.
& BRAYDEN MCFADDEN

© 2025 Mark D. Ogletree and Brayden McFadden

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form whatsoever, whether by graphic, visual, electronic, film, microfilm, tape recording, or any other means, without prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief passages embodied in critical reviews and articles.

This material is neither made, provided, approved, nor endorsed by Intellectual Reserve, Inc. or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Any content or opinions expressed, implied or included in or with the material are solely those of the owner and not those of Intellectual Reserve, Inc. or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” Permission for the use of sources, graphics, and photos is also solely the responsibility of the author.

Paperback ISBN 13: 978-1-4621-4942-1

eBook ISBN 13: 978-1-4621-4943-8

Published by CFI, an imprint of Cedar Fort, Inc.

2373 W. 700 S., Suite 100, Springville, UT 84663

Distributed by Cedar Fort, Inc., www.cedarfort.com

Library of Congress Cataloging Number: 2025931920

Cover design by Shawnda Craig

Cover design © 2025 Cedar Fort, Inc.

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed on acid-free paper

CONTENTS

[MARK'S STORY](#)
[BRAYDEN'S STORY](#)

[INTRODUCTION](#)
[Anxiety as a Superpower](#)

[SUPERPOWER 1](#)
[High Levels of Motivation](#)

[SUPERPOWER 2](#)
[Empathy, Care, and Compassion](#)

[SUPERPOWER 3](#)
[The Spidey Sense](#)

[SUPERPOWER 4](#)
[The Analytical Mind](#)

[SUPERPOWER 5](#)
[The Nurturing Leader](#)

[SUPERPOWER 6](#)
[Self-Awareness](#)

[SUPERPOWER 7](#)
[Emergency Preparedness](#)

[SUPERPOWER 8](#)
[Being Healthy and Fit](#)

[SUPERPOWER 9](#)
[Resilience, Grit, and Moxie](#)

[SUPERPOWER 10](#)
[Becoming Your Best Self](#)

[CONCLUSION](#)
[A Little Inconvenience](#)

[ABOUT THE AUTHORS](#)

MARK'S STORY

Worry often gives a small thing a big shadow.

—SWEDISH PROVERB¹

My story with anxiety began when I was three years old. My father died from the lingering effects of a car accident, and it rattled my world. When a three-year-old loses his father, he also loses his sense of stability and certainty. Shortly after my father's death, I began to bite my fingernails—a nervous habit to be sure, and one that I have maintained until the present day. In elementary school, I became aware that I was a worry wart mainly because my mom often called me that. Ironically, my mom is the biggest worrier I know.

Throughout my childhood and adolescence, I became more aware of my worries and fears. Although they did not impair me, I certainly kept them hidden from everyone else. I still remember an experience in fifth grade. I wasn't feeling well during class, and I walked to the front of the classroom and told Mr. Acker, "I don't feel very well." My next memory was of my teacher and several students huddled over me, putting smelling salt in front of my nose. I had passed out in front of the entire classroom. My mom came to the school and immediately took me to the doctor's office. After a quick assessment, the doctor said he couldn't find anything wrong with me and told my mom I had hyperventilated. He taught me how to breathe in a brown paper sack in case that happened again. Looking back on that experience, I'm sure my fainting spell had something to do with anxiety.

As I transitioned from adolescence to adulthood, I was aware that I was a worrier. I had fears that I didn't express to anyone—not even my wife. I managed to worry about almost everything—the economy, our financial problems, war, terrorism, failing out of graduate school, and worst of all, losing one of our children. However, I noticed that the busier I was, the smaller the space I had to worry. I think that is one of the reasons I enjoyed being in graduate school so much. I worked full time while I obtained two master's degrees and then a doctorate degree. While I was in school and working, there was little room for worry and fear. Once I finished school in my mid-thirties, I found plenty to worry about.

Here is a metaphor for the way I view anxiety. All of our fears, stressors, and worries are being constantly poured into a large cup. If we can manage those fears and concerns, we can keep the cup about one-half full of our challenges. However, if we are too busy to engage in some form of self-nurturing and choose to ignore our stresses and worries, eventually, the cup will overflow. This is what happened to me in my early forties.

The First Wave

One morning, I was looking up on a shelf in my walk-in closet for some sweatpants and realized the room was spinning. I had no idea what was happening, so I returned to

bed, thinking I didn't get enough sleep. However, I was still dizzy thirty minutes later when I got out of bed, and the dizzy sensation remained with me for a few weeks, morphing into brain fog. Each day, I felt like I was on a heavy dose of cold medicine. The only hope that I found was that I usually felt fine after a good night's sleep. However, as the day wore on, the brain fog would set in, and I would spend most of my workday with this phenomenon. When I drove home from work at the end of the day, the fog would begin to lift, and I could enjoy a few hours of normalcy with my family before it was time to go to bed and repeat the same process the next day.

These symptoms caused me to visit several doctors. The first doctor, a family practitioner, wanted to simply treat me for vertigo by prescribing medicine. Unfortunately, the medicine only made me drowsy. I guess the treatment was to sleep through my dizziness. Second, I saw a neurologist, who recommended an MRI and wanted to test me for multiple sclerosis. Thankfully, he could find nothing wrong. Third, I visited a cardiologist who did a full work-up on my heart. Not surprisingly, he couldn't find anything wrong. I even visited an ear, nose, and throat specialist, and of course, he couldn't find anything wrong either. It was frustrating to live in this brain fog each day, and yet, not one medical professional could find anything wrong. I must have lived in this condition for a year or two. One day, my wife said, "Why don't you try a chiropractor? You have tried everything else, and nothing has worked." I thought, "Why not?"

The chiropractor seemed to have some answers. He believed my neck was misaligned and that a series of adjustments could help my brain be back to normal soon. Surprisingly, his treatment worked! Looking back on it now, I believe there was certainly a placebo effect—the chiropractor seemed to have answers, and his answers made sense. And, as a double bonus, I was feeling so much better. As he adjusted my spine and neck, my brain fog lifted! However, I realize now that the chiropractic treatment was only relaxing me. I would go to the chiropractor three times a week for several weeks, he they would massage my neck and back, and then he would do the adjustments. After a month of treatment, I felt better than ever. Did the chiropractic treatment really help, or was it the massage?

The Second Wave

My season of living without anxiety symptoms lasted for several years. It was wonderful! However, I was hit with a strong second wave, unlike anything I had previously experienced. By now, I was in my mid-forties. I retired from my job as an educator and was doing marriage and family therapy full time in my new practice. I was also the leader of my church congregation, which demanded many hours of my time. Furthermore, I was married to my wonderful wife, Janie, and we had eight busy children. We had five teenagers at the same time, and it was the most expensive time for our family, with children launching off to college, getting braces, driving, and participating in sports and music activities. Additionally, being self-employed for the first time caused some significant stress in my life. If I wasn't working in my office, we were not making any money. Vacations were stressful. First, I knew we were going to spend money, and second, while I was out of the office, we would not make a dime! So, I took every counseling appointment I could. I saw more than forty clients a week, working every day, including Saturday mornings. I was at the church all day on Sunday, as well as two nights

a week, in my role as a leader.

Looking back on these events, I can see that I was mega-stressed. One Saturday morning while I was visiting with a mother and her daughter in my counseling office, I began to experience a significant sensation like I had never felt before. I felt like I was dying. I had no control over my body, and I felt myself shutting down. Everything began to close in on me. It seemed like I was on the verge of passing out. A good friend of mine had died a few months before from a heart attack, and I felt like I was having my own cardiac episode.

I tried to compose myself. I wasn't sure what to say to my clients, but I finally admitted I wasn't feeling well and that I may vomit. That is a quick way to get people to clear a room! I abruptly ended our appointment so I could head to the restroom. My clients were kind and left quickly. I'm sure they assumed I had something contagious. I immediately called Janie and tried to explain what was happening. She tried to assure me that I had a flu bug. I tried to believe her—I wanted to believe her. But I felt this was much more serious, especially since I had never experienced this feeling before. I thought maybe I could gather myself and get my act together for my next appointment, which would have been twenty minutes later.

My next client came in, and I explained to him that I wasn't feeling well. I said I would try to power through our session but that we may have to reschedule. Sure enough, about ten minutes into our meeting, I began to experience the same sensation. I had no idea what was happening to me, but I felt I should get to a hospital quickly. I called Janie again, and this time we decided to call a friend, who was also a nurse, and get some counsel. She was unsettled enough to recommend that I go to a pharmacy and have my blood pressure checked. In those days, I didn't understand anything about blood pressure—I had no idea what those numbers meant. So, when I called the nurse back and gave her my blood pressure reading, she said, "Get to the emergency room immediately. You're going to have a stroke!" That got my attention.

My wife rushed me to our local hospital in Allen, Texas, and the doctors began to run some tests. Of course, they could find nothing wrong. Even my blood pressure that had been so high had come back down. Later, I was able to determine that I was having a panic attack and that the more I panicked, the more my blood pressure would spike. Nevertheless, at the time we didn't have any solid answers other than for me to go home and get some rest.

Unfortunately, over the course of the next few weeks, these symptoms continued. I felt like I was going to pass out. I was dizzy. I felt zapped of all energy and strength. I was jittery. I was hyper-alert and anxious. I felt cold—in fact, practically freezing. I had a hard time sleeping. I had no idea what was going on. I imagined that I was not going to live a long life because it was obvious that something drastic was wrong. During this time, there was a social event at our church. I remember walking in, and one of our dear friends saw me and said, "You look horrible." Although that was difficult to hear, I knew it was true. I was bothered that I could not conceal my problem as much as I thought I could.

One day, Janie came to my counseling office. We were going to go to lunch and figure out what to do with me. I had to take a phone call, so Janie sat in my office and began to thumb through some of my books. As she did so, she noticed a workbook that I used to help my anxious clients overcome their fears and worries. As she began to read, she

became aware of the answer to my problem. When I hung up the phone, she said, “I know what your problem is.”

I knew I had many problems, so I said, “Which one?”

She said, “Don’t be silly, you know exactly what I am talking about!” She then read to me all of the symptoms of anxiety and panic from the workbook. I had every symptom! I was a textbook case for a person with generalized anxiety disorder and panic disorder. However, my pride kicked in. At that time, I owned my own private practice. I was a congregational leader. I was the father of eight children. I had a doctorate degree. I couldn’t have anxiety—I treated people for anxiety! It took me some time to humble myself and admit that I did have anxiety.

Later I realized that I had an experience that had repeated several times long before I began to have these panic episodes. I would go through the same workbook Janie had picked up, reading the symptoms of generalized anxiety to one of my clients. As I read through those symptoms, I would quietly think to myself, “That is so funny. I have every one of these symptoms. It’s a good thing that I do not have anxiety.” Talk about denial.

Once we realized that I was dealing with anxiety, I felt a sense of relief that I did not have a serious medical problem. I got to work and started the exercises in the workbook that I used for my clients. I also had a good friend who was a therapist—we would often refer clients to each other. I asked him if I could have several visits to deal with my anxiety, and he graciously accommodated me. I also began to incorporate personal lifestyle changes, such as exercising more, eating healthier, losing weight, and getting more rest. I began to take days off work so I could have fun and enjoy my family. It worked! Life began to go well for several years, and then lightning struck for the third time.

The Third Wave

Janie and I had moved to Provo, Utah, where I had accepted a job as a professor at Brigham Young University. I was now in my late forties. Initially, I felt better physically than I had ever felt. The move from Texas to Utah would be a great way to push the “reset” button. However, moving to Utah and not being able to sell our Texas home (it was 2010 and the economy was horrible) was stressful. Moreover, I was also beginning a new job unlike any other I had ever had. We also moved from a place where we knew hundreds of people to somewhere where we knew very few. As I began my teaching career as a professor, I realized how stressful the life of a college professor can be if you are a task-oriented person like I am.

Within a week of the first semester, all of my anxiety symptoms returned with a vengeance. This time, I felt like I had to vomit each day. Sometimes I would go to a remote place on the campus where I could not be seen, hide behind a clump of trees, and vomit. I would compose myself, teach my classes, and then rinse and repeat the next day. I also felt so unsteady—practically wobbly—that I had to always hold on to the podium in our classroom for stability. This went on for several months. I knew that I had to get my life under control. I began to work on my problems again. I also received some therapeutic help. And this time, I decided that I would try medication. I couldn’t believe when I walked out of Costco with my prescription for Zoloft that it cost only five dollars. I thought to myself, “I’ve been struggling with this anxiety for almost seven years now. If I take this pill and it works, I’m actually going to be so mad that the solution was this

easy!”

The solution did work. I took the medication, and it helped immensely. I noticed that the anxious thoughts that plagued me almost daily subsided drastically. I was no longer dizzy or unstable. I wasn't cold, shaking, or nervous all day. And, since I was feeling so much better, I could exercise with greater intent and passion. I began to feel much better, and that trajectory continued. About six months later, I weaned myself off medicine and have never looked back.

I am now more than sixty years old. In many ways, my anxiety is behind me. I haven't had a panic attack or serious anxiety episode during the past ten years. Yes, occasionally I get overstressed, fearful, or nervous. However, I now have the tools necessary to combat my anxiety and live a healthy and normal life. I have enjoyed meeting with anxious clients and helping them by sharing with them what I have learned on my personal journey.

Along with Brayden, I look forward to sharing more of our anxiety experiences, some of the tools that have been helpful, and the ways anxiety can be viewed as a strength—even a superpower!

-
1. PsychCentral. Quotes about anxiety. Retrieved July 23, 2024, from <https://psychcentral.com/anxiety/quotes-about-anxiety#quotes-on-anxiety>

You've Just Finished your Free Sample

Enjoyed the preview?

Buy: <http://www.ebooks2go.com>