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Managing Stress and Anxiety: Turning Fear into Fuel

Stress and anxiety are part of being human, but they don't have to control your life. Instead of seeing them as obstacles, what if you viewed them as guides or cues? You can transform stress and anxiety into opportunities for growth through practical tools and personal insight.



Reframing Anxiety: An Invitation to Explore

When I was younger, anxiety often consumed me. It felt like a relentless wave pulling me under. But I began to notice something very profound. My anxiety was an invitation to tell me something important. It wasn't there to break me or to depress me. It arrived in my life to wake me up and to show me direction.

For example, I remember vividly the time I was asked to share my story in front of a group of ladies at a crisis center for the first time. My hands were trembling, my heart pounding, and my mind racing with "what ifs." But I realized this feeling wasn't just fear.....it was also excitement. Excitement and fear have the same similar feelings inside your body. Once I realized that I say my anxiety has pointing me toward something meaningful, something that mattered.

Here some reliction exercises for exercise you can try:

The next time anxiety arises, try this:

- 1.) Name it: Say out loud, "This is anxiety, and it's okay to feel this."
- 2.) Ask it a question: "What are you trying to show me right now?"
- 3.) Take a step: What is one small action I can take to move forward, even if it feels uncomfortable?



The Power of the Present Moment

Anxiety often pulls us into the past or the future, leaving us disconnected from the present. But the present moment is where peace lives.

My Personal Practice:

One summer, during a particularly stressful time, I went to the beach—a place that has always been my Zen sanctuary. Sitting there, I focused on the feeling of the sun on my skin, the sound of the waves crashing, and the sand between my toes. Slowly, my thoughts quieted. I realized the present moment was my anchor, the one place where anxiety couldn't reach me.

Grounding Exercise: If you feel overwhelmed, try this simple practice inspired by that day:

- 1) Look around and name 5 things you see.
- 2) Identify 4 textures you can touch (e.g., your clothes, a chair).
- 3) Listen for 3 sounds (birds, cars, or silence).
- 4) Notice 2 smells (coffee, flowers, or fresh air).
- 5) Take a deep breath and focus on 1 thing you can taste (even a sip of water).

This practice pulls you back to the here and now, breaking anxiety's grip.