

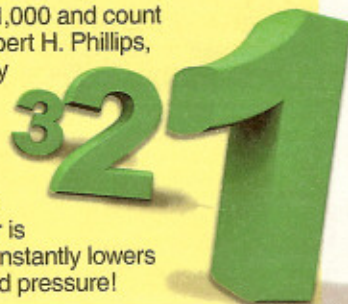
No more worrying!

7 easy little mind tricks that turn off anxiety

Whether it's meeting new people, speaking in front of a group or going on a job interview, everyone feels those nervous butterflies from time to time—but psychologists say you don't have to! Use these proven strategies to immediately feel more confident and less anxious in any situation!

1 Count backward!

Whenever you get nervous, just start at 1,000 and count backward—by sevens. Psychologist Robert H. Phillips, Ph.D., says refocusing on another activity that completely absorbs your mind immediately relaxes you. "Worrying about one thing and concentrating on another are incompatible," he explains. "Counting backward by sevens requires focus, which distracts you from whatever is making you anxious." In fact, he says, it instantly lowers your respiration rate, heart rate and blood pressure!



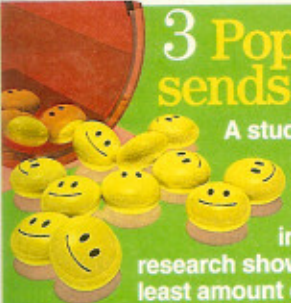
2 Have a mantra!

Choose an encouraging mantra like "I can handle this" and repeat it in your head whenever you have to do something that makes you nervous. Psychologists tell their patients to do this because it subconsciously instills courage and shuts down the body's threat response—regardless of whether the threat is real or imagined! Why? "After hearing it so many times, your brain will start to believe it, which calms your nervous system," explains psychologist Tina Tessina, Ph.D.



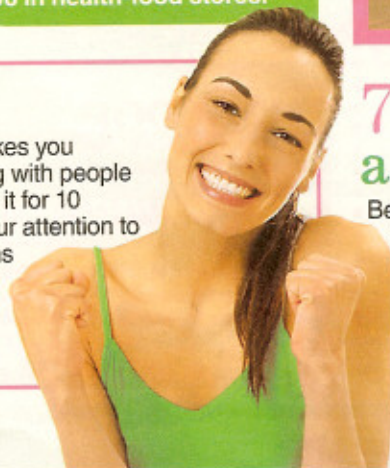
3 Pop the vitamin that sends worries packing!

A study finds people who boost their intake of inositol, a B vitamin, feel less anxious almost immediately. Why? It activates serotonin, a neurochemical involved in the brain's reaction to threat. And research shows those with the most anxiety have the least amount of serotonin! Look for inositol powder or capsules for as little as \$8 in health-food stores.



4 Make a fist!

When you have to do something that makes you nervous—meeting with the boss, chatting with people you don't know—simply make a fist, hold it for 10 seconds, then release. "This redirects your attention to something other than your worry," explains Debbie Mandel, author of *Addicted to Stress*. And tensing the hand muscles, then relaxing them, triggers the release of tension throughout the body!



7 Relax with a cup of tea!

Before you have to do something you're worried about, down a cup of green tea. Research shows that L-theanine, an amino acid found naturally in the brew, quickly boosts the production of brain-calming tryptophan and dopamine by more than 25% within just half an hour!



5 Change your ending!

When you're nervous about a situation, it's easy to envision it going wrong. But simply changing that visual picture to a positive one—say, getting the job or succeeding at something you try—makes it more likely to go that way! The reason: Research shows the brain can't tell the difference between false and real mental images. So replacing your negative image with an optimistic one instantly calms your brain and instills confidence, so you're better equipped to make that happy ending come true!

6 Write your worst-case scenario!



Jotting down the worst you believe can happen won't make you *more* anxious—it actually empowers you by shrinking your fears down to size! "The brain can quickly inflate the severity and impact of an actual situation, blowing it out of proportion," says Anna Maravelas, author of *How to Reduce Workplace Conflict and Stress*. "But by writing down on paper what you're afraid of and why, you'll clearly see that your worst-case scenarios are unlikely—and some may be plain ridiculous!"