

# Overcoming Anxiety in our Anxious World

April 15, 2020 | 5 Points Community Church

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Anxiety is the overestimation of danger and the underestimation of our ability to cope.

*Jessica Thompson<sup>1</sup>*

Said the robin to the sparrow,  
"I should really like to know,  
Why these anxious human beings  
Rush about and worry so."  
Said the sparrow to the robin,  
"Friend I think that it must be,  
That they have no Heavenly Father,  
Such as cares for you and me."

*The Robin and the Sparrow*

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## *Introduction:*

Anxiety is a big issue that affects and afflicts many of us. It is the #1 mental health issue Americans face outpacing even depression. Reports say that 1 in 5 Americans struggle with anxiety issues (roughly 65 million people).

[\*Dr. Tim Lane\*](#): In 2008, American physicians wrote more than 50 million prescriptions for specifically anti-anxiety medications and more than 150 million for antidepressants, many of which were used for anxiety-related conditions.

*All that being said, how can you as a church help those in your home and community?*

- How can we identify anxiety in the time of COVID-19? What does it look like? What does it feel like?
- How do we help ourselves, and how do we help others? How can we point our own hearts and the hearts of others to the God of all peace and beauty in this time?

<sup>1</sup> Jessica Thompson, *How To Help Your Anxious Teen: Discovering the Surprising Sources of Their Worries and Fears*, (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2019), 9.

Let's think through 4 categories together:



Fig. 1- Dr. Tim Lane [[What Causes Us to Worry?](#)]

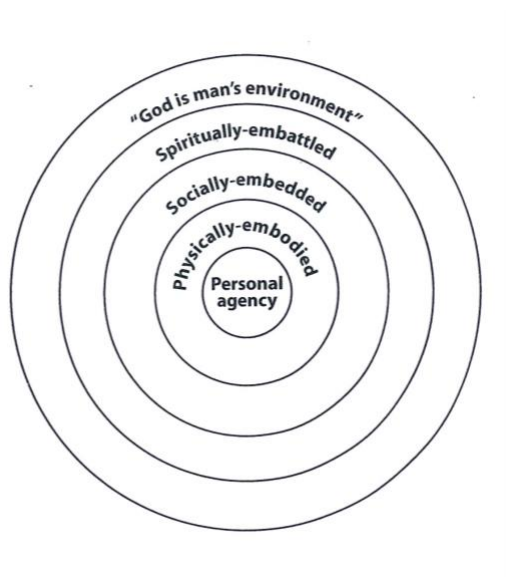


Fig. 2- Dr. David Powlison [[Psychiatric Disorders Conference](#)]

- *Physically embodied beings*
  - DSM-V: The anxiety and worry are accompanied with at least three of the following physical or cognitive symptoms (In children, only one symptom is necessary for a diagnosis of GAD):
    - Edginess or restlessness
    - Tiring easily; more fatigued than usual
    - Impaired concentration or feeling as though the mind goes blank
    - Irritability (which may or may not be observable to others)
    - Increased muscle aches or soreness
    - Difficulty sleeping (due to trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, restlessness at night, or unsatisfying sleep)
    - *For a description of other DSM-V anxiety disorders check out this [post](#) from Dr. Tim Lane.*
  
- *Emotional beings*
  - During this season of COVID it is helpful for us to be mindful of our emotions.
    - *Laura Hudson: [Four Steps to Understanding Your Emotions During COVID](#), Laura Hudson*
    - *Sarah Keene: [Responding to Your Kids' Emotions During the COVID-19 Crisis](#), Sarah Keene*
  
  - *Stephanie Manes, Gottman Institute: [Emotional Flooding](#)*
    - “Psychologist John Gottman explains this emotional hijacking as the hallmark of our nervous system in overdrive. Something happens — and it could be almost anything — in your interaction with your partner that sets off your internal threat-detection system. This is your sympathetic nervous system in action, preparing you for battle or flight. In this state, you lose some of your capacity for rational thought. Science describes this as a decrease of activity in your pre-frontal cortex, the center of higher cognition.”

- *Socially embedded beings*

- *Spiritually embattled*

### *When we are anxious, what is helpful?*

Psalm 94:17–19

[17] If the LORD had not been my help,  
my soul would soon have lived in the land of silence.

[18] When I thought, “My foot slips,”  
your steadfast love, O LORD, held me up.

[19] When the cares of my heart are many,  
your consolations cheer my soul. (ESV)

1. Listen and follow Scripture’s example

*Blaise Pascal*: What a vast distance there is between knowing God and loving him.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Malcolm Muggeridge, *A Third Testament: A Modern Pilgrim Explores the Spiritual Wanderings of Augustine, Blake, Pascal, Tolstoy, Bonhoeffer, Kierkegaard, and Dostoevsky*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 28.

2. Empathize with anxiety as suffering

*Brené Brown:* [Video on empathy](#)

3. Examine what kind of anxiety is at play

*David Dunham,* "[Confronting Anxiety's False Filters](#)"

4. Emotional/Physical exercises

*Eric Ravenscraft*: In reality, your brain and body get a lot out of talking.

When you are feeling very intense feelings — especially fear, aggression or anxiety — your amygdala is running the show. This is the part of the brain that, among other things, handles your fight or flight response. It is the job of the amygdala, and your limbic system as a whole, to figure out if something is a threat, devise a response to that threat if necessary, and store the information in your memory so you can recognize the threat later. When you get stressed or overwhelmed, this part of your brain can take control and even override more logical thought processes.

Research from U.C.L.A. suggests that putting your feelings into words — a process called “affect labeling” — can diminish the response of the amygdala when you encounter things that are upsetting. This is how, over time, you can become less stressed over something that bothers you. For example, if you got in a car accident, even being in a car immediately afterward could overwhelm you emotionally. But as you talk through your experience, put your feelings into words and process what happened, you can get back in the car without having the same emotional reaction.<sup>3</sup>

Tired	Overwhelmed	Distracted	Restless	Angry	Nervous	Unhappy
Depressed	Pessimistic	Blank/Empty	Fearful of others	Doubtful	Insecure	Stuck
Guilty	Guarded	Over-stimulated	Over-concern	Obsessive	Accused	Panic
Fretful	Discontented	Stressed out	Angsty	Moody	Difficulty focusing	Numb
Ashamed	Hyper-vigilant	Irritated	Exhausted			

a. Breathing and grounding exercises<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Eric Ravenscraft, “Why talking about our problems helps so much (and how to do it),” April 3, 2020, *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/03/smarter-living/talking-out-problems.html>. Accessed 13 April 2020.

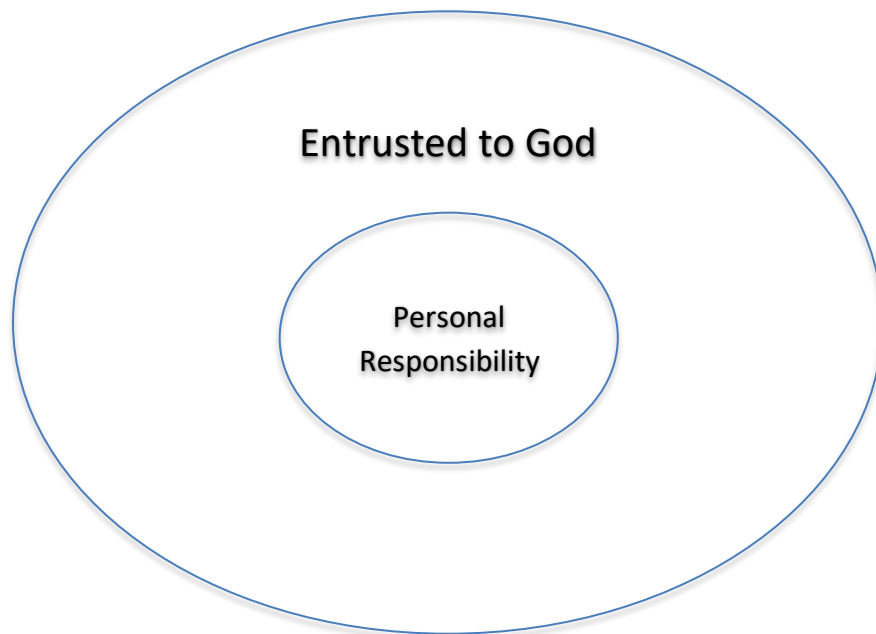
<sup>4</sup> David Dunham, “Using Anchors in Battling Anxiety,” April 9, 2019. <https://pastordaveonline.org/2019/04/09/using-anchors-in-battling-anxiety/>. Accessed 4 October 2019.

Eliza Huie: [Demo video](#)

5. Psalm 131 and the circles of responsibility

David Powlison, [“Peace, Be Still” Learning Psalm 131 by Heart](#)

a. Paul Tripp, circles of responsibility



6. A final word on suicide and anxiety

7. Jonathan D. Holmes, [“Practical Ways to Stay in Touch in a Season of Social Distancing”](#)

What can we do?

## *Resources & Sites:*

Fieldstone Counseling COVID Resources: <https://fieldstonecounseling.org/covid-19>

Christian Counseling Educational Foundation COVID Resources:  
<https://www.ccef.org/coronavirus/>

- Brad Hambrick, "[Sorting Through Our COVID Anxieties](#)"
- \_\_\_\_\_, "[Talking To Your Children about Coronavirus](#)"
- \_\_\_\_\_, "[Coronavirus and It's Emotional Strain](#)"
- \_\_\_\_\_, "[Maintaining Positive Morale During Quarantine](#)"
- Pierce Taylor Hibbs, *Struck Down But Not Destroyed: Living Faithfully with Anxiety*
- Robert W. Kellemen, *Anxiety: Anatomy & Cure*
- Julie Lowe, *Helping Your Anxious Child: What to Do When Worries Get Big*
- David Powlison, *Overcoming Anxiety: Relief for Worried People*
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Zoe's Hiding Place: When You Are Anxious (children's book)*
- Amy Simpson, *Anxious: Choosing Faith in a World of Worry*
- William P. Smith, "[How to Parent Fearful Kids](#)"
- Paul Tautges, *Anxiety: Knowing God's Peace (31-Day devotional)*
- Jessica Thompson, *How To Help Your Anxious Teen: Discovering the Surprising Sources of their Worries and Fears*
- Edward T. Welch, *A Small Book for the Anxious Heart: Meditations on Fear, Worry, and Trust*
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Running Scared: Fear, Worry, and the God of Rest*
- Sara Wallace, *Created to Care: Truth for Anxious Moms*