

99 SIMPLE WAYS
TO CHANNEL
YOUR SECRET EDGE

JULIAN BRASS

FOREWORD BY JOE MIMRAN
Founder of Club Monaco and Joe Fresh

**OWN
YOUR
ANXIETY**

● ●
PAGE TWO
BOOKS

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This book is dedicated to YOU.

You are limitless, strong, and full of love.

We're ALL in this together.



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Foreword

JULIAN BRASS is on a mission to make a true impact on the lives of people who want to live better, regardless of their anxiety, stress, or mental health challenges. His book, *Own Your Anxiety*, offers everyone simple ways to quickly manage those challenges, irrespective of their social class, geographical location, or physical abilities.

This book will guide you to own your anxiety—and even to own your entire life! It presents a journey toward self-improvement and self-finding. Contained within these pages is Julian's story of being completely lost, breaking, and then picking up the pieces to put himself back together as a better version of his former self. He reminds you to honor yourself, by sharing about times when he didn't honor himself. But this book is not only his journey; it is yours, too. I love this book because it is so relatable and so honest! Julian doesn't let us forget that even when times feel really scary, hard, and lonely—times that, as a serial entrepreneur, I have intimate knowledge of—we can always create a healthy fire within ourselves to serve as our guiding light on the path to inner peace, success, and happiness.

Now more than ever, we need to know how to own our anxiety. In today's highly charged environment, where we are always connected, the ability to find moments to de-stress and deal with anxious situations and feelings has never been more important. The phenomena of constantly interacting with technology, devices, and the world through social media and the like is not restricted to entrepreneurs and professionals alone. It has reached into every strata of society, with youth hit particularly hard. But sometimes all we need is to become mindful and check in with ourselves, so that we can take that deep breath and learn to unwind.

Julian's message is truly universal and needed for so many people today. And he articulates this message in a way that anyone can understand. This is a rare skill set that, frankly, is just hard to find.

How many successful professionals have made time to hit their "pause button" to seek out sage learnings from Western science and Eastern traditions?

How many award-winning founders of super-popular online lifestyle magazines who are constantly in the spotlight leave it all behind? How many travel far from home to train with health and wellness practitioners, yoga gurus, and spiritual leaders around the world?

How many people who seemingly "have it all" are willing to leave it all and dedicate their lives to a path of service, helping others take charge of *their* lives and *their* anxiety?

This is something that I really respect about Julian.

While other books talk about how to "get rid of" or how to "heal yourself" from anxiety, this book teaches you about how to *own it*. *Own Your Anxiety* will inspire you to design an intentional lifestyle and a general way of being that shifts your challenges into conveniences, obstacles into opportunities,

and problems into potential. Julian has created a successful life, both in business and personally, by learning how to change his relationship with anxiety, to make it his secret edge—and so can you!

This work by Julian Brass will put you on the path to do just that.

Now it is your turn.

Here's to truly being the owner of every part of your life. You can be. You deserve to be.

With great respect,

JOE MIMRAN

Founder of Club Monaco and Joe Fresh

Your Secret Edge

IT'S AN EPIDEMIC. It's sweeping through our communities, homes, schools, and workplaces. Many sufferers are silent while others don't even know what's wrong with them or how to fix it.

I'm talking about . . . anxiety.

Often it feels like it's bigger than we are and that it's just too much to handle, so we try to "cope" with it. We try to "make do" with it. This is no way to live. I know because I tried living like this for too long. I was a mess.

This book is about owning your anxiety rather than being owned by it. It's about seeing that anxiety is a gift, an invitation to a better way of living.

Sometimes we try to beat our stresses and worries altogether. Another pill. Another prescription refill. Another glass. Another boozy night out. Another line. Another bite. Another fling. We've become a pill generation, medicated for anxiety *before* we intentionally attempt to see if there's something it's trying to tell us or if there's a natural way to manage it.

But what if anxiety is not a burden at all but is a unique gift? What if that tension we feel is in fact a powerful force of energy that we, *the anxious*, possess and that other so-called *normal* people don't?

What if our anxiety, when channeled in the right way, can give us an edge? What if that edge is our secret to helping us accomplish our greatest dreams, those that most people can't even conjure? What if that rush of nervous energy we sometimes feel, that adrenaline, is a blessing? What if it's all supposed to be this way? What if there's a way to not just survive but to *thrive* with anxiety?

I believe that there is. And I know it's possible for anyone, because it worked for me.

Do you know the intrusive feeling of waking up in the morning and having a small or not-so-small anxiety attack over breakfast for no reason at all? I do. Do you recognize that familiar sensation of butterflies in your stomach (and beyond) before you're about to give a speech or a presentation? I do. And what about that annoying and embarrassing eye twitch or overheating in a restaurant for no good reason? Familiar? Yes. Me, too.

Don't worry. You are not alone. Many people with anxiety have these experiences. But by becoming mindful and self-aware, suddenly you might see an opportunity to take control and get to the source of what you're feeling. This book is meant to help you find the source of the fire instead of just turning off the smoke alarm. Think of anxiety as your life sensor. What is it trying to tell you when it goes off?

Throughout your journey with this book, take time for self-reflection. I encourage you to ask yourself, "What is my anxiety trying to tell me?" Stay present. Let being present and awake become a way of empowered, conscious living that creates a confident awareness around the choices you make.

Anxiety became my life sensor when I started listening with intention to it. When I'm in the midst of an anxiety attack, I see the moment for what it is. I get empowered by the messages my body and mind are sending me. I listen. And then I decide what I'm going to do with the information. Because I'm mindful, I have the opportunity to decide what to do about my anxiety—and this is where it gets awesome.

Let's say you're about to go on stage in front of a group of people (could be at a wedding or for something related to work) and you're feeling seriously anxious. Or imagine you're about to take an exam (maybe for a course or certification that's really important to you) and you're overcome by anxiety. It spikes your nerves and travels throughout your body. It could manifest when you're about to have a defining and difficult conversation with someone—maybe it's a partner, employer, or client—and it's giving you clammy hands, heart hiccups, dry mouth. Maybe you're having trouble sleeping, which makes *everything* harder.

With this book, you're going to understand natural ways to take those nerves and turn them into energy that gives you clarity, creativity, and focus. You'll learn doable strategies that anyone—yes, that includes *you*—can start doing right now to transform that anxiety into a positive force. How much better would that be?

By reading this book, you'll learn natural lifestyle tips to *own what you're feeling* so that you access vibrant, amazing energy and even spread it to others around you.

I've got you. I've got your back.

Your Edge

Own Your Anxiety is the “manifestation” of the past eleven years of my life. I never knew myself to be anxious, but when I hit twenty-four years old and launched my former company, Notable, I came face to face with some of the scariest, loneliest anxious thoughts and states that I have ever known. Fear of the unknown will do that. I was unsure what my future held. I was living on canned tuna, Kraft Singles, and crackers. Making rent on time was top of mind. Once, while going to withdraw \$40 from the ATM, my transaction slip said minus \$36. I’ll never forget the feeling of overwhelming anxiety entering every crevice of my body. Never.

My apartment looked like a scene from the movie *A Beautiful Mind* with Russell Crowe. The walls were covered with oversized white paper with goals and ideas for my new business, wireframes of what the website would look like, mantras and affirmations of what I hoped to create one day. I was a young man who desperately longed to “make it,” but I lacked the holistic strategies to do that in a healthy, sustainable way.

Malnourished because I lacked money for quality food, I made things worse several nights a week. I would work until 10 p.m. and then get an invite from my “party friends” who owned the hottest nightclubs to join them for a night on the town. As a way of blowing off some steam and getting out of my depressing living situation, I’d soon be tableside in the booth taking shots, chugging vodka Red Bulls, and experimenting with drugs. The party nights would turn into party mornings spent in someone’s mansion, penthouse, or condo. Sound glamorous? It wasn’t. It was dark. Lonely. Fake.

Often after a party night and only three or four hours of sleep, my alarm would go off and I’d have to haul myself out of bed to go to work, which was literally at the desk beside my

bed or a coffee shop outside. Run-down from sleep deprivation, hungover, and coming down from the “party favors,” I’d rush for double or triple espressos, somehow find the strength to squeeze in an intense, adrenaline-pumping workout (knowing how desperately I needed the energy), and then take a freezing cold shower because I read somewhere that this would wake me up. Did I feel any better after all that? No.

I was in a shitty relationship with life. I was addicted to highs and lows. Times were tough, but my ridiculous habits were making them *even harder*. Anxiety, stress, and bouts of depression eventually became the new normal for me. I was constantly worried, even though I played it cool. You couldn’t see it from the outside, but I had butterflies in my stomach most of the time, stomach aches, sweats coming out of nowhere, an annoying eye twitch, and I was literally hooked on caffeine and getting sick all the time.

I needed to regain control of my life. I needed to realize that the anxiety I was running from—because I thought it was hurting me—was my friend. I just had to learn how to listen to it. It took many years of slowly but surely embarking on a path of holistic, mindful living that brought me close to health professionals and spiritual gurus, and faith in a higher purpose. I began to tune in to my inner voice and values, and ultimately I learned that anxiety was an internal alarm trying to alert me that I was on the wrong path. By listening to when I got anxious and why, I learned about my triggers. I responded by either changing my lifestyle to avoid anxiety-causing situations or evolving my inner dialogue to turn the volume down on anxiety-causing thoughts. Learning how to live like this and to just listen to my anxiety is how I learned to:

Own Anxiety.

And now, I'm here to help you #OwnYourAnxiety.

That's what this book and this method of living are all about. I'm here to show you how to own your anxiety. Not just to live with it but literally *to like living with anxiety*. And eventually, you'll even learn how to channel it into a positive stream of renewable energy that will help you achieve your goals. Then one day, if you're like me, you might even appreciate it for what it is, this thing you used to see as holding you back—it's your gift. Anxiety is your secret edge.

Today, I put this idea into practice every day of my life. So much of this book was written during an exceptionally anxiety-filled period for me: helping my single, amazing mother fight the ferociously unfair cancer battle. As the only one of her children living in the same city, a lot of the responsibility to help was on me. And I had to rise to the occasion. I had to own my anxiety. On those dark, cold Canadian winter mornings on my way to pick her up for chemo appointments, the only choice was to own it. I had to channel my anxiety into an empathetic strength and resilience. I needed to put on my game face as I held her hand and we awaited the anxiety-ridden test results. I had to transform that energy into a secure loving-kindness as I shaved her head for the first time, once the effects of chemo started to overtake her body. And after her operation, when I had to pull the sticky, blood-soaked bandages off her breast as tears welled up in my eyes, nausea overtook my stomach, and butterflies flew rapidly in my chest, all the self-talking dialogue—you can imagine what would go through a thirty-five-year-old man's mind in this situation—simply had to be owned. In that moment, I had to own my anxiety in order to be calm, gentle, and compassionate. My intention with this book is that you will learn how to own your anxiety, no matter what life throws at you, too.

Maybe you can't imagine that right now. I recently spoke with someone who sought help in handling anxiety. This individual was so upset and overwhelmed by tears, which he kept apologizing for.

"Don't apologize for crying," I said. "Those tears are sacred. They're your insides speaking to you in their unique way. They're tears of awakening. You can't be scared when you're sacred," I shared.

Have you ever felt what my friend felt—imprisoned by your own anxiety and sadness? Maybe you're feeling as though you can't escape or that you're one million pounds or overwhelmed by and scared of the unknown. But I'm here to tell you that I've been there, and I'm here for you, right now, and I'm not leaving you. I know these horrid feelings, too. But I won't give up on you.

It may be pretty rough where you're at, but don't give up on yourself either. Stay with me here. Learn the strategies that I learned and that improved every aspect of my life.

I'm not going to say that by following this method you'll never feel overpowering anxiety again. That might be as close to impossible as it gets. But fully managing anxiety and thriving with it instead of going up against it *is possible*. It can happen in a moment, simply by having the right tools at your disposal. My goal with this book isn't to cure you of feelings of extreme, misguided energy, or what we commonly refer to as anxiety. My goal is to help you learn how to manage and channel that energy.

This book gives you the tools—doable lifestyle strategies that are at your fingertips. I'm talking about small changes to your daily habits so that you look at how you sleep, move, think, drink, eat, and love differently. You'll learn how to live in a way that doesn't bring on anxiety. You'll learn to handle whatever anxiety flare-ups come your way.

I've broken this book down into bite-sized lessons in three parts: Own Your Body, Own Your Mind, and Own Your Soul.

By the end of my method, you will wake up and go to sleep differently. You will walk and move differently. You will think and breathe differently. You will eat and drink differently. You will be you, but enhanced, evolved, and, yes, different—in a very good way. People will come to you for inspiration and advice, noticing how you've changed, and for the better. Why? Because anxiety has become your compass. Anxiety is your secret edge.

THIS BOOK IS for people who, at a non-clinical level, are suffering from anxious and stressful feelings. For many, the ways to own your anxiety that I share in this book will be just what you need to begin the joyous process of shifting your relationship with anxiety forever. But these methods aren't intended to be a substitute for medical advice. If you feel that you have a serious condition, make the first line of communication with your family doctor. If you're in an emergency situation, please visit a hospital immediately. There is no reason to ever be ashamed or embarrassed.

PART 1

OWN YOUR BODY

.....



YOUR BODY is a blessing. It's sacred. Your body is brilliant. It's your personal gateway to your mind, and it knows and endures so much. It is the wisest machine that you may ever have, constantly sending you real-time, astute feedback. Your body is the vehicle that carries you through life. However, it is not the type of vehicle that you can just "trade in" to take a lease out on another. Your body is yours to keep, through good times and bad. Sometimes, you may forget to treat it like the temple that it is—and that's when your body will send you signals. These signals can be unpleasant and launch anxiety sky-high.

The good news is that you already possess sacred tools that can immediately begin to make your body feel better than ever. When you use these tools, you'll empower yourself. Imagine feeling better in your body than you ever have before. You're about to.

Part 1 of our journey together will teach you medically validated, extensively researched, totally doable, natural ways to treat your body so that you can own your anxiety for life.



Breathe

THEY SAY that the most common fear besides death is public speaking.

Picture this: in a few hours, you have a big presentation in front of ten or one thousand people. This presentation is a big deal. A lot depends on it. It gets your nerves going in a huge way; it makes you feel exceptionally anxious. How are you breathing? Are you breathing slow and deep, as if you're catching some rays on the beach, or is it more like you're running from a hungry tiger in the Sahara? Don't worry. We've all been there. It's no fun to feel this kind of high-level anxiety, especially when there are no tigers (at least no literal ones) about to take you down. Your body—and your breathing—is in what is commonly known as *emergency response*, or *fight-or-flight*.

So what are you supposed to do? How are you supposed to quell those pre-presentation nerves? Is that even possible? Yes. Yes, it is.

**Breath is the opponent of stress
and the enemy of anxiety.**

Breath enables us to go from emergency response to *relaxation response*. In high-anxiety situations, we tend to have high-intensity, fast-paced breathing. We are in fight-or-flight mode. We're acting like we're fleeing death, even if we're just waiting to do our big presentation or we're jetting to a date and we're going to be late or we're doing absolutely nothing. Making you anxious just thinking about it? Me, too! It makes me feel really *frigging* anxious.

But here's the antidote. The ancient yogis believed that the number of breaths we take determines our life span, more equals less—meaning that people who breathe many shallow, quick breaths for years on end will have a shorter life span than those who take long, deep, slow breaths. Studies have been done comparing breath rates and life spans, and compelling information definitely supports the “long breath, long life” idea.

For the moment, consider that breath is a skill. Not only that, it's a skill that can help you transform anxiety into a feeling of chill calm. Notice that I'm not asking you to do something really difficult here—no triathlons or intense math. Just . . . breathe.

Here's how:

Step 1: Place one hand on your belly as you begin inhaling through your nose. Direct the breath to the belly (below your chest). Feel your belly expand.

Step 2: Fill your belly to full capacity, meaning smoothly explore close to the edge of what you can comfortably hold.

Step 3: Once you've taken a full and complete breath in, exhale slowly and smoothly through your nose, allowing your belly to naturally contract without pushing or straining.

Remember the
nose-to-belly
breath and
you will always
be stronger than
your anxiety.

.

Step 4: Repeat the in-breath and out-breath ten times or as many times as you need to regulate your breathing, calm your nerves, and appreciate the beautiful air that's part of our incredible universe.

Four simple steps—that's it! Or, made even simpler, breathe in fully, exhale fully, *live* fully. I call this *nose-to-belly* (NTB) breathing. Remember that! It's my goal that NTB breathing becomes second nature for you.

Research has proven that when we breathe deeply and consciously like this, and when we use our nostrils for both inhaling and exhaling, we activate our parasympathetic nervous system, which is associated with rest and relaxation. On the other hand, when breathing quickly through the mouth, we activate the sympathetic nervous system, the survival system that helps us escape from dangerous fight-or-flight situations.

Being late for a date or being afraid to speak in public often triggers our survival reflexes. It's up to all of us to train ourselves away from physical and behavioral overreactions—and breath is your tool. You can manage your anxiety by breathing with intention, focus, and concentration. Practice this breathing technique often, so that it becomes automatic. After all, what could be more natural than breathing?

Remember the NTB breath and you will always be stronger than your anxiety. Now that you *are* stronger than it, take what was negative—your nervous energy—and channel it in to positive, focused energy as you go after your goals and dreams. You got this—let's own it!



Smile More

MORE SMILES means less stress. And less stress means less anxiety. That's what we need in our lives. And we *can* have it. We're so busy looking at what we don't have, why don't we look at what we *do* have for a change?

Here's one thing we all can give that costs nothing: a smile. No one is too poor to give a smile. No one is too rich to give a smile. And smiling diminishes anxiety. When we smile, we feel happier. A positive chemical reaction in the brain ignites. Serotonin flows through us, which reduces stress. The world looks brighter—a lot brighter. We create light inside and outside ourselves.

I've had dark moments when I wondered, "What's the point?" I'm sure you have, too. I've felt unfulfilled, like there's way too much emptiness to ever find happiness. I've also felt so stressed that I sweated and panicked and had a horrible breathless sensation, as though I'd lost something and would never find it. Do you know that feeling?