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# Anticipatory anxiety:

## The Unseen Weight Of Worry!


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# Anticipatory anxiety

- Anticipatory anxiety is the worry about the future and the fear that bad things might happen or that you might become unable to successfully accomplish what you set out to do.
- It is the anxiety we feel when we are anticipating a difficult decision, action, or situation.
- Anticipatory anxiety occurs before facing a feared situation. It involves imagining worst-case scenarios and the fear of what might happen, even though the situation hasn’t yet occurred.

# The Three Layers of Fear

1. **First Layer – Fear of the Situation**
- Fear of the event itself (e.g., a difficult conversation with a family member).
2. **Second Layer – Fear of Being Afraid**
- Fear of how you might react (e.g., anxiety or regret during the conversation).
3. **Third Layer – Fear of Being Afraid of Being Afraid**
- Fear of feeling anxious just thinking about it, leading to avoidance (anticipatory anxiety and avoidance).

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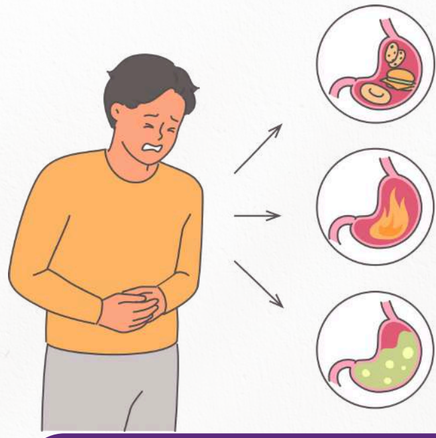
# Symptoms of Anticipatory Anxiety

- Phobic avoidance (avoiding situations to prevent anxiety)
- Performance anxiety (fear of performing in front of others)
- Physical symptoms (e.g., muscle tension, headaches, chest pain)
- Chronic hyperventilation or gastrointestinal problems.



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# The Intrusive Impact of Anticipatory Anxiety on Daily Routines

- Difficulty Waking Up: Anxiety about the day ahead can lead to trouble getting out of bed.
- Decreased Focus: Persistent worry can make it hard to concentrate on tasks, leading to reduced productivity.
- Emotional Eating: Conversely, some may turn to comfort foods as a coping mechanism, leading to unhealthy eating habits.

- Health crisis: Frequent health-related searches online, over-monitoring physical symptoms, and repeatedly seeking medical reassurance.
- Economic uncertainty: The gnawing fear of financial ruin and the inability to provide for one's family. The stress that undermines job performance, creating a vicious cycle of anxiety and poor productivity.

- Avoidance: Fear of negative social outcomes can lead to avoiding social gatherings or interactions
- Pre-Sleep Anxiety: Worrying about the next day can intrude on bedtime, leading to a restless night.
- Reduced Enjoyment: Persistent anxiety can make it hard to enjoy activities or find pleasure in hobbies.

# Repercussions of Anticipatory Anxiety Across Multiple Perspectives

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## 1. Psychological

- Chronic stress and mental health decline
- reduced self-esteem
- Emotional exhaustion

## 2. Physical

- Stress related symptoms
- Immune system suppression
- Gastrointestinal issue

## 3. Social

- Strained relationships
- Social isolation
- Cultural stigma

## 4. Professional

- Procrastination and Underperformance
- Missed Opportunities
- Economic Impact

## 5. Cognitive

- Impaired Concentration
- Memory Issues
- Catastrophic Thinking

## 6. Behavioural

- Avoidance Behaviors
- Substance Abuse
- Compulsive Rituals

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# Repercussions of Anticipatory Anxiety Across Multiple Perspectives

## 7. Long term health

- Chronic Conditions
- Mental Health Entrenchment

## 8. Existential

- Existential Dread
- Resilience Growth

## 9. Devolopmental

- Academic Impact
- Social Skill Delays

# Recognizing the Indicators of Anticipatory Anxiety

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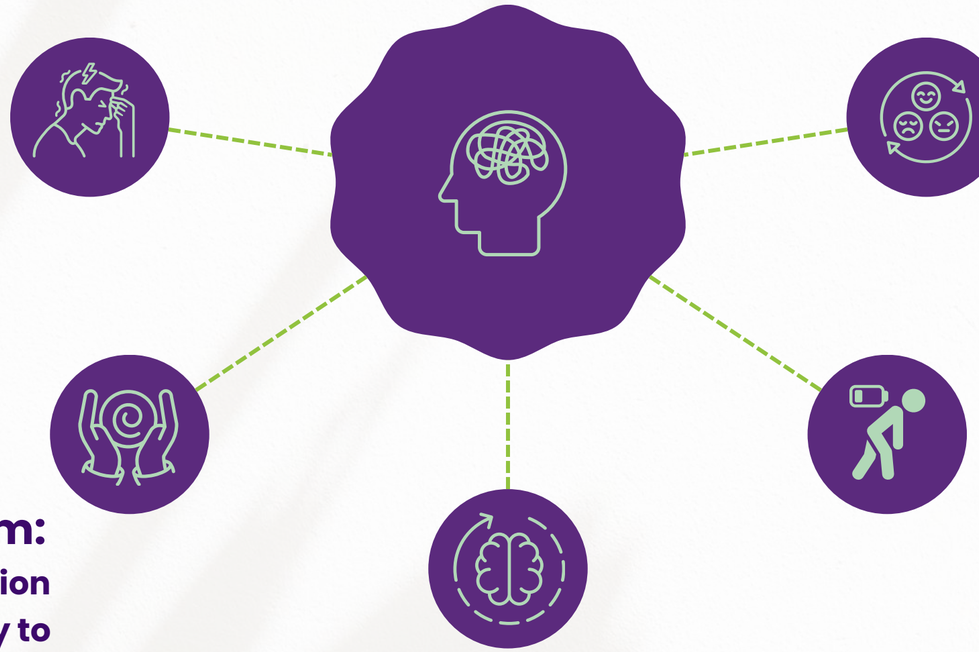

## Overthinking:

Spending excessive amounts of time analyzing and reanalyzing future events, often leading to increased anxiety.

## Difficulty in Expressing Emotions:

Struggling to communicate feelings and emotions effectively, often leading to misunderstandings and frustration.

## Perfectionism:

Striving for unattainable perfection in tasks and activities as a way to manage anxiety about future failures or mistakes.

## Rumination:

Continuously thinking about past events and their potential impact on future situations, which can exacerbate anxiety.

## Physical Exhaustion:

Feeling constantly tired and drained due to the ongoing mental and physical toll of anticipatory anxiety.

# Recognizing the Indicators of Anticipatory Anxiety

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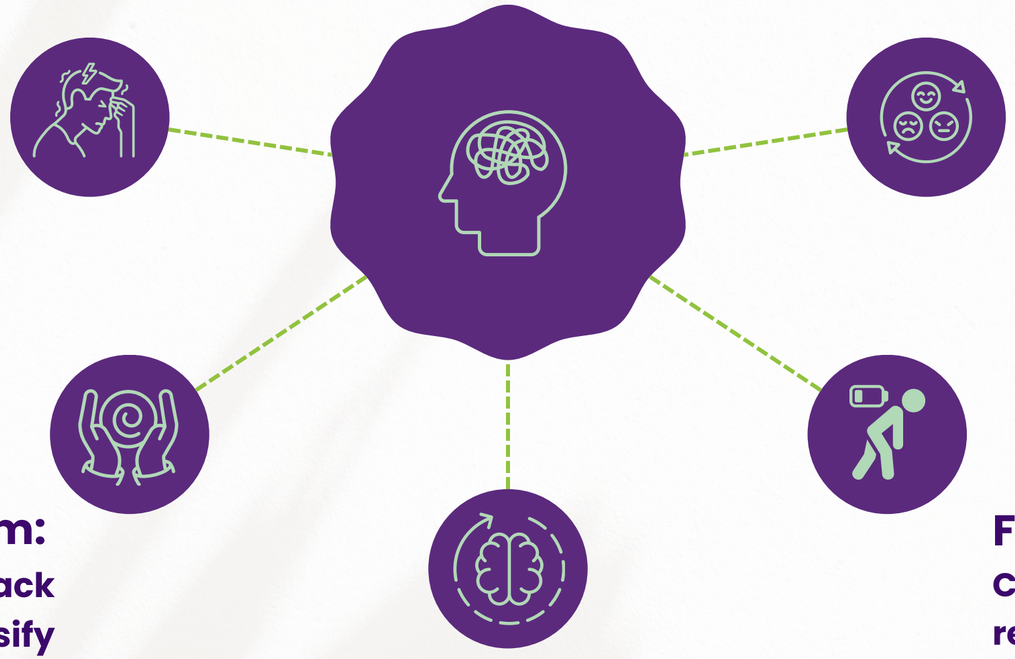

**Social Withdrawal:**
Gradually pulling away from social interactions and activities due to fear of potential negative outcomes in social settings.

**Negative Impact on Academic or Work Performance:**
Decreased productivity and performance in academic or work settings due to preoccupation with future anxieties.

**Hyper-sensitivity to Criticism:**
Being overly sensitive to feedback or criticism, which can intensify anxiety about future performance.

**Frequent Checking:**
Constantly checking and rechecking details related to future events (e.g., checking the weather, re-reading emails).

**Excessive Planning:**
Creating detailed and often unnecessary plans or contingency plans to feel a sense of control over future events.

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# Impact of COVID-19 on Mental Health

The pandemic heightened anticipatory anxiety due to uncertainty, lockdowns, and life disruptions.

**16.8%** of India's youth **(18-24 years**) reported anxiety or depression in 2021, up from **9.3%** at the start of the pandemic, due to academic disruptions, uncertainty, and social isolation

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Anxiety disorders in adults, previously at **3.1%**, are believed to have risen post-COVID, driven by work-from-home stress, financial instability, and health concerns.

Kerala shows one of the highest rates of mental health disorders, with anticipatory anxiety being a major concern post-pandemic.

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# Quick Anxiety Relief Techniques

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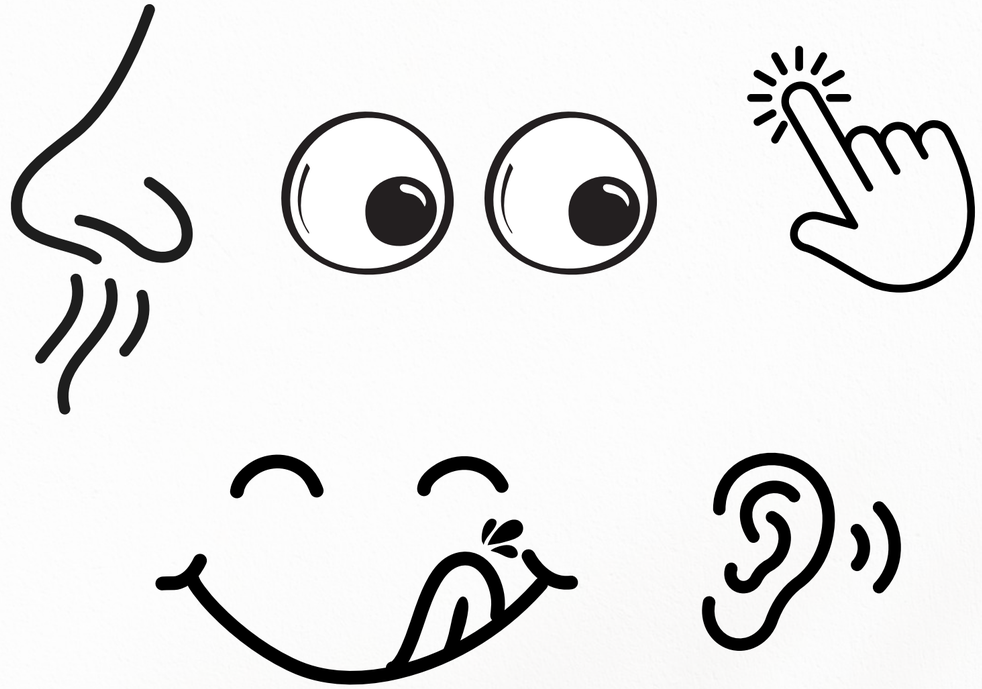
# 1. The 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique

**Name-**

- **5** things you can see
- **4** things you can touch,
- **3** things you can hear,
- **2** things you can smell,
- **1** thing you can taste.



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# 2. Power Posing for 2 Minutes

Adopting **a confident, expansive posture** (e.g., hands on hips, arms raised) for **2** minutes can enhance feelings of confidence and power by influencing hormone levels (testosterone & cortisol).

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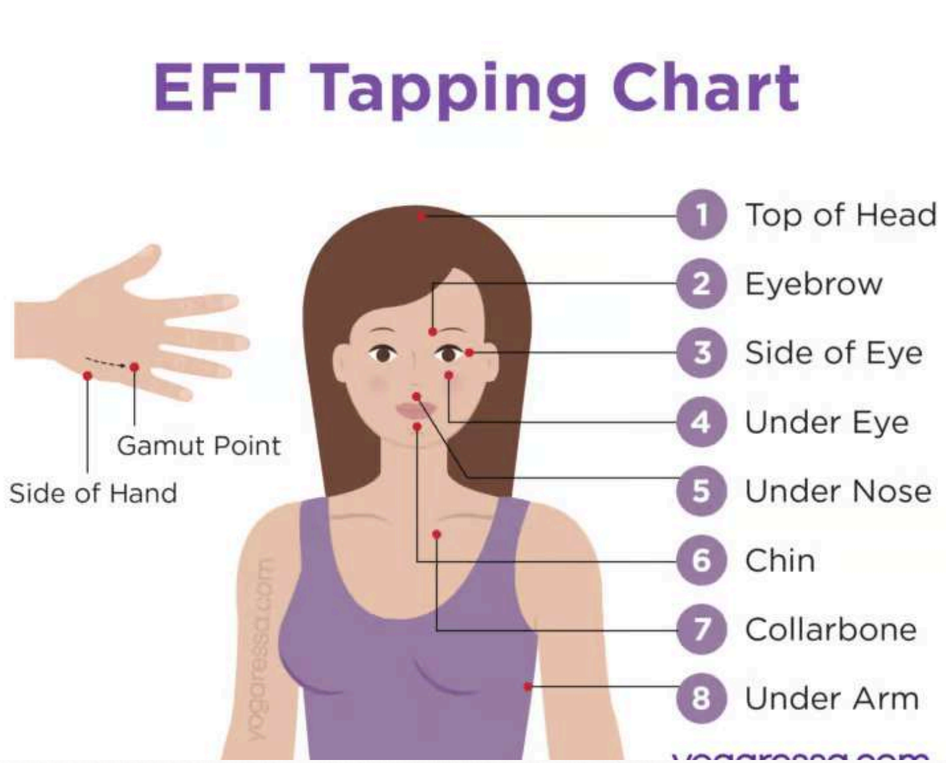
# 3.Tapping (EFT - Emotional Freedom Technique)

A stress-relief technique involving tapping on energy meridian points while reciting affirmations.

1. **Identify an Issue – Rank its intensity (0-10).**
2. **Tap on Specific Points – Head, eyebrows, under eyes, etc.**
3. **Repeat a Phrase – Address the emotional aspect.**
4. **Rescore Intensity – Repeat until stress reduces.**

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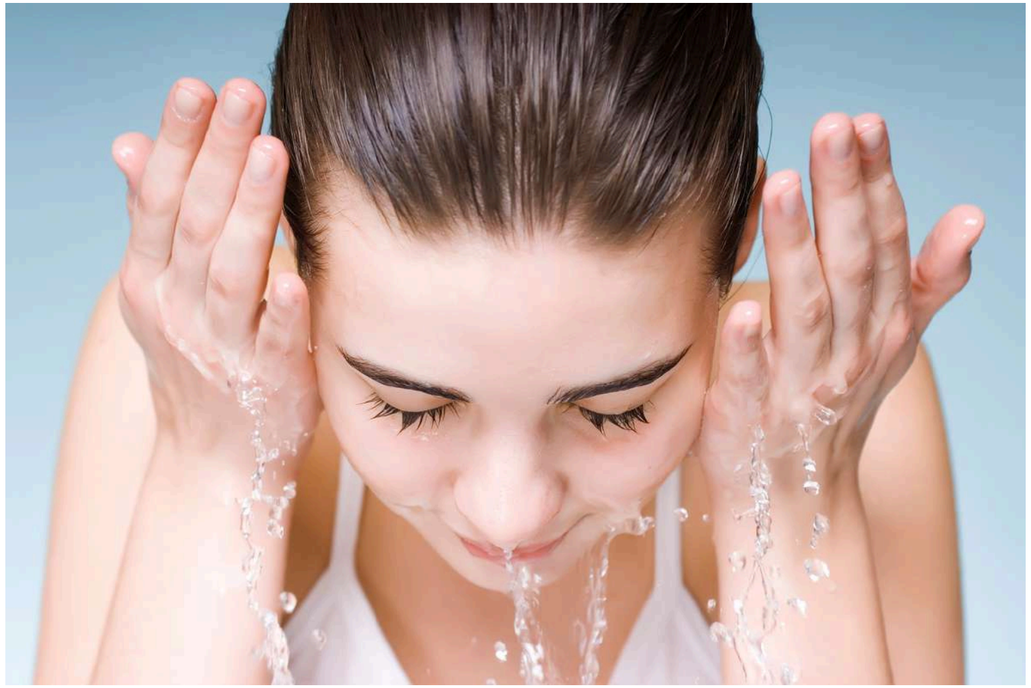
# 4. Cold Shock Therapy



Splash cold water on your face or hold an ice pack to your wrists for **30 seconds.**

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# Instant Overthinking Control Methods

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# 1. The “Worst-Case Scenario” Game

·Write down the worst possible outcome of the situation. Then, brainstorm how you’d handle it.

·It reduces the fear of the unknown and makes you feel prepared.

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## 2. Set a “Worry Timer”


·Give yourself 5 minutes to overthink. When the timer goes off, shift to a productive task.

·It contains overthinking to a specific time frame, preventing it from taking over your day.

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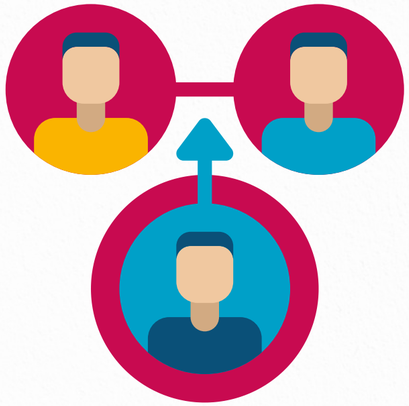

# 3. The “Third-Person” Technique

**Talk to yourself in the third person**

**(e.g., “Why is [Your Name] feeling anxious about this?”).**

**It creates psychological distance, making it easier to analyse your thoughts objectively.**

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# 4. Visualize Your Thoughts as Clouds


**Visualize Your Thoughts as CloudsImagine your anxious thoughts as clouds passing by in the sky. Don’t attach to them—just let them drift.**

**It helps you detach from overthinking and see thoughts as temporary.**

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# Confidence-Boosting Strategies

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# 1. The “Fake It Till You Make It” Hack

**Act as if you’re already confident. Smile, speak clearly, and maintain eye contact, even if you don’t feel like it.**

**Your brain picks up on your actions and starts to believe you’re confident.**

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# 2. Create a “Confidence Anchor”

**Recall a time you felt unstoppable. While reliving that memory, squeeze your thumb and index finger together. Repeat this several times to create an anchor. Use the anchor in anxious moments.**

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# 3. The “Small Wins” Strategy


**Break tasks into tiny, achievable steps. Celebrate each small win to build momentum.**

**It trains your brain to focus on progress, not perfection.**

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# 4. Affirmations with Evidence


**Instead of generic affirmations, use evidence-based ones like, “I handled [specific past challenge] well, so I can handle this too.”**

**It reinforces your belief in your abilities with real proof.**

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Remember, anxiety and self-doubt are not your enemies—they're signals. Signals that you care, that you're stepping out of your comfort zone, and that you're growing. The techniques are the toolkit to transform those signals into strength.

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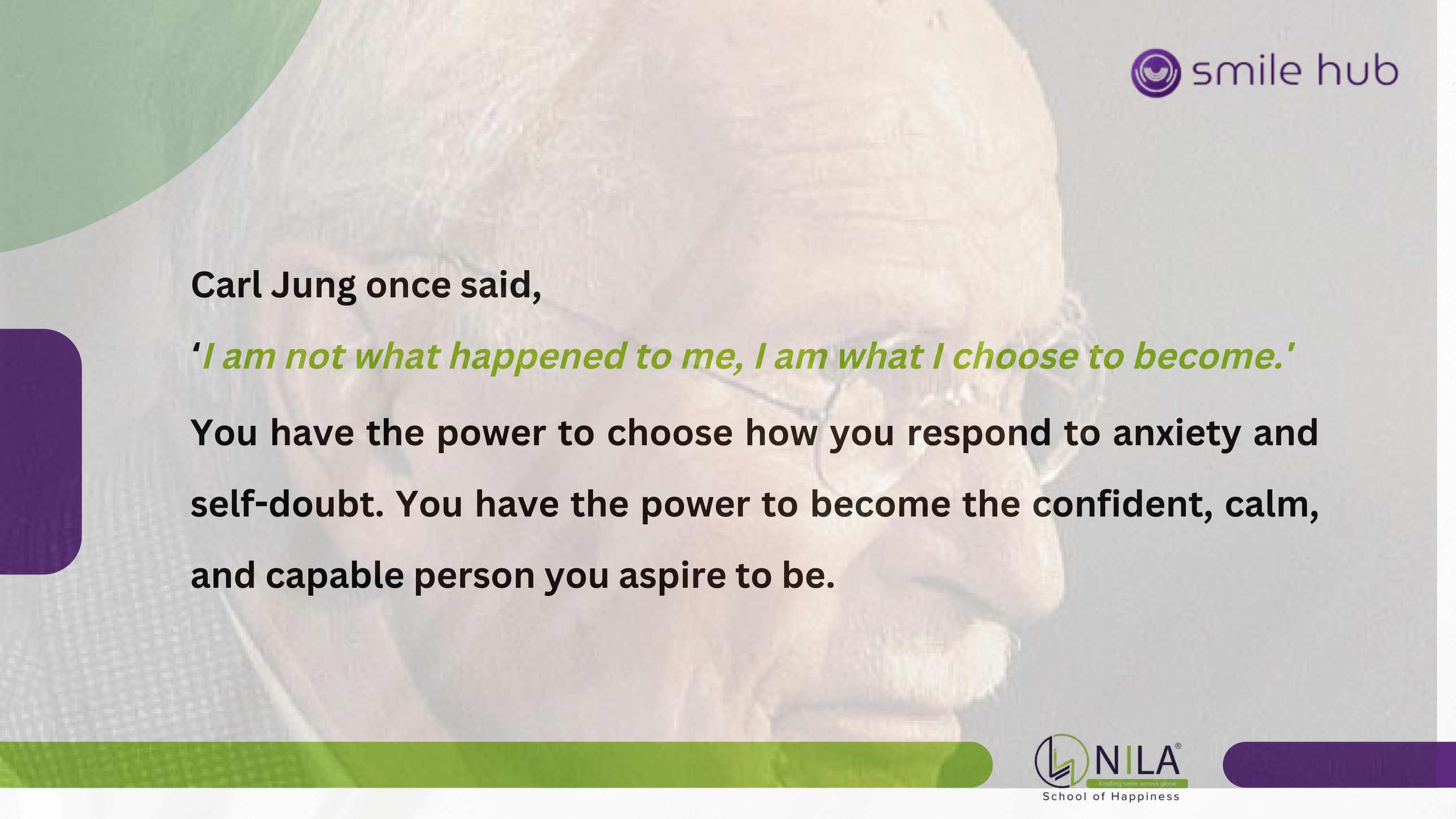

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Carl Jung once said,

‘*I am not what happened to me, I am what I choose to become.'*

You have the power to choose how you respond to anxiety and self-doubt. You have the power to become the confident, calm, and capable person you aspire to be.

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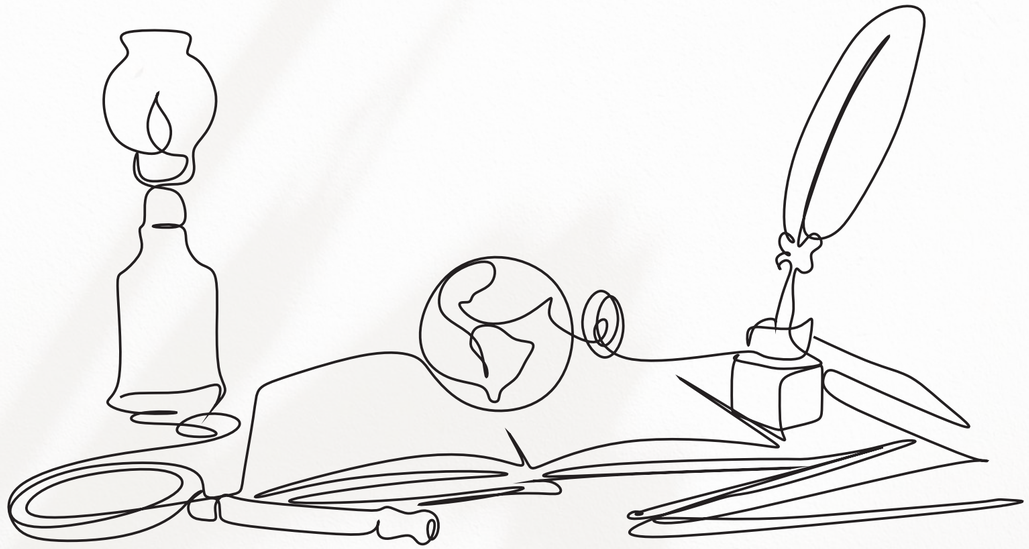

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