

*CBT Tip of the Week, from Lee Rosen, Ph.D.*

### **Moving in and out of states of anxiety**

In times like this, states of anxiety are inevitable. Evolution shaped our brains to excel at evaluating and avoiding threats to our wellbeing (see this excellent [description](#) by psychiatrist, Judd Brewer, MD). When stressors are abundant, we are sometimes caught in anxiety loops, which keep us in a state of more or less perpetual anxious arousal.

- Because we cannot avoid experiencing anxiety during times of stress, we must instead cultivate the ability to *move in and out of* anxious states. How is this done? Here's one simple method:
- *Notice* your emotional state. *Name* it, articulate it, as in, "Ok, I'm getting worked up; I think I'm feeling scared." Accept your feelings; attempts to avoid them tightens anxiety's hold on you.
- You're most of the way there, having identified your internal state, ask yourself, "Have I done the problem-solving that make sense to do at this moment?" If the answer is, no, then stop and make a plan, or schedule a time to make a plan.
- If the answer is yes, as it often is these days, then gently redirect your attention – like a flashlight beam – onto something else, something you value or something that pleases you or captures your imagination.

Now, practice this. Get anxious on purpose. On purpose think of something worrisome, and practice noticing your feelings, accepting them, and redirecting your attention. Do this 3 times daily.