**Be Unsure and Uncomfortable on Purpose**

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Our brains have an alarm system that works all on its own. It is called the **amygdala**, and when the amygdala fires off its alarm system we tend to listen. Which is great if we are actually in a fire, or actually being chased by a large wild animal, or actually our life is indeed in danger! However, for the most part, often our amygdala fires when we are NOT in any real kind of danger. For instance:

Talking to a person we don’t know, is NOT life threatening.

Ordering a meal in a restaurant, is NOT life threatening.

Writing a test, is NOT life threatening.

Making eye contact with someone, is NOT life threatening.

However, when we have anxiety our brain activates our amygdala and we respond with body sensations and thoughts that make us believe they just might be! The amygdala is a small almond shaped organ in our brain that processes our memory, our decision-making response and our emotional responses. It is part of our nervous system, and all too often it is working over-time.

To handle worry and anxiety we need to teach our brain to NOT turn on the alarm system. (The best part about a brain is that it is *very capable of changing* the way it thinks! This is called neuroplasticity.). **We need to tell our brain:**

* I am willing to feel UNcomfortable.
* I am willing to feel unsure and to NOT know what might happen next.
* I am willing to use my courage and do what I might not want to do.
* I can handle it if things do not go just perfect.
* I am okay with NOT knowing how things are going to turn out.

By **saying this** in our mind and by **doing this** we can change the response

our brain makes. It will take time and **constant repetition**…but it can be accomplished. We can actually make a new neuropathway in our brain so that it no longer ‘fires up panic’ when we do things. It is like making a new walking path across the grass. Eventually, if we stay on the same new path, the old one fills in and a new path begins to appear.