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LARISSA DE MICHIEL

## **De Activate Anxiety**

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# endorsements

This is a healthy and engaging read on anxiety. Larissa's insight, through lived experience, is like oxygen to the soul. Her open, transparent and vulnerable approach gives us the tools and most importantly the hope, that no matter where we are today, God can help us find our true north.

**Pastor Ross Abraham**

Chairman of International Network of Churches  
Lead Pastor Elevation Church Australia

Anxiety prevents many from finishing their beautiful and unique life story. Here in her book, Larissa gives clear strategies to assist in conquering those anxieties that try to hold a person back from fulfilling their true life's purpose. Thank you, Larissa, for such a real and courageous book.

**Elder Pastor Sandra Dumas**

Senior Pastor of Ganggalah Church and  
5 Stones Indigenous Leadership  
ACC National Indigenous Initiate Leader

De Activate Anxiety is one of those books that is raw, real and packed full of revelation for the searching heart and mind. This book is a must read for all ages and will arm them with effective tools to navigate life. This is a brilliant piece of work and a wonderful tool that is going to help so many people.

**Pastors Brad and Kim Otto**

Senior Pastor's of COH Church, Gold Coast  
ACTS National Leadership Team

If you struggle with anxiety, you will find a friend in this book. I own a few books on the subject, but this one is different. It is both a personal story, a practical resource, highly informative and deeply spiritual. I found the book profound and readable, all at the same time. Larissa shares her own mental health journey with such honesty and vulnerability, yet is highly conscious of you the reader, serving you at every step of the way. I got the strong impression that my journey and my freedom actually mattered to her. That's quite an achievement.

**Vicki Simpson**

Minister, conference speaker and coach  
C3 SYD Church, Oxford Falls, Sydney

Larissa De Michiel has poured her life and experience into this book. She provides key ideas and strategies for overcoming anxiety based on the Bible that emphasise Spirit-filled living. Those facing similar struggles can be enriched from her healing journey learn practical strategies for their own lives.

**Rev Dr Jacqueline Grey**

Professor of Biblical Studies  
Alphacrucis University College

Deactivate Anxiety is a brave and helpful exploration of mental health from a Christian perspective. Fully endorsing clinical best practices while highlighting the spiritual reality of a journey that so many young adults walk through. I will have a stack of these on my shelf ready to pass on to young adults that I counsel for their own well-being and freedom."

**Pastor Tim Biasetto**

NSW Director Youth Alive Academy  
Discipleship Pastor, Horizon Church

This is a practical yet deeply personal and powerful guide that I'm sure will help many who grapple with anxiety. What I appreciate most about Larissa's book is how she has unashamedly shares her Christian faith and the critical role it has played in her mental health journey, while acknowledging the importance of having clinical support in place at the same time. The two-work hand in glove and that's such an important message."

**Gemma Tognini**

Award winning business owner, media personality  
Opinion writer and public speaker

What a powerful and engaging book! From the moment you open the first page there is honesty, transparency and a deep rawness. This book is dense with practical activities and deep spiritual and gospel truths. Through each chapter, Larissa offers insights by being vulnerable, spiritual, and practical. For anyone reading this book because a loved one is battling anxiety, this book will offer understanding, compassion, and most of all hope! Larissa is a trusted prophetic voice in our church community, as well as a dear friend and we believe she has conveyed her heart beautifully in this book. "

**Pastor's Lachlan and Tara Jones**

Lead Pastors of Elevation Church, Tweed Coast

## **dedication**

To my husband,  
my Ma,  
and my 'sisters'  
Kristy and Melinda.

“Love makes your soul  
crawl out from its hiding place.”  
—Zora Neale Hurston

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# the starting point

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You cannot go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending.  
—C.S. Lewis

**C**ongratulations! Well done for picking up this book and taking a fresh step toward owning and dominating your anxiety. For some of you, this is the beginning of a journey; for others, this is another significant step in your healing expedition.

Anxiety and all her family members, like worry, stress, fear, and dread, are impacting us and our generation with ferocity. If you have picked up this book because you are in your own battle, you are not alone. You are part of a growing number of people who are battling issues related to mental health.

Depression and anxiety are increasingly global issues. As an example, I live in Australia, where, in 2018, one in five people suffered a mental or behavioural health issue.<sup>1</sup>

Tragically, suicide claims the lives of more Australians between the ages of 15 and 44 than any other cause, and with the current state of the world, this number looks set only to increase.

## **Never has there been a time where learning the keys to a healthier inner life is more imperative.**

If you have picked up this book because you are seeking to co-create a life that is better going forward than it has been in the past, then I believe this book is for you. If you are battling your own mental health challenges around worry, fear, stress or anxiety, and are longing for answers, I will join you in your quest to that end.<sup>2</sup>

This book is tailored for those dealing with anxiety, panic attacks, high stress or fear, who love Jesus or want to know Him better, and who desire to figure out the grand plan for their lives on this planet. Whether you are dealing with one or all of these issues, this book is written with you in mind.

As you read this book, my deep desire is that you will gain new insight into how to deactivate anxiety in your life. That you will discover a whole new world of managing anxiety, which at its heart is not ego centric but born of heaven. That you will learn coping strategies bathed in the

2 Let me say at the forefront of this journey together—if you are dealing with debilitating anxiety or panic attacks I am neither a GP nor a psychologist. If you are being crippled by your mental health, and haven't already done so, please go and see a health practitioner. I want to make sure that this book is part of a holistic healing care plan for you. I will discuss this in more detail as we move forward together.

anointing and the presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**This is not meant to be a 'self-help' book, but a Spirit-inspired experience with divine impartation and transformation!**

The truth is we got ourselves into many of the problems we are facing, so why on earth would we think we can get ourselves out alone? After more than 20 years of walking with Jesus, I am convinced that He desires to walk alongside us, out of the messes we have made for ourselves. This book is my attempt to share with you how He got me out of my huge mess, and it is a testament to His heart for doing the same for you.

To begin this journey together, I will share more about my own mess #goodtimes. I do this in the hope that you will see some of your own story in these pages and to help you regain hope, just as I have, that life can be different—even if you are at the bottom of a pit.



**safety instructions:** Before we take off, I really want to share an important thought. Anyone about to head off on a journey is given safety instructions that are vital along the way. I want to make sure you are given instructions to keep you safe on this journey too, and they will be flagged with this icon.

My story includes some potentially triggering content like abuse, suicide, and other traumas. The absolute best bet, if you are triggered by anything you come across, is to talk with an expert before proceeding. I have a story to tell, but while I am a pastor with a degree in theology and 20 years' experience in pastoral care and secular coaching, I am neither a psychologist or GP. I will discuss this further in the next chapter, but from the onset, I wanted to reinforce that if you need expert help, please reach out for it. And if you aren't sure where to start, I have put together a resource chapter at the end of the book.

Let me give you a quick look at my life today. I am happy, content, living with purpose, and full of gratitude. I'm married to a fantastic man who is truly my partner in life, Lorenzo, and we have two beautiful, rambunctious girls. It is a wonderful and full season that feels like a larger divine harmony. I was on the pastoral team at Horizon Church in Sydney from 2004 until 2020, have been a credentialed pastor since 2009, and have been in Christian ministry since 1998. Our family now lives on the beautiful Tweed Coast of NSW Australia and serving the local church and community.

However, my life has NOT always been flourishing, either internally or externally. Like many, I had a broken and dysfunctional upbringing. My early years were a mixed bag—at times dark, at other times filled with opportunities and privilege.

Both my parents were highly regarded academics

and influential in their respective fields. Although retired, my mother is still an Emeritus Professor whose expertise is internationally sought after, while my father was an outstanding scholar, well known in education circles and held significant education roles nationally up until his death in 2016. My parents were and are, inspirations to me on so many levels with their vocational achievements. They've both authored a multitude of books and journal articles, been recognised with a plethora of awards in their respective fields, sat on national boards, were sought after nationally and internationally as speakers, and ultimately influenced the multitudes. Their career success is truly breathtaking and admirable.

So, it is not surprising they championed high achievement in my life. I learnt that being a woman meant I was strong and capable—not weak and needy. They taught me to walk with confidence (even if I had to “fake it ‘til I made it”), to love the excitement of competition, to treat the garbage woman with the same respect as I would the CEO, and to be a contributor to my community. These values and others they taught me are ones I am deeply grateful for, as they have served me well. My mother in particular, has been a significant role model in how to lead with fairness, humour, and strength.

I have learnt from them both and have much to be grateful for in retrospect and reflection. There is genuine honour in my heart today for my parents. However, as a 21-year-old, I had neither retrospect nor reflection. I did

not possess the substance of grace and forgiveness living in my soul to extend to their weakness as I do today. What I did have at 21 was a mountain of undealt with pain and destructive coping patterns as a result of the darker parts of my childhood.

I was working out deep abandonment, stemming from being sent away very unexpectedly to boarding school at the age of 12 after my parents divorced. I was also experiencing the repercussions of childhood abuse, which included the sexual misconduct of a significant adult in my family. I would later discover that I had been in an active, and what I thought was a loving, relationship with this paedophile for many years. This defiled relationship caused so much damage in my life.

**Let me just make this very clear, though. God is bigger than an abuser, and His love is stronger than any corrupt touch.**

I will expand on this toward the end of the book when we talk about dealing with the root causes of anxiety. It is enough to say here that, by the age of 21, I was in a world of hurt and couldn't find my way out. Thank God that Jesus found me!

My conversion was rather radical. At the time of my salvation experience, I was a heavy drug user which was compounded by some severe mental health issues (many of which were not diagnosed until over a decade later). I

battled a type of intense anxiety disorder in which you fear and avoid places or situations that might cause you to feel trapped, helpless or embarrassed. This meant I couldn't cope with situations like public transport, movie theatres or going anywhere with people I didn't know. Every time I needed to leave my house it would trigger a panic attack.

I would self-medicate with marijuana, other illicit drugs, and alcohol to build up the courage to walk out the front door—which I gradually did less and less, and never without being highly inebriated. I was drinking something, sniffing something or smoking something from the moment I woke up until the time I passed out in bed at night. This was my day, every day. So, by the time God revealed himself to me, it's fair to say that, even though I was still young, I had made a total mess of my life and had no way out.

I had isolated myself from my family and friends and was living 40 kms out of town in a place called Devils Pinch. I couldn't have scripted this name any better! It was an accurate description of my location, as true in geography as it was in the spiritual. I was lost, caught in a cycle of drugs, and trapped in a serious situation with some dangerous people.

**I had nothing to offer God when I met Jesus other than brokenness, wickedness, and filth. Yet, He still called me, forgave me, and filled me with His Spirit.**

Which is the grace available to us all, isn't it? He did not call me when I was well, He called me at the height of my illness and said, "Yep, you're my girl." It still amazes me to this day, causing deep emotions of gratitude as I think back to those times. He wants to do the same thing for us all. While we are still messed up, broken, not perfect—God wants to tell us, "Yep, son, daughter, I love you just the way you are." And this love doesn't stop once we are Christians; it's a never-ending pull of God to draw us back, and back again, to His road of life.

Brothers and sisters think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.

—1 Corinthians 1:26–29

If you're reading this, and feeling like life is all messed up, let me tell you God is into restoration, healing, and fixing things up. Not just once or twice or three times, but repeatedly—over and over and over again. It is His nature to take you just as you are and create something remarkable because of His love for you. If you aren't in a huge mess, but are dealing with your own stresses or fears, He can take that too and turn it around. Big or small, complex or



seemingly simple, God is here for you right now as you read this book, wanting to take your life as it is—and guide you forward.

I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that this book isn't intended to be a self-help manual for your life. The absolute intent of these words you are reading is that they serve as an encounter with your God, your Creator—who knows you better than you know yourself. Knowing Him and calling on Him are the beginning of your way out.

Throughout this book, I will encourage you to pray to God, to become aware of Him in these pages, and to turn your attention toward Him. You can use the words I have written down in the prayer below, or you can use your own. They are simply a prompt to help keep Him front and centre in this journey. I'd love for you to do that now. Take some time to connect with Jesus. Perhaps put on some worship music or take out your journal and give yourself some time to sit, be still, and pray.



**“Lord Jesus, I give You my life afresh just as it is. I turn toward You with my heart open again and ask You to lead me forward. I want You to be front and centre in this journey of healing and freedom. Help me hear Your voice and feel Your presence as I read the pages of this book. Amen.”**

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Congratulations! Well done for picking up this book and making a fresh step toward owning and dominating your anxiety.
- This book is tailored for those dealing with anxiety, panic attacks, high stress, and fear—or those wanting to support someone dealing with any of these—and who love Jesus and desire to figure out His grand plan on this planet.
- This is not meant to be a ‘self-help’ book, but a Holy Spirit-inspired experience with divine impartation!
- Spend time connecting with your heavenly Father today.
- Would you like to join myself and others in deactivate anxiety in person? You're welcome to join the private Facebook group De Activate Anxiety. Look for De Activate Anxiety in your search engine on Facebook or fill in the following link: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/141652122113692/>

# deep surrender

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**A**s we journey, you will find that I primarily speak about anxiety and panic attacks—because that has been my battle. However, for you, it might be deep worry, it might be intense stress, or it might be uncontrollable fear. Or perhaps, you are reading this book to better understand what a loved one is going through. Whatever you or your loved one is facing, in my opinion the symptoms are all related. So, when you hear me talk about my panic attacks, I just want you to translate that to whatever it is that you are dealing with. The deactivation tools that I share in this book will work on them too.



**exercise:** Along the way, there will be opportunity for you to do some exercises and activations. I'd love us to engage in one now. Can you remember the first time you experienced anxiety at a level that affected you deeply? I don't want you to concentrate on the event, I just want you to reflect on when you can first remember anxiety becoming part of your life.



**safety instructions:** This chapter touches on abuse and self-harm. If you are struggling with thoughts of self-harm, you must reach out for help. Please go to a health professional—ring up now and make an appointment. Call a friend or family member and tell them you are struggling. Call another community support group such as the mental health clinic at your local hospital and tell your story. Telling people is the first step, and if you need guidance, there are lots of resources for help at the end of the book.

The first time I remember experiencing intense panic was when I was 11 years-old at my dad’s wedding to his second wife. It was a highly stressful event for me as my parents had only separated a year earlier, and I was still coming to terms with the fact that they were not getting back together. There were other factors at play—My relationship with my dad was very convoluted and I was about to be sent to boarding school in my *own hometown*.

There were also some other very complex family dynamics at work, including the sexual molestation by an adult in our family’s world. The wedding day seemed to compound all these realities, and then, to add more pressure, the occasion was being televised for the local news as my dad was running for a seat in a local election.

As the music began, and I stood at the aisle about to walk down in my pretty flower girl dress, it all came

crashing down on me—the deep grief for the life I had lost. In front of the cameras, and in front of all our friends, I cried uncontrollably. It's fair to say the glass of champagne I'd been given just prior to this moment probably didn't help me to control my emotions. I was a total mess, and I've never felt embarrassment like it.

I remember thinking, “Why can't I stop crying? Pull it together, you are embarrassing yourself.” But the tears kept coming, and what felt like looks of disdain and judgment from the guests at the wedding burnt deep.

To my horror, I was finally escorted out of the wedding by one of Dad's groomsmen. I felt weak, embarrassed, and deeply shamed about who I was. I remember everything becoming very dark and feeling very alone. It was the first time in my life I felt totally out of control, and I vowed never to feel that way again. This was, however, only the beginning of what became a lifestyle of ever-increasing fear, anxiety, and panic.

**I look back today at that little girl, and my  
compassion for her is deep.**

I wish I could have held her and told her she was brave and magnificent. In fact, over the years, I have done just that, and I would encourage you to view your childhood through the same lens of compassion. However, I didn't receive compassion that day, and a seed of shame and fear was sown into my core, and a severe personal fracture took

place.

Up until this event, I had been known by the name 'Lara'. However, during this season of my life, I took on my more formal name 'Larissa' and demanded everyone make the change. The motivation for this shift was deep self-loathing connected to all that had happened to 'Lara' during this time. It was also the beginning of a lie about what was really going on for me, and the start of a public persona that concealed my mental health challenges.

During my teenage years, my mental health was a mess. By year 11 I had been 'asked to leave' by the principal of the boarding school and was now attending a local high school and living back at home. I would go to school and pretend things were normal, and then come home each afternoon and lie on my bed and cry for hours. I began drinking and taking drugs to suffocate the internal chaos and anxiety with ever increasing frequency, until I was 21 and encountered Jesus. Unfortunately, due to the situation I was in, coming to Christ didn't remove the life of fear.

I wish my story was different, but even as a born-again and Spirit-filled Christian pastor, I would still have to deal with panic attacks, high fear, and anxiety. In truth, there are still experiences today that draw me into a panic cycle. However, the difference is that I now have the tools (the ones that I'm going to share with you) to bring myself back out when fear tries to take a hold.

During my twenties and thirties, I lived with the secret shame of not being able to 'cure' my mental health, and

the embarrassment of thinking I must have lacked faith. I thought there must have been something wrong with me because my worldview at the time didn't allow for the tension between Christ's victory on the Cross and human suffering. I am so thankful my theology has come to a deeper understanding today.

Mental health still has a stigma in our society and even more so in the church. I remember being plagued with the thought, "What sort of Christian am I if I can't fix this issue in my life?" Perhaps you have had similar thoughts that Christians shouldn't struggle with mental health issues. If so, then let me be very clear: *that is a lie from the pit*. Are you less a Christian if you suffer with cancer, diabetes or the flu? Of course not! Part of the reason that I wanted to write this book is to contribute to removing this stigma by addressing some of the unhelpful judgements around mental health in the church.

**Does God want you to find total freedom and healing? Of course. However, this is a process, which means there will be parts of that journey where you love God and struggle with your mental health at the same time!**

I do think that healing can be instantaneous, and that God does choose to move miraculously in particular struggles. For example, I know when I met Jesus, I was radically delivered from drugs—almost in a single moment.

But with regard to the panic attacks and high fear and anxiety, the transformation was not instantaneous for me. How I wished, prayed, and fasted that it would be! It has instead been a process where things got worse before I experienced victory, and a journey that I've discovered still requires faith.

**It could be argued that the road of long suffering requires us to show a greater faith than if we had been healed before that road even began.**

I experienced almost three decades of panic attacks and crippling anxiety before I found transformation, new hope, and new ways of managing my stress. However, once I started actioning these strategies, I began to experience results. These strategies that I will share in this book are simple, and if you commit to them, I believe they will revolutionise your life as they have mine. These tools have been birthed from the darkest chapter of my life, and this book contains the gold I gained from a time where I hit rock bottom after decades of silent struggle.

**It is always darkest before the dawn.**

For my entire adult life, the level of my anxiety has been a secret from most of the people in my world. Yet, at the age of 29, I could not pretend there weren't major problems any longer. My anxiety finally erupted with an



uncontrollable force that left me with my first nervous breakdown.

A bunch of things were going on at the time. I was working nights at a youth refuge and days at my church. I had some family stress that was surfacing, and I was starting to deal with sexual abuse from my childhood. One shift at the refuge, a young teenage boy violently pulled a knife on me. Later that night, as I was lying in bed, a very familiar feeling of aloneness, fear, and anxiety overtook me. It became so intense that I threw up, and it flung me into a spiral of uncontrolled emotions which I didn't emerge from for four months.

During those months, I hardly ate or slept. I was trapped in a panic cycle that had no end—like falling down a hole with no bottom. Looking back, I think the biggest source of trauma was not knowing why it was happening, what was happening or when it would end. I began having tormenting thoughts and invasive urges around suicide, and I felt like I was being subjected to an assault which I had no idea how to combat. I will be forever grateful to my flatmates at the time, Kristy Mills and Jacqui Grey, who are more like sisters and carried me through when I was drowning.

I sought treatment; I went on medication. I stopped working at the refuge, and I completely changed my life in terms of the pace I was living. I slowly regained my sanity but ultimately, I had no real idea what had happened to me or how it was I had eventually come back into my right

mind.

Going forward, I started to rebuild. But in the background, there was always an underlying beat, a constant rumbling of fear that, in time, when I least expected it, another episode would ‘get me’. Every time I experienced a panic attack, I thought I was falling back into the extremes I had experienced when I was 29. To compensate, my life and its experiences grew smaller and smaller as I tried to control any possible onset.

I never went on public transport—I wouldn’t go anywhere I felt I was going to be trapped. And I always had to sit on the aisle seat when I went to movies. I had to be facing the door in a restaurant, and I wouldn’t travel anywhere unless I could drive myself. Looking back, I can see every main event of my life for the next decade was accompanied by panic and fear.

A large part of my own wedding was spent huddled in a foetal position in a hidden room, unable to breathe and throwing up from uncontrolled anxiety. How grateful I am for a husband who locked himself in there with me, missing out on all the food and festivities of our wedding to just be with me in my panic.

I loved the Lord, and there was strength in my life. I was a pastor, and I contributed to my church in many ways—as long as there was routine, and a level of familiarity and control. If those elements were present, I was fine; I was strong; I was even dynamic. But, faced with a situation where they were absent, I couldn’t cope,

and panic would overtake me—this was something that happened often.

I remember being asked to preach and needing two weeks of mental preparation to manage the onslaught of panic. It was often too much, and I would end up declining the invitation. I remember being asked to run or be involved in mission trips on more than one occasion, and with every opportunity, I had an excuse why I couldn't go.

So, that's where I was when my life came crashing to a halt in my late thirties. By this stage, I was married and had just given birth to my first child. Anyone who has had kids knows that a newborn couldn't care less about your routine, coping strategies or level of control.

Even before having a baby, my life was already a bubbling cauldron. My ministry was under some serious strain at that stage—as was my marriage. I had also recently had a miscarriage at 12 weeks, which meant the lead up to the birth carried a degree of apprehension, and (like a constant foul smell in my life) I was once again attempting to unravel some deep issues relating to childhood sexual abuse.

Anxiety was high when my first baby was introduced to my life. After three weeks with the newborn, plus the other stressors in the forefront of my life, I think my internal workings just gave in. I did not have the coping strategies for the life I was in. I gazed upon this beautiful baby girl, fully dependant on me, and when I looked inside, I just knew I didn't have the capacity to be available for her in the

way she deserved. I was completely broken.

My sanity and centredness had left me, and in their place, was the highest level of panic and fear I had ever experienced in my life. I have no words that could describe to you what the next year of my life would be like. To look at my life and know that I had lost my mind was the scariest reality I have ever faced. I couldn't control my thoughts, and the darkness I was in was a real place I couldn't escape.

I remember collapsing in my husband's arms and finally admitting something was very wrong. He loved, and loves me dearly, but he would be the first to tell you, he felt very helpless. My mum had just retired, and after speaking with Lorenzo, it was decided she would come and live with us. We didn't realise it would become an eight month on-and-off arrangement.

I am so very grateful for her! There is no doubt in any of our minds that without her, I would have been hospitalised for a good length of time—or worse. I remember going to the local hospital and being admitted as an outpatient in the mental health ward. I would go to see the psychiatrist and be demoralised and humbled as I waited in the waiting room. I would look at these other people who were suffering, and I could see the reality of my situation through their eyes.

Some of these patients knew me as a local church pastor and would ask for prayer. I couldn't pray for myself, let alone someone else, I was utterly broken. But I couldn't bring myself to admit that I was there for my own struggles

and would play along with the assumption I was there for a pastoral visit. In time, the nurses saw what was happening, and would whisk me away the moment I arrived. I am grateful for their kindness.

Let me just say, being at the local mental health ward in a public hospital was necessary, but it did little for my sense of self-worth. It was so clinical and sterile, and I personally hated every visit—but I needed it. I am thankful for a country that has the healthcare system that we do, but I also felt demoralised.

I tried different medications while experiencing psychotic reactions. Again, I couldn't eat, sleep, think, hold a conversation or be around anyone, bar a few trusted people. I forgot how to drive, cook, and at times, how to say my own name. I would throw up continually. I couldn't stand noise, and I was just a complete mess. To lose your mind is a horrendous experience—I know no other way to explain it.

I remember at the height of it, I'd gone for a walk on my own and everything slowed down to an eerie pace. Nothing I did helped, I couldn't stop the panic and fear drilling through my body 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There was no reprieve, I was helpless. As I saw a truck driving toward me, I waited to cross at the lights. A feeling of clarity filled my mind, and I had this sensation, almost like a premonition, that I could cure it all if I just stepped out in front of the oncoming vehicle.

I saw myself in my mind being struck by the truck, and

I remember thinking how much better off everyone would be. I felt like a burden to those I loved and was crushed by the thought of my daughter having to grow up with a mother that loved her desperately but couldn't get her mind right. It would be so easy to fix it all, I thought. In that moment, I saw with complete clarity how to solve this debilitating problem—the problem that was me. I started to walk out but, as I looked up and saw the driver, my mind flashed with an image of his family. In a single second, I saw a movie play out showing his life after taking mine, and it stopped me—but it didn't heal me.

After this experience, I was defeated and had come to the end of my strength. I'd done everything I knew to do for almost two decades to fix this, and I had been dealing with the symptoms since I was that 11-year-old girl at my father's wedding. I'd answered every altar call, was fully committed to the journey of inner healing, loved God, and had been in ministry for about 15 years.

I had listened to podcasts, tried medication, and seen counsellors, psychologists, and psychiatrists. And yet, here I was, still filled with panic and anxiety, and at a complete loss as to how to get better. I just remember thinking, "I give up." To be honest though, the language at the time was probably far more colourful.

Then I felt the whisper of the Holy Spirit. As He so beautifully does when He rebukes us, He kindly said, "That's right my daughter, *you* have done everything you can. Now let *Me* guide you." It was like everything became

very clear.

**Ever had those moments when you sense God talking to you, and in a moment, His words change everything?**

I thought, “You’re right!” Which He is, obviously, because He’s God! I thought, *I have* done everything. *I have* been to every altar call. *I have* gone and sought counselling. *I have* tried different medications. *I had* taken control of the healing and the responsibility of fixing the problem. But what I needed to do was surrender it over to God completely and give Him full control.

**This was the turning point in my life in dealing with anxiety and learning to deactivate it.**

In that moment, I realised that I had been taking the driver’s seat in my healing, when what I needed to do was surrender that position of control to God and move on over. I had no way of fixing things on my own. I needed to hand them over to Jesus and trust that the Cross, that great exchange of His life for mine, was enough. I needed to trust that He could lead me forward if I was prepared to follow.

You may have already done that, but I’d like to invite you, as we commence this journey together, to bring the anxiety—or whatever it is that brought you to this book—and freshly surrender the issues you are facing to Jesus. Be

open to Him guiding the healing, the transformation, and the victory into your life. Are you up for it? It is where we start.

I have learnt keys and strategies and tools that have changed the game when it comes to panic attacks, and I'm going to share them all with you. But it all starts with surrendering your life to Jesus afresh.

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

—1 Peter 5:7



**“Father, thank you for bringing us to this spot.**

We declare You are Emmanuel, God in the midst of us. We believe that You loved us so much that You sent Your Son to die on the Cross. You did this to show us that You want to take our lives just as they are and bear our pain and anxieties. We believe that You can make a way out of our anxious lives, even though we may not be able to see it ourselves yet.

Show us the path of life, and Holy Spirit, we ask that You come afresh into our hearts today. We breathe You in; we love You. Please anoint us each time we come to read the pages in this book. Help us to hear what it is we need to hear for our own personal breakthroughs. In Jesus' name, Amen.”



## HIGHLIGHTS

- I had nothing to offer God when I met Jesus other than brokenness, wickedness, and filth. Yet He still called me, forgave me, and filled me with His Spirit, which is the grace available to us all, isn't it?
- I am now pretty awesome 😊, but I wasn't always as content. If you want to hear some of what really messed me up, and what brought me to writing this book, then you might like to go back and read this chapter.
- Can I just reinforce once more, if you are dealing with debilitating anxiety or panic, please go and see a health professional? Make sure that this book is part of a holistic care plan for you. I am not a doctor; I am just sharing my own story. If you are struggling, then reach out for professional help. That is the brave next step for you. There are a bunch of excellent resources for your support in the resources chapter at the end of this book.
- The key is the power of surrendering your life to Jesus—just as it is. Your story needs to be aligned with His story for you, and that can only happen when we invite Him into the guts of our troubles.