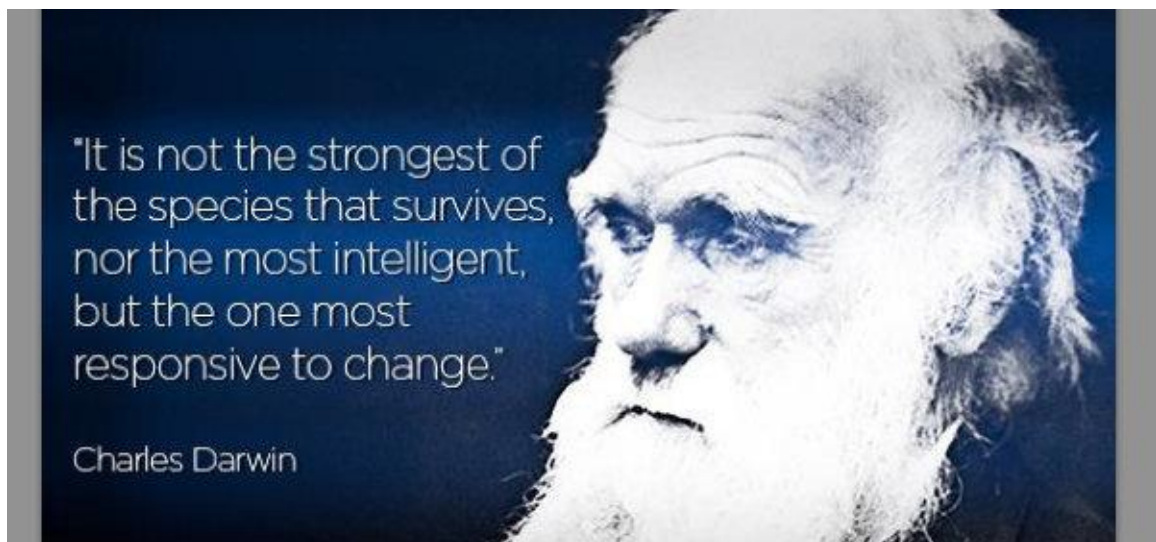


*“Lifting measurable performance for individuals, teams and businesses”*

**A VACCINE FOR ANXIETY**  
**DEVELOPING A GROWTH MINDSET**



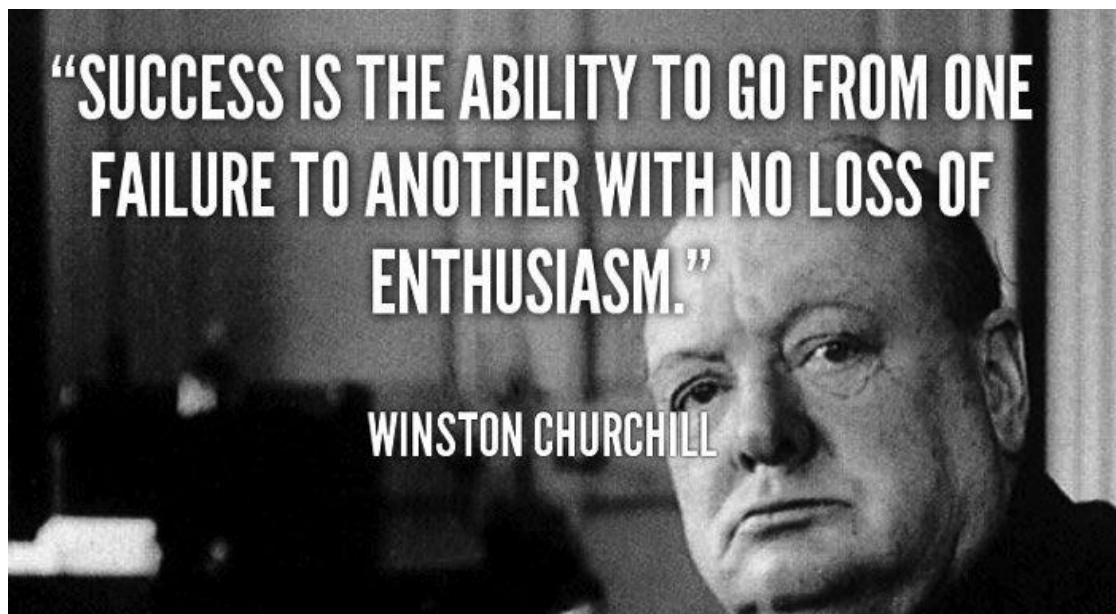
## Introduction

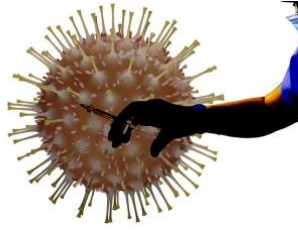
I have personally experienced half a dozen economic downturns in my lifetime, and what I have learned is that at an individual, team and business level developing a “Growth Mindset” is a key component to surviving and thriving such downturns. It will be equally vital for recovery in our new post Covid-19 world.

The prefrontal cortex is the part of our brain that is involved with creativity and planning and central for a “Growth Mindset”, however, it is easily hijacked by that part of our brain that is hard wired to detect threats. These threats in turn cause us anxiety and fear, that paralyses our ability to think and plan for the future.

This guide will assist you to vaccinate against anxiety and develop a growth mindset.

[David Morrison-Jones](#)





## **A Vaccine for Anxiety**

**What and Why:** Anxiety and stress are the product of fear, which is the most dangerous virus on the planet, unlike Covid-19 it is something that everyone at some point in their lives will experience, it does not discriminate by age, ethnicity or status.

Anxiety is debilitating and affects the mind and body. In the body it can be detected as that hollow feeling in your gut and that dryness in your mouth. While a relatively small percentage of people will contract Covid-19 the fear it provokes will chip away at the mental health of nearly everyone who hears about it.

As humans today, we face different problems. Will I have a job in 3 months? Will my business survive the coming downturn? Will I be able to pay my mortgage/rent? These problems can rarely be solved in the present moment and the prefrontal cortex (thinking brain, rational thought) doesn't have enough information to predict the future which in turn means our brain spins stories of fear and dread. This leads to chronic stress and anxiety.

**2 good Podcasts on [anxiety](#) and [Covid 19](#)**

## 5 Step Process to Help Overcome Anxiety

### 1. **Awareness.** 4

Recognize that you are getting anxious, pause, accept it.

Be calm and focus on something physically tangible such as a deep breathing or progressive muscle relaxation throughout the body.

### 2. **Breathe.**

Through your nose, using your belly and not your chest and shoulders.

Exhale more slowly than usual but not to the point of exertion or discomfort.

Focus on your breath (try to repeat “rising” on the inhale and “falling” on the exhale) to help clear the mind.

Try it for 10 breaths.

### 3. **Accept.** Do not suppress or try to think yourself out of anxiety. Accept the emotion and put it into words, give it a label – “I could lose my business”

### 4. **Focus.** While your eyes are closed the thinking brain will come back online. You accept the problem and realise that it is not an immediate threat. Take the perspective of a best friend and advise on an actionable first step, such as writing down some ideas on how to respond.

**e.g.. Financials** – Contact your creditors for extended credit terms. Look at the government assistance package. Analyse your expenditure and cut wasteful and discretionary expenses.

### 5. **Daily Routine.** Every day track your progress on the steps you are taking to resolve your problem. Measure the marginal gains. This will reduce the uncertainty and you will feel in control.

‘Knowledge is the antidote to fear’ -Ralph Waldo Emerson



## Developing a Growth Mindset

Having got our thinking brain back online we can focus on developing a mindset to take on the new challenges that will be in front of each of us after the lockdown.

What we need to do is state: “I am looking forward to working on the challenge in front of me.”

30 years of research by the psychologist Carol Dweck<sup>3</sup> has demonstrated that some people seem to see their abilities as “**fixed**”, a belief that you either have a talent for something or you don’t. Others have a “**growth** mindset”, a belief that your abilities can change over time. These mindsets will determine how each of us will face the challenges of post Covid-19, whether we will give up, or if we will persevere in the knowledge that we will improve over time.

A couple of examples: **Fixed mindset**: An MD I spoke to this week confessed that he was sitting in his home office with his head in his hands.

**Growth Mindset**: An organization pre Covid-19 had built a game plan around a premium product. The market disappeared overnight with Covid 19. The company pivoted and changed the product offering and the focus is now on setting up a new supply chain.

### 10 Tips for Developing a “Growth Mindset”

1. **Reframe** the “problem” as a “challenge”
2. **What gets measured gets done**, so ensure you reflect on the marginal gains you make every day. The aim is to be better today than you were yesterday.
3. **Be determined**, be focused.
4. **Use the phrase “not yet.”** “I have **not yet** mastered writing this guide”
5. **Concentrate on the process**
6. **Support.** Too often we delude ourselves into thinking that our enthusiasm won't waiver, that we have the staying power and we will stay on course. Make sure you have some people to lift, support and encourage you.
7. **It matters what you are doing not what others are doing!**
8. **Have a bias for action** and clarity rather than dreams and wishes.
9. **Circle of control.** It is surprising how much you can control when you construct a list.
10. **Be aware of Psychosclerosis** – A hardening of the arteries of the mind. Take input from others and look at alternatives to achieve the challenge. Be persistent but couple that with an open mind.

**“Do what you can, where you are, with what you have” -Teddy Roosevelt**