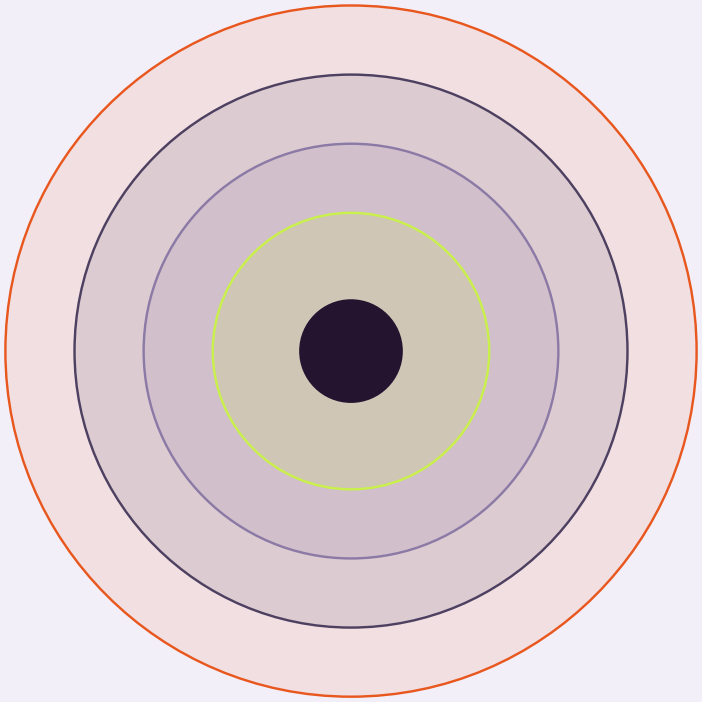


Dare: The New Way to End Anxiety and Stop Panic Attacks

A reading of the book by Barry McDonagh (2015)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Dare: The New Way to End Anxiety and Stop Panic Attacks, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Barry McDonagh is an Irish author and coach who struggled with anxiety and panic attacks as a young man and has spent years teaching others how to get past them. Dare argues that anxiety is kept alive by the effort to resist it: the more you fight, flee or monitor the feeling, the louder it gets. His answer is a four-step response called DARE: Defuse the what-if thoughts, Allow the feeling to be there, Run toward it instead of away, and Engage with the world again. He treats a panic attack as deeply uncomfortable but not dangerous, and suggests reading anxious arousal as excitement. Later chapters apply the same response to particular problems and to setbacks, drawing on his own experience and on people he has coached.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Anxiety feeds on the fight against it, so the way out is to stop fighting.

McDonagh's central claim is that resistance keeps the alarm ringing. Bracing, fleeing and checking your body all tell your nervous system there is a real threat. When you stop resisting, the alarm has less to react to and settles on its own.

2 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A panic attack is the body's alarm going off with no fire behind it.

The book treats panic as deeply uncomfortable but not dangerous: a surge of adrenaline that rises, peaks and passes. Believing that is easier once a doctor has ruled out other causes, which is why any new or changing symptom should be checked first.

3 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Answer a what-if with a so-what, then stop arguing.

Defuse is the first step of DARE. Anxious thoughts arrive as what-if questions, and trying to disprove each one keeps you stuck in debate. A flat, almost bored reply takes the charge out of the thought so you can let it sit there.

4 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Allowing a feeling is not the same as liking it.

The Allow step asks you to let the anxiety be present without trying to push it out. You can dislike it and still stop wrestling with it. Loosening your body, rather than bracing, is part of the same move.

5 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A racing heart can be read as fear or as excitement, and the reading changes what happens next.

In the Run toward step, McDonagh suggests telling yourself the sensations are excitement. The physical signs of the two states overlap a great deal, so the new label is not a lie, and it points you toward the feeling instead of away from it.

6 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Inviting the feeling to do its worst takes away its power to frighten you.

Running toward anxiety can mean asking it for more instead of begging it to stop. Fear of the fear is often what turns a wave into a spiral. Calling its bluff breaks that loop.

7 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Get absorbed in something real, and let the feeling tag along.

Engage is the last step. Once you have stopped resisting, put your attention on a task, a conversation or what is in front of you, rather than scanning your body for the next symptom. You do not need to feel calm before you carry on with your day.

8 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A setback is part of recovery, not proof that it failed.

The book expects bad days after good weeks and prepares you for them with anchor thoughts: short, steady lines you return to when anxiety comes back. The aim is to meet a setback with the same DARE response instead of panic about the panic.

9 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Every place you avoid makes the world smaller; going back is how it grows again.

Running toward also means returning to the situations anxiety has fenced off. Each time you go and the feared outcome does not arrive, your nervous system has new evidence. Start with the easiest place, not the hardest.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Get your symptoms checked once
- [ ] Write your so-what line
- [ ] Choose two anchor thoughts for setbacks
- [ ] Make a pocket DARE card
- [ ] List the places you avoid

KEEP UP DAILY

- [ ] Meet each what-if within one breath
- [ ] Call the rush excitement out loud
- [ ] Go back to one avoided place each week

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

Get your symptoms checked once

Book a doctor's appointment for any chest pain, fainting or symptom that is new or has changed.

Knowing it has been checked makes it far easier to treat the next wave as an alarm, not an emergency.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

Write your so-what line

Pick one short, slightly bored reply to your most common what-if thought, in words that sound like you.

Keep it under ten words so you can reach for it mid-wave.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

Choose two anchor thoughts for setbacks

Write two steady lines to read on a bad day, such as reminding yourself that setbacks are part of getting better.

Put them somewhere you will see them without searching.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

Make a pocket DARE card

Put your four lines for Defuse, Allow, Run toward and Engage on one card or a phone note.

Save it to your lock screen or wallet so it is there before you need it.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

List the places you avoid

Write down every place or situation you skip because of anxiety, then rank them from easiest to hardest.

This is the map you will walk back into, one step at a time.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Meet each what-if within one breath

When a what-if lands, answer it with your so-what line straight away and go back to what you were doing.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Call the rush excitement out loud

When your heart speeds up before a meeting, a drive or a crowd, say quietly that you are excited.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Go back to one avoided place each week

Take the easiest item on your list and go there this week.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
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December 2026

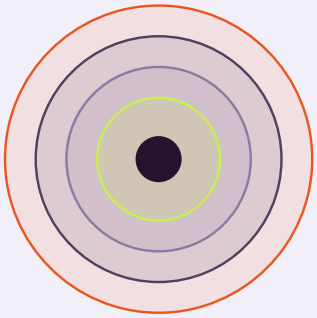
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



Stop fighting the wave. Let it come, step toward it, and get back to your day.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER BARRY MCDONAGH