



HOW  
JEWS  
DEAL  
WITH

THIRD IN A FOUR-PART  
SERIES ON ANXIETY BY

**RABBI MANIS FRIEDMAN**

PARTS 1 & 2 MAY BE READ AT  
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anxiety

# THE MAIN SOURCE OF MODERN ANXIETY IS NOT FEAR,

it's uncertainty. We constantly ask ourselves if we are making the right decision, or if something else might be better, wiser, or more fulfilling. That's why *chassidim* would go to the Rebbe and ask: What should I be doing? What is my mission and *shlichus* in life?

If you can get a direct answer from a Rebbe, that's a huge blessing.

All Rebbeim of Chabad starting with the Alter Rebbe call on the older *chassidim* who have learned a lot of Chassidus to take care of younger *chassidim* and to guide them in their life decisions. *Baruch Hashem*, N'shei Chabad has many compassionate, wise, and experienced women who can guide as well.

Other than that, you have to take a hint from *hashgachah pratis*. Hashem is leading you, but you need to trust that what Hashem is showing you is what's right for you. The talent that He has given you, the opportunities that He has put before you, the roadblocks that have prevented you from going in other directions—take that as Hashem's personal instruction.

Don't live your life with a constant question mark. If you're supposed to be somewhere else, G-d will let you know. For now, focus on pouring your energy into making your life today the best that it can be.

# QUESTIONS ANSWERS

**WOMAN:** My husband struggles with severe anxiety. How can I help him get through it?

**RMF:** The first thing you can do to help your husband is to encourage him to identify the source of the anxiety when he starts feeling it. Otherwise, it's like a ghost that haunts him; he never knows what it is, where it's hiding, and when it's going to show up next.

So let's identify the source of your husband's anxiety. Is it financial ruin? Family rejection? A need for approval?

**WOMAN:** It's financial. My husband doesn't have a job, he can't pay the mortgage, and he's panicking.

**RMF:** Okay, now that you have identified it, you've kind of corralled it. Instead of anxiety, your husband has a realistic question to ask himself: What can he do to pay the bills? Now, he can start working on a realistic solution. You can help him, or he can turn to a friend. There is no need to solve every problem alone.

Anxiety is self-inflicted punishment. There is no need for it. He needs to replace the worry with practical, solution-oriented thinking.

**MAN:** Does my negative thinking impact the future? If I'm always thinking the worst will happen, am I messing with Hashem's plan?

**RMF:** Negative thinking might delay and complicate what is supposed to happen, but it won't change it. No matter how negative you are, if you're meant to be successful, you will be. The process will just be more painful, confusing, and unpleasant than it needs to be. If you place your trust in Hashem, the path to success will be a lot smoother and more enjoyable.

A man once told the Rebbe that he wanted his daughter's marriage to be sooner, because he had a heart condition and was afraid he would not make it to the wedding. The Rebbe told him, "Don't worry. It will be okay."

The man said, "But Rebbe, I am going to worry."

The Rebbe said, "There is nothing to worry about. You'll be okay."

The man said, "Rebbe, you know me. I'm going to worry." So the Rebbe made a gesture with his hand and said, "Worry; don't worry. Either way, it's going to be okay."

You might have a tendency to think negatively, but you're not going to mess up G-d's plan. You're only going to make life harder for yourself.

**MAN:** You seem to be saying that radical *emunah*, in addition to other wellness components, can cure anxiety. Does that apply across the board or are there cases where more drastic measures need to be taken, such as therapy or medication?

**RMF:** There are definitely situations that require therapy and/or medication, but if you don't have a foundation of trust, it will be futile. The feeling of trust, of having Someone you can rely on, is the foundation of a healthy life. If you don't have that, all the therapy in the world will only put a bandaid on your problem.

The problem with the word trust is that it sounds too risky. When somebody tells you, "Trust me," it defeats the purpose. No, I don't want to trust you. I want to be sure. Trusting you is at best a gamble.

Trusting in G-d means something very different. It's not a gamble. It's absolutely secure.

Let's break down what it really means to trust in God.

G-d created the world, do you know that? Yes.

G-d runs the world, do you know that? Yes.

G-d is running the world for a purpose, right? Yes.

That purpose is a good purpose, right? Of course.

Would G-d change His mind? No.

Would G-d lose interest in His good purpose for which He created the world? No.

So you can trust, with absolute certainty, that everything that G-d sends you is for a good purpose. Trusting G-d is not hoping He'll be nice to you or hoping He doesn't hate you. Trusting in G-d is knowing that it's impossible for G-d to do anything that isn't good for you. He has a purpose. He will not change that purpose. That's absolute.

So you can rely on G-d. Now, isn't "rely" a better word than "trust"?

**WOMAN:** There's a joke that says "I'm so used to being anxious that when I'm calm, I get nervous." That describes me perfectly. Over the years, I've tried to work on combating my natural anxiety with trust in Hashem. At the same time, I am considering taking certain precautionary measures, such as life insurance and pension insurance. Do you think that signifies a lack of trust?

**RMF** : First of all, just the fact that you can joke about it means that you are way ahead of the game. Because with a sense of humor you can solve the most annoying problems. You also remind me of another joke: Jews are so good at feeling guilty, that if a Jew doesn't feel guilty, he says, "It's probably my fault that I'm not feeling guilty."

Secondly, a person who is truly anxious can have the best life insurance policy, the best health insurance policy, live right next to a police station and a fire station, and still be anxious.

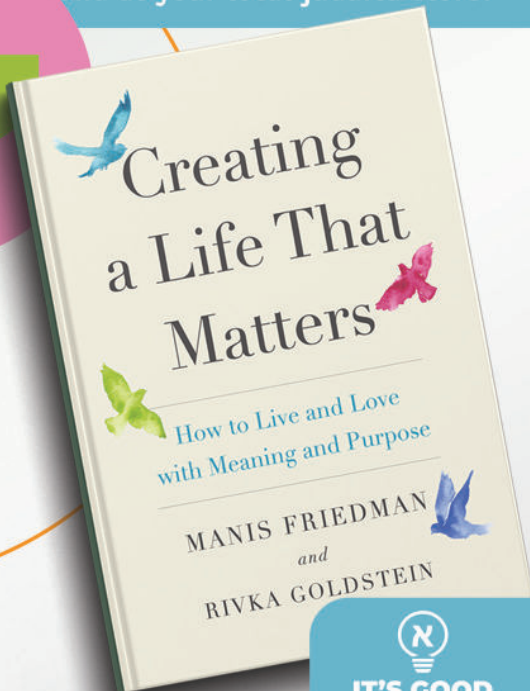
The fact that you want to buy life insurance doesn't signify a lack of trust, but a sense of realism. In the same way that having the number for Hatzolah on speed dial is not being paranoid, but being responsible. You have your safety net in place. Now you can live life and stop worrying about it. ❄️

*This four-part series on anxiety is based on an interview by Menachem Bernfeld of Rabbi Manis Friedman on 24 Av (August 2, 2021), which was followed by callers' questions. The podcast is called "Let's Get Real With Coach Menachem," and it may be found online.*

JEW'S ARE SO GOOD AT FEELING *guilty,* THAT IF A JEW DOESN'T FEEL GUILTY, HE SAYS, "IT'S PROBABLY MY FAULT THAT I'M NOT FEELING GUILTY."

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