



**Katharina Altemeier**

## **Hello Anxiety!**

**How panic attacks and anxiety disorders can awaken unforeseen strengths**

Original title: Hallo Angst – Wie Panikattacken und Angststörungen ungeahnte Kräfte wecken können

April 2022

288 pages

### **Your are not your anxiety – you are so much more!**

Anxiety disorders and panic attacks are an everyday experience for many of us; battling against them is tiring and unproductive. But it doesn't have to go on like this! The systemic consultant Katharina Altemeier only realized this after she herself had battled against her anxiety disorder for many years. Now she knows that those who dare face their anxiety will be free from it eventually. Those who stand still and look their anxiety in the eye will be able to reconnect with themselves. The author takes us with her on her journey, telling us the story of her personal experiences, gathering advice from experts, and along the way giving us suggestions and solutions for how life and levity can exist alongside anxiety and panic!



**Katharina Altemeier**, born in 1976 and having herself been affected by anxiety disorders for two decades, she is best placed to know how it is possible to live with anxiety and still lead a fulfilled life. She sat down with her anxiety, got to know it really well, and then turned her disorder into her professional focus. Today, she lives with anxiety, husband and son in Munich

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## **Foreword**

Let me be the first to admit it - the cover of my book could give you the impression that I’m one of these hyper-optimistic coaches who want to sell you anxiety as the newest must-have in the cycle of self-optimisation. But I can reassure you there. That’s not the case. I’m neither convinced by the neo-liberal idea of ‘everyone can do it all if they only want to’ nor do I want to sell you anything, least of all the message that anxiety is actually a good thing. I know from my own experience how difficult and unbearable it can be when your thoughts run in circles in the merry-go-round of anxiety and you can’t find the emergency brake. And when it comes to self-optimisation, it’s a phenomenon that contributes, in my opinion, at least partially, to the increase of mental health issues in our society. If you’re constantly tinkering around with your better self, modelling yourself on influencers and other narcissist opinion makers, you’re bound to fail and therefore be dissatisfied. Why? Because you can never fulfil your own unrealistic aspirations.

So what do I want to achieve with this book?

I want to tell you something. About me, about the anxiety that has been part of me since my adolescence in so many different ways. It kept me down, held me back in my job, my relationships and in life in general, it ensured that I was unable/unwilling to take responsibility. And I tried to get rid of it in almost every conceivable way,. I tried countless therapies, yoga, the tapping technique, shamanism, herbs and even medication.

I’m going to tell you about that, and how I managed to say ‘hello’ to my anxiety. I’m writing about it as someone who is affected by it, providing an insight into her personal history with anxiety. I’m also writing as a journalist who informs, defines and raises awareness, something I already do in my podcast “Hallo Angst” (Hello Anxiety). And I’m going on this journey with you in my role as a systemic counsellor, sharing ideas and

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thoughts, how to make contact with your anxiety, how to accept it as a part of you, live in peace with it and maybe even transform it into courage. I want to show you alternatives in your struggle with anxiety and encourage you to live with your fear. Why? Because, and I want to say this right now, in advance, it is a fight you can only lose. Although therapists, psychiatrists, books and the pharma industry claim otherwise, you can’t overcome your anxiety by trying to get rid of it. On the contrary, if you fight it, it will become even stronger. It took me a long time to understand that. That’s why I’m telling you my story, so that, maybe, it won’t take you quite as long.

But even if it takes you as long as it took me, that would be ok too. Because, and that’s important to me, it’s not about achieving something, putting in a perfect performance, successfully checking off the exercises in my book in order to become a ‘Hello Anxiety’ pro. I can now live quite well with my excessive fears and the thought of an occasional panic attack. I even managed to find my courage and try new things, thanks to my anxiety. A process that I also owe to many wonderful people around me.

Every story around anxiety is an individual story. That’s why I have no intention of recommending my ideas, thoughts and solutions as a kind of ‘recipe for a happy life without anxiety’ or even push them onto you. I would be very happy if my book made you think a little bit, if you reflect on a phrase in it for a little while, or maybe even many times, or if one of my exercises could help you in some way. It’s about impulse, about the small things in life, about a tiny dose of confidence meant to support you to find your own way of saying ‘Hello Anxiety’.