



ANXIETY SOLUTIONS: HOW TO QUIETEN THE RUNNING COMMENTARY IN YOUR MIND

When I was researching my book [7 Ways to Reduce Anxiety in 7 Minutes or Less](#) I collected a large number of simple, effective, and quick to apply techniques that can help reduce the level of stress we experience. One super easy technique that didn't make it into the book is one I use many times a day because it's so effective at quietening the mind.

The technique involves taking conscious control of your tongue.

When we think, we have a tendency to talk to ourselves. Even if we are not consciously aware of this sub-vocalisation, our body, and more specifically, our tongue is. The continuous 'running commentary' in the conscious mind corresponds to tiny movements in the tongue, in which the tongue is 'saying' the words of our internal monologue. When we relax the tongue or stop it from moving, the inner monologue ceases.

Our tongue is part of the *involuntary* (autonomic) nervous system. We often hold tension in the tongue without being aware of it and when stressed, many of us manifest this tension by pressing our tongue against the roof of our mouth.

Interestingly, our tongue is also part of our *voluntary* nervous system. This makes our tongue a "bridge" between our voluntary and involuntary nervous systems, and opens the way for us to trigger our involuntary nervous system—the "deeper" part of our nervous system—to begin to relax.

Below are two simple exercises you can use anytime to take conscious control of your tongue and quieten the anxious running commentary in your mind.

Relax your tongue

Relaxing the tongue is such an effective practice that, in her book [Awakening the Mind: A Guide to Harnessing the Power of Your Brainwaves](#), Anna Wise, says "*If you take nothing else away with you from reading this book, you will have gained enormously from this one practice.*" Anna offers the following exercise:

1. Close your eyes
2. Briefly press your tongue against the roof of your mouth to make it tense, then stop doing that and allow your tongue to relax.
3. It's OK to let your mouth hang open slightly.
4. Just simply let your tongue go, especially the back of your tongue.
5. As you exhale, feel it let go even more.
6. Exaggerate the relaxation.
7. If you need to swallow, that's okay.
8. If your tongue gets tense again, don't get annoyed. Just give it permission to relax again.
9. Exaggerate the relaxation again.



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10. By now you can almost feel your tongue floating in the cavity of your mouth.
11. You may feel it shorten some – or thicken.
12. Exaggerate the relaxation even more.
13. Focus on only relaxing your tongue – nothing else.

Stop your tongue from moving

In addition to relaxing your tongue you can reduce the tiny movements in the tongue by holding your tongue still.

This can be achieved by either physically holding the tongue with the thumb and forefinger or by placing the tip of the tongue on the roof of the mouth.

The latter option is the one I recommend you use.

So go ahead and give it a go:

1. Just imagine that there is a little droplet of olive oil balancing on the tip of your tongue.
2. Now place the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth, behind your front teeth.
3. Imagine that you are balancing the droplet of oil, holding it in that position.
4. Notice that your tongue becomes still as you continue to hold your tongue in this way.
5. Now notice how quiet your mind becomes as you do that.
6. You can hold your tongue in this position for as long as you like.

I use this technique when working with clients as it stops my internal chatter and allows me to focus 100% on what the person is saying. I also use it to stop a negative thought in its tracks.

I encourage you use one or both of these simple techniques. You'll be amazed at the difference they make.

What Next?

I help people to reduce distress and anxiety and avoid chronic stress. If you'd like to explore how I can help you let's have a chat (021 056 8389) or send me email: tony@tycoaching.nz. I coach face to face and via Skype.