

# Why you're anxious, angry, depressed – and how to fix it

**UNF#CK  
YOUR  
BRAIN**

GETTING OVER ANXIETY, DEPRESSION,  
ANGER, FREAK-OUTS, AND  
TRIGGERS... WITH SCIENCE

FAITH G. HARPER, PhD, LPC-S, ACS

**Unfuck Your Brain: Using Science to Get Over Anxiety, Depression, Anger, Freak-outs, and Triggers**  
by Faith G. Harper

*Meredith Mathis is a recent graduate of Reed College and a volunteer with the Mental Health Association of Portland.*

**BY MEREDITH MATHIS**  
CONTRIBUTING COLUMNIST

Faith G. Harper is an experienced mental health provider. She is a trauma-informed therapist; a licensed clinician with certificates in sexology, integrated life coaching and clinical nutrition; a board supervisor; and a teacher. Harper's goal is to cram what she has learned from decades of being in the field into a digestible, helpful guide for anyone looking to understand and begin working through their trauma informed physical and emotional responses to the world around them. Harper writes that the biggest takeaway from this book, if any, should be that these responses to the world, be they anger, anxiety, addiction or "the rest of it" are adaptive.

Harper communicates that these adaptive strategies are learned behaviors that made sense in the circumstances in which they were developed. By somehow breaking down something as complex as neurobiology in a very accessible way, Harper explains how and why the brain/body develops the way it does after traumatic events, and how this causes us to develop behaviors that negatively affect our daily life. From there, she explains how to undo, rework or "unfuck" as she would say, the feedback loop of our neurological responses and our behaviors. She offers hope that learning the whats and hows of it all can begin a process of regaining a sense of agency in your life. Or, as she wrote more clearly, "this book is about the why you are miserable so you can do something about it."

This book makes both academic and professional information accessible. The complexities of a topic are reworded, broken down and organized, making it much easier to read and understand without sacrificing nuance. Alongside the scientific explanations, Harper offers practical advice, guidelines, treatment options and small exercises a reader can use to start locating

*Faith G. Harper*



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their own feelings, responses, needs, etc. The book mirrors a lot of what someone might learn through either years of studying in the field, or even from years of being a patient with a good trauma-informed therapist. Harper makes no overstated promises, just gives thorough guidelines, and encouragement that it is possible to learn your particularities and (re)adapt for a better life, even if yours is a complicated, difficult and long process.

For every chapter and subsection of this book, I thought of a new handful of friends and family I wanted to share it with. It is many resources in one. Beyond establishing trauma as a key element in forming behavioral patterns, it covers dynamics of anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, grief, anger, addiction and more; it is *thorough*. I found myself simultaneously

wanting to share it with a partner, who I thought could benefit from certain sections, while wanting them to read other sections to better understand things I go through. It's a good guide for anyone affected by these topics, or people who are close to people who are, which is a lot of people. It's potentially helpful for people who don't necessarily need therapy, for people who are in therapy and could use some new guidelines and strategies, and/or most people who have difficulty naming and acting on what's going on with them – again, a lot of people.

I'm thankful I read it. I will probably read it again, and I will definitely recommend it to most of my friends, family and mental health care providers.



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