

Unleashing Potential: Joanne Chua's Approach to Workplace Empowerment



Written by: Joanne Chua, Executive Contributor

In today's demanding professional landscape, Joanne Chua boasts over 20 years of experience across various organizations. She is an Executive and Leadership Coach with expertise in psychology and mental health.

Joanne's daily work revolves around addressing workplace challenges such as anxiety, navigating organizational structures, managing upward relationships for career progression, resolving conflicts, and fostering collaborative, motivated teams.

Her clientèle includes diverse organizations seeking her coaching for managers and leaders. She imparts training on a range of topics, from emotional intelligence (EQ) to mental health strategies, including anxiety management and preventing burnout. Joanne's expertise covers the multifaceted challenges of the workplace.

Beyond coaching, Joanne astutely integrates mental health insights, identifying recurring behavioral patterns and unearthing underlying root causes.

Join us as we embark on a transformative journey through Joanne Chua's expertise, unlocking the untapped potential and self-empowerment within the professional world.

Understanding Workplace Anxiety

What is workplace anxiety?

“Workplace anxiety encompasses those moments when the mere thought of work or heading to the workplace triggers feelings of unease and discomfort. In more severe cases, it can disrupt one's daily functioning. For instance, individuals might find themselves unable to sleep on a Sunday night due to the looming stress of Monday's workday. They may experience palpitations, a racing heartbeat, or a loss of appetite the day before returning to work on a Sunday. These signs are strong indicators of workplace anxiety, signifying that work is causing stress that hampers their ability to function optimally. This situation is a cause for concern because it robs individuals of the joy of going to work. Ideally, work should be something to look forward to, not a source of dread. Considering that work occupies a significant portion of a person's life, addressing workplace anxiety becomes crucial. Without intervention, it can escalate into a highly challenging and potentially disastrous situation. In essence, workplace anxiety is an issue that demands attention and resolution.”

Identifying Workplace Anxiety

How do we know we experience workplace anxiety?

“Workplace anxiety often manifests as a series of distressing symptoms that surface each time you approach your job. These symptoms can be quite pronounced, including sensations like nausea, palpitations, and even diarrhea. These physical signs serve as early warning signals of workplace anxiety. One telltale sign is a noticeable decline in productivity. When employees grapple with anxiety at work, it invariably impacts their ability to deliver the quality of work they typically do.

Various factors can contribute to this distress. It might stem from interpersonal difficulties, such as conflicts with colleagues that create an emotional barrier. It could also be related to one's superiors, the feeling of being ill-equipped for the tasks at hand, or struggling to adapt to the company's workflow and culture – a pervasive sense of not fitting in.”

Symptoms of Workplace Anxiety

What are the symptoms of workplace anxiety?

“Workplace anxiety can manifest in various ways, affecting an individual both mentally and physically. These symptoms fall into four categories: cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral.

Cognitive Symptoms: Workplace anxiety often leads to cognitive challenges, including forgetfulness, difficulty remembering tasks, and errors in email communication. You may find yourself lost in thought or struggling to focus on your work. The heightened stress levels associated with anxiety can significantly impact your cognitive abilities.

Emotional Symptoms: The emotional toll of workplace anxiety is profound. You may notice increased irritability, impatience, and an overall lack of peace. Small frustrations can escalate into intense anger, and this emotional turmoil can negatively impact your interactions with colleagues and supervisors.

Behavioral Symptoms: Behavioral changes can signal workplace anxiety. Sleep disturbances, such as insomnia or sleeping excessively, are common. Some individuals may turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms like overeating or smoking more than usual. These behaviors often serve as ways to temporarily alleviate stress, but they can lead to additional problems.

Physical Symptoms: The physical toll of workplace anxiety is undeniable. You may experience physical discomfort, such as migraines, neck or back pain, irritable bowel syndrome, gastritis, or palpitations. These physical symptoms can be distressing and may further exacerbate the emotional and cognitive aspects of anxiety.

Recognizing these symptoms is the first step in addressing workplace anxiety. It's essential to understand that these symptoms are interconnected, and managing one aspect, such as cognitive or emotional symptoms, can positively influence the others. Seeking support and employing coping strategies is crucial to managing workplace anxiety effectively.”

Managing Workplace Anxiety

How do we manage workplace anxiety?

1. Create Self-Awareness

2. Social Network

3. Practice Mindfulness

4. Talk to Anxiety

- “Effectively managing workplace anxiety is crucial for overall well-being. Begin by identifying the root causes of your anxiety, as self-awareness is the first step towards improvement. If the causes remain unclear, consider seeking therapy or speaking to a trusted individual to help uncover and understand your underlying emotions.
- Increase social network : speak to a close friend to internalize your thoughts and emotion, get to know a support group to help you overcome your anxiety.
- Incorporating mindfulness practices can be highly beneficial. Techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, and yoga help calm the nervous system and stimulate the release of serotonin, a calming hormone. For instance, try the 'box breathing' technique: inhale deeply for 4-5 seconds, hold for the same duration, exhale slowly while anchoring words like 'calm' or 'peace,' and then rest for 4-5 seconds before repeating for about two minutes, twice a day. Consistent practice can yield noticeable improvements in managing anxiety.
- Another effective strategy involves personifying anxiety as if it were a separate entity. Engage in a dialogue with your anxiety, questioning why it persists and what it seeks to achieve. Make it clear that you no longer wish for its disruptive presence. Then consciously choose to ignore anxious thoughts, diverting your energy toward positive mindfulness activities like deep breathing, enjoying nature, or engaging with loved ones.

Physical activity plays a significant role in anxiety management. Engage in exercises like jogging, swimming, or yoga, as they enhance overall well-being and contribute to stress reduction.

It's essential to remember that workplace anxiety is not a dead end.”