

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Owen O’Kane has dual medical and psychotherapy training and is a former NHS Clinical Lead for Mental Health. His first book *Ten to Zen* was a *Sunday Times* bestseller. Owen lives in London but grew up in Belfast during The Troubles, which he describes as a great training ground for his current work. He also spent many years of his career working with people living with a terminal illness, which has greatly influenced his work. When not writing books, Owen runs his private therapy practice, delivers talks, and contributes to press and media on mental wellness issues. He is a lover of dogs.

OWEN O'KANE

HOW TO BE YOUR OWN THERAPIST

Boost your mood and reduce
your anxiety in 10 minutes a day



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Names, identifying characteristics and details have been changed to protect the
identity and privacy of individuals.

This book is not a substitute for one-to-one live therapy, which some people
will unquestionably need. If you feel you need one-to-one or group
professional support, please prioritise getting help via your doctor or
local mental health organisations. There is a list of support organisations
included at the end of the book.

*To my partner Mark, who believed I could
help many people through my books.*

Thank you for your belief and encouragement.

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INTRODUCTION

I'm a therapist and, like most therapists, I've been to therapy. It changed my life. In fact, therapy affected me so profoundly that I was inspired to become a therapist myself.

I believe therapy has the potential to change everyone's lives for the better. But here's the problem. It isn't cheap, it's hard to access and there are often waiting lists spanning years. And let's not forget, there's still some degree of stigma attached to therapy! But if you're feeling at all hesitant, consider this: sometimes our brains need a little maintenance and looking after to help us deal with life's challenges. And that's what good therapy helps with. It's nothing

to be ashamed of. Life can be demanding. We juggle responsibilities, expectations, and unexpected changes that throw us off balance. Many of us try to navigate these challenges alone, often feeling overwhelmed or uncertain of the best way forward.

In my years of clinical practice, I have witnessed countless individuals discover their inner resilience when given the proper tools. That is precisely what this book offers: straightforward, effective techniques that you can incorporate into your daily routine.

In this book, I will teach you how to access the therapist within you and make the best of each day — whatever is going on for you. The skills you'll learn will help you to function better, feel better and live better for the rest of your life.

One final declaration that might come as a bit of a surprise. I am not going to change you. I am offering you my insights, learning and experience. It is *your choice* what you do with it. Too many books, 'gurus' and professionals promise to change your life. I can't do that. But I do believe *you* can change your life.

ABOUT ME

First and foremost, I'm a human being with weaknesses, vulnerabilities and a back catalogue of mistakes like most people. I know from personal experience what it means to be imperfect. I believe this helps a lot in my line of work!

I think we have too many people telling us to do more, be more and buy more, instead of helping us understand how we can live our present lives better and with less struggle. My other bugbear is how often we're told to ignore the warning signs that life is getting on top of us. It's all well and good being

resilient, but real resilience starts with honest self-awareness. I grew up in Belfast during a turbulent period, and early on I learned the profound impact that stress, fear, and uncertainty can have on the human spirit. Later, working as a palliative care nurse and clinical lead in mental health, I saw firsthand what truly matters when everything else is stripped away.

These experiences shaped my understanding of human vulnerability and strength. When you learn to listen to yourself without judgement, you unlock the ability to heal and grow.

I share these insights with you, to demonstrate what is possible with therapy. I'm talking about breakthroughs. Transformation. I am confident you will realise both by reading this book.

HOW DOES THIS BOOK WORK?

THIS BOOK IS DIVIDED INTO TWO PARTS.

Chapters 1 to 5 make up Part 1. This is the essential foundation work that sets you up for your ten minutes of daily therapy practice, which is covered in Part 2. You will need a notebook and a pen to do this work, so be sure you have both ready. Part 1 includes everything you'd usually cover in therapy with me. There are no shortcuts here, so I encourage you to stick with the work. It's life-changing. It will also help you understand the importance of your ten minutes of daily self-therapy. In part 1 we will look at:

1. Your 'real' life story
2. Making sense of your story and how it affects you today
3. What you really want from your life

PART 1

5

CHAPTER

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

When we communicate who we are through our choices, we establish an alignment between our inner values and outer presence. Words can declare intentions, but daily actions define reality.

or fabricate who you are, you compromise your integrity and the foundations supporting you.

I remember once being advised by a friend not to talk too much about my own struggles in book interviews because ‘People don’t want advice from a therapist who has struggled.’ I disagreed and chose not to adapt my approach. I am good at my job partly because I personally have known, and I understand, human struggle. Why would I hide that? The best professionals in health and psychology are often those people who have walked the walk.

I’m not advocating that you shouldn’t strive for self-improvement. Personal growth can fulfil you and help to augment those aspects of your personality and identity that make you special and unique. All I ask is that you avoid the trap of believing you need to be different from what you are. You don’t.

Commit to your authentic self. It won’t let you down.

PART 2

6 CHAPTER

GET READY FOR YOUR DAY

Have you ever had one of those days where you've rushed out of the house already late for an appointment looking like you've been dragged through a hedge backwards, with your jumper on inside out and just blindly hoping you've got your phone, wallet and keys with you? Apart from looking like you've just been on a motorbike without a helmet, you also notice that your mind is racing. Everything feels frantic, chaotic and imbalanced. You're not set up for the day and consequently the remainder of the day landslides into what can best be described as a pile of crap. We all have them.

THE MORNING ROUTINE

How you start your morning sets the emotional cadence for the entire day. When you awaken to an immediate cascade of panic and hurried reactions, your nervous system remains in high alert. By taking just ten intentional minutes to ground yourself, you fundamentally shift how you respond to stress.

- Take three deliberate breaths before checking notifications.
- Acknowledge your current state without judgement.
- Identify one primary intention for the hours ahead.



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