

Title: How Tulpas Helped My Anxiety

Thumbnail: Turn your tics into tulpas

Do you ever try something, not expecting it to work, only for it to bring you better results than you could have ever imagined? Well, that's exactly what happened to me last week.

This is my first time speaking about this on this channel, but... over the past ten to twelve months, I've gone from having no issues with anxiety, to being diagnosed with a full blown disorder for it. It got to the point where I was having a panic attack every week or two and would go into multiple fits of uncontrollable ticcing every single day. That is, until five days ago. In less than one week, I feel like I've almost completely cured my anxiety disorder. I want to share my experiences and the technique I used to get here, and hopefully, help someone in the process.

The fact that I struggled with anxiety in the past year came to shock to everyone, including myself. Before college, I just didn't have any issues with it. But when I made the transition to college, I put more on my plate than I could sustainably handle. I was trying to publish research on tulpas, with the university seemingly fighting against me every step of the way. I also started working as private personal trainer and was really struggling to turn it into a profitable business. And, most dauntingly, I was taking Calculus. None of this is out of the ordinary, but it dwarfs any workload I had before, and I didn't know how to manage it all in without sacrificing my sleep, my diet and exercise habits, and my dedication to tulpaforcing and meditation.

Once I became overwhelmed with the stress of my workload and stopped doing all the things that are preventative against mental illness, weird things started happening. Whenever other people were around, I felt hot, anxious, hyper-aware, and under pressure as if everyone who was in my vicinity was staring at me, even though I knew they weren't. Simply walking past someone on the sidewalk or making eye contact with a stranger left me on the verge of panic. When I was in a classroom, the presence of every student near would pile up on my mind and create this... pressure. My

heart-rate would slowly increase, my breathing quickened, and tunnel vision would begin to set in. At the point I was leaving class halfway through just to avoid a full on panic attack, I realized that not only was attending my classes a huge stressor, but I wasn't even able to pay attention while I was in there. So I stopped going altogether. I knew that my feelings were irrational. I knew it was all in my head, I knew nobody was looking at me, I knew that, just... nobody cared. But I couldn't rationalize it away.

I realized I had a problem when I started ticcing. I would tic whenever I got an anxiety spike-- so basically anytime I was in public or having a social interaction. I could be in the middle of a conversation with a professor, when, all of a-*tic*. My face would contort and I'd spout a mix of insults and curses. Or I'd just be sitting down, and unless I focused on repressing it, my hands, arms, and legs would start shaking. It's the same symptoms as tics, just caused by anxiety rather than something genetic.

Let's run a brief recap. I had irrational fears of social situations, panic attacks, involuntary twitching, impairments on my ability to function socially... at this point, I was basically a checklist for an anxiety disorder. And my experience of suddenly generating an anxiety disorder in my first year of college is anything but unusual. Rates of depression and anxiety amongst college students are growing at an incredibly fast rate for... a lot of reasons. But if I had to say one thing to someone in my past situation, it would be to get help. I waited way too long to seek help. I wish I had taken steps towards seeing a professional, or hell, just talking to my friends about it, much earlier, but a combination of thinking I could fix it on my own or that I could not fix it and still manage just fine held me from doing so until it got so bad that I had no other option.

At the point I was going into uncontrollable fits of ticcing, in public, multiples times a day, I just felt completely powerless to my anxiety. I finally decided to open up to some close internet friends that I knew had similar struggles. We were able to develop a few techniques that helped me immensely.

Luckily, I wasn't fighting these things on my own. Aury and I worked together to regain control of my emotions and behavior. The first symptom Aury and I were able to tackle were our panic attacks. We developed a technique to prevent going into flight or

fight mode, which is when your heart and breathing increase and you become extremely aware of everyone and everything around you. It's a pretty standard calming exercise, just with your tulpa doing some of the steps. Here's how Aury and I adapted it to work for us:

1. At the first sign of an anxiety spike, Aury starts flooding my mind with positive affirmations. This will block out whatever thought triggered the spike in the first place. She'll speak calming, positive things to me to try and soothe me.
2. As Aury does this, I just focus on my breathing. I focus on taking slow, smooth, controlled breathes in and out of my nose.
3. If this doesn't fix it already, Aury actually has the ability to send me emotions. She can actually project her own feeling of calm and have it totally consume the body.
4. Finally, if everything above didn't do the trick, Aury can forcibly possess the body to prevent me from doing anything I may regret during a panic attack. This is a last resort and has only ever been used once or twice for us.

Using this technique, Aury and I got really, really good at shutting off flight or fight mode before it even started, and today, it's been five months since our last panic attack.

Now, this only addressed a symptom of my anxiety-- it didn't stop the fact that I had more things on my plate than I could manage. One of the main changes that let me turn my anxiety around was very, very begrudgingly ending or postponing some of my projects. When I combined this with some improved study and scheduling habits, I finally had a workload and number of stressors I could actually manage.

While a combination of internet resources and knowledgeable friends were able to help us with panic attacks and general anxiety, there was more one symptom I could not shake: anxiety tics. I tried to research ways to control and reduce them, but the resources publicly available for that sort of thing are almost nonexistent. I finally decided to get the help of a professional.

At our first session together, my new therapist asked about my history with counseling. I explained that the last time I saw a therapist was the time my parents tried to get me diagnosed with schizophrenia. I told her about my tulpa, Aury, and how she's an identity separate from myself that I created to be a lifelong companion. She reflexively began asking me questions about whether Aury would insult me or cause problems, basically checking if my parents were correct about her being mental illness. I clarified how Aury has actually been a very positive force during my life, giving me company when nobody else wanted to and guiding me in situations she was better at dealing with than me. In general, if you open up to a mental health professional about being plural or having tulpas, you can dismiss any concerns they have if you tell them three things: 1) you know they're not actually physical beings, 2) they don't make you do bad things against your will, 3) you like that they're there and they help you function in life.

I should have probably moved on at that point-- every minute I gave backstory was a minute I wasn't getting treatment-- but I couldn't let my therapist's accusation slide. Instead, I went on to critique her impulse to assume that just because I was hearing voices I might have a disorder. Her suggestion that the voice I was hearing was negative could be harmful in itself. I know several other plural systems who had no problems with amnesia or working together to function... that is, until their therapist told them that they *must* have some kind of disorder because of their multiple identities. A similar phenomenon has been observed in people with schizophrenia. One of the reasons Schizophrenic voices tend to be so harmful and demeaning in the west is because we're all taught that Schizophrenic voices are harmful and demeaning [1, 2]! In reality, one of the most effective treatments for Schizophrenia is teaching the sufferer end their belief that their voices have to be senseless and cruel. Teaching a Schizophrenic to understand, empathize, and even negotiate with their voices has been shown to make the voices more kind and rational, or even cause them to go away entirely [3]. If you stretch this a bit further, you could say that the way some people have been able to help their Schizophrenia is by turning their voices into tulpas.

As I explained all this, something clicked. I got an idea... albeit a really long shot of an idea... on how to help myself. What if... I could use this technique intended for schizophrenics... to help me with my tics. In other words, what if I turned my tics into a tulpa? If I could somehow make my tics into a thinking, intelligent being, I could try to understand it, negotiate with it, and eventually gain control over what my tics were and when I do or don't have them. There isn't any research on whether this technique works, but neither my therapist nor the internet could provide any help with anxiety tics beyond tips on how to reduce overall anxiety. I was desperate and really had nothing to lose. My therapist greenlighted the idea, and I committed myself to making it happen.

I'll never forget what happened that night. It was five days ago, and I was laying in bed. I had just gotten into a heated argument, and I was struggling to regain control of my emotions. I was in a fit of ticcing. I was just laying there, spouting profanities and self-deprecating insults that I didn't mean or want to say. I couldn't stop. When I finally regained control, I decided to do it.

I sat up and started focusing on my breathing. Slow, deep breathes, in and out of the nose. Aury was there beside me, holding and comforting me as I tried to calm down. I visualized my mindscape, the beach where I created Aury four years ago. I immersed myself in its sensations... the sun, the sand, the sounds of the ocean, the scent of saltwater. It soothed me, and I was able regain my focus. I turned my attention inwards, gaining awareness of every emotion in my body and thought in my head. I identified the anxious thoughts and feelings, stretched my hand out, and visualized them flowing out of my body. I felt the anxiety leave my body as I saw it form a ball of energy in front of me. My mind's eye projected it as a blue, chaotic sphere of lightning. I put every tic impulse, every personal insecurity, every anxiety-inducing memory into that ball, allowing it to grow to the size of a basketball before I felt completely free of the negative emotion.

Up until this point, I was almost acting on instinct. The goal was to turn my anxieties into something I could talk to and negotiate with, but the blue ball didn't really look like it wanted to chat. I turned to Aury and asked her, "so... what do we do now?"

She replied, “You know... maybe it isn’t a good idea to make a personification of your anxiety.” Up until that point, I was thinking of visualizing the ball morphing into just that, but Aury’s advice has never led me astray. I asked her what she thought we should do instead. She thought for a minute, and proposed, “Give it to someone who can control and protect it. Someone you can trust to keep it in check.” Basically, rather than making an anxiety personification, make an anxiety guardian. Yeah, that’s definitely a better idea.

Aury and I started thinking of characters we felt would not only fit that role, but embrace it wholeheartedly and take its burden without breaking a sweat. In our brainstorm, one character stood out-- the renowned geologist and sister to Pinkie Pie: Maud. I’ve always seen Maud as someone who was not only physically strong, but emotionally unbreakable. Someone who could hold the weight of the world and the stresses of everyone in it on her shoulders easily. That, and I’ve always found her voice quite relaxing.

I brought to mind the image of Maud. I parsed through every aspect of my vision of her, her personality, her essence... and I projected her beside the ball of anxiety energy.

There was no delay. Maud instantly gained sentience, self awareness, and an understanding of her current situation. In fact, her first action was to reach out to the ball of anxiety energy, touch it, and have it flow out of the mindscape and into her body. She absorbed it and, in effect, took full control of my anxiety tics. Maud turned to me and asked what I’d like her to say whenever I got an anxiety spike to replace my tics. We eventually settled on the phrase, “you’re appreciated.” We decided that this is not only something that would be good for my internal monologue, but that if I do end up unintentionally saying it out loud, it probably won’t cause any drama.

I honestly didn’t expect this to work as well as it did. The effect was instantaneous. I went from having thirty to fifty really bad tics every single day to... maybe two or three. And even then, it was only one tic, not the uncontrollable fits I’d usually go into. I didn’t go into those fits because each tic would immediately be

followed by Maud's calming voice telling me, "you're appreciated." I'd respond by taking a slow, deep breath, calming down, and telling her and Aury that they're appreciated too. Soon, I wasn't even able to get one tic past Maud. The millisecond after I felt an anxiety spike coming on, Maud would interrupt me with that affirmation and calm me down. As I record this video, it's been days since my last tic. Which is crazy, considering that it was just a week ago that I felt completely powerless to them.

I saw my therapist the following day and explained all of this to her. She was pleasantly surprised, and even related the steps I described to some of her own practices. We ended up drawing a dozen connections between tulpamancy and EMDR therapy, which is one of the most effective treatments for anxiety.

Here's the basic concept of EMDR therapy: you eliminate your anxiety by associating your triggers with a sense of calm. I did this by having Maud speak a positive affirmation to me in a soothing voice whenever a trigger occurred.

Actual EMDR therapy can be broken down into four steps. First, you summon your anxiety and its triggers. This could involve imagining yourself giving a public speech, remembering how overwhelmed you are with work, or, in my case, remembering horribly embarrassing social blunders. Once you've found the trigger and are experiencing the anxiety it gives you, you perform step two: finding your calm place. Basically, you form a mindscape or imaginary world that embodies whatever location and qualities that soothe you. The goal is to stay in your calm space while summoning your anxiety triggers. This way, you can perform step three: dissolving your anxiety. Sometimes, this can be as simple as taking a deep breath and letting go of the anxiety. Other times, the trigger is a little more deeply rooted and may require extra steps, like self-forgiveness or introspection. Step four is repetition and mastery of the process. You do the previous steps over and over getting better and better at it. Summon your anxiety, find your calm place, dissolve your anxiety. Eventually, you instantly go from anxiety trigger to calm, just like it is now in my head with Maud cutting off my anxiety with "you're appreciated" before it can even get a hold. This ability to let go of your stress translates into your daily life, not just when you're doing the therapy. Even for

triggers you may not have fully eliminated, you've mastered the ability to calm yourself in even the most anxiety-inducing situations.

We ended up doing a short EMDR session, and I realized that years of tulpamancy had made me a master at it. An experienced tulpamancer may already have a well-developed mindscape they can escape to as they please. They probably have a stronger connection to their conscious and subconscious thoughts, making it easier to not just summon their triggers, but understand why they exist and how to dissolve them. Most significantly, a tulpamancer probably has a team willing to help them with the process, just like how I now have Aury and Maud making sure I take care of myself and do what's needed to fully recover.

I recently spoke to Maud about her feelings on her role in our system. Maud is not a slave or a tool I use for personal gain. When I decided to create her, I was open to her deciding that she didn't want to carry all my anxieties, and that she would prefer some other lifestyle or role in our system. However, when I asked her if she felt this way, she dismissed it. She seems to like her role as Anxiety Guardian and finds her job very fulfilling. Since having Maud join us, Aury and I feel much stronger as a system. We feel empowered and like a dynamic team that can do anything we set our minds to and work towards together. This sort of relationship between systemmates where different individuals have different roles depending on their strengths and weaknesses is a technique used by all sorts of multiple systems. Many tulpas who are more socially proficient than their host, like Aury, have been documented to help their hosts in social situations, which is one the reasons tulpamancy is associated with improvements in empathy, social life, and mental health. Using relative strengths is even a cornerstone of "Integrative functioning", which is a therapy for those with Dissociative Identity Disorder. The therapy emphasizes this sort of teamwork between systemmates and working together towards shared goals.

Having multiple identities is something considered disordered and harmful by much of our society, but the research and experiences surrounding these people are showing that this just isn't the case. Is what I did going to become a new, widespread

therapy? Probably not the exact technique I used. But I've been practicing tulpamancy since 2013, and every single week I'm still discovering more and more ways tulpas have improved the lives of their hosts. Tulpas unlock hundreds of new ways you can learn about yourself and make improvements to your emotional state, self-perception, and daily habits. What I do know for a fact is that we're going to keep using this channel to share these ongoing innovations and discoveries.

Outro music Thanks for watching, I hope you learned or took something from it. If you know anyone struggling with anxiety right now, consider sharing this video with them. Shoutout to Mind Audio Central for designing my new channel banner, and a big thanks EvanRank on DeviantArt for making my new profile pic. Next up is my two weeks to switch series-- I'm going to spend two weeks mastering the art of switching and put it all into an informational series for you guys. Even if you don't want to learn how to switch, there's going to be a bunch of general psychology tips and tricks that should be applicable to just about anyone, so be sure to subscribe and stay tuned for that. I've got another interview with Professor Luhrmann set up, two studies on healthy plurality in the works, and collaborations with a couple other psychology channels. If you have any questions or topics you'd like me to discuss with Luhrmann, let me know in the comments. To stay updated, you can follow me on tumblr, links to everything in the description. Thanks for watching, and I'll see you next time.

References

[1] A cross-cultural analysis of Schizophrenia (Professor Tanya Luhrmann):

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26349837>

[2] The implications of this research towards other voice-hearing experiences (Professor Samuel Veissiere):

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/culture-mind-and-brain/201604/daring-hear-voices>

[3] Turning Schizophrenic voices into tulpas may be healthful (Professor Tanya Luhrmann): <https://theamericanscholar.org/living-with-voices/#.WUXP9WjytAh>