Author Erica Matthews Releases Navigating Life with Anxiety, Exploring the Often-Unseen Impact of Anxiety

New book gives voice to the physical fear, family patterns and everyday limitations of anxiety—and the small steps that can help people reclaim their lives


Erica Matthews, author

BRANDON, FLORIDA, FL, UNITED STATES, September 11, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Eight years ago, Erica Matthews could get in her car and drive anywhere—city to city, state to state, sometimes without a destination at all.

Then something changed.

Her heart would race. Her hands became clammy. Her chest felt heavy. Driving began to feel dangerous. A woman who once experienced the road as freedom found herself avoiding highways, staying close to exits and sometimes struggling simply to make it to work.

Yet from the outside, Matthews still looked fine.

She worked. She cared for her family. She fulfilled responsibilities. She showed up looking put together while privately managing fear, physical symptoms, hospital visits, sleepless nights and the exhausting question that follows many people experiencing anxiety: If the tests say nothing is wrong, why does this feel so real?

> Anxiety didn't just give me symptoms, Matthews writes. It changed the way I lived."
>
> *Erica Matthews*

That experience became the foundation for Matthews' debut book, Navigating Life with Anxiety: A Compassionate Guide to Overcoming Anxiety and Reclaiming Peace, releasing September 15.

Rather than writing from clinical distance, Matthews writes from inside the experience. She recounts hospital stays and medical testing, the frightening

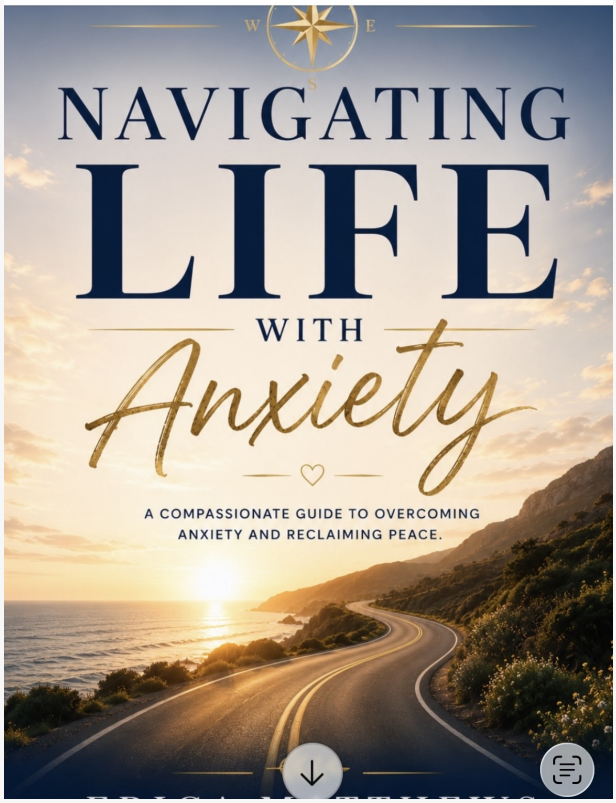
physical sensations that initially left her without answers, the fear of another episode occurring while driving, and the subtle ways avoidance gradually changed how she lived.

“Anxiety didn't just give me symptoms,” Matthews writes. “It changed the way I lived.”

When Anxiety Doesn't Look Like Anxiety

One of the central themes of Navigating Life with Anxiety is the disconnect between what anxiety can look like externally and what someone may be experiencing internally.

Matthews continued functioning while struggling privately. In the workplace, that disconnect became especially difficult when her experience was judged by how she appeared: if she looked fine and continued getting the work done, how serious could the struggle really be?



Book Front Cover

The book challenges that assumption.

Matthews explores the “hidden weight” carried by the high-functioning person, overthinker, exhausted achiever, people pleaser and emotionally drained individual—the people who may continue smiling, producing, caregiving and meeting expectations while privately struggling.

Her own experience also revealed another dimension of anxiety: the more she avoided what frightened her, the smaller her world became.

Highways became difficult. The right lane became a perceived safe zone because it offered an escape. Trips, family gatherings and events became harder to attend. What initially felt like caution gradually became limitation.

From “Bad Nerves” to Anxiety: Recognizing a Family Pattern

Matthews' journey eventually led her beyond her own symptoms and into her family's history.

She remembered her mother stopping driving at a relatively young age and describing the problem with language familiar to many families from previous generations: “My nerves are bad.”

Matthews began wondering whether what she was experiencing had existed in her family long before anyone had language for it. She also recognized similar anxiety and driving-avoidance patterns among other relatives.

For Matthews, that discovery raised a larger question about the emotional struggles families inherit—not only through possible biological factors, but through behaviors, coping mechanisms and patterns that can remain unnamed for generations.

She writes specifically about the generational difference in discussing mental health within the African American community, where earlier generations were often encouraged to endure, pray, remain strong and keep moving rather than openly name anxiety or seek support.

“My mother called it ‘bad nerves.’ Today, we call it anxiety,” Matthews writes.

Faith and Anxiety Can Exist in the Same Life

Matthews also addresses another misconception she encountered: that having faith should somehow make a person immune to anxiety.

Her experience has taught her otherwise.

For Matthews, prayer and faith remain important sources of support, but faith is not presented as evidence that anxiety should simply disappear. Instead, she writes candidly about learning that faith can accompany someone through anxiety rather than invalidate the experience of having it.

Throughout Navigating Life with Anxiety, Matthews combines personal narrative with reflection questions, practical coping strategies, trigger awareness, boundaries, daily habits and incremental action steps. The book also encourages readers to seek professional medical or mental-health support when needed and does not position itself as a substitute for professional care.

Why This Conversation Matters

Matthews' story offers a window into an experience that can remain remarkably invisible: people can be functioning and struggling at the same time.

They may still go to work, raise children, care for parents, serve in churches, maintain relationships and meet deadlines while quietly arranging their lives around fear.

Navigating Life with Anxiety asks readers to notice when their own world has begun getting smaller—and consider what one small step toward reclaiming it might look like.

For Matthews, progress isn't defined by never feeling anxious again. It can mean driving a little farther, sleeping a little easier, establishing a boundary, recognizing a trigger, asking for support or choosing not to let fear make every decision.

Her message is grounded in what she continues to learn herself: anxiety may still show up, but you can learn to show up, too.

About the Author

Erica Matthews is the author of Navigating Life with Anxiety: A Compassionate Guide to Overcoming Anxiety and Reclaiming Peace. Drawing from her lived experience with anxiety, Matthews writes about the physical and emotional realities of anxiety, family patterns, faith, triggers, avoidance, boundaries, resilience and the everyday practices she has used while learning to navigate life differently.

Book Details

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