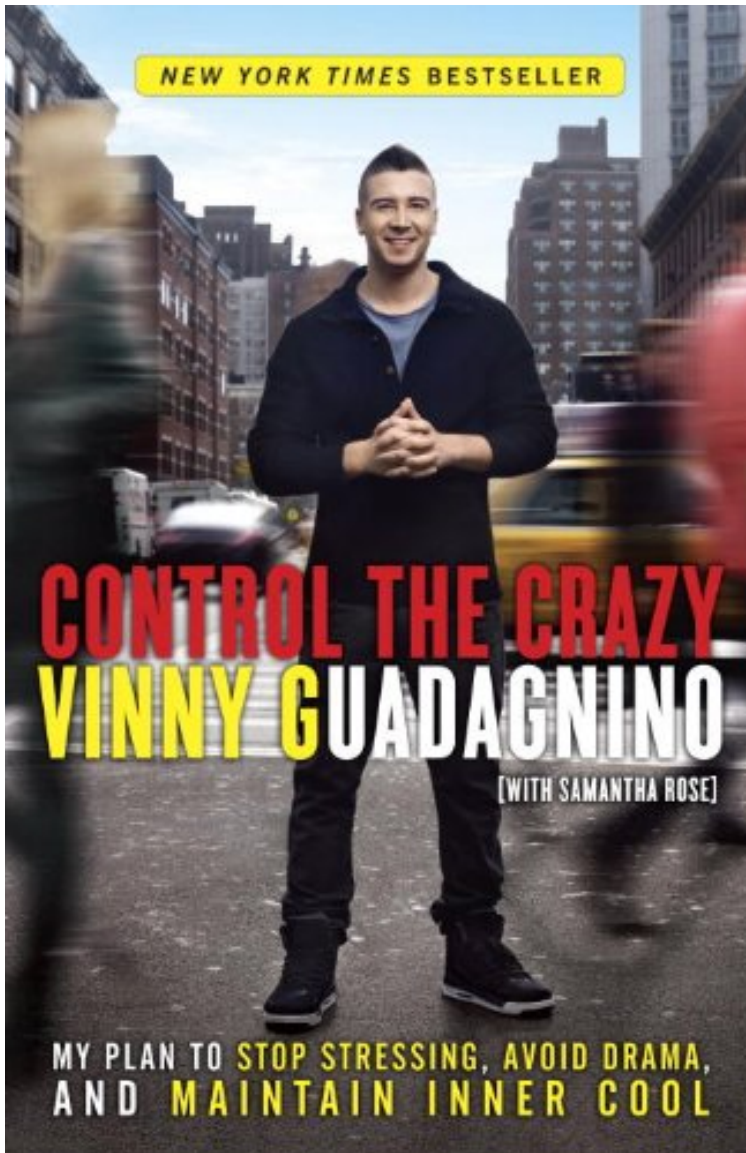


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# Control the Crazy: My Plan to Stop Stressing, Avoid Drama, and Maintain Inner Cool



*Par Vinny Guadagnino, Samantha Rose  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurWe all have the power to make our lives better in an instant. You have absolute power to control your crazy. In his new book, Vinny from Jersey Shore shares the step-by-step program that has helped him get a handle on his anxious mind and filled him with a sense of personal power and control that has rocked every facet of his life.ExtraitThe Story Behind the StoryYou may have seen me recently and very publicly hit my emotional breaking point during season 5 of Jersey Shore. I bailed from the Seaside house, setting off rumors that I may have left the show for good. Yet, regardless of what youve seen on TV or read,

trust me when I say--no one knows the story Im about to share with you.To fully understand my behavior, its important you know what led up to it. So, lets go back several years to when this story really began.It was 2009. I was a twenty-two-year-old kid, living the life--partying in Seaside Heights, sharing a coed beach house with seven tanned and toned guidos and guidettes, and hooking up with super hot girls on a national TV show. Yet, two weeks into the filming of the premiere season of Jersey Shore--BOOM!--I awoke one night out of a dead sleep short of breath. I couldnt get enough air; I felt like I was friggin suffocating. My heart began to race, and I was seized by feelings of dread and doom. I was having an anxiety attack. Im trapped. I have to get out of here. All my roommates were nervous to some degree. On a reality TV set, cameras follow you around day and night, and its no surprise their constant 24/7 presence can create some stress. But thats not what was bothering me. The dark, oppressive cloud that was closing in around me had nothing to do with cameras, crews, or craft services. Rather it had everything to do with what was going on inside me.Thankfully, Id scored one of the few single rooms in the house, so when the attack hit I was removed from my seven roommates. They had no clue that I was wide awake, pacing the floors and freaking out. I spent most of the late-night hours feeling trapped in my single bedroom, convinced I was losing it and my head was going to burst. My mind was spinning on high speed, as if my thoughts had been thrown into an industrial-strength washing machine. On a reality TV set, youre basically cut off from the sounds of the outside world--no phone, Internet, TV, or radio. Besides the noise we make, its relatively quiet. When Im at home on Staten Island, I usually fall asleep with the TV on, but when Im shooting Jersey Shore theres nothing like that to distract me from my thoughts. And trust me, the crazy, doomsday thoughts I was having that night were not the kind you want to be left alone in bed with.Because Id been picked for the show to fill the role of the authentic and fun-loving guido who liked to fist-pump on camera, I was afraid to tell anyone about what was going on in my head. Being on the show was a huge opportunity, and I didnt want to blow it.

So for the next several days I tried to ignore my anxiety, push through, and fake it for the cameras. I pretended I was having a good time, but the truth was that I felt disconnected and alone. Every minute of every hour, I felt like an outcast standing outside a house party watching everyone inside having fun. I went through the motions, playing the class clown, but my mind was in a dark place. I feared that the fun-loving Vinny that the MTV producers were counting on had disappeared. If I didnt quickly snap out of my funk during the brief six weeks we were filming, I was going to come off looking like a major head case on national TV. Problem was--Id been in this low-down place before, and that hell ride had lasted several months. What was I going to do? The world was watching. I was on a locked set. This was the worst possible scenario for someone like me--someone who suffers from chronic anxiety.My battle with anxiety first reared its ugly head when I was a freshman in high school. Id always been a pretty likable and funny kid, though I had my share of insecurities that sometimes tripped me up. For example, in the looks department, I battled with pimples, braces, and a mess of thick hair that made me look like a white Fresh Prince of Bel-Air. My hair looked, and felt, like a friggin Brillo pad. Add to that, my family never had a lot of money, so I was always struggling to fit the part. I definitely didnt have the freshest sneakers. I certainly didnt drive the nicest car. And to top it off, I tried out for the high school basketball team my freshman year but didnt make it unless you count benchwarmer as a position. I was bullied by the popular jocks, and girls werent all that interested in talking to me. I always felt a little bit awkward, like I was on the outside of life, you know? Regardless, I had a group of friends who seemed to think I was pretty cool, so all in all, I considered myself pretty normal. Until...One day, I was sitting in English class when from out of nowhere my heart started pounding, my vision went blurry, I became dizzy and light headed, and my teachers voice sounded muddled and distorted. It was like what Charlie Brown hears whenever a grown-up is speaking to him: Whaa-whaa-whaa. I was paralyzed; the classroom walls felt like they were closing in around me, and I was physically unable to move. I had no idea what was happening, and I certainly wasnt going to tell the gangster Spanish kid with the neck tattoo sitting behind me, Hey, I think Im having a heart attack. Call an ambulance. He wouldve definitely looked at me like I had ten heads. So I just sat still for what felt like forever and prayed for the feeling to pass. The entire episode probably only lasted for twenty seconds, but it felt like a lifetime. What the hell was that? I couldnt think of anything specific that would have caused me to freak out like that. It was just an ordinary day in English class. I didnt have a name for it at the time, but I later came to understand that Id suffered my first anxiety attack. After that, similar attacks became somewhat regular. Since they didnt seem to be triggered by anything specific, I lived in constant fear of being hit with one. Just knowing that it might happen was sometimes all it would take to set one in motion. My heart would start pounding, Id begin to sweat, and my head would go into spin mode. Id grip the sides of my school desk,

afraid to move, speak, or breathe until my anxiety passed. I was sure I was the only fourteen-year-old in the world who suffered like this, so I was embarrassed to tell anyone what was going on. I didnt want my friends to think I was weird or to worry anyone--my mom, especially--so I learned how to wait out the attacks. It worked. By my senior year at Susan E. Wagner High School on Staten Island, my anxiety had almost completely disappeared. In fact, Id nearly forgotten about it until my first year of college, when the attacks returned with renewed force, knocking me into my first deep depression. Hold UpToo Much, Too SoonIf youre thinking, Vinnys a mess! I cant relate to this guy. He slips into dark places Ive never fallen into--hold on right there. While the dark holes Ive crawled out of have been very dark indeed, you dont have to be someone who suffers from anxiety, depression, or anything diagnosable to benefit from this book. The tools

I roll out for you in the chapters ahead can be used to manage any stressful situation, tough ordeal, or unexpected dark day. For sure, you can relate to that, right?What the Funk?I was seventeen when I started college at the State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz. I was young, and to be honest, I was a little nervous to leave the mothers nest on Staten Island, but I was also excited to party and study away at college. Id gotten a pretty sweet scholarship thanks to my high grade point average in high school and extracurricular activities outside of school. Also, Id written a pretty dope college essay about growing up in a full-on Italian family that started with: So, Im eating meatballs with my Uncle Nino... I was nervy for sure, but felt ready to jump into the college experience one hundred percent. And I was sure I was prepared for it.On a late-summer day, my mother, my father, my big sister, my cousins, and my aunt helped me move into the dorms. No joke, I was the only kid moving into college who brought nearly ten relatives along for the ride. It took a caravan of three cars to transport all of us and all of my stuff to the school. As soon as we arrived, Mom began hauling in boxes of homemade bread, chicken cutlets, meatballs, and marinara sauce, along with Easy Mac, Devil Dogs, Yodels, and enough potato chips to feed everyone on my floor. I could have easily run a high-class moneymaking food ring out of my dorm room, and in fact, it soon gained a reputation as the place to go when the cafeteria was closed. In addition to all the food, Mom made sure to bring along a years worth of cleaning supplies, an industrial-strength floor fan, and a fire extinguisher that she insisted I mount on the wall just in case. Mom--really?If youve seen my mother, Paola, in any of her cameo appearances on Jersey Shore, you know that what Im describing is absolutely true to her character.

Shes the nurturing, loving mother who lives for taking care of people. Shes not just my mom--shes everybodys mom. Id moved into a triple room with two other guys--one who arrived with a single backpack and the other whose big-ticket item was a TV. Both of my new roommates watched my crazy Italian family fussing all over me and were totally amused, and it didnt take long before my mom took both my roomies in like they were her own. After several hours of getting me settled and situated, my aunt and cousin had to physically remove my mother from my dorm room. She was all tears. Ma, I told her, Im only going to be an hour and a half away. This was no consolation; her baby boy was leaving the nest. Yes, the tabloids have labeled me right--I am a mamas boy. She waved a sad good-bye like on some after-school special about a son going off to college. It was a long, drawn-out farewell, and finally they drove off, leaving me to start a new life at SUNY. That night, I went to my first college frat party. It was exactly how I imagined it would be: kegs of beer, drunken sorority girls doing SoCo and lime shots, frat guys playing beer pong and flip cup, and Shaggys It Wasnt Me blasting in the background. I hung with my new crew--a mix of guys from Staten Island, Long Island, Queens, and the Bronx that Id met on my dorm floor. I finally made it out of my house, and Im in for a wild ride, I thought. The party scene was poppin, and as far as school was concerned, I was mad psyched about kicking ass in all my classes.But not even a month into my first semester, I started to notice that feeling of anxiety creeping back into my life. Every day, I became a little bit more nervous and tense. The drastic difference between my old home life and my new dorm life was definitely affecting me. My privacy was gone, my ability to focus was jacked, and sharing a room with two other guys made it hard for me to sleep at night. I would toss and turn, get out of bed and do push-ups, watch TV, sometimes wander the hallways. Eventually this turned into full-blown insomnia, and my anxiety became chronic. Yet when I thought about it on a rational level, life wasnt that stressful, was it? Did I really have a legit reason to feel so messed up? Id gotten into a great college. I was living on my own in a coed dorm. I was killing it in school, and to top it all off, Id recently lost my virginity to one of the hot sorority girls on the floor directly above me. I was living the college dream! Life was great, right? Then why, I wondered, do I feel like shit?There were parties to go to, new people to meet, but all I wanted to do was catch up on my sleep and escape the constant stream of nagging thoughts in my head. Id lie awake at night, consumed with thoughts about the pointlessness of life, like Why am I even here? Whats my purpose? Whats the reason for my being alive? It

would not stop. I felt like I was going crazy. Imagine some demon-possessed merry-go-round in a horror flick--that was my mind. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't get off the ride. And when I wasn't consumed by my thoughts, I was obsessed with getting physically sick. I'd become a mad hypochondriac. No doubt about it, I was a mess. Convinced that I was a real freak show--that my anxiety was unique to me and that I belonged in the psych ward--I started to withdraw from everyone around me. I stopped hanging out with my roommates and my campus crew; I couldn't relate to them anymore. Actually, it was the other way around. I worried that they wouldn't relate to me. If they knew what was going on in my head, they'd think I was a nut job, for sure. Yet oddly enough, no one seemed to notice that anything was wrong. While I thought it was totally obvious I was falling apart, what I quickly discovered was that on the outside, I appeared pretty together. I could still carry on a conversation, laugh at people's jokes, smile at girls across campus, and sit in class like a regular guy. Still, I knew something was off--way off--and preferred to stay holed up in my dorm room when I wasn't in class. I'd pace the floors like a friggin' mouse trapped in a cage with a mind that was going in a million directions. By the time the weekend would roll around, I'd be on the phone with Mom, begging her to come and get me. My mom's an overly protective Italian mother, so as soon as she heard the slightest sadness in my voice, without even questioning the cause of it, she'd hop in the car and drive an hour and a half out of her way--and in the snow, no less--to fetch her baby. As soon as I'd get home to Staten Island, I'd lock myself in my bedroom, curl up in a ball on my bed, and pray that my screaming head would stop.

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