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## Australian Story: All in the Mind

**Airs Monday, October 5 at 8pm on ABC & introduced by Shane Jacobson**

Acting legend Garry McDonald is a man on a mission. He wants to educate the public about an urgent and poorly understood mental health problem.

*"Ninety percent of the public I think now understands depression... but anxiety disorders are just never cottoned on to...Anxiety still has a, 'Oh for God's sake, oh for God's sake...wake up to yourself!'"*

Garry McDonald has suffered from anxiety since his 20s but he never understood his condition until it triggered a major and very public breakdown in the 1990s.

McDonald was relaunching his comic character Norman Gunston for television when he cracked under the pressure. The show was cancelled and McDonald was "mortified". But, says the actor, *"there was nothing I could do. I was a basket case."*

McDonald was subsequently diagnosed with anxiety which had tipped him over into a major depression.

*"For ages, I thought I was like everyone else and why couldn't I handle it? Once...there was a name, it was a disorder; I got terribly excited that I could do something about it."*

McDonald sought help in the form of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, a treatment which trains sufferers to examine their negative thoughts, and he's evangelical about the results: *"CBT changed my life. It gave me a life!"*

McDonald was able to relaunch his career and the last ten years have been some of the busiest in his career. He's acted in TV dramas *Offspring* and *Rake*, sung in the musical *Guys and Dolls* and performed in plays for the Sydney and Melbourne Theatre Companies.

In between roles, the veteran actor joined the board of Beyond Blue and has campaigned passionately to increase awareness around anxiety and reduce its stigma.

*"With anxiety disorders... you are so ashamed that you are such a wuss. You're so frightened. It's an awful feeling and you just feel like you are letting everyone down, everyone will just think that you're absolutely a waste of space."*

McDonald has been performing on the stage and screen for nearly fifty years. He came to national prominence in the 1970s with his off-the-wall comic character Norman Gunston, and followed this with his role as Arthur Beare in the acclaimed TV series *Mother and Son*. McDonald won Logies for both roles.

Join the conversation: **#AustralianStory**

**Australian Story: All in the Mind** airs during **Mental As...** the ABC's week long initiative in support of Mental Health Week which aims to encourage Australians to start talking about mental illness and to give to mental health research.

Visit **abc.net.au/mentalias** or SMS "MentalAs" to 0455 021 021 to show your support and make a contribution. **#mentalias**

Producer: Lisa McGregor  
Executive Producer: Deb Masters

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