

24 *Essential*

TOOLS FOR TREATING ANXIETY DISORDERS



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BETWEEN  SESSIONS
THERAPEUTIC TOOLS FOR GROWTH AND CHANGE



24 Essential Tools for Treating Anxiety Disorders

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Intended Use

This book is designed to be used by therapists to treat clients with anxiety disorders. It is not intended to be a self-help book for people with anxiety disorders, who would most likely need more information as well support. The forms and worksheets in this book are intended to be used for therapeutic assignments as part of a systematic therapy program, based on evidenced-based methods of treating anxiety disorders.

The techniques and worksheets in this book have been selected for the general treatment of anxiety disorders. Other forms are available from BetweenSessions.com for specific anxiety disorders such as Panic Disorder, PTSD, OCD, Social Anxiety, and other problems.

Disclaimer

The worksheets in this form are intended as models only. Therapists are encouraged to modify the worksheets as they see fit. Modifiable worksheets (in MSWord format) are available to members of BetweenSessions.com at no cost. Please contact the company for more information at info@BetweenSessions.com.

About the Company

BetweenSessions.com is a membership site of hundreds of therapeutic tools and practice management forms designed by therapists for therapists. Individual forms and Ebooks are also available at TherapyStore.org. The mission of the company is to provide therapists easy access to evidenced based therapeutic tools which can be used to help accelerate client growth and change.

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Introduction

Anxiety disorders are the most common psychiatric illnesses affecting children and adults. According to the Anxiety Association of America, an estimated 40 million American adults suffer from anxiety disorders, yet only about one-third of those suffering from an anxiety disorder receive treatment.

This is ironic, because anxiety disorders are arguably the most treatable of all mental health problems. When treated with cognitive and behavioral techniques, most clients with anxiety disorders report a significant reduction in symptoms in as little as 12 sessions.

The basic principles for treating anxiety disorders include:

- Provide psycho-education, including teaching clients how the brain and how the body reacts in the face of perceived anxiety.
- Teach clients skills to tolerate the things that cause them fear and worry rather than avoid them.
- Teach clients to self-monitor their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.
- Help clients learn and regularly practice relaxation and other self-calming techniques.
- Help clients develop a lifestyle that is most conducive to controlling anxiety.
- Helping clients develop a social and familiar support system to aid them in overcoming their anxiety.

The forms in this book are designed to supplement the treatment of anxiety disorders, which often occur with other serious problems, including depression, ADHD, disorders on the Autism Spectrum and substance abuse. We encourage all therapists to prepare a comprehensive treatment plan, including therapeutic assignments, during the initial phases of treatment.

While most of the tools in this book will be printed out and given to clients, it is worth noting that several tools contain links to audio and video demonstrations which can be particularly helpful in treating clients. These digital techniques can be shared with clients in various ways, including creating links to the tools on your website. Techniques with links to audio or video have an asterisk (*) next to the name of the technique in the Table of Contents

For more tools to treat anxiety disorders and other mental health problems, please visit BetweenSessions.com.

To sign-up to get weekly newsletters featuring free therapeutic downloads, please click [here](#).

Understanding Your Anxiety

Anxiety is a feeling that everyone experiences from time to time. When you are anxious you can have a sense of uneasiness or jitters. Small tasks can become unmanageable you and you can find it difficult to relax.

However although anxiety is very common, it is also highly treatable and manageable.

Describing Anxiety

Different people use different words to describe their feelings of anxiety different ways.

For instance:

- the shakes
- worry
- freaking out
- on edge
- jumpiness
- butterflies
- stress
- nervousness
- apprehension
- panic
- angst
- fear

Where Does Anxiety Come From?

While everyone experiences anxiety, some feel it more often or more deeply, while others barely feel it at all. Why? Some reasons for experiencing more or less anxiety include:

Genetics	How your parents, grandparents, and other family members experienced anxiety.
Brain chemistry	The type, amount, and movement of the chemicals that are working in your brain.
Life events	The everyday situations and challenges that you are forced to deal with in your life.
Personality	How you feel about the things that happen to you, and how well or how badly you deal with them.

The first three categories, genetics, brain chemistry, and life events are factors that you have little or no control over. But you have a lot of control over your personality, or the way you look at problems and handle them.

1) What words do you use to describe anxiety when you feel it?

2) How would you describe yourself?

- Highly anxious Moderately anxious Rarely anxious

3) How often do you feel anxious?

- More than once a day More than once every week Less than once a week

4) List the kinds of situations that make you feel anxious:

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

d) _____

5) How does anxiety affect your body?

6) What do you do to manage your anxiety when you feel it?

Types of Medication for Depression and Anxiety

Category	Names	Medication Description	Conditions Treated
Benzodiazapine	Xanax, Klonopin, Ativan	Benzodiazapines affect neurotransmitter chemicals that nerves use to communicate with one another. Since scientists believe anxiety is caused by excessive activity in the nerves of the brain, and this drug is thought to help reduce this activity to a manageable level. This medication is considered the most dangerous, as it can be habit forming.	Panic Attacks, General Anxiety, Insomnia
SSRI (Serotonin selective reuptake inhibitors)	Prozac, Zoloft, Paxil, Lexapro	SSRI's work by blocking a receptor in the brain that absorbs the chemical serotonin. Although no drug is 100% safe for everyone, SSRIs are among the safest since they are non-habit forming and rarely interact or cause problems with other medicines.	Depression, OCD, Eating Disorder, Panic Disorder
SSNRI (selective serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors)	Effexor, Pristiq, Cymbalta	Just like SSRIs, these medications affect the neurotransmitters in the brain. The difference is that Effexor and drugs like it will not only affect your serotonin levels, but also dopamine and other related chemicals. There is still debate as to which of these two types of medications are most effective.	Major Depressive Disorder, Anxiety, Panic Disorder
Tetracyclic	Remeron, Avanza, Zispin, Mirtazon	This class of medication is the same as SSNRI and SSRIs, in that they inhibit serotonin to the brain. These are just as safe as the other classes, yet they are being used less frequently because of mild unwanted side effects such as overeating and lethargy.	Major Depressive Disorder
MAOI (Monoamine oxidase inhibitors)	Marplan, Nardil, Zelapar, Emsam	Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors were the first class of antidepressants to hit the market. These work in almost the same way as other anti-depressants, by reducing certain chemicals in the brain to balance the neurotransmitters. MAOIs are being used less and less as newer anti-depressants become available, since MAOIs have the most serious side effects when taken with other medications, or with certain foods. People who are still on MAOIs are usually on them because they have had a personal success in the past, and do not want to change their treatment.	Depression, Social Anxiety, Panic Disorder
Bupropion	Wellbutrin, Zyban, Aplenzin	Bupropion is another anti-depressant that attempts to balance out your neurotransmitters by blocking certain chemicals. Unlike the other anti-depressants, which focus on serotonin, Bupropion focuses mainly on releasing extra dopamine. More recently, this drug has found to help smokers quit. It has since been marketed as both an anti-depressant and a smoking cessation solution.	Major Depressive Disorder, Seasonal Affective Disorder

Ten Facts You Should Know About Medication for Anxiety

1. Xanax and other benzodiazepines are considered to be the most addictive of all the anti-anxiety medications. These medications are so addictive that withdrawal symptoms can be severe enough to cause seizures.[1]
2. It can take about four hours for Xanax to leave your system and one to two weeks for withdrawal symptoms to subside.
3. Drinking alcohol when on these medications is very dangerous.[2] Some medications can double the effects of alcohol.
4. The top 5 anti-depressant and anti-anxiety medications in 2011[3] were;

Rank	Medication	Number Of Prescriptions
1	Xanax	47 Million Prescriptions
2	Celexa	37 Million Prescriptions
3	Zoloft	37 Million Prescriptions
4	Ativan	27 Million Prescriptions
5	Prozac	24 Million Prescriptions

5. According to a study done in 2008, 11% of Americans take some sort of anti-anxiety or anti-depressant medication, more than 60% of those who take this medication have taken it for over two years, and 14% have been taking these medications for more than 10 years. [4]
6. Xanax and other benzodiazepines are known to make you drowsy and are sometimes used as a sleeping aid for insomnia. They also usually contribute to some memory loss, though not severe.[1]
7. Despite their sedating properties, some people who take anti-anxiety medication experience paradoxical excitement. The most common paradoxical reactions are increased anxiety, irritability, and agitation. [9]
8. Many medications originally approved for the treatment of depression have been found to relieve symptoms of anxiety. These include certain selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs), monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs), and the newer atypical antidepressants. (9)
9. Older adults (over 65) should be cautious about taking anti-anxiety drugs since they are more sensitive to the sedating effects of anti-anxiety medication. Even small doses can cause confusion, amnesia, loss of balance, and cognitive impairment that looks like dementia. If you are pregnant or have problems with alcohol you may also have problems with anti-anxiety medication. Always give the prescribing doctor a complete medical and psychological history. (9)

10. Medication for anxiety should always be combined with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and attention to lifestyle issues including exercise, sleep patterns, and nutrition.

References

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8. WebMD – “Depression Medicines” <http://www.webmd.com/depression/guide/optimizing-depression-medicines>
9. HelpGuide.org “Anxiety Medication”
http://www.helpguide.org/mental/anxiety_medication_drugs_treatment.htm

This information is not intended to be a substitute for medical advice. Consult a medical doctor for all questions and concerns about medication.

Identifying What Triggers Your Anxiety

Most of the time there is something that triggers your anxiety. Sometimes you may be aware of it, and sometimes you may not. Rate your reaction to each common anxiety trigger from 1-7, with 1 being “no anxiety” and 7 being “an intense level of anxiety.”

Clutter	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Time alone	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Crowds	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Media overload	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Fear	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pain	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Failure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Concerns about appearance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Thinking about the future	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Making a mistake	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Socializing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Arguing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Criticism	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strangers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Family	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Enclosed spaces	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Speaking or Performing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Bridges or Tunnels	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Flying	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Other_____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Other_____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Other_____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Other_____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Other_____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Other_____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Preventing and Managing Lapses in Overcoming Your Anxiety

This worksheet will assist you in developing an awareness of when you are at risk for a lapse by identifying early warning signs (triggers and symptoms) and how to appropriately respond.

What is a lapse?

As you start to successfully manage your anxiety, you will see that your symptoms will begin to decrease or even disappear. However, you should know that at some point there may be a temporary reappearance of symptoms. This is called a lapse and it is common. The more prepared you are for a lapse to happen in the future, the more likely it is that you will successfully get through it.

Lapses can occur while you are still in therapy or months after you've finished your treatment. Lapses tend to happen during times of high stress, when you allow yourself to loosen up on using your coping skills, or start to make unhealthy choices. It is wise to develop a plan to respond to a lapse now, so that you know what to do if and when it happens. When you manage your lapses, you are actively decreasing the risk that a relapse will occur.

What are the people, places, thoughts, behaviors or things that trigger your anxiety? In other words, what makes you anxious?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Write down the main symptoms you felt when you first began therapy. Try to be as specific as possible for this exercise, because the longer you live without the symptoms of anxiety, the more difficult it may be to look back and remember how much they once impacted your life.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Write down the coping skills that you have found most helpful in decreasing your anxiety so far in therapy. Try including details about why these skills have helped you or why you liked using them. You'll want to revisit these coping skills if a lapse comes up.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Quick Tips Prevent or Manage a Lapse

- Lapses are normal because stress is normal.
- Lapses can be clues to stress and anxiety that you may not have been aware of.
- Be patient. Remember that change takes time and that a lapse does not mean you are back at square one with your therapy.
- Do not avoid your anxiety. Be honest with yourself about your symptoms and what you are doing to cope with them.
- Reach out to someone if you need help. You do not have to suffer through anxiety alone.
- If you see symptoms creeping up, do not give up on yourself! A lapse can be discouraging, but you always have a choice to work through it.
- Do not mask your anxiety. Be careful of behaviors that temporarily give you comfort but limit your ability to make healthy choices, such as drinking alcohol. If you find yourself drinking more than usual, it may be a sign that you are masking some stress or anxiety.
- Live a balanced life. Managing anxiety is not just about coping skills. A healthy diet, restful sleep, exercise, safety, and recreation all contribute to an anxiety-free life.
- If you have been prescribed medication for your anxiety, keep taking it as prescribed. Talk with your doctor if you are thinking about stopping.

Exposure Hierarchy Worksheet

Conquering Your Fears and the Things That Cause Anxiety

The best way to overcome fears and anxieties is to face them in small steps. To do this, you can create an Exposure Hierarchy which will gradually “expose” you to the situations that upset you until you can face your fears with a minimum of concern. Avoiding your fears never helps and in fact may even make them worse.

This technique works with many kinds of fears as well as specific situations that make you anxious. It is recommended that you create your Exposure Hierarchy with a supportive professional.

The goals of an exposure hierarchy include:

- Doing things you have been avoiding
- Reducing anxiety over time
- Learning and using skills to handle anxiety
- Enjoying activities again
- Feeling more control in your life

Measuring Your Distress

Anxiety is measured by a scale called the Subjective Units of Distress Scale or SUDS. This scale goes from zero to one hundred. A zero means you have no distress, a fifty means you have moderate distress, a one hundred means you have the worst distress you can imagine.

Creating Your Exposure Hierarchy

- Pick a fear or situation that makes you anxious that is disrupting your life. This could be a fear of crowds, a fear of enclosed places, or a fear of flying. Enter this on the Fear line on the attached worksheet.

Now write down specific situations related to your fear that you wish to avoid. Write them in the Situations Boxes, listing as many as you can. It will be easiest to work on your fear if you can list at least 10 to 15 fears. These situations are related to the thing you fear most. For example, if you are afraid of flying and being in the air over an open ocean, you might also be afraid of going to the airport, waiting to board, taking off, and so on.

- Rate this fear from 0-100 according to how much each situation would upset you, with 0=None and 100=This would be horrible. As you write down the things that make you fearful or anxious, you may think of more related situations as well. Write them down as you think about them, and again put in your rating.

Practicing Exposure Therapy: Exposure Worksheet

Learning to face the things that cause you to be fearful and anxious takes practice. After you create an Exposure Hierarchy, use this worksheet to practice facing your fears in small steps.

List the behavior you are practicing _____

Rate your experience using the SUDS scale, with 0=No fear or anxiety and 100=This is intolerable.

	Date/Time/Place	SUDS Rating (0-100)		
		Pre	Peak	Post
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				

Notes:

Grounding Techniques

Grounding techniques are a set of tools used to assist individuals to stay in the present moment during episodes of intense anxiety or other over-whelming emotions. Staying in the present moment allows people to feel safe and in-control by focusing on the physical world and how they experience it.

How it Works

Grounding is easy to do. Just focus on some aspect of the physical world, rather than on your internal thoughts and feelings (see suggestions below). Focus on the present rather than the past. Practice your grounding techniques so that they will come naturally when you are upset. Let go of any negative feelings. Try a variety of techniques and rate the effectiveness of each technique in keeping you calm (see p. 2). Have others assist you in using these techniques by reminding you to practice them and use them as soon as you are feeling emotionally distressed. [Click here](http://youtu.be/DFxRs1oFiEE) to see a demonstration of this technique or go to: <http://youtu.be/DFxRs1oFiEE>

Try It

Here are some suggestions of grounding techniques, but you can make up your own as well.

- Run cool water over your hands.
- Grab tightly onto your chair as hard as you can.
- Touch various objects around you: a pen, keys, your clothing, or the wall.
- Dig your heels into the floor-literally “grounding” them! Notice the tension centered in your heels as you do this. Remind yourself you are connected to the ground.
- Carry a grounding object in your pocket, which you can touch whenever you feel triggered.
- Notice your body: the weight of your body in the chair; wiggle your toes in your socks; the feel of your chair against your back...
- Stretch. Roll your head around.
- Clench and release your fists.
- Walk slowly; notice each footstep, saying “left or “right”... in detail to yourself.
- Focus on your breathing, notice each inhale and exhale.
- Eat something, describing the flavors to yourself.
- Focus on your breathing, notice each inhale and exhale.

Recording Sheet

Use this sheet to record the success of different grounding techniques, with 1=Not Helpful and 5=Very Helpful.

Technique	Date Started	Rating	Comments
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	

How to Do Deep Breathing for Stress Relief

Deep breathing is a simple technique that can be used to help with stress relief, anxiety management, mood improvement, and general well-being. It works best if you practice for about 10 minutes a day on a consistent basis. Find a place and a time where you will not be disturbed.

To get started, you may find it easier to lie down on the floor. Use pillows under your head and knees for comfort.

1. Place one hand on your lower abdomen.
2. Breathe in deeply and slowly as you count to five, pulling your breath into your lower abdomen until it raises the hand that is resting there.
3. Release your breath slowly and smoothly as you count to five.
4. Focus on your breath as you do this exercise.

Once you have mastered the technique, you can do this without using your hand on your abdomen.

If you prefer not to lie on the floor, you can practice sitting up in a chair. Use your hand on your lower abdomen until you get used to bringing your breath down deep.

Try to relax your body and your mind as you breathe. If you are distracted, simply bring your attention back to your breath. You may enjoy playing some soft, relaxing music or nature sounds.

Give it A Try

Sometimes it's helpful to see a technique being demonstrated. [Click here](#) (or go to <http://youtu.be/8c-1Ylieg3g>) to watch Dr. Lillian Cheung at the Harvard School of Public Health demonstrate mindful breathing. Join the class! It takes just over 13 minutes.

Visualization for Relaxation and Stress Management

Use this worksheet to plan how you will incorporate visualization into your daily life to help you manage stress.

First, choose a relaxing spot, such as a favorite chair, where you can sit comfortably and not be disturbed.

A place I can relax is: _____

Plan a time of day when you are most likely to be able to focus on your visualization.

The best time for me to relax is _____

Identify the safe and relaxing place you will visualize. It can be a spot in nature, a place in your imagination (as long as you can imagine it vividly), or any other place where you feel at peace.

The place I will visualize is: _____

Some people like to use recordings to help them with visualization. There are many types of audio guides to help you relax available. Here is one recorded by the McKinley Health Center at the University of Illinois.

[Click here](#) to follow a link to hear the audio. You can right click the screen to download the audio to your computer.

When you are doing your visualization, follow these steps:

1. Go to your relaxing spot.
2. Use any relaxation techniques you have learned in therapy, such as progressive muscle relaxation or deep breathing, to begin your visualization process. Close your eyes if you feel comfortable doing so.
3. Picture your safe and relaxing place in your mind. Use each of your senses to bring it to life. What do you see? What do you hear? What sensations do you feel? What scents do you smell? Are there any tastes associated with your scene?
4. Allow yourself to be immersed in the scene in your mind's eye. With each breath you take, it becomes more and more vivid. As you feel yourself to be present in the scene, you become more and more relaxed and you begin to feel better and better.
5. When you are ready, open your eyes if they were closed, sit up straight, and take a few moments to focus on your current surroundings, bringing the sense of relaxation and peace into the present.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation is a technique that involves tensing specific muscle groups and then relaxing them. It is termed “progressive” because you relax all major muscle groups, starting at the head and working your way down to your feet, relaxing them one at a time. In only 10 to 15 minutes you can achieve total body relaxation.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation is a particularly effective relaxation technique, because it focuses you on your body tension. There are many other relaxation techniques that can help you reduce your anxiety, but this technique may be most helpful for people who have body complaints that often accompany high levels of stress and anxiety, such as headaches, stomach problems, or muscle pain. When you are ready to try this technique, find a place where you won't be disturbed or distracted for at least 15 minutes. Recline in a comfortable chair or on a mat and take a few deep breaths to begin the exercise. Use the following audio to help you learn this technique. This audio was recorded at the McKinley Health Center at the University of Illinois and will guide you through your progressive relaxation. You can follow the link and play the audio right from your computer. Time: 12 minutes

http://www.mckinley.illinois.edu/units/health_ed/stress_audio/PMR%20Head%20to%20toe.mp3

You can also download the audio to your computer as an mp3 file by right clicking on the screen and selecting “save as.” You can then attach your smart phone or music player to your computer and copy it to a playlist. After listening for a few times, you can practice this relaxation technique without the audio if you wish, but remember to relax for at least 10 minutes.

Relaxation techniques can be very effective in reducing anxiety, but only when you practice these techniques regularly. When you practice relaxation techniques for at least 10 minutes a day, you will train your brain and body to “calm down” on demand. As soon as you start to feel anxious, you can take a few deep breaths and think about how it feels to be calm, and this automatically will send a message to your brain to “calm down,” and your body to release your muscle tension.

Taking 10 minutes a day to practice relaxation techniques will not only help you control your anxiety, but may also have other health benefits. There are many different kinds of relaxation techniques, and they all appear to have the same healthful effect on the mind and body. Some research suggests that relaxation techniques can aid the body in the healing process, and can help in controlling high blood pressure, dealing with chronic pain, controlling asthma, and aiding with sleep problems. Many medical professionals all believe that daily relaxation exercises will aid in preventing disease, reducing elevated levels of cortisol (the stress hormone) and bolstering the immune system.

Use the chart on the next page to help you create a habit of relaxing every day.

Relaxation Worksheet

Use the chart below to record your daily relaxation “habit.” Make copies of this chart and keep recording the time you spend relaxing until it is truly a habit, something you do without thinking, like brushing your teeth.

Date: _____

	Time of Day	Minutes	Mood Before	Mood After
SUNDAY				
MONDAY				
TUESDAY				
WEDNESDAY				
THURSDAY				
FRIDAY				
SATURDAY				

Learning to Self-Soothe

There are many things that can upset you to the point that you feel emotionally overwhelmed and even out of control. When you feel this way, the emotional part of your brain (called the limbic system) takes over and the rational or thinking part of your brain takes a back seat. Calming your emotions—also called self-soothing—is an important life-long skill everyone should learn. When you perform any of the activities on this list your brain will be producing serotonin, a biochemical that gives you a sense of calm.

There are three different factors that can make a particular activity more soothing:

Familiarity: Activities that are associated with pleasant memories from the past will be particularly helpful in soothing your feelings. For example one woman said that sipping hot chocolate with a marshmallow on top from a large blue mug made her think of happy afternoons from her childhood.

Multi-Sensory: Our emotional brain responds best when activities are multi-sensory and involve sound, sight, taste, touch, and smell. Typically pleasant activities that involve two or more senses are most soothing. An example of a multi-sensory activity might include walking in the woods, smelling the flowers, feeling the breeze, and hearing the wind rustling the trees.

Repetitive Motion: Studies suggest that repetitive motion, such as chewing gum, knitting, or rocking in a chair, can produce serotonin in the brain. Our bodies are naturally inclined towards repetitive motion, like pacing, when we are agitated.

Directions: Look at the list below, and check-off the things you think would soothe your emotions. Everyone is different and certain activities will seem more appealing to you than others. The list is divided into three types of activities:

- Activities you do immediately when you are starting to feel overwhelmed.
- Activities you can do if you are anticipating a situation that can make you feel overwhelmed.
- Activities you can do on a regular basis to practice emotional control. It's worth noting that when you practice self-soothing on a regular basis, preferably daily, calming yourself down when you are more upset will be much easier.

Self-Soothing Activities

Check off the activities that you think would work best at different times.
Add additional ideas of your own.

Things You Can Do Immediately When You Are Feeling Emotionally Overwhelmed

- Take five cleansing breaths
- Self-massage
- Chewing gum
- Sip a soothing warm drink (preferably not one with caffeine)
- Wear familiar perfume or cologne
- Suck on hard candy
- Stretch
- Sit in the sun
- Other things you can do:

Things You Can Do When You Are Anticipating Situations That Will Make You Upset

- Take a warm shower or bath
- Get a massage
- Wear most comfortable clothes
- Enjoy a favorite meal
- Burn scented candles
- Take a walk outdoors
- Arrange and smell flowers
- Listen to quiet music

Other things you can do:

Things You Can Do Every Day to Develop the Habit of Self-Soothing

____ Take care of a pet

____ Cook or bake

____ Meditate or relax in a quiet place

____ Read a book

____ Listen to “quiet” music

____ Watch a funny movie or show

____ Work on a hobby _____ write in the hobby)

____ Rock in a chair for 10 minutes

____ Garden

Other things you can do:

Self-Soothing Worksheet

In the space below, write down the self-soothing activities you want to try. Try each one out, and then rate how successful they were in reducing your emotional distress using the following scale: 1=Not helpful at all; 7=Very helpful.

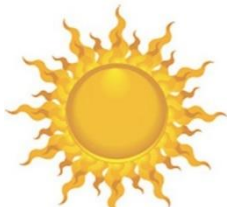
Name of Activity	Date Tried	Success Rating (1-7)	Thoughts About This Activity

Talking About Your Emotions Helps You Manage Your Anxiety

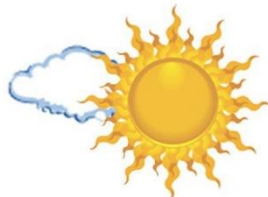
Most people talk about the weather all of the time, but not everyone talks about how they are feeling on a daily basis. Ironically while you can't change the weather by talking about it, talking about your emotions does help you feel better and can help you manage your anxiety. When you talk about your feelings, your brain produces more serotonin, a neurochemical which is a mood regulator. Talking about your feelings also brings you closer to other people, helping you develop a support network which can also be important in managing your fears and worries.

Try this exercise for one week. Make a copy of this chart for each day and circle your emotional weather at some point during the day, also noting the time of day. Write down three or four things that contributed to your moods. Then find someone to talk to about your feelings.

Day _____ Date _____



Bright & Sunny _____



Partly Cloudy



Overcast _____



Occasional Showers _____



Rain All Day _____



Stormy _____

Write down things that happened which contributed to your moods:

Write down someone you can talk to about your day: _____

Changing the Automatic Thoughts That Cause Your Anxiety

Most people with anxiety disorders have some form of “distorted” automatic thoughts that cause them to be anxious. They are distorted because they are rooted in faulty thinking instead of reality-based thinking. These are the 10 most common forms of automatic distorted thoughts.

1. All or nothing thinking

You look at things in absolute, black-and white categories.

2. Overgeneralization

You view a negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat.

3. Mental filter

You dwell on the negatives and ignore the positives.

4. Discounting the positives

You insist that your accomplishments or positive qualities “don’t count.”

5. Mind reading

You assume that people are reacting negatively to you when there’s no definite evidence for this

6. Fortune telling

You arbitrarily predict that things will turn out badly with no evidence this will happen.

7. Magnification or minimization

You blow things up way out of proportion or you shrink their importance inappropriately.

8. Emotional reasoning

You reason from how you feel. “I feel like an idiot, so I really must be one.” Or, “I don’t feel like doing it, so I’ll put it off.”

9. You use many “should” statements

You criticize yourself or others people with “shoulds” or “shouldn’ts.” Words like “musts,” “oughts,” and “have tos” are also types of distortions.

10. Labeling

You identify with your shortcomings with negative labels. Instead of saying, “I made a mistake,” you tell yourself, “I’m a jerk,” “a fool,” or “a loser.”

Changing Your Automatic Thoughts with the Triple Column Technique

One of the most effective ways to change your automatic distorted thinking is called the Triple Column Technique. When you are feeling anxious write down your thoughts in column 1, write down the type of distortion (from the previous list of 10) in column 2, and write down a rational response in column 3.

Automatic Thoughts Write your negative thoughts and estimate your belief in each one	% belief	Distortions Identify the distortions in each Automatic Thought	Rational Response Substitute more realistic thoughts & estimate your belief in each one	% belief

Accepting Unpleasant Experiences, Thoughts and Feelings

We use language to define our experiences, including those that have caused unpleasant feelings. By labeling experiences negatively, we create the tendency to limit, avoid, or control situations so that the discomfort associated with them will not be repeated. As a result, we may miss opportunities, encounter harm, or experience overall dissatisfaction with life. For example, if you label a party as boring because you felt left out of the conversation, you may decide that you will not go to any more parties.

This worksheet will act as a guide to help you understand that your experience of the present moment does not have to be determined by the past. Accepting unpleasant internal experiences, rather than actively avoiding them, creates opportunities for positive and rewarding experiences that you might otherwise have missed.

Identify five negative internal experiences that cause you to severely limit, avoid, or control certain activities (for example, anxiety, worry, sadness, jealousy, fear, insecurity, etc.):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Write down the situations you avoid in order to keep from experiencing the discomfort of these five internal experiences.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Finally, identify and describe potentially positive internal experiences you could have if you permitted yourself to engage in these situations, rather than avoid them. Be as specific and descriptive as possible. This will help you identify the experiences you are choosing to miss out on.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Controlling Your 'Checking' Behavior

Introduction

Compulsive checking behavior is common with people who have anxiety disorders. Some people repeatedly check to see if a door or window is locked. Some people check to see if ovens are faucets are turned off. Some people must check throughout the day to make sure that the people they love are okay. Checking behavior is a characteristic of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), and can reduce anxiety for short period of time. Many people get into the habit of checking, without even realizing it. If you think that your checking behavior has become a problem and has become disruptive in your life, then the first step is to become more aware of how often you do this behavior.

Your Checking Behavior

Checking behavior you'd like to control:

How often do you think you do this?

What are the potential negative effects of this behavior?

Tracking Your Checking Behavior for One Week

Day 1) Date: _____ How many times did you engage in this habit today? _____

Day 2) Date : _____ How many times did you engage in this habit today? _____

Day 3) Date: _____ How many times did you engage in this habit today? _____

Day 4) Date : _____ How many times did you engage in this habit today? _____

Day 5) Date : _____ How many times did you engage in this habit today? _____

Day 6) Date : _____ How many times did you engage in this habit today? _____

Day 7) Date : _____ How many times did you engage in this habit today? _____

Total Time: _____

Life Goals Worksheet

Name: _____

My top goals in each of the following seven areas are:

Health/Fitness/Appearance:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Financial/Income/Investments/Net Worth:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Business/Professional/Career/Job:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Relationships/Family/Friends:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Fun Time/Recreation/Hobbies/Travel:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Personal/Learning/Projects/Purchases:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____

3) _____

Contribution/Service/Community/Spiritual:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Achieving Your Goals One Step at a Time

Most people achieve their goals in small steps. You can use this worksheet to think about the steps you must take to achieve a goal and to keep track of your progress. Each step is a “sub-goal,” a smaller goal that will bring you in the direction of accomplishing your main goal. Be very specific in writing each step to achieve your goal. Most people find success in creating small steps that can be accomplished in two weeks or less.

If you are not able to achieve a specific sub-goal, write down what you learned that will help you keep moving towards the main goal.

Step #1: _____

Date to Begin: _____

Date to Achieve Goal: _____

Resources Needed:

Anticipated Outcome:

Actual Outcome:

Anything You Learned?

Step #2: _____

Date to Begin: _____

Date to Achieve Goal: _____

Resources Needed:

Anticipated Outcome:

Actual Outcome:

Anything You Learned?

Step #3: _____

Date to Begin: _____

Date to Achieve Goal: _____

Resources Needed:

Anticipated Outcome:

Actual Outcome:

Anything You Learned?

Step #4: _____

Date to Begin: _____

Date to Achieve Goal: _____

Resources Needed:

Anticipated Outcome:

Actual Outcome:

Anything You Learned?

Step #5: _____

Date to Begin: _____

Date to Achieve Goal: _____

Resources Needed:

Anticipated Outcome:

Actual Outcome:

Anything You Learned?

Step #6: _____

Date to Begin: _____

Date to Achieve Goal: _____

Resources Needed:

Anticipated Outcome:

Actual Outcome:

Anything You Learned?

Step #7: _____

Date to Begin: _____

Date to Achieve Goal: _____

Resources Needed:

Anticipated Outcome:

Actual Outcome:

Anything You Learned?

Step #8: _____

Date to Begin: _____

Date to Achieve Goal: _____

Resources Needed:

Anticipated Outcome:

Actual Outcome:

Anything You Learned?

Step #9: _____

Date to Begin: _____

Date to Achieve Goal: _____

Resources Needed:

Anticipated Outcome:

Actual Outcome:

Anything You Learned?

Step #10: _____

Date to Begin: _____

Date to Achieve Goal: _____

Resources Needed:

Anticipated Outcome:

Actual Outcome:

Anything You Learned?

Identifying Your Support System

When you are having emotional problems it's important to develop a support system. Do not suffer alone or in silence. Whether you realize it or not, there are many people who can give you help and support.

Family members' phone or e-mail:

Friends' phone or e-mail:

Community resources phone or email:

Clergy phone or email:

Medical phone or email:

Hotlines:

Practicing Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the practice of focusing your attention and awareness on the present. It's a simple concept, but it's not so easy to do in our fast-paced world. Mindfulness calls for you to put life's noise and demands and stressors in the background while you concentrate on the now.

Putting the brakes on the multi-tasking and overthinking, even for just a few minutes, can help you find some peace and some perspective, which can help reduce anxiety, depression, and stress.

So rather than getting caught up in a whirlwind of distractions, stop, take a breath, and be conscious of your own thoughts and feelings and surroundings without passing judgment. Just be, feel, focus.

This week, find some time to be mindful in everyday moments, like eating, walking, or being with a loved one. Be aware of your surroundings – the sounds, sights –and your feelings. Be open, and immerse yourself in appreciating and experiencing the moment you are in.

For instance, instead of just eating your lunch quickly, pause to really focus on a few bites - the taste, the texture, the scent. Or stop to appreciate the soft comfort of your pajamas and your warm bed just after you turn in for the day.

In the chart below, note the thoughts and sensations experienced when practicing mindfulness.

Eating or drinking	
Breathing	
Walking	
Going to bed	
Waking up	
Other	
Other	

Controlling Anxiety with a ‘Worry Script’

Many people spend hours each day trying to avoid worrying about things that upset them. People distract themselves by watching TV, focusing on a new worry to avoid thinking about an old one, or even self-medicating with drinking, drugs, or over-eating. None of these things help reduce worrying.

In fact, most people find that the harder they try and avoid the thoughts that make them anxious, the worse they get. Trying to push something out of your mind is a little like trying to push a beach ball under water: it takes a lot of work to keep it down, and the minute you let it go, it pops right back up again.

Rather than putting all of your energy into avoiding upsetting thoughts and images, you can instead face your fears, and writing worry scripts is one way to help you do this. By writing a worry script about your biggest worry, you will be facing your negative thoughts and upsetting feelings rather than trying to avoid them. Writing scripts will also help you get a clear picture of what is really upsetting you. Many people who write a worry script for a few weeks report that they feel less anxious about the things they were worrying about.

How to write a worry script:

- Choose a place where you won't be interrupted. Turn off your cell phone, music and television. Set aside about 30 minutes to complete each script.
- Write about one thing you are worrying about.
- Write about the worst-case scenario of one of your worries. For example, if you are worrying about your child getting bullied in school, write about the worst events that could happen to your child and the worst ways he or she might react.
- Write a script that is vivid and include how things look, sound, and feel. Include your feelings and reactions.
- Write a new script on the same subject each day, going deeper into your feelings with each script.
- After about two weeks, you can move to the next worry.

NOTE: If you feel anxious and even tearful while you are writing, keep at it! Experiencing these feelings means you are on the right track. Even though it may be difficult, the more you face your fears and worries, the more likely they will eventually fade.

My Worry Script

Date: _____ Beginning Time: _____ Ending Time: _____

Summarize what you are worrying about in a sentence:

Describe your worry in vivid detail:

How Diet Affects Anxiety

Diet, stress, and mood are all intertwined, so it's important to consider what you're putting in your body, not only for your physical health but also for your emotional wellbeing.

It is not necessary to go to extremes in changing your diet. By simply being more mindful of what you're putting in your body, you can find small ways to improve, and that can add up to big changes.

The troublemakers:

- Caffeine – You'll find this stimulant in coffee, tea, chocolate, soda, energy drinks, and some over-the-counter medications. The temporary boost it provides can end in fatigue, headache, and tension. Caffeine has also been identified as a potential trigger for anxiety attacks and a contributor to other health issues such as insomnia, heartburn, aggression, irritability, heart palpitations, and high blood pressure.
- Salt – Sodium is present in many processed foods, so check labels and look for low-sodium or salt-free alternatives. Also be aware of how much salt you use while cooking. Sodium consumption affects fluid retention, weight, and blood pressure, all of which, in turn, can affect your mood.
- Sugar – Excessive intake of simple sugars (such as white or brown sugar and honey) can cause health problems such as diabetes and hypoglycemia, the latter of which is often accompanied by symptoms similar to those experienced during a panic attack. Also, the temporary uplifting affects come with some other serious downsides, including an increased risk of depression in those who have a sugar-heavy diet.
- Preservatives and hormones – These substances are present in processed foods and many types of meats. Our bodies were not built to handle these additives, and their possible side effects have been heavily debated. Swapping in some whole, unprocessed, organic foods can help reduce consumption of these potentially harmful substances.
- Nicotine and alcohol – Introducing these substances into your system can cause a range of problems, not the least of which is aggravating anxiety. Nicotine is a stimulant, like caffeine, and alcohol a depressant. The addictive properties of both nicotine and alcohol have also been well documented.

It should also be mentioned that what you don't put in your body can also be problematic. Nutrient deficiencies and dehydration can cause irritability, anxiety, and fatigue. So stop skipping meals and make sure you are drinking enough water.

How Your Diet Affects Your Mood

Directions

For the next week, keep track of how often you consume any of the above listed items, and write in the predominant moods you had each day.

Day	Food and Drink	Your Moods
Sunday		
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		

Getting More Sleep Can Help Reduce Your Anxiety

Do you have a hard time falling to sleep or staying asleep? A lack of sleep will reduce the serotonin levels in your brain, which may make it harder to control your moods during the day. There are a variety of techniques that can help you get the sleep you need, but of course they only work if you are diligent at trying them and then using the ones that work best. Getting enough sleep is an important part of your overall plan to overcome your anxiety, but it is also important for your general health.

There are a variety of medications available to help you sleep, including prescription medication, herbs, and supplements, but always consult a physician before taking any kind of sleep aid.

Here are some other things you can try. Keep track of your sleep and the methods you use to sleep better on the chart on the next page. Track your progress for at least two weeks.

Techniques to Help You Get More Sleep

- Listen to soft music, read, take a warm shower or meditate before going to bed.
- Exercise for at least a half hour each day, but not before you go to bed.
- Write a to-do list for the following day and then clear your head of those concerns.
- Practice deep breathing or progressive muscle relaxation before bedtime.
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine, either entirely or at least in the evenings.
- Keep your bedroom at a cool temperature (65-68 degrees).
- If you are sensitive to light and sound, wear earplugs and a sleep mask or try a white noise machine to mask the sound. There are various white noise apps available if you have a smart phone.
- If you are having trouble falling asleep, get out of bed and do some light activity (like reading) in another room. Go back to bed when you feel drowsy.
- Go to bed and get up at the same time every day.
- Avoid eating heavy meals at least two to three hours before bed.
- Make sure your mattress and pillows are comfortable.
- Write down other ideas below:

Sleep Diary

Date	Hours Slept	Trouble Sleeping?	Methods Tried	Successful?
		<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N		<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
		<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N		<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
		<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N		<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
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Overcoming Anxiety With The Help of Exercise

Regular exercise can help you overcome your anxiety in a number of ways. During exercise, your brain increases the production of chemicals that can lift your mood and regulate your emotions. With regular exercise you will feel stronger and more confident, and more likely to feel that you can make positive changes in your life. Exercise will also increase the oxygen flow to your brain which may help you think more clearly and rationally and more positively.

Directions

1) Circle the types of exercise you can do on a regular basis:

- | | | | |
|----------------|---------------|----------|------------|
| bike riding | baseball | football | handball |
| jogging | hiking | soccer | karate |
| walking | skateboarding | surfing | Pilates |
| weight lifting | kick boxing | skiing | yoga |
| tennis | swimming | dancing | basketball |

Write down any other exercises you think you can do that aren't listed above:

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____
- d) _____

2) Now choose three exercises of these that you would like to do over the next week.

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

3) Decide how much time you need for each exercise. Fifteen minutes? A half-hour? An hour?

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

4) For each of the exercises, write down how often you can realistically do them in a week.

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

5) For each of the exercises, write down which days are best to exercise and what time of day is most realistic.

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

Keep a chart or journal to record how many times you actually exercise and the affect that exercise has on your mood

Day	Type of Exercise	Amount of Time	Mood Before	Mood Afterwards
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				