

Practicing Getting Anxious-6 Steps to Success

It is perfectly understandable to avoid the things that make you anxious, but this is actually the worst thing you can do. We all experience reasonable anxiety sometimes, like when you are driving at night in a storm. But we're talking about recurring problems with anxiety and fear which are not based in reality. This would include situations like going over a bridge, being in a crowded elevator, the fear of public speaking, and so on. In these situations, your brain may trick you into feeling that something terrible will happen, but in fact, these situations are only mildly unpleasant like many things you experience throughout the day. There is no reason to avoid them and doing so may significantly constrict your life.

The key to overcoming your anxiety is to learn to tolerate the situations that make you worried and fearful and this takes practice. This worksheet is designed to help you "practice getting anxious." This may not be easy, but the more you practice the sooner you will be able to overcome your problems with anxiety and fear.

Practice Worksheet

Date: _____

Step 1: Choose to get anxious.

Write down the one thing you will intentionally do today that will make you anxious. List the time of day you will practice getting anxious.

_____ Time _____

Step 2: Stay with your symptoms by just observing and accepting them.

Instead of trying to run away from your anxiety and the physical symptoms that accompany your feelings, just let your reactions happen and dispassionately observe them. For example, if you feel your heart start to beat faster, say to yourself, "I'm upset and I can feel my heart racing, but I know that it is just my mind playing tricks on me. There is nothing to be afraid of. It will pass."

Write down something you can say to yourself that will help you tolerate your symptoms.

Step 3: Let go of your safety crutches.

Write down three things you might normally do to avoid your anxiety such as: tell yourself you aren't feeling well enough to face your fears, use some magical ritual, or insist on having a friend stay with you for support. These are your safety crutches. Make sure you don't use them when you practice facing your anxiety.

Step 4: Stop yourself from overreacting.

Many people with anxiety problems immediately think of the very worst thing that could happen to them if they face their fears. For example, a person afraid to ride in an elevator might worry that the elevator will break down between floors or that the elevator cable will snap. This is called "catastrophic thinking," which means that you only think about the very worst thing that could happen even though the probability of this happening is extremely small.

In the space below, write down the worst thing you think could happen if you face the things that cause your anxiety and fears. Then write down why these thoughts are unreasonable.

The very worst thing that could happen is:

The reasons that this is almost impossible are:

Step 5: Decide how long you can tolerate your anxious symptoms.

Minutes Planned _____

Minutes Actual _____

Step 6: Rate how successful you were in tolerating your anxiety with 1=not successful at all and 10=very successful.

Rating: _____

Write down any thoughts or feelings you had about this practice session.
