

# Confronting Your Anxiety Provoking Thoughts

## Objective

- To learn to accept rather than avoid the thoughts that make you anxious.

## You Should Know

*Avoiding thinking about your worries just makes them worse.* Many people seek ways to distract themselves from their anxiety provoking thoughts, however research tell us that this is the opposite of what you should be doing. The more you simply accept and allow your thoughts to happen, even the most disturbing ones, the less power they will have over you.

In this worksheet, you will practice confronting your anxiety provoking thoughts rather than avoiding them.

## Does This Sound Like You?

Marcia was planning a trip to Europe with her boyfriend Tyler. Marcia rarely flew on a plane, but she didn't want Tyler to know that she had a fear of flying. Whenever Marcia saw a story on television about a problem on a plane or at an airport, she immediately changed the channel. When she and Tyler talked about the trip, Marcia would force herself to think about the fun things they would do rather than think about her dreaded flights. Marcia wasn't sure how she was going to actually get through the flights. Her worst fear was that she would have a panic attack and not be able to get on the plane. She thought she would probably just have a drink or two at the airport and try to "tough it out."

List the ways that Marcia is avoiding thinking about her flight.

---

---

---

Write down a thought or worry that you avoid thinking about because it makes you anxious.

---

---

---

List the strategies you use to avoid thinking about these upsetting thoughts.

---

---

---

## What to Do

Instead of avoiding thinking about the thoughts that upset you, you should force yourself to have these thoughts. I know this doesn't sound like a great idea, but it is the best way to remove the power that these thoughts have over you. The following are activities that will force you to have these thoughts over and over again until they lose their power over you. As you do this activity remember: *These are thoughts and thinking them cannot make bad things happen.*

Begin by writing down an upsetting thought that you normally try to avoid:

---

---

---

Now put a check mark by one or two of the following activities that will force you to have this thought:

Write down this thought on a sheet of paper at least 25 times.

Sing this thought to the tune of "Happy Birthday" (or another tune if you prefer).

Draw a picture of the worst thing this thought represents (e.g. in Marcia's case it would be a picture of an airplane crashing with her onboard).

Say this thought in front of a mirror for three minutes.

Make a recording of this thought and play it for at least five minutes.

Create a collage representing this thought, cutting out words from newspapers or magazines and pasting in pictures that represent what the thought is about.

Say the thought at least 10 times in a ridiculous voice.

Translate the thought into another language and repeat it in that language several times.

Use the worksheet on the next page to keep track of how you feel when you try the activities of your choice. Do at least one activity every day for at least one week.

## Confronting Your Anxiety Provoking Thoughts-Schedule of Activities

Keep track of your practice in confronting your upsetting thoughts with the following worksheet. Rate how upsetting you found this thought after each activity with 1=Not really upsetting and 10=Extremely Upsetting

Date	Activity	Length of Time	Rating

Which activities did you find most helpful in confronting your thoughts?

---

Do you still feel that you have to avoid these thoughts? If the answer is “yes” you should continue this work for another week.

Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

Rate this assignment from one to 10 with 1=not helpful at all and 10=extremely helpful  
Rating\_\_\_\_\_

What did you learn about yourself?

---

---

In completing this assignment, did you find anything that kept you back?

---

---