

## Tips and Techniques to Manage Anxiety

It's important to address anxiety from a variety of different angles, such as problem solving, accepting that there are things we are not able to control, modifying thinking when necessary, incorporating good self-care, and finding healthy coping skills. Remember that diversity is essential when it comes to coping with challenges; the more skills and coping methods we have, the more flexible we can be when challenges arise.

### ➤ **Feeling Safe**

- ✓ Being able to feel safe in our environment is really important. If we are dealing with a toxic environment (in our home, in our job, or in our relationship), that can heighten our anxiety. I know it can be tough to make changes here depending on our circumstances, so if we are unable to adjust our environment, then perhaps we can incorporate some ways to feel safe at times so we can experience some moments of calmness. We could take some time out each day to be alone to relax, meditate, or do some self-care (see the self-care area below).

### ➤ **How We Decipher Challenges**

- ✓ How we interpret challenges that show up in our lives can make a difference with our anxiety level as well. Things will happen in life that we didn't want or expect, but if we see them as something negative, we can often feel like we have to be on alert all the time to look out for danger. But how would we feel if we looked at those challenges in a different way? We are resilient and we can make it through tough things....so what if we thought of those challenges as a chance for us to learn and grow from the experience? Sometimes just making small adjustments to the way we look at things can make a big difference in our stress level.

### ➤ **Slowing Down**

- ✓ Ask yourself: "Has there been a day this week in which I did not "rush" at all? Keeping a constant fast pace in activity, whether walking, working, or even planning leisure activities, communicates a sense of urgency to the brain, which can increase tension in our body. This has an impact on our anxiety from day-to-day. Practice slowing down your pace of life consciously to reduce this sense of urgency.

### ➤ **Exercise**

- ✓ Exercise is beneficial to us in many ways; it can reduce feelings of anxiety and depression, improves our memory, protects us against many chronic diseases, improves our quality of sleep, and helps us to have more clarity so we can problem solve much easier (please see the document on my webpage that has some ideas for different workouts you can do from home). Let's see if we can incorporate some exercise a few days a week (20 minutes a day).

### ➤ **Eating Healthy Foods**

- ✓ It's good to be mindful as to how much caffeine and sugar we are consuming each day. Having too much caffeine can ramp up our anxiety.
- ✓ Maybe change up a couple of things here and there to eat healthier each day (we don't have to go cold turkey ☺).

➤ **Getting a Good Quality of Sleep**

- ✓ Using a weighted blanket can help us to feel calm.
- ✓ Evaluating our bed, pillow, and covers to make sure they are comfortable.
- ✓ Making sure it's cool enough when we sleep (sometimes being warm can keep us from getting a good night's sleep).
- ✓ Listening to rain, soft music or evening meditations (you can find these on YouTube or Spotify).
- ✓ Journaling in the evening can help clear our mind so we can get some sleep. We can write down what's on our mind before going to bed and decide to address those thoughts later (maybe the next day or later in the week).
- ✓ We can also write down a to do list for the next day if we are feeling anxious about forgetting something we want to get accomplished. We can feel confident knowing the list will be there waiting for us when we wake up.
- ✓ Doing nighttime Yoga (there are some good YouTube videos on this).

➤ **Self-Care**

- ✓ Self-care can be things we do daily to take good care of ourselves, such as incorporating exercise, eating healthy and getting a good quality of sleep, however, it also goes beyond that. We need things in our life that bring us joy and help us to let go of the stress once and a while. Taking small breaks from stress can lower our anxiety.
- ✓ How about doing one nice thing each day for ourselves? It could be taking a nice warm shower, going for a walk at the park, relaxing and listening to our favorite music, reading a book, journaling, playing a board or video game, doing a puzzle, painting, calling a friend and chatting for a bit, laying out in the sun, walking your dog, or watching a great movie with some nice warm cozy covers on the couch (there are many more, but too many to name here ☺). Figure out the things you like to do and write them down. Then each day, pick something you can do. It's important to allow some activities we enjoy into our routine so we give our mind and body those positive feelings each day.

➤ **Working through some challenges that could be contributing to our anxiety.**

- ✓ Being able to resolve situations in your life can help bring your anxiety down quite a bit. If you've lost your job, had a relationship end, experienced some financial instability, lost someone close to you, or anything else (the list here is pretty long, but I wanted to just name a few), it's important to work through those challenges so we can process what happened. Sometimes just allowing ourselves to grieve over something we lost can help us to avoid getting stuck in those anxious feelings.
- ✓ Also, holding on to anger, resentment and unresolved things that hurt us in the past can lead us down a path of anxiety. It can be difficult to face some of the things from our past, and we may need to reach out to others for help in this area, but it's so important to let go of things that are continuing to hurt us. We might need to forgive others or even ourselves to let go of our pain. We cannot heal what has not been processed.

➤ **Finishing Projects**

- ✓ Being able to finish projects....even small ones (doing laundry, dishes, organizing something around the house, cleaning our closet or making the bed – and that's just naming a few things), can give us a sense of accomplishment and help our anxiety and/or depression to subside.

- ✓ I also wanted to mention that it's good to accomplish things, however, if we don't finish everything we anticipated getting done, let's not be upset with ourselves. We are all amazing and are doing the best we can. We can always work on the things we didn't finish the next day or over a weekend. It's setting realistic goals, loving and being kind to ourselves, and giving ourselves a break when we need it ☺

### ➤ **Welcome Humor**

- ✓ Watching something that makes us laugh; like a comedy show or even talking with someone that makes us smile can help us to dive into a place where we feel the world is a little lighter. We can allow ourselves to get out of the dark place we sometimes feel we are in and enjoy life for a moment. Each time we do this, it's teaching our mind that we don't need to stay in anxiety all the time and we love being able to embrace some fun.

### ➤ **Working On Our Self-Talk**

- ✓ How we speak to ourselves really makes a difference in how we feel about ourselves and our lives. If we are tough on ourselves and say or think negative things throughout the day, this can be very damaging to our self-esteem and lower our motivation to accomplish anything.
- ✓ Let's see if we can catch ourselves when we are having negative thoughts and replace those thoughts with healthier ones (this is where being mindful can be really helpful). It's noticing our thoughts we have throughout the day, and seeing how we speak to ourselves or how we perceive things such as when we make mistakes. Now it might seem fake by doing this, but in time if we do practice this enough, we can really get ourselves to embrace those more positive thoughts. It's training ourselves to not see everything as bad or think all or nothing thoughts (I'm either successful or I'm a failure). For example, if our thought was, "I can never do anything right"...perhaps we could adjust this thought and instead say, "I've made some mistakes that I feel embarrassed about, but a lot of the time I make good choices." We are working to change our thought patterns so we can become less critical of ourselves. Over time, being able to replace self-criticism with self-compassion can help us to change our thoughts and create a better view of ourselves and others.
  - Here are some questions we could ask ourselves when those negative thoughts emerge:
    - Is this thought based on emotion or facts?
    - Is there another way of looking at this?
    - How can I change my understanding, after weighing up all the evidence, to make it less distressing?
    - What does this thought pattern cost me emotionally?
    - Does this type of thinking help me achieve my goals?
    - Does this thought help me to feel the way I want to feel?
    - What can I learn from the situation?
- ✓ We may have to work longer on our self-talk depending on how many negative feelings we have about ourselves and circumstances in our lives. Many of our thoughts could have come from our past and from others that were around us. Old or even current relationships can be tough if the other person is negative or if they've said things to us that made us feel bad about ourselves. Basically self-talk is being able to undo what others have passed along to us (and perhaps they had their own situations that led them

down that path as well). This possibly could go back to our childhood...how did your parents speak to you?

- **Reaching Out to Others – Social Support**
  - ✓ When we feel supported by others, we feel more safe, secure, and happy. One important approach to treating anxiety is to reduce symptoms; another way is to increase positive experiences, especially with people that help us feel good about ourselves.
  - ✓ Reaching out to a trusted family or friend, life coach, Meetup group ☺ or a therapist can be really helpful. Sometimes getting clarity means we need to get things off of our mind. Once we clear out those thoughts, it leaves room for new thoughts and experiences.
  
- **Volunteering**
  - ✓ Volunteering or finding other ways to be active in the community can help create a support network, and it gives us a break from our everyday stress. Plus, it can make us feel good to reach out and help others.

## Relaxation Techniques

(Tools for Centering and Grounding Ourselves)

- **Deep Breathing (belly breathing)**
  - ✓ Taking time out a couple of times a day to do this can help lower our anxiety (we tend to breathe shallow because we are stressed and we may not even realize it).
  
- **Meditation**
  - ✓ Maybe set aside 10 to 20 minutes a day to do this (it could be right when we wake up, in the middle of the day, or when we are going to be bed in the evening).
  
- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation**
  - ✓ Doing progressive muscle relaxation can help us to feel our body being tense and when it's relaxed. When we are aware of the feelings in our body, we can find it much easier to calm down. There are some good YouTube videos on this.
  
- **Yoga**
  - ✓ Yoga can help us stretch, slow down a little, and focus on our breathing to help us relax. There are so many benefits to yoga. There are some good YouTube videos on this.
  
- **Journaling**
  - ✓ Being able to journal and express our feelings can help us to feel lighter. When we write down our concerns and what is making us feel anxious, it can help us to see perhaps the things that are triggering that anxiety. This can help us to work on our triggers and be more mindful about situations that come up.

- **Self-Soothing**
  - ✓ Incorporating some self-soothing techniques can really help to calm our anxiety (please see the document on my webpage that has some self-soothing ideas).
  
- **Visualization**
  - ✓ Visualization is a powerful way to let go of stress and anxiety. Through visualization, you use your imagination to picture yourself in a more calming and serene environment, such as at a beach or sitting and looking at some beautiful mountains. Visualization works to relax your body and soothe your thoughts. By simply seeing yourself in a more rejuvenating setting, you can actually allow your mind and body to feel as though you are there.
  
- **The 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique**
  - ✓ This technique gets you to use all your five senses to help you to get back to the present.
    - It starts with you sitting comfortably, close your eyes and taking a couple of deep breathes. In through your nose (count to 3), out through your mouth (to the count of 3).
    - Now open your eyes and look around you. Name out loud:
      - 5 – things you can see (you can look within the room and out of the window).
      - 4 – things you can feel (the silkiness of your skin, the texture of the material on your chair, what does your hair feel like? What is in front of you that you can touch – maybe a table?)
      - 3 – things you can hear (traffic noise or birds outside, when you are quiet and actually listening things in your room constantly make a noise but typically we don't hear them). Focus on things you can hear outside of your body.
      - 2 – things you can smell (maybe you are in your house and smell food, your pillow in your bedroom, or soap from your bathroom).
      - 1 – thing you can taste (what does the inside of your mouth taste like—gum, coffee, or the sandwich from lunch).
    - Take a deep breath to end.
  
- **Hold Something and Really Focus On It**
  - ✓ Look around your house for things that have a texture or that you find interesting to look at.
  - ✓ Hold the object in your hand and really bring your full focus to it. See the color variances, and look at where shadows may fall on parts of it or maybe there are shapes that form within the object. Feel how heavy or light it is in your hand and what the surface texture feels like under your fingers.
  - ✓ This can be done with any object you have lying around or if you know you are going into a stressful situation, take one of your favorite small objects and put it in your pocket or purse so you can do this calming exercise on the go.
  
- **Let Your Thoughts Come and Go**
  - ✓ When we are anxious, our thoughts about our worries go around and around in our mind. Those thoughts can keep building on each other until we feel drained by them so we try not to worry. Whenever we try not to do something it is guaranteed to make us do it more, so instead, let's see if we can observe our thoughts like we are on the outside

looking in. Just watch your thoughts for a minute. Imagines leaves floating on the surface of a stream. For each thought that comes to mind, allow that thought to take its place on a leaf and watch it blow away in the wind. Or allow the thought to turn into a fish and watch it float away down the stream. Allow those thoughts to come and go without feeling the need to respond to them.

➤ **Distract Yourself**

- ✓ There are several ways to distract your mind so it stops thinking about whatever it is that is worrying you and focuses on something that isn't emotionally driven. Here are a couple of examples.
  - Pick a color. How many things in different shades of that color can you see around the room or out of the window? Still feeling stressed? Pick another color.
  - Count backwards by 7, starting at 100. It isn't that easy and needs you to concentrate. This one can also be helpful to do when you are finding it hard to sleep.

➤ **Play a Game with Yourself**

- ✓ You can get your mind off of the anxiety by playing a quick game. Ask yourself a question that has several answers:
  - Name as many states as you can
  - Name as many dog breeds as you can
  - Name as many cities as you can
  - Recite the alphabet backwards
  - Practice simple times tables

➤ **Draw Around Your Foot in Your Mind**

- ✓ Place your feet on the ground and in your imagination pick your favorite color to draw an outline around each foot. Start at the heel and using your imaginary pencil slowly go up the side of your foot to your pinky toe and then make sure you draw around each toe and then go back towards the heel. Repeat on the other foot.
- ✓ Another quick way to focus on your feet when you are in a stressful situation is just wiggle your toes inside your shoe. Pay attention to the sensation as you move each separate toe. Do some move independently of the others? Tense up your whole foot then stretch it out. Now do the other foot.

➤ **Relax by counting**

- ✓ Counting is a simple way to ease your anxiety. When you feel anxiety washing over you, find a quiet and comfortable place to sit. Close your eyes and slowly count to 10. If necessary, repeat and count to 20 or an even higher number. Keep counting until you feel your anxiety subsiding.
- ✓ Sometimes this relief occurs quickly, but other times it might take a while. Stay calm and patient. Counting can relax you because it gives you something to focus on besides your anxiety. It's a great tool to use in a crowded or busy space like a store or train where other anxiety exercises might be more challenging to carry out.

➤ **Get Your Adrenaline-Fueled Energy Out**

- ✓ If you feel you are unable to concentrate enough to do any of these grounding exercises because your body seems too pumped full of adrenaline, then perhaps incorporate something physical first to get rid of that energy, and then come back to your favorite grounding techniques.
  - Run on the treadmill/elliptical if you have one at home
  - Run up and down the stairs
  - Take a brisk walk or run outside
  - Cleaning up the kitchen, doing laundry, or work in your backyard on something
  - Dance around the house while listening to loud music

**I hope you find these helpful 😊**

**♥ Good luck on your journey to healing and managing anxiety ♥**

**If you ever feel like coping techniques are not enough, or if anxiety and/or depression get to be too much, please reach out to a mental health professional.**



**If you feel suicidal, please call the suicide hotline; 1-800-273-8255  
(they are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)**

**♥ Never let a stumble in the road be the end of your journey ♥**

**♥ Your life is worth living ♥**