

CBIS

Cognitive Behavioural Interpersonal Skills

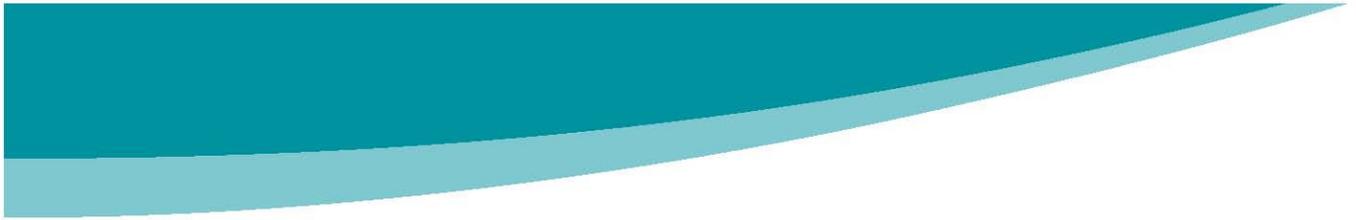


Anxiety Addendum



Table of Contents

FLOW CHARTS.....	76
EDUCATION MODULE	79
The Many Faces of Anxiety	80
Notes to Practitioner.....	81
Medical Considerations	82
Understanding Generalized Anxiety Frequently Asked Questions	83
Anxiety “System-Wide Explosion”	84
Considering Medication for Anxiety Disorders?.....	85
Resources for Self-Help	86
COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL MODULE	87
GAD: Self-Assessment Questionnaire	88
GAD: Self-Assessment Profile.....	89
Costs and Benefits of Anxiety.....	91
How Anxiety Works	92
Panic Circle	94
Taking Control of Panic	95
Your Emotional Thermometer	96
Keeping Anxiety in Check	97
Anxiety Equation	98
Predicting Disaster	99
Anxiety Lies	101
Coping Cards	102
Coping Plans.....	103
Problem Solving	104
Taking Risks.....	105
Assertive Behaviour 101	107
D.E.S.C. Script	108



FLOW CHARTS



This module contains flow charts that direct you to the appropriate CBT strategies in this manual.

When in doubt – go with the flow.

Self-Management & CBT Strategies

GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER

- Self-Assessment Questionnaire, pg 88
- Self-Assessment Profiles, pg 89
- Understanding Generalized Anxiety, pg 83
- Anxiety “System-Wide Explosion”, pg 84
- Abdominal Breathing, pg 60
- Passive Relaxation, pg 64
- Mindfulness, pg 67
- Costs and Benefits of Anxiety, pg 91
- How Anxiety Works, pg 92
- Common Thinking Errors, pg 47
- Your Emotional Thermometer, pg 96
- Thought Stopping, pg 51
- Worry Time, pg 52
- Anxiety Equation, pg 98
- Predicting Disaster, pg 99
- Anxiety Lies, pg 101
- Coping Cards , pg 102
- Coping Plans, pg 103
- Problem Solving, pg 105
- Taking Risks, pg 106
- Self Talk/Mean Talk, pg 50
- Good Guilt/Bad Guilt, pg 53
- Setting Limits, pg 55
- Is Anger A Problem For You?, pg 57

SOCIAL ANXIETY DISORDER

- Anxiety “System-Wide Explosion”, pg 84
- Abdominal Breathing, pg 60
- Grounding, pg 62
- Body Scan, pg 63
- Costs and Benefits of Anxiety, pg 91
- How Anxiety Works, pg 92
- Anxiety Equation, pg 98
- Taking Risks, pg 105
- Self Talk/Mean Talk, pg 50
- Assertive Skills, pg 54
- Assertive Behavior, pg 107
- Setting Limits, pg 55

PANIC DISORDER

- Anxiety “System-Wide Explosion”, pg 84
- Abdominal Breathing, pg 60
- Grounding, pg 62
- How Anxiety Works, pg 92
- Panic Circle, pg 94
- Taking Control of Panic, pg 95
- Anxiety Equation, pg 98
- Predicting Disaster, pg 99
- Coping Cards, pg 103
- Taking Risks, pg 105

PHOBIA

- Anxiety “System-Wide Explosion”, pg 84
- Abdominal Breathing, pg 60
- Grounding, pg 62
- Body Scan, pg 63
- Taking Control of Panic, pg 95
- Anxiety Equation, pg 98
- Coping Cards, pg 102
- Taking Risks, pg 105

PTSD

- Anxiety “System-Wide Explosion”, pg 84
- Abdominal Breathing, pg 60
- Grounding, pg 62
- How Anxiety Works, pg 92
- Panic Circle, pg 94
- Taking Control of Panic, pg 95
- Coping Cards, pg 102
- Taking Risks, pg 105

OCD

- Anxiety “System-Wide Explosion”, pg 84
- Stress Busters, pg 65
- Meditation, pg 68
- One Minute Stress Break, pg 66
- Costs and Benefits of Anxiety, pg 91
- How Anxiety Works, pg 92
- Common Thinking Errors, pg 47
- Keeping Anxiety in Check, pg 97
- Thought Stopping, pg 48
- Anxiety Equation, pg 98
- Coping Cards, pg 102
- Problem Solving, pg 104
- Taking Risks, pg 105



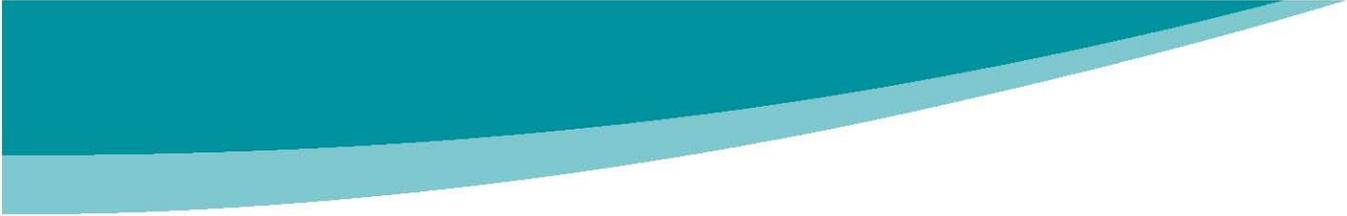
EDUCATION MODULE

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The education module contains handouts providing basic information on anxiety for practitioners, patients and their families

It includes a handout for patients who may be considering medication as well as a list of websites and self-help materials

Choose the handouts that correspond to patient needs



The Many Faces of Anxiety

Panic Disorder with or without agoraphobia

- Recurrent unexpected panic attacks without an obvious trigger
- Avoidance of situations where panic attacks have occurred (agoraphobia)
Example: A person may have bouts of intense fear and avoid leaving the house alone

Social Anxiety Disorder

- Excessive or unrealistic fear of social situations or performance
- Intolerance of embarrassment or scrutiny by others
Example: A person is so shy that they cannot speak in a group

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

- Presence of obsessions (intrusive thoughts, images, or urges that cause anxiety)
- Presence of compulsions (repetitive behaviours or mental acts that are performed to reduce anxiety)
Example: A person washes their hands repetitively until they are raw because they are afraid of germs

Specific Phobia

- Unreasonable fear of a specific object or situation usually associated with avoidance
Example: A person is so afraid of flying that they cannot travel by plane

Generalized Anxiety Disorder

- Uncontrollable and excessive worry occurring most days about ordinary activities
- Intolerance of uncertainty
Example: A person worries a lot about harm coming to their family members on a routine trip to town

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

- Occurs after a traumatic event to which the patient responds with intense fear, helplessness, or horror
- Patients relive the event in memories or dreams; avoid reminders of the event and experience symptoms of increased vigilance
Example: A person returns from war and relives the battlefield traumas in his nightmares and startles at the sound of loud noises

Notes to Practitioner

Don't rush to treat anxiety after upsetting events.

- Although difficult to tolerate, in most cases anxiety will resolve with time. Early treatment may interfere with the natural ability to process the anxiety.

Keep the patient at work or in their usual role as much as possible.

- "Taking a break" is usually not a good idea as it can reinforce avoidance.

All anxiety cannot be eliminated.

- Patients will need to be convinced anxiety is an essential part of their survival system. A little anxiety is not harmful and can indeed be helpful.

Avoidance provides immediate relief from anxiety.

- Avoidance however reinforces the anxiety. It can be difficult to convince patients to give up avoidance in favor of new strategies that may initially increase anxiety.

Attempting new behaviors will increase anxiety at first.

- The most difficult aspect of self-management for anxiety is that relief will not come until the patient has done the cognitive work and also practiced new skills.

Anxiety is rewarded in our society.

- Anxious people gain self-esteem through praise for being conscientious, careful, compliant and protective of others as well as for not causing trouble.

Patients with anxiety are generally less motivated for change.

- Unlike depressed patients, anxious patients will be reluctant to engage in strategies that may initially increase anxiety until their anxiety becomes severe and interferes with functioning.





Medical Considerations

Most Common Medical Conditions That Mimic Anxiety

- **Endocrine:** Thyroid, menopause, adrenal disorders
- **Cardiovascular:** Congestive heart failure, mitral valve prolapse, angina, pulmonary embolus
- **Respiratory:** Asthma, COPD
- **Metabolic:** Diabetes, hypoglycemia
- **CNS:** Migraines, temporal lobe epilepsy, vestibular dysfunction
- **Hematologic:** Vitamin B12 deficiency, anemia
- **Drugs:** Caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, discontinuation syndromes, stimulants, some prescription meds like asthma medication

Baseline Lab Investigations

- CBC
- Fasting glucose
- Electrolytes, calcium, magnesium
- Liver enzymes
- Urinalysis, urine toxicology for substance abuse
- TSH
- ECG if indicated
- Pregnancy test if indicated



Understanding Generalized Anxiety

Frequently Asked Questions

Who gets anxious?

Everyone! Anxiety is part of the natural way that the mind and body are motivated to prepare and plan for a possible threatening situation or event.

What's the difference between anxiety and fear?

Fear is a strong emotion that we feel when faced with immediate danger or threat, such as a fire. Fear makes us “fight, freeze or flee” depending on which is the best way to cope with the threat. Fear is a self-defense reaction that can save our lives. Anxiety is a more general nagging kind of fear about something going wrong in a situation that hasn't happened yet, and may not even happen. Anxiety wonders “What if?” Anxiety is not about what will definitely, immediately happen, only about what might or could happen.

When is anxiety a problem?

A little bit of anxiety, occasionally, is not a problem at all. In fact, being a bit anxious before an exam or a race or a job interview has been shown to actually improve performance. Anxiety is only a problem when it becomes excessive. Anxiety can be so debilitating that people are unable to write anything at all in exams; they become sick with worry; they even avoid places or activities that are unlikely to be harmful; they make more mistakes at work because they are too tense. Too much anxiety over things that could happen, but have not happened and may never happen, can interfere with a person's ability to function at home or at work.

Why do some people get overanxious?

Some people are born with a more sensitive emotional system so they tend to become anxious in situations that might not bother other people. If a child with this inborn tendency is constantly told how dangerous the world is, that child will most likely feel more anxious. Traumatic experiences also may contribute to increasing anxiety. Some people get overanxious because of the way they cope with their anxiety. They try to avoid anxiety or they try to get rid of it, and it just gets stronger.

What is the treatment?

This kind of anxiety, when a person worries about a lot of different things to the point that their life is disrupted or their health affected, is called Generalized Anxiety Disorder. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, which focuses on the inter-relationship between thoughts, feelings and behavior, has been shown to be very successful in treating anxiety. This type of therapy will not help you get rid of all your anxiety because you need some for everyday life, but it will help you learn to manage and reduce your anxiety. You and your doctor may decide that medications may also be helpful.

What can I do?

At home, in your daily life, practice all the exercises that you have been given. Research shows that the people who have the most success with anxiety treatment are those who practice the most. Practice means doing things against the anxiety: taking very small risks; not avoiding places or activities; trying new things. When you initially go against your anxiety, you will feel a little more anxious. As you continue you'll discover that most of the time what you were anxious about did not come true. Your anxiety will start to weaken until you feel little or no anxiety in situations that previously scared or worried you.

Preparation by practicing coping skills is a potent antidote to disabling anxiety that is often highest when anticipating fearful situations.

Anxiety

“System-Wide Explosion”

Anxiety has a significant impact on people, physically, cognitively, emotionally and functionally.

The following is a list of symptoms that people with anxiety may experience.

To understand the extent of anxiety’s impact, circle the symptoms that apply to you.

Body	Feelings	Mind	Behaviour
Tense muscles	Anxious	Easily distracted	Avoiding
Numbness, tingling	Nervous	Poor memory	Agitated, restless
Feeling hot or chilled	Fearful	Can’t think clearly	Multi-tasking
Flushed face	Worried	Can’t make decisions	Can’t start things
Lump in throat	Frightened	Confusion	Can’t finish things
Trembling, shaking	Terrified	Racing thoughts	Snap at people
Weakness, unsteady	Pressured	“Spaced out”	Frantically busy
Dizzy, lightheaded	Overwhelmed	Obsessive thinking	Social withdrawal
Sweating	Frantic	Worrying	Cry at least thing
Heart pounding	Panicked	Self-critical	Hypervigilance
Chest pain	Guilty	Negative thinking	Oversleeping
Insomnia	Shy	Suicidal thoughts	Unable to be alone
Weight loss	Uncertain	Frightening images	Seeking reassurance
Nausea	Self conscious	Nightmares	Compulsive behaviors
Diarrhea	Embarrassed		Self medicating
Shortness of breath	Irritable		Addictions
Dry mouth	Angry		



Considering Medication for Anxiety Disorders?

For some people, medication is an important part of their anxiety disorder treatment. Sometimes, medications that were originally developed for other conditions can be very effective in treating anxiety. Anti-depressants, anti-seizure medications, and even anti-psychotic medications can be very useful treatments for anxiety.

How you take your anti-anxiety medication is very important.

- Sometimes when you first start a medication it can actually make you feel worse temporarily. Some anti-depressants can cause an initial rise in anxiety, which will go down overtime. This is especially true if you start at a dose that is too high or try to increase the dose too quickly.
- “Start at low doses and go slow” is the best motto when treating anxiety.
- The full benefits of a medication can take up to 8-12 weeks to be fully effective.
- Generally, side effects go down and benefits increase over time. It is usually better to be patient when trying a medication rather than quickly switching to a new one if there is no immediate improvement.
- Ask questions about your medication if you are not sure what to expect.

Don’t stop your medication without discussing it with your doctor.

- While most anti-anxiety medications are not addictive, it is not safe to stop them “cold turkey.”
- If you quickly stop the anti-anxiety medications that are in the benzodiazepine group (Ativan, Clonazepam etc) you can have increased anxiety, insomnia and infrequently, seizures.
- If you quickly stop anti-depressant medications you can get uncomfortable symptoms like electric shock sensations, dizziness and increased anxiety.
- If you decide to stop your medication, it is usually best to taper off it slowly over at least four weeks and use other coping strategies such as relaxation and try to avoid stimulants like caffeine.

What if my doctor recommends a benzodiazepine?

- There are a group of medications called benzodiazepines that can usually be identified by having “pam” at the last part of their generic name.
- Some common ones are Lorazepam (Ativan) and Clonazepam (Rivotril).
- These are effective medications for treating anxiety disorders especially for short-term distress. Their use does require careful planning as they can cause sedation, cognitive impairment and it is possible to become dependent on them.
- Usually the use of these medications is limited to short-term use and regular rather than “as-needed” dosing.
- If you start finding that these medications are no longer effective or you need higher doses to get the same effect, it is time to talk about other options with your doctor.



Resources for Self-Help

Online Resources:

Anxiety Disorders Association of Canada (ADAC) www.anxietycanada.ca

Anxiety Disorders of America (ADAA) www.adaa.org

Anxiety Disorders Association of BC (ADABC) www.anxietybc.com

BC Partners “Anxiety Disorders Toolkit” www.heretohelp.bc.ca

Freedom from Fear (FFF) www.freadomfromfear.com

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) www.cmha.ca

CMHA BC Division www.cmha.bc.ca

National Institute of Mental Health www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/anxiety.cfm

Clinical Research Unit for Anxiety and Depression (CRUFAD) www.crufad.com

The Anxiety Panic Internet resource (tAPir) www.algy.com/anxiety

Changeways Programs www.changeways.com

Books:

The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook by Edmund Bourne (1995)

The Assertiveness Workbook: How to express your ideas and stand up for yourself at work and in relationships by Randy Paterson (2000)

Don't Panic: Taking Control of Anxiety Attacks by Reid Wilson (1996)

Mind Over Mood: Change How You Feel by Changing the Way You Think by Dennis Greenberger & Christine Padesky (1995)

When Perfect Isn't Good Enough: Strategies for Coping with Perfectionism by Martin Anthony & Richard Swinson (1998)



COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL MODULE



The cognitive-behavioral module contains a self-assessment questionnaire for GAD that matches the section with the highest scores to the corresponding profiles of worrier, avoider or hard-driver

It also contains handouts that explain basic CBT concepts and exercises to shift anxiety driven behaviors and cognitions

This module has been organized so that materials can be handed out sequentially or chosen to match patients' specific needs

GAD: Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Name: _____ Date: _____

Please rate how well each of the statements below describes your **usual** way of interacting with the world.

0 = never or rarely true for me; 1 = somewhat true; 2 = quite a bit true; 3 = very true of me.

1. ___ I spend a lot of time thinking about what might go wrong for the people I care about.
2. ___ I am always reminding my family and friends to be careful in what they do.
3. ___ There seem to be so many dreadful things happening in society these days.
4. ___ People say I worry too much, but they don't understand what could go wrong.
5. ___ I always plan very carefully for events and try to think of everything that could go wrong.
6. ___ Even after an event has turned out OK, I still think about what could have gone wrong.
7. ___ I feel better going out if I have someone with me who could help me if I get anxious.
8. ___ I can't understand people who say: "Don't worry; it will all work out."
9. ___ I will do everything to protect my family from even the slightest harm.
10. ___ It's hard to feel safe anywhere.
11. ___ I prefer to go to places that are familiar to me and feel safe.
12. ___ I don't seem to go out to as many places and events as I used to.
13. ___ I have high standards for myself and expect to do my best at everything.
14. ___ I am often overwhelmed by all the things I have to do.
15. ___ I can't focus on one thing at a time and therefore nothing much gets done.
16. ___ I always push myself very hard to do my best at everything.
17. ___ Sometimes I am so worried about doing things right that I can't even get started.
18. ___ People think I am reliable, conscientious and always willing to take on extra tasks.
19. ___ I get really mad at myself if I make mistakes.
20. ___ I am afraid that I would be rejected if I did not do excellent work.

GAD: Self-Assessment Profile

Worrier: High scores on questions 1-9

Main Fears	Main Thoughts	Coping Behaviours
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Something bad will happen to self or loved ones • General fear of looming catastrophes e.g. floods, disease, etc. • Belief that whatever happens will be unbearable and too overwhelming to cope with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The world is full of danger • Something terrible is going to happen • I won't be able to cope • I won't be able to stand it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worry endlessly • Talk to others about worry topics • Seek sympathy for worry • Fail to engage in effective planning • Over plan for every contingency • Nag and remind people about being careful • Rehash event afterwards, with focus on what might have happened
Suggested Strategies		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a relaxing bubble bath • Listen to soothing music • Do a craft or puzzle • Spend a few minutes appreciating nature • Watch a funny movie • Read a captivating book 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend time in the garden • Light a fragrant candle • Bake cookies • Pet your dog or cat • Enjoy a massage 	

Stay Safe Avoider: High scores on questions 10-12

Main Fears	Main Thoughts	Coping Behaviours
All of above plus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being left alone to cope with disaster 	All of above plus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I need to be protected • I am not strong enough on my own 	All of above plus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrict activities to "safe" zone • Avoid going out or being left alone • Keep mental list of dangerous places and times to avoid e.g. night, crowds
Suggested Strategies		
All of above plus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take small risks • Call or visit a friend 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get out of the house • Take action, start small

GAD: Self-Assessment Profile

Hard Driver: High scores on questions 13-20

Main Fear	Main Thoughts	Coping Behaviours
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making mistakes • Failing • Not meeting own and others' standards or expectations • Rejection • Disappointing self or others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have to be perfect but that's impossible • I have to keep going • No one knows the real me and how weak I am • If I fail or make a mistake something terrible will happen • I won't be able to cope • I won't be able to stand it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cram schedule too full • Overextending and not setting limits • Set standards and goals too high • Procrastinate • Use self-talk to push self and at the same time predict failure • Multitask to the point of inefficiency • Assume 100% responsibility for failure
Suggested Strategies		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave a project undone • Make a mistake on purpose • Schedule down time • Take a mini vacation • Stay in your PJs for a day • Drop your towels on the floor after you use them 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let your answering machine get your calls • Take spontaneous stress breaks • Set limits with family and friends • Do one thing at a time • Focus on the moment • Dare to be average

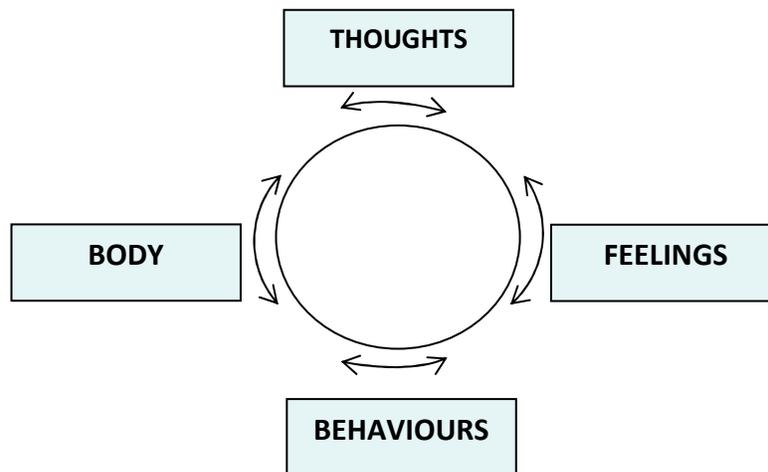
Costs and Benefits of Anxiety

Check below to see what benefits anxiety has brought you and what it has cost you.

BENEFITS	COSTS
You are anxious about doing a good enough job so you work harder than others. Your employer lets you know how much you are valued, which makes you feel good.	When you are not at work you still think about work, worrying if you did things correctly. You may take work home. Your stress affects your family because you are too busy and irritable to spend time with them.
You are anxious that people won't like you so you do everything you can to please them. People talk about how kind, helpful and generous you are.	People get used to you being helpful and start to take advantage of you. People stop appreciating your efforts so you have to try harder to please them. No one seems to think your needs are important and you feel resentful.
You are afraid that things will go wrong so you always plan very carefully. You are very vigilant and often catch things when they start to go wrong so that you can head off bigger problems.	You over plan everything and get stressed if the least little thing goes wrong. Your over planning takes fun and spontaneity out of events. You are constantly on guard and can't relax.
You are afraid to make mistakes so you do a thorough job of any tasks you take on. People know they can rely on you to do everything well.	You are so afraid of a mistake that you do things over and over, which takes an excessive amount of time and makes you less productive. You procrastinate because you don't think you can do the task perfectly.
You are afraid that if your life gets out of control there will be total chaos so you are very organized and orderly. People perceive your orderliness as a valuable trait at work or at home.	You spend so much time organizing and trying to keep things under control that you feel constantly stressed and overwhelmed. You are tough to live with because you require everyone else to be as organized as you.

- The goal is to balance the benefits and costs so that you keep some of the benefits and don't pay such a heavy price. This is hard to do because anxiety tries to push you to do more: more checking, more planning, more working, more organizing, more worrying, and more avoiding.
- What are the benefits of limiting anxiety? Feeling more relaxed and comfortable; being able to play and have fun; other people being more comfortable around you; getting some of your own needs met; being appreciated even if you are not perfect; feeling better about yourself; sleeping better...and so on.
- Your first task in limiting anxiety is to recognize what it costs you and others in your life. As you begin to apply anxiety management strategies, you will often be tempted to go back to your old anxious habits because your anxiety may increase temporarily. It will be helpful to come back to this page to re-affirm for yourself that you are already paying too much because of your anxiety. It is worth your effort to limit anxiety and not let it run (and ruin) your life.

How Anxiety Works



Managing anxiety is easier if you understand how thoughts, feelings, behaviours and body sensations are linked together and affect each other.

In the following example, the same situation seems to produce very different reactions. The way you think about or interpret the situation will influence how you feel and behave.

ANXIETY REACTION	HELPFUL REACTION
Situation: Husband is late coming home.	Situation: Husband is late coming home.
Thoughts: Maybe he's had an accident. I know something terrible has happened. I can't stand it if he's hurt; how will we manage without his salary?	Thoughts: Maybe he's working a bit late. I'll give him an hour and then call the office; I'm not going to panic until I know for sure something bad has happened.
Feelings: Worried, anxious	Feelings: Mild concern
Body: Heart racing, sweating, light headed	Body: Butterflies in stomach
Behaviours: Phones hospitals, frets and paces, yells at kids, forgets to make dinner.	Behaviour: Distracts herself by getting on with usual tasks.

Neither woman knows the truth of what has happened. If nothing has happened, the first woman is likely to be cranky and angry when her husband finally gets home. The second woman will want an explanation but will probably be quite calm.

If something bad has happened, the first woman will be overwhelmed as she is already panicky, the second woman will handle it better because she is not as panicked from the start.

In this example different thoughts produced different feelings and behaviors.



In this next example the same situation and similar feelings are dealt with in different ways, producing different outcomes.

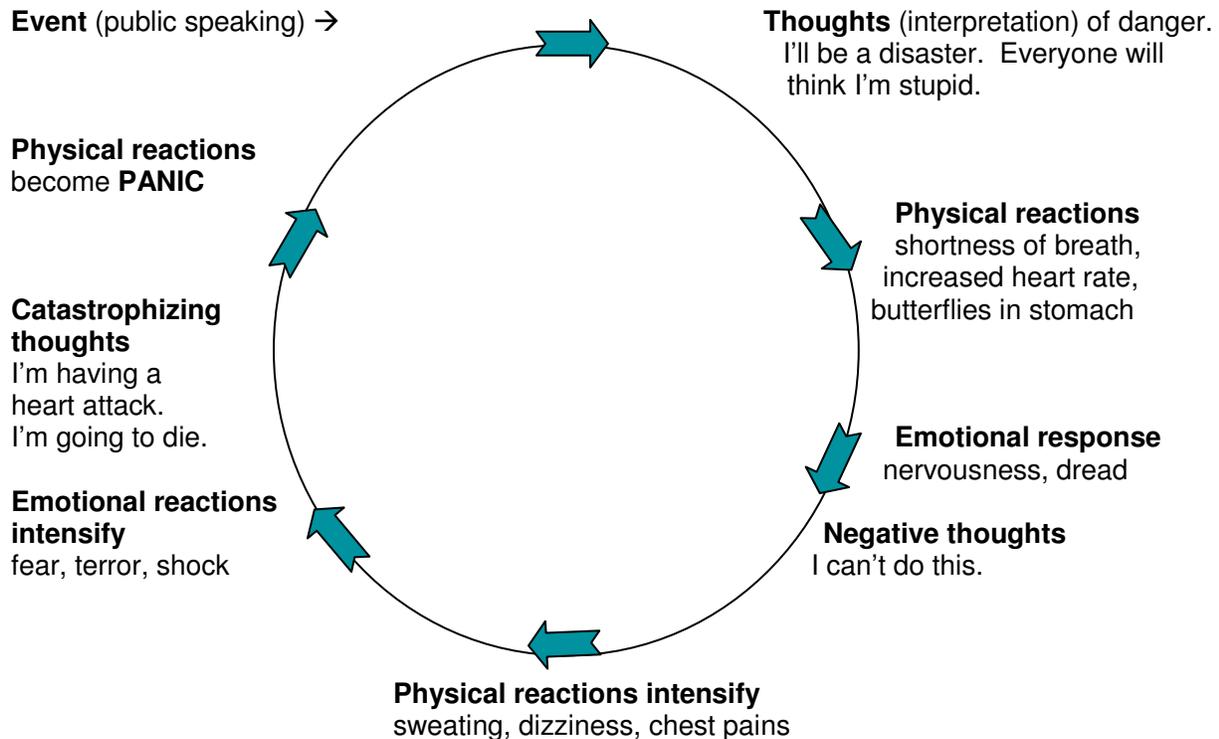
ANXIETY REACTION	HELPFUL REACTION
Situation: Man wants to ask boss for a raise	Situation: Man wants to ask boss for a raise
Thoughts: What if he yells at me, tells me I'm not good enough for a raise? What if he fires me?	Thoughts: I don't care what he says. I know he's a yeller, but I have a right to ask. He won't fire me, not when others on the job are much worse.
Feelings: Anxious, nervous, and scared	Feelings: Anxious and nervous but determined
Body: Trembling, flushed, diarrhea	Body: Little shaky
Behaviours: Hesitates outside door and then goes back to own office.	Behaviours: Goes in and presents the best argument he can.

The first man lets his anxiety control his behaviour and avoids an anxious situation. He feels relieved but engages in negative self-talk and calls himself a coward. The next time he wants to ask for a raise, he will remember this incident and his anxiety will be even stronger. Avoidance feels good at the time, but makes anxiety worse and reflects badly on self-esteem. If he keeps giving in, over time, his anxiety will continue to grow.

The second man fights his anxious feelings and follows through despite his anxiety. He congratulates himself on his effort and the next time he faces a difficult situation it'll be easier for him to act in spite of the anxiety. By taking risks and not avoiding anxious situations his anxiety lessens over time.

In this example, different behaviour (going against anxiety) produced different thoughts and feelings.

Panic Circle



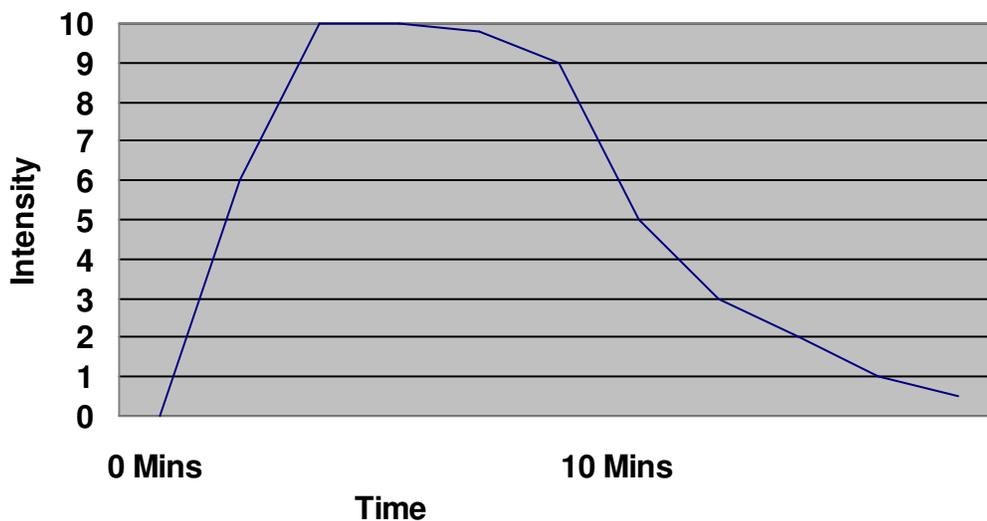
Anxious people are often hypervigilant about normal body sensations. This excessive focus on bodily sensations creates a negative internal feedback loop that leads to further anxiety and increases the likelihood of panic.

Panic attacks certainly “feel” dangerous, however, our bodies are designed to deal with the increased adrenaline and eventually the symptoms will dissipate as the liver absorbs the adrenaline.

Taking Control of Panic

Anxiety symptoms peak quickly and begin to dissipate in approximately 10 minutes, unless further fueled by negative catastrophic thinking. Therefore your **initial** response to the onset of panic is extremely important.

It is essential that you initiate coping skills at the first hint of increasing anxiety. Coping skills become less effective as the level of anxiety increases and usually are not helpful at the height of panic.

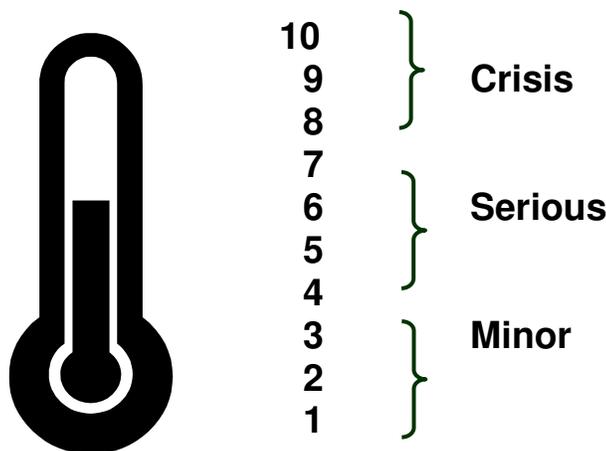


Steps for taking control of panic

- **Distract** yourself during the initial stages
- **Initiate** deep, slow breathing
- **Use** coping statements
- **Observe** the anxiety – don't fuel it
- **Remember** anxiety will pass
- **Repeat** all these steps as needed

Your Emotional Thermometer

- Imagine a thermometer marked from 0-10. The highest number 10, represents the most anxious you have ever felt, 0 is the calmest, and 5 represents midway. This is your anxiety thermometer.
- The numbers 8,9,10 represent an anxiety level that is only appropriate for the most severe problems and situations. These would be situations that realistically involve a disaster that is about to happen or has already happened, such as serious accidents, fires, and illness. Events that warrant 8-10 are quite rare in most people's lives.
- The numbers 5, 6, 7, are appropriate for moderately serious events that may have significant consequences, such as missing a job interview or your car breaking down on the highway at night. Even events that warrant 5-7 on the anxiety thermometer are still fairly unusual.
- Most of the things we get anxious about on a daily basis are not serious enough to be worth high levels of anxiety. Realistically, everyday events would be somewhere between 1 and 4 on the thermometer. They may feel more intense to anxious people because they tend to react on a much higher level, even to minor events.
- Level 8-10 situations can be thought of as crisis and level 1-7 as different sized hassles.
- The next time you feel your anxiety rising, stop and ask yourself these two questions to help you calm down by putting the event in a realistic context:
 1. How serious is this, really, in terms of life and death?
 2. How much anxiety is it really worth?"





Keeping Anxiety in Check

You may temporarily feel increased anxiety when you first try a new strategy. If you stay in the anxious situation until your anxiety begins to drop a little, your anxious brain learns that the danger it was warning you about wasn't really that harmful.

The following strategies will help keep your anxiety in check.

Signals

Choose signals to help you stop one activity, such as work, and start another one, such as family time. For example, on the way home from work, make a rule for yourself that once you pass a certain spot you are not allowed to think about work or do anything connected with work. Refocus your thoughts on home and family and if possible plan something pleasant for part of the evening. This strategy stops one part of the day “leaking” into another and spoiling it.

Do it once

If you have the habit of re-doing tasks in case they are not quite right or good enough, make a rule that you are allowed to check or re-do only once. You need to be strict with yourself about moving on to a different activity and not letting yourself go back and fix or re-do the task repeatedly.

Grading

Anxious people often have difficulty accepting that not everything needs to be done perfectly. In house keeping for example, it is important to clean the kitchen and bathroom thoroughly because of germs. The same does not apply to making the beds. A helpful strategy is to give your daily tasks a realistic grade in terms of actual importance. Tasks graded “A” need to be done carefully and thoroughly. “B” tasks need to be done well, but don't need quite as much care and attention. “C” tasks can be skimmed over. If you have difficulty not labeling all tasks “A”, get assistance grading from a family member or friend.

Dare to be average

Anxious people often believe that they have to be better than average or they will be judged as inadequate and not liked. If it were true that only above average people were acceptable this would mean more than half the human race is unacceptable. If you dare to let yourself be average (even below average!) in one or two areas of your life, you may be pleasantly surprised how relaxing this is and how forgiving and helpful others can be. Your average-ness is a gift, allowing others the chance to shine and/or the chance to accept their averageness.

Anxiety Equation

Anxiety arises out of exaggerating danger and underestimating coping ability.

Magnifying fears + + +

Leads to increased anxiety

Minimizing Coping - - -



How can you reverse this equation to minimize fear and maximize coping? What part of this equation do you need to work on first?

- 1) **Top:** Minimize fear by making estimation of danger more realistic.
 - a) Ask yourself: What's fact? What's exaggerated? Can you challenge it? Can you make it more realistic?
 - b) What are you saying to yourself that magnifies the fear (could be an image)?
 - c) What could you say to yourself to decrease the fear?
- 2) **Bottom:** Maximize coping by increasing coping resources.
 - a) Identify your internal and external coping resources, past and present.
 - b) Remind yourself that you have coped with other difficult situations.
 - c) Use coping statements, problem solving, distracting, thought stopping, relaxation, assertiveness etc.

Remember coping means muddling through somehow



Predicting Disaster

There are two main thoughts that fuel anxiety:

1. Something terrible is going to happen

As long as you believe this, you are likely to feel anxious, panicky, scared, worried and even helpless.

In order to manage anxiety it is important to take a look at this “disaster thought” and decide for yourself how true it is. You can do this by asking yourself the following:

“If 100% is definite and certain, how absolutely sure am I, in this situation, that what I fear is definitely going to happen?”

In order to give an answer anywhere close to 100%, you need hard evidence, solid courtroom evidence, which proves for a fact that your fear will come true.

Think of all the other times in the past that you have worried and predicted disaster. Were you always right? Most people are not very good at predicting the future!

How often does this kind of disaster happen? Research will show you how infrequently really bad things happen to even the unluckiest of people.

Now, mark on this line, realistically, how probable, or certain is it that what you fear will happen?

Very unlikely _____ **Very likely**

If you decide that your fear is not very likely to come true, ask yourself the following:

“How much time and energy do I want to spend on worrying about something that is not certain and may not happen at all?”

If you have good evidence to believe that what you fear is very likely to happen, there are some ways you can prepare for it, but worrying impedes clear thinking and sensible decision-making.



2. When something bad happens, I won't be able to cope

If you worry about not coping, even before something bad occurs, the disaster will grow in your mind and you will feel overwhelmed and helpless. You will convince yourself that your feared situation will never get better and will completely destroy you.

If what you fear does come true and you already feel helpless and overwhelmed, it will be much harder for you to cope. Strong emotions interfere with clear thinking and realistic decision-making.

The following ideas suggest new approaches to coping:

Coping means muddling through a situation, somehow.

Anxious people believe that “coping” means quickly managing every part of a situation perfectly; this is an unrealistic expectation to put on yourself. Problem situations are usually messy and confusing and there may be no way that anyone could manage quickly or perfectly.

Natural feelings of distress make it harder to cope in an ideal way. A more helpful definition of coping is “muddling through a situation somehow.”

Tell yourself: “I don't have to fix all of this really well, by myself, immediately. I just have to figure a way to muddle through, somehow.” Thinking like this allows you to relax a little more, and will actually help you cope better.

If you doubt your ability to cope, ask yourself the following:

“How many other difficult situations have I coped with in my lifetime?”

The fact that you are still alive and functioning is the only proof you need that you are experienced at coping.

Remind yourself: “I have dealt with many tough situations over the years and I will be able to muddle my way through this one.”

This way of dealing with difficult situations promotes clear thinking and realistic decision-making.



Anxiety Lies

Anxiety tells you that what you are worrying about is going to happen and when it does, it will be catastrophic!

The following two questions will help you dispel the illusions anxiety tries to create.

1. Is what I'm worrying about really going to happen?

- a) Specify what you are worrying about.

- b) Collect relevant information that either supports or contradicts your fear.

- c) Determine the probability that what you fear will actually happen.

2. Even if it does happen, would it really be as catastrophic as I'm imagining?

- a) What have you done to cope with similar problems in the past?

- b) What could you do to cope now?



Coping Cards

Anxious people often make the anxiety worse by telling themselves things such as “What if the car breaks down; this is all going wrong; we never should have left; this is going to be a disaster.” These thoughts actually reduce our ability to cope.

Research has shown that the best way to cope with a difficult situation is to tell yourself things that help you calm down and stay grounded, focused on the moment, rather than predicting trouble in the future.

Below is a list of coping statements to prepare you for difficult situations. You can add others that work for you. Type out the statements you find helpful on a small card (you can even have it laminated) and carry it with you.

- 1. I have coped with situations like this before and survived.**
 - 2. I just have to muddle through – I don’t have to fix everything perfectly right away.**
 - 3. I can try to find someone else to handle part of this.**
 - 4. This is only going to last a little while longer – I can handle a few more minutes.**
 - 5. Anxiety is uncomfortable but it won’t kill me.**
 - 6. Worrying doesn’t change anything. It only stresses me and wastes my time.**
 - 7. There isn’t time to do everything perfectly. I need to prioritize and accept that many tasks can be done “good enough.”**
 - 8. If I avoid things, my anxiety will get worse. If I fight anxiety, my life will get better.**
 - 9. Saying no is hard, but I’m not going to be a doormat for others to walk on.**
 - 10. A little anxiety is OK, it’s harmless; I can ignore it.**
 - 11. I will start feeling less anxious if I hang on and think about other things.**
 - 12. Breathe.**
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Coping Plans

From time to time things will go wrong, whether you worry or not, however hard you try, because that's just the way life is.

You have a choice: you can either worry about things that might go wrong or you can make plans for how you will deal with them. If you have some idea of how you might cope, you will feel less anxious and you will cope much better than if you simply let your anxiety take over.

A coping plan is simply a list of steps you think out ahead of time that helps you manage a difficult situation.

1. **List** what has to be done.
2. **Prioritize** what must be done first.
3. **Recruit** others who could help.
4. **Delegate** tasks to each helper.
5. **Focus** only on the task you are doing right at this moment.
6. **Delay** emotional reactions until you have done what needs to be done.
7. **Pause** no matter how much there is to do; you will cope better after a short break.
8. **Do** take care of yourself. Eat, drink plenty of fluids, and get adequate sleep.
9. **Avoid** alcohol and other drugs. They will make you less efficient at coping.
10. **Accept** that this will be a difficult time.
11. **Tell** yourself “I will muddle through this, one step at a time.”

If you find yourself worrying about something that might go wrong, write out a coping plan using these steps and put it away in a safe place. Whenever you start to worry about the problem, remind yourself “I have planned as best I can for this. I refuse to think about it anymore.”

Coping is a step-by-step process. Looking at the big picture and seeing every detail overwhelms anxious people. It is more calming and effective to think of coping with a situation a small chunk at a time. Concentrating on small pieces of the situation gives you a greater sense of control, which gives you space and time to use your best coping skills.



Problem Solving

Anxiety is strengthened by avoidance. The following problem solving technique is helpful when you feel stuck. It will help change worry into action.

1. **List** the specific problem that you are worrying about.
2. **Brainstorm** all possible solutions and options – don't leave any out.
3. **Choose** one of the options or solutions you've listed.
4. **Take** action!
5. **Evaluate** results.
6. **Repeat** steps 3, 4 and 5 as necessary.



Taking Risks

Your anxiety is making you miss out on a lot of things in life. Taking a risk means doing everyday things that you've been avoiding.

The only way to get some of those things back in your life is to start doing them. This may sound scary to you. In fact, you may be feeling anxious just at the thought of doing risky things.

There is a way to make it easier to get back to a fuller and more enriched life.

- **List** some of the things you have been avoiding. Choose small everyday things such as going to a store or a movie.
- **Number** your list with #1 being the least anxiety provoking.
- **Start** with #1 on your list.
- **Break** it down into small manageable progressive steps.
- **Begin** with the first step.
- **Hang in** there until your anxiety starts to drop.
- **Tell yourself** "Good for me. I'm teaching myself that I don't have to get so panicked about everything."
- **Repeat** the experiment daily until you can easily do the activity with little anxiety.
- **When** you have mastered one risk, pick the next from your list, and take the same steps.

Remember, if you stop when your anxiety is rising you have just strengthened your anxiety and made it harder to repeat the activity. By waiting until your anxiety begins to drop, you learn that what you feared and avoided is not so dangerous.

Continue until you put anxiety in its place and take back your life.