

# 10 WAYS TO MANAGE ANXIETY

Jerath, R., Crawford, M. W., Barnes, V. A., & Harden, K. (2015). Self-regulation of breathing as a primary treatment for anxiety. *Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback*, 40(2), 107-115

Leahy, R. L., Holland, S. J., & McGinn, L. K. (2011). *Treatment plans and interventions for depression and anxiety disorders*. Guilford Press.

## CONTROL YOUR BREATHING.

As anxiety grows, our breathing gets faster and shallower. This deprives our bodies of oxygen and causes a buildup of carbon dioxide.

We can reverse this with **controlled breathing**: breathe deeply into your lower abdomen for four counts, hold for four counts, then breathe out for six counts. Repeat for about 5 minutes.



## BE KIND TO YOURSELF.

Anxiety worsens when we add **self-criticism**: "This is an awful situation, and I'm doing an awful job at handling it. What's wrong with me?"

**Compassionate self-talk** can remove the extra weight of shame and self-recrimination: "We all get into difficult situations sometimes, and it's natural to feel scared. But I know I can handle this, and it will pass."



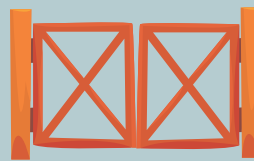
## GROUND YOURSELF PHYSICALLY.

This involves **shifting attention** away from anxious thoughts and **toward** physical sensations & environmental stimuli. This helps us regain a sense of **calm** and **control**.

Controlled breathing is a good grounding technique. Try to recruit other senses as well: run your hands under water, listen to soothing music, smell or taste something pleasant, do progressive muscle relaxation, etc.



## SET BOUNDARIES AROUND WORRY.



Some of us benefit from **allocating a set amount of time** to do our worrying.

This involves setting aside a few minutes each day to review and write down things that worry us.

This allows us to express and process our fears, but sets **healthy boundaries** around the time and energy spent.

## GROUND YOURSELF MENTALLY.

This involves **shifting the mental focus** away from our anxious fears by remembering something pleasant or visualizing ourselves in a calm, safe place (e.g. forest or beach).

It also helps to prepare a **positive coping statement** to say to ourselves in moments of anxiety, like: "This is difficult, but it will pass. I can handle this."



## TRY FACING YOUR FEARS.

Sometimes our anxiety is misconstrued or disproportionate to the situation.

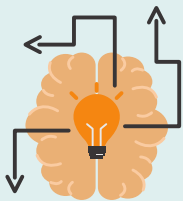
So, another technique involves writing down what we think will happen, **facing the feared situation**, and then reflecting on what actually happened.

Seeing the difference between our predictions and real outcomes can alleviate fears that are larger than they need to be.



## DISTRACT YOURSELF.

The physical and mental grounding techniques described above are helpful **distractions** during anxiety.



Working on an enjoyable hobby, listening to an inspirational podcast, or taking a long walk are examples of other, **useful diversions** that channel energy into something **healthy** and **productive**.

## PRACTICE SELF-CARE.

This one should be obvious, but often gets sidelined during anxiety and depression.

Simply put: **physical health supports brain health**. When we take care of ourselves through exercise, nutrition, and healthy sleep habits, we bolster our ability to handle severe stress and anxiety.



## REFRAME YOUR THOUGHTS.

Anxiety arises when we ruminate over past fears, get triggered by present events, and/or anticipate threats in the future.

**Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)** helps us challenge these thoughts, weighing evidence for and against them, and **reframing** them into an equally valid but less stressful perspective.



## GROW IN RESILIENCE.

**Resilience is the capacity to bounce back after adversity**. Research shows that we can all grow in our resilience.

Strategies include looking for opportunities in each challenge and learning to view circumstances with curiosity, courage, and optimism.

