

COPING STRATEGIES FOR ANXIETY

Training Your Morning Thoughts

When we wake up in the morning, our negative trains of thought are often waiting for us.

Make a list of three positive and accurate thoughts that you can read and repeat to yourself before getting out of bed tomorrow.

For example, make a list of things that are likely to go well today.

Fill your mind with thoughts that will benefit you.

Be Accountable

Schedule a time in your calendar to complete an activity you've been putting off.

Tell someone you trust that you're going to do it today.

If you live with others, post your strategy somewhere where everyone can see it (e.g., whiteboard, vision board).

Increase the likelihood that you will follow through on your intention by using accountability.

Limits of Your Control

When you're worried about something today, write down three things you can control and three things you can't.

Concentrate your efforts on what you can control and let go of futile mental efforts to force the desired outcome.

Break the Worry Cycle

Worry is frequently motivated by the question, "What if happens?" where the blank represents anything you are afraid of. By not arguing with your "what if," you can break the cycle of worry.

Instead tell yourself ***"That might happen, and I would have to deal with it if it did."*** Then bring focus to what is actually happening at that moment.

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What Are the Odds?

If you're worried about something bad happening today, consider how likely that outcome is.

How many times has this happened before?

Are there more probable outcomes?

Most of the time, the things we worry about never come to pass, so the anxiety we feel causes us unnecessary pain.

Thoughts Are Not Facts

We frequently believe that our thoughts are simply observations of what is true. However, "I'm not good enough" or "Nobody cares about me" can feel as real as "The sky is blue."

Look out for any interpretations you're making about yourself, others, or the world today.

Recognize that these are stories your mind has made up that may or may not be true.

Assume the Best

Someone will almost certainly irritate you today. When this happens, try to interpret the person's actions as gently as possible. For example, if someone cuts you off in traffic, you may rationalize that they are rushing to see a dying loved one in the hospital. Examine how this reaction affects your mental health.

Let Go of Tension

Close your eyes and sit in a quiet place. Take three deep, calming breaths, exhaling for a count of five. Squeeze your hands into fists, then release the tension in your hands. Take three more deep breaths to relax. Now, shrug your shoulders up towards your ears, creating tension, and then relax them. Finish with three more breaths. Take note of how you feel right now.

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One Step at a Time

What is one activity that you have been putting off? Determine the very first step in completing it, and make it as small as possible.

Finding a brush and roller, for example, could be the first step in painting a room. Finish that step today, and then plan on doing the next small step tomorrow.

Continue in this manner, taking one small step at a time, until the task is completed..

Self-Soothe Skills

The goal of self-soothe is to calm and soothe your senses. The goal is to fully engage your senses in activities that will help you relax your body and mind.

When practicing self-soothing, let go of judgments, worries, and thoughts about your

responsibilities and focus on the present moment. The passage of time will help to regulate your body and recharge your battery.

Commit to incorporating self-care into your daily routine.

Ground Yourself

Sometimes distress checks us out of the moment. If you start feeling unreal or are drifting out of the moment, try some of the following Grounding skills:

1. Observe and describe who and what is currently around you. The more detail, however minor, the better.
2. Use your senses: Describe what you see, hear, smell, and touch right now.
3. Breathe slowly and deeply, saying the words "here" and "now" to yourself as you inhale and exhale.
4. Get up and move your body mindfully, paying attention to the connection between your movement and your surroundings.