

# Introduction to Anxiety

Anxiety is the body's response to situations that are interpreted as threatening. Without any anxiety, you would probably make bad decisions, such as driving too fast on the highway, or not paying your bills. However, too much anxiety can lead to avoidance or unpleasant physical, emotional, and cognitive symptoms.

**What are three things that trigger your anxiety?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**What are three physical symptoms that you experience when you feel anxious?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**What are three thoughts you tend to have when you feel anxious?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**What are three things you do to cope when you are anxious?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

# My Fears

What are some things that make you feel nervous or scared?

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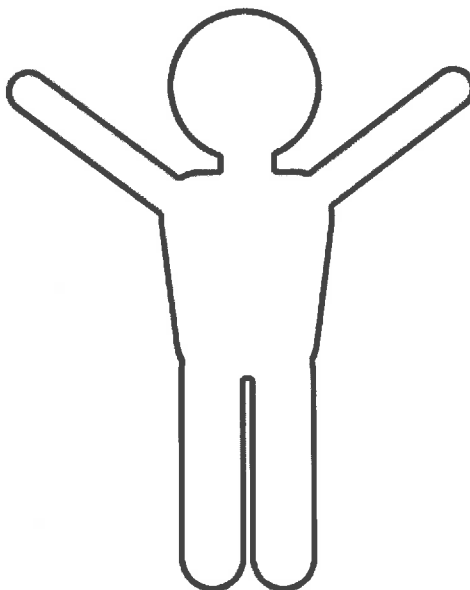
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What do you think about when you are nervous or scared?

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How does your body feel when you are nervous or scared? Color the areas where you can sense these feelings.



What's something you can do to feel better next time you are afraid?

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# What are Panic Attacks?

Panic attacks are brief periods of overwhelming fear or anxiety. The intensity of a panic attack goes well beyond normal anxiety, and can include a number of physical symptoms. During panic attacks, people often fear that they are having a heart attack, they cannot breathe, or they are dying.



## Symptoms of a Panic Attack

**Note:** A panic attack does not need to include all of the symptoms listed below.

- ✓ Pounding or racing heart
- ✓ Sweating
- ✓ Trembling or shaking
- ✓ Fear of "going crazy"
- ✓ Feeling of being detached from reality
- ✓ Breathing difficulties
- ✓ Sense of terror, or impending doom or death
- ✓ Chest pain or discomfort
- ✓ Nausea
- ✓ Fear of dying

## Panic Attack Facts

- Panic attacks may feel scary, but they don't actually cause physical harm. The most common fears associated with panic attacks (having a heart attack or fainting) are not actually a threat.
- Panic attacks are usually brief but intense. The symptoms of panic typically peak within 10 minutes, and end within 30 minutes. However, some lingering symptoms can last over an hour.
- Panic attacks can seem to occur randomly, or they can be closely linked to a specific source of anxiety such as driving, crowded places, or simply leaving home.
- Panic *disorder* occurs when a person has frequent worry or fear of future panic attacks, or when they change their behavior in to avoid attacks (such as avoiding a feared situation).

## How are Panic Attacks Treated?



### Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a common and well-supported treatment for panic attacks and panic disorder. CBT works by identifying and changing unhealthy thinking patterns that trigger panic attacks. The benefits of CBT can be long-lasting.



### Exposure Therapy

During exposure therapy, the patient is intentionally exposed to the symptoms of panic in a safe environment. As exposure continues, the symptoms become more familiar and less terrifying. Exposure therapy may also involve gradual exposure to feared situations.



### Medication

Medication for panic attacks can act as a short-term treatment for severe cases. Because medication does not treat the underlying issues that cause panic disorders, it should be accompanied by another form of treatment such as psychotherapy.



### Relaxation Techniques

Much like how muscles become stronger with exercise, the body's relaxation response can be improved with practice. Frequent use of relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, and progressive muscle relaxation can help to combat panic attacks.

# Panic Assessment

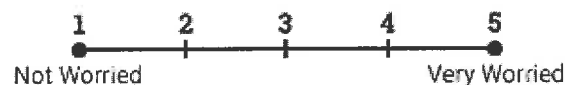
What were you **thinking** about before your most recent panic attack?

How were you **feeling** before your most recent panic attack?

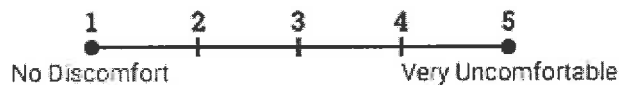
What were you **doing** before your most recent panic attack?

Circle the symptoms you experience during panic attacks.		
Pounding or racing heart	Difficulty breathing	Sweating
Sense of terror, impending doom, or death	Feeling dizzy, light-headed, or faint	Feeling of being detached from reality or oneself
Fear of "going crazy"	Nausea	Chest pain or discomfort
Choking sensation	Chills or feeling of heat	Numbness or tingling
Trembling or shaking	Other	

Are you worried about having another panic attack?



How would you rate the discomfort caused by your panic attacks?



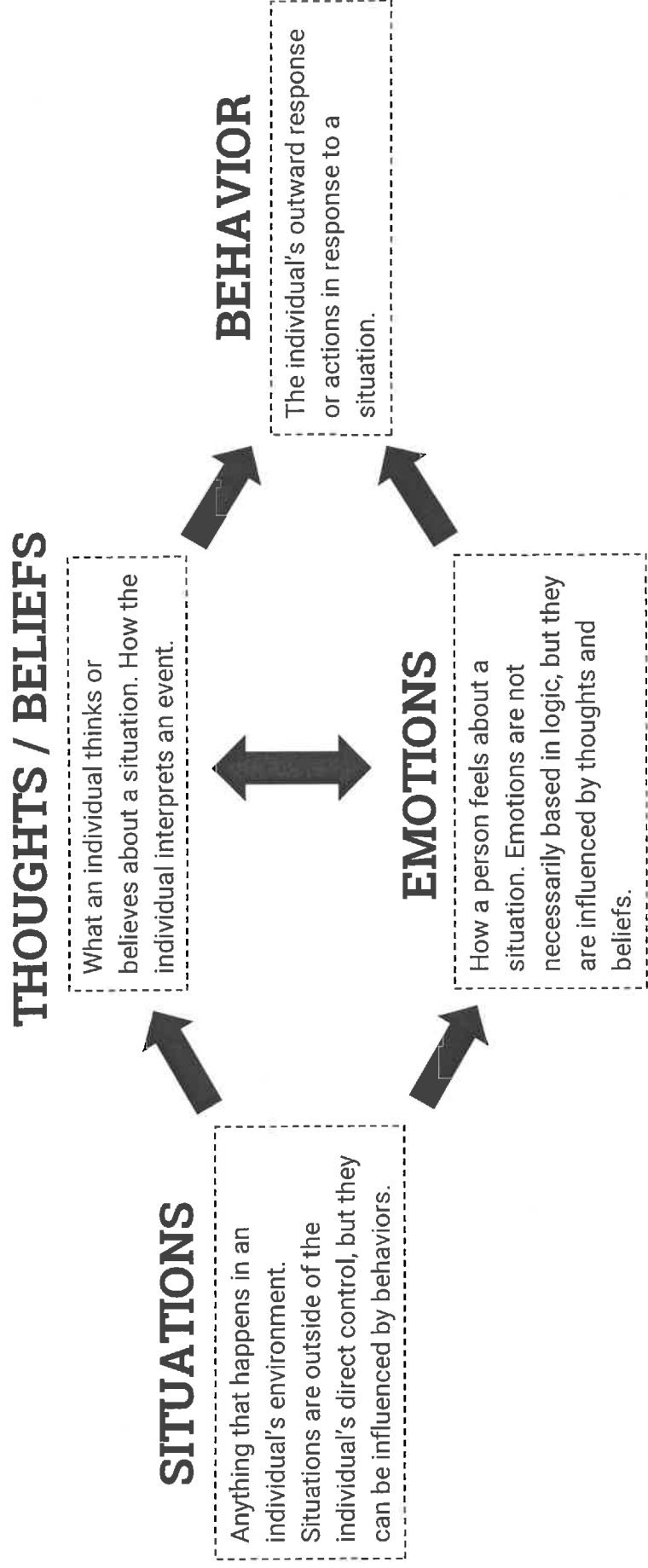
Have you changed your behavior because of your past panic attacks?

**Example:** Avoiding situations that you think might cause a panic attack, or places where a panic attack would be embarrassing or dangerous.

Yes

No

# The Cognitive Behavioral Model





# Cognitive Distortions

Cognitive distortions are irrational thoughts that can influence your emotions. Everyone experiences cognitive distortions to some degree, but in their more extreme forms they can be harmful.

**Magnification and Minimization:** Exaggerating or minimizing the importance of events. One might believe their own achievements are unimportant, or that their mistakes are excessively important.

**Catastrophizing:** Seeing only the worst possible outcomes of a situation.

**Overgeneralization:** Making broad interpretations from a single or few events. "I felt awkward during my job interview. I am *always* so awkward."

**Magical Thinking:** The belief that acts will influence unrelated situations. "I am a good person—bad things shouldn't happen to me."

**Personalization:** The belief that one is responsible for events outside of their own control. "My mom is always upset. She would be fine if I did more to help her."

**Jumping to Conclusions:** Interpreting the meaning of a situation with little or no evidence.

**Mind Reading:** Interpreting the thoughts and beliefs of others without adequate evidence. "She would not go on a date with me. She probably thinks I'm ugly."

**Fortune Telling:** The expectation that a situation will turn out badly without adequate evidence.

**Emotional Reasoning:** The assumption that emotions reflect the way things really are. "I feel like a bad friend, therefore I must be a bad friend."

**Disqualifying the Positive:** Recognizing only the negative aspects of a situation while ignoring the positive. One might receive many compliments on an evaluation, but focus on the single piece of negative feedback.

**"Should" Statements:** The belief that things should be a certain way. "I should always be friendly."

**All-or-Nothing Thinking:** Thinking in absolutes such as "always", "never", or "every". "I *never* do a good enough job on anything."

# Core Beliefs

Everyone looks at the world differently. Two people can have the same experience, yet have very different interpretations of what happened. **Core beliefs** are the deeply held beliefs that influence how we interpret our experiences.

Think of core beliefs like a pair of sunglasses. Everyone has a different “shade” that causes them to see things differently.



Many people have negative core beliefs that cause harmful consequences. To begin challenging your negative core beliefs, you first need to identify what they are. Here are some common examples:

I'm unlovable	I'm stupid	I'm boring
I'm not good enough	I'm ugly	I'm worthless
I'm a bad person	I'm abnormal	I'm undeserving

What is one of your negative core beliefs? \_\_\_\_\_

List three pieces of evidence contrary to your negative core belief.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



# Countering Anxiety

Come up with a rational counterstatement for each of the following thoughts:

Anxiety-Producing Thought	Rational Counterstatement
I can't go to the mall with my hair like this—everyone will notice me.	<b>Example:</b> My hair looks a little messy, but everyone will be too occupied with other things to notice. Even if they do notice, I doubt they would care.
I know I won't be able to finish my work on time.	
I can't face my boss. She's going to yell at me.	

Next, think of three examples of anxiety-producing thoughts and rational counterstatements from your own life:

Anxiety-Producing Thought	Rational Counterstatement

# The Mental Health Benefits of Exercise

Research has shown us that people who exercise regularly tend to be more resistant to many mental illnesses. Exercise can help treat current symptoms, and prevent future episodes.

## What problems can exercise help with?

### Mental Illness

Depression  
Anxiety  
Substance Abuse  
Bulimia  
Alzheimer's Disease

### Other

Sleep Difficulties  
Stress  
Physical Health  
Low Energy  
Self-Esteem

Beginning an exercise plan doesn't have to be difficult. Walking for as little as 30 minutes, 3 times a week, has been found to be beneficial. Don't worry too much about what exercise you choose. Aerobic and anaerobic exercises are both effective at improving mental health.

### Anaerobic Exercises



Weightlifting  
Sprinting (running, biking, etc.)  
Interval training  
Climbing

### Aerobic Exercises



Walking, jogging, or biking  
Elliptical or ski machines  
Swimming  
Dancing

If you're crunched for time, you might still be able to squeeze some exercise into your day. Two 15 minute walks work just as well as one 30 minute walk! Here are some tips to help:



Need to make a phone call? Walk and talk.

Do an activity you enjoy, and it won't be a chore.

Get an exercise partner to hold you accountable.

Skip the elevator and take the stairs.

Park at the back of the parking lot and walk.

Head outside for 10 minutes during lunch.

# The Mental Health Benefits of Exercise

## What days of the week can you find time to exercise?

Choose a minimum of three days per week to exercise. You should exercise for at least 30 minutes, but the time can be split up throughout the day.

Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.

## List three types of exercise you would like to try.

The best exercises are activities that you'll genuinely enjoy, without having too many obstacles to get started.

①

②

③

## What strategies can you use to make sure you remember to exercise?

It's easy to put off exercise, prioritize other things, or simply forget about your plan. Circle the ideas that might help you stick to your plan.

- ❖ Plan to exercise with a friend so you can both hold one another responsible.
- ❖ Set an alarm to remind you when to exercise. If you're using your phone alarm, set it to automatically repeat every day at the same time!
- ❖ Get into a routine by exercising at the same time every day. Try attaching exercise to a particular part of your day, such as walking every evening right after dinner.
- ❖ Reward yourself for a job well done. Treat yourself to something you enjoy when you exercise. However, you have to be honest! No exercise, no reward.

# Exposure Hierarchy

Describe, in broad terms, what makes you anxious:

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Describe specific situations related to your anxiety that make you feel varying levels of discomfort. On a scale of 0 to 10 (0 being not at all anxious, and 10 being extremely anxious), rate how much each situation affects you.

Anxiety-Producing Situation	0 - 10

# Relaxation Techniques

When a person is confronted with anxiety, their body undergoes several changes and enters a special state called the *fight-or-flight response*. The body prepares to either fight or flee the perceived danger.

During the fight-or-flight response it's common to experience a "blank" mind, increased heart rate, sweating, tense muscles, and more. Unfortunately, these bodily responses do little good when it comes to protecting us from modern sources of anxiety.

Using a variety of skills, you can end the fight-or-flight response before the symptoms become too extreme. These skills *will* require practice to work effectively, so don't wait until the last minute to try them out!

## **Deep Breathing**

It's natural to take long, deep breaths, when relaxed. However, during the fight-or-flight response, breathing becomes rapid and shallow. Deep breathing reverses that, and sends messages to the brain to begin calming the body. Practice will make your body respond more efficiently to deep breathing in the future.

Breathe in slowly. Count in your head and make sure the inward breath lasts at least 5 seconds. Pay attention to the feeling of the air filling your lungs.

Hold your breath for 5 to 10 seconds (again, keep count). You don't want to feel uncomfortable, but it should last quite a bit longer than an ordinary breath.

Breathe out very slowly for 5 to 10 seconds (count!). Pretend like you're breathing through a straw to slow yourself down. Try using a real straw to practice.

Repeat the breathing process until you feel calm.

## **Imagery**

Think about some of your favorite and least favorite places. If you think about the place hard enough—if you really try to think about what it's like—you may begin to have feelings you associate with that location. Our brain has the ability to create emotional reactions based entirely off of our thoughts. The imagery technique uses this to its advantage.

Make sure you're somewhere quiet without too much noise or distraction. You'll need a few minutes to just spend quietly, in your mind.

Think of a place that's calming for you. Some examples are the beach, hiking on a mountain, relaxing at home with a friend, or playing with a pet.

# Relaxation Techniques

Paint a picture of the calming place in your mind. Don't just think of the place briefly—imagine every little detail. Go through each of your senses and imagine what you would experience in your relaxing place. Here's an example using a beach:

- a. Sight: The sun is high in the sky and you're surrounded by white sand. There's no one else around. The water is a greenish-blue and waves are calmly rolling in from the ocean.
- b. Sound: You can hear the deep pounding and splashing of the waves. There are seagulls somewhere in the background.
- c. Touch: The sun is warm on your back, but a breeze cools you down just enough. You can feel sand moving between my toes.
- d. Taste: You have a glass of lemonade that's sweet, tart, and refreshing.
- e. Smell: You can smell the fresh ocean air, full of salt and calming aromas.

## **Progressive Muscle Relaxation**

During the fight-or-flight response, the tension in our muscles increases. This can lead to a feeling of stiffness, or even back and neck pain. Progressive muscle relaxation teaches us to become more aware of this tension so we can better identify and address stress.

Find a private and quiet location. You should sit or lie down somewhere comfortable.

The idea of this technique is to intentionally tense each muscle, and then to release the tension. Let's practice with your feet.

- a. Tense the muscles in your toes by curling them into your foot. Notice how it feels when your foot is tense. Hold the tension for 5 seconds.
- b. Release the tension from your toes. Let them relax. Notice how your fingers feel differently after you release the tension.
- c. Tense the muscles all throughout your calf. Hold it for 5 seconds. Notice how the feeling of tension in your leg feels.
- d. Release the tension from your calf, and notice how the feeling of relaxation differs.

Follow this pattern of tensing and releasing tension all throughout your body. After you finish with your feet and legs, move up through your torso, arms, hands, neck, and head.

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation Script

Progressive muscle relaxation is an exercise that reduces stress and anxiety in your body by having you slowly tense and then relax each muscle. This exercise can provide an immediate feeling of relaxation, but it's best to practice frequently. With experience, you will become more aware of when you are experiencing tension and you will have the skills to help you relax. During this exercise each muscle should be tensed, but not to the point of strain. If you have any injuries or pain, you can skip the affected areas. Pay special attention to the feeling of releasing tension in each muscle and the resulting feeling of relaxation. Let's begin.

Sit back or lie down in a comfortable position. Shut your eyes if you're comfortable doing so.

Begin by taking a deep breath and noticing the feeling of air filling your lungs. Hold your breath for a few seconds.

*(brief pause)*

Release the breath slowly and let the tension leave your body.

Take in another deep breath and hold it.

*(brief pause)*

Again, slowly release the air.

Even slower now, take another breath. Fill your lungs and hold the air.

*(brief pause)*

Slowly release the breath and imagine the feeling of tension leaving your body.

Now, move your attention to your feet. Begin to tense your feet by curling your toes and the arch of your foot. Hold onto the tension and notice what it feels like.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension in your foot. Notice the new feeling of relaxation.

Next, begin to focus on your lower leg. Tense the muscles in your calves. Hold them tightly and pay attention to the feeling of tension

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension from your lower legs. Again, notice the feeling of relaxation. Remember to continue taking deep breaths.

Next, tense the muscles of your upper leg and pelvis. You can do this by tightly squeezing your thighs together. Make sure you feel tenseness without going to the point of strain.

*(5 second pause)*

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation Script

And release. Feel the tension leave your muscles.

Begin to tense your stomach and chest. You can do this by sucking your stomach in. Squeeze harder and hold the tension. A little bit longer.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension. Allow your body to go limp. Let yourself notice the feeling of relaxation.

Continue taking deep breaths. Breathe in slowly, noticing the air fill your lungs, and hold it.

*(brief pause)*

Release the air slowly. Feel it leaving your lungs.

Next, tense the muscles in your back by bringing your shoulders together behind you. Hold them tightly. Tense them as hard as you can without straining and keep holding

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension from your back. Feel the tension slowly leaving your body, and the new feeling of relaxation. Notice how different your body feels when you allow it to relax.

Tense your arms all the way from your hands to your shoulders. Make a fist and squeeze all the way up your arm. Hold it.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension from your arms and shoulders. Notice the feeling of relaxation in your fingers, hands, arms, and shoulders. Notice how your arms feel limp and at ease.

Move up to your neck and your head. Tense your face and your neck by distorting the muscles around your eyes and mouth.

*(5 second pause)*

Release the tension. Again, notice the new feeling of relaxation.

Finally, tense your entire body. Tense your feet, legs, stomach, chest, arms, head, and neck. Tense harder, without straining. Hold the tension.

*(5 second pause)*

Now release. Allow your whole body to go limp. Pay attention to the feeling of relaxation, and how different it is from the feeling of tension.

Begin to wake your body up by slowly moving your muscles. Adjust your arms and legs.

Stretch your muscles and open your eyes when you're ready.



# Thought Log

Event	Thought	Consequence (Emotion / Behavior)	Alternate Response

# Thought Log