

10 WAYS TO MANAGE ANXIETY

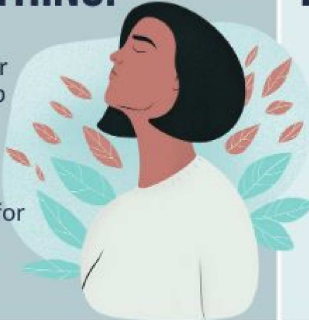
Jerath, R., Crawford, M. W., Barnes, V. A., & Harden, K. (2015). Self-regulation of breathing as a primary treatment for anxiety. *Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback*, 40(2), 107-115

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."



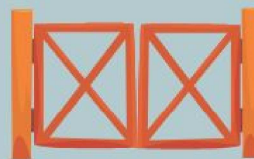
GROUND YOURSELF PHYSICALLY.

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.

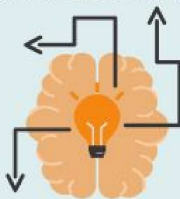
So, another technique involves writing down what we think will happen, **facing the feared situation**, and then reflecting on what actually happened.

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.

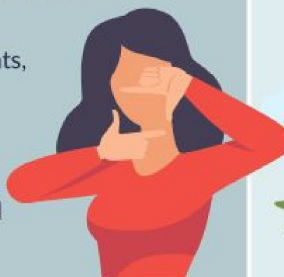
Simply put: **physical health supports brain health**. When we take care of ourselves through exercise, nutrition, and healthy sleep habits, we bolster our ability to handle severe stress and anxiety.



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.

