MENTAL HEALTH SKILLS & RECOVERY SERIES

ANXIETY SURVIVAL KIT

Notice the alarm. Steady yourself. Check the facts. Choose one safe next step.

NOTICE • BREATHE • GROUND

CHECK • CHOOSE

A practical workbook for crisis clinics and community mental health settings

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Your well-being comes first

Read this page before beginning. You can complete these exercises on your own or with a support person.

This workbook offers education, reflection, and coping tools. It does not replace diagnosis, therapy, medical care, crisis assessment, or emergency services.

You may skip any question, use another skill, or ask a clinician to help. If paying attention to your breathing or body feels uncomfortable, keep breathing normally and focus on something you can see or hear.

NEED HELP RIGHT NOW?

For overwhelming emotional distress, suicidal thoughts, or a mental health crisis in the United States: CALL OR TEXT 988.

For immediate danger or a life-threatening emergency: CALL 911 or seek emergency assistance.

If you are in a clinic, tell a staff member immediately.

If new, severe, or unusual physical symptoms occur, seek medical evaluation.

Anxiety is an alarm, not a command

Anxiety can be useful, but an alarm can become louder than the situation calls for.

Anxiety may bring racing thoughts, worry, tension, nausea, restlessness, shortness of breath, or an urge to avoid something. These sensations can feel intense. They do not always mean danger is present, but genuine danger and medical symptoms still deserve attention.

The goal is not to force yourself to feel calm. The goal is to create enough space to decide what helps next.

THE FIVE-STEP SURVIVAL KIT

01 NOTICE	Name what you are experiencing.
02 BREATHE	Try a comfortable pace, or simply feel your feet on the floor.
03 GROUND	Look for reliable details in your surroundings.
04 CHECK	Separate a feared prediction from what you know.
05 CHOOSE	Take one safe, manageable next step.

Learn your anxiety signals

The earlier you notice your signs, the sooner you can try a helpful response.

BODY SIGNALS

- [ ] Tight muscles
- [ ] Racing heart
- [ ] Upset stomach
- [ ] Shaking or sweating
- [ ] Restlessness
- [ ] Tiredness or numbness

THOUGHT OR ACTION SIGNALS

- [ ] What if...? thoughts
- [ ] Reassurance seeking
- [ ] Avoiding something
- [ ] Repeated checking
- [ ] Difficulty focusing
- [ ] Wanting to leave

My first warning sign is...

People I trust might notice...

Choose a skill that fits

No single exercise works for everyone. You can change or stop a skill at any time.

NOTICE

Name it: "I am noticing anxiety." You do not have to agree with every anxious thought.

COMFORTABLE BREATHING

If it feels helpful, gently slow your breathing without straining or holding your breath. If uncomfortable, skip it.

SENSORY GROUNDING

Look around and describe colors, shapes, textures, or sounds. Eyes can stay open.

FEAR AND FACTS

Ask: "What do I know? What am I predicting? What information is missing?"

ONE NEXT STEP

Choose water, a quiet space, contacting someone, or doing one manageable action.

When anxiety is high

Use a simple approach, and prioritize safety over completing a worksheet.

1. Notice where you are

If the environment is unsafe, get to safety and request assistance. Do not use grounding to ignore real danger.

2. Reduce the task

Pick one sense, one thought, or one sentence. You do not need to complete all five steps.

3. Ask for another person

A counselor, clinic staff member, or trusted support person can sit with you and help you choose a step.

4. Reassess your needs

If distress rises or skills do not help, pause. You may need medical attention, crisis support, or a different approach.

A worksheet is a practice aid, not a clinical risk screen. Do not delay asking for immediate support in order to finish it.

1 / My anxiety snapshot

Start anywhere. Short words or a few sentences are enough.

What happened or what am I worried about?

What sensations or emotions am I noticing?

What am I afraid might happen?

What do I need in this moment?

- ☐ 0-3: manageable
- ☐ 4-6: difficult
- ☐ 7-10: intense
- ☐ Not sure

2 / Pause and get oriented

Use this when anxiety feels loud. You may skip breathing entirely.

One word for what I am experiencing...

- [ ] Notice my feet
- [ ] Look at three objects
- [ ] Name two sounds
- [ ] Ask for support
- [ ] Breathe comfortably
- [ ] Pause the exercise

What do I see, feel, or hear around me?

What changed, if anything? It is okay if nothing changed.

3 / My grounding practice

Try the senses that are comfortable and available. There is no right way to do this.

5 things I can see (or fewer)

4 textures or contact points I can feel

3 sounds I can hear

2 smells I notice or remember

1 taste I notice, or another safe detail

4 / Fear versus facts

This tool is for examining an uncertain prediction, not dismissing actual danger.

My worry or prediction says...

What I know for sure...

What I do not know yet...

Another possibility I can consider...

A balanced, kind response to myself...

5 / Control what I can

Anxiety often asks us to solve everything. Choose one realistic action instead.

What is within my influence?

What is outside my control right now?

What matters to me in this situation?

One small action I can take today...

6 / A plan for my day

Use this at home, work, school, in the waiting room, or with a clinician.

Where does anxiety show up most often?

My early warning sign...

A quiet coping option I can use...

A person or staff member I can ask for help...

What I could say: "I need..."

7 / My personal survival kit

Write your own practical reminders to keep somewhere you can find them.

NOTICE: I can recognize anxiety when...

BREATHE or STEADY: My comfortable option is...

GROUND: An object, sound, or detail I can use...

CHECK: A useful question I can ask...

CHOOSE: My next safe step can be...

8 / Practice log

Using the skills in smaller moments may help you remember them later.

Practice 1: date / situation / skill / what I noticed

Practice 2: date / situation / skill / what I noticed

Practice 3: date / situation / skill / what I noticed

Practice 4: date / situation / skill / what I noticed

9 / After a difficult moment

Reflection is optional. You may return to this page when you feel ready.

What helped, even a little?

What was not useful or made things harder?

What could I try differently next time?

What support would I like to request?

10 / Support when I need it

You do not have to manage intense anxiety by yourself.

If you are in immediate danger, call 911. For emotional distress or suicidal crisis, call or text 988. If you are at a clinic, ask staff for immediate support.

Signs I need support right away...

A safe person or clinic staff member I can tell...

Their contact information (if known)...

A safe place I can go or stay with someone...

Words I can use to ask for help...

KEEP NEARBY

Quick survival kit card

Cut out or photograph this card, or copy the steps onto your phone.

MY ANXIETY SURVIVAL KIT

NOTICE	I can name anxiety without judging myself.
STEADY	I can breathe normally or feel my feet.
GROUND	I can find one detail in this room.
CHECK	I can ask what I know for sure.
CHOOSE	I can take one safe next step.

Need crisis support? Call or text 988. Immediate danger? 911.

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Credits & additional resources

Mental Health Skills & Recovery Series | Anxiety Survival Kit Workbook

Author

Bobby Perrine

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Bodhi Life Balance

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2026 revised edition

Intended use

Psychoeducation and clinician-supported or personal skill practice

Primary audience

General outpatient and crisis clinic populations; adapt to individual needs

MORE MENTAL HEALTH WORKBOOKS

https://bodhilifebalance.com/mental-health-workbooks

Selected references

National Institute of Mental Health. Generalized Anxiety Disorder: What You Need to Know.

National Institute of Mental Health. Psychotherapies.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. https://988lifeline.org/