

Anxiety ToolKit



<https://creativehealingni.co.uk>

Self Check-In

1. Take a moment to breathe
2. How am I feeling today?
3. Where am I feeling it in my body?
4. What are my thoughts?
5. What do I need right now?

How to Recognise Anxiety

PHYSICAL SIGNS:

Rapid heartbeat, sweating, trembling, shortness of breath, dizziness.

EMOTIONAL SIGNS:

Feeling tense, worried, irritable, overwhelmed.

COGNITIVE SIGNS:

Racing thoughts, difficulty concentrating, excessive worrying about future events.

BEHAVIOURAL SIGNS:

Avoidance of situations, restlessness, fidgeting.

(source: Various)

Challenging Negative Thoughts



source: Various CBT

Examining the Evidence

What thought worries me?

The Defence

Evidence for this thought.

The Prosecution

Evidence against this thought.

What is the judges verdict?

(source: Various) CBT

GROUNDING



Feel your feet firmly on the ground and Breathe in slowly & steadily through your nose using one of the breathing techniques



Find smells to ground you:
Essential Oils - lavender, Eucalyptus, Mint, Sandalwood or perfume soaked on cotton, or spices from the kitchen such as Cinnamon, Lemon etc.



Hold a stone or object in your hand. Notice: the texture, shape, weight. How does it feel in your hand, on your skin? What temperature is it?Chewing Gum to reduce cortisol.

Box Breathing

Trace each side of the box for a count of 4 as you breathe

Breathe In 4

Hold 4



Hold 4

Exhale 4

If you have trouble finding your breath, put your hands on your ribs, stomach or chest to ground and feel.

4 - 7 - 8

Count as you Breathe

Inhale **4** Seconds

Hold **7** Seconds

Exhale **8** Seconds

FLIGHT/FIGHT/FREEZE

The fight, flight, freeze response is a natural reaction to perceived threats or danger. It's an automatic response controlled by the body's nervous system, specifically the sympathetic nervous system, which prepares the body to either confront or avoid the threat.

(source: Various)

F-F-F & ANXIETY

Anxiety can trigger the Fight, Flight, Freeze, response even without real danger. This causes physical symptoms (fast heartbeat, sweating) and emotional symptoms (fear, irritability). Recognising this response helps you understand and manage your reactions.

(source: Various)

FIGHT RESPONSE



What Happens?

The body prepares to confront the threat. This can result in feelings of anger, aggression, or defensiveness.

You might feel irritable or on edge, ready to "fight" the source of your stress, even if there isn't a physical threat.

Coping:

- Breathe deeply.
- Tense and relax muscles.
- Engage in physical activity.
- Focus on your surroundings.

(source: Various)

FLIGHT RESPONSE



What Happens?

The body prepares to escape from the threat. This can result in feelings of restlessness, the urge to run away, or avoid situations.

you might want to avoid stressful situations, withdraw from social interactions, or feel the need to escape.

Coping:

- Practice mindfulness.
- Visualise a safe place.
- Take slow, deliberate actions.
- Use positive self-talk.

(source: Various)

FREEZE RESPONSE



What Happens?

The body becomes immobile, often as a last resort if fighting or fleeing isn't possible. Resulting in feeling stuck, numb, or unable to move or make decisions.

You might feel paralysed by fear or uncertainty, unable to take action or make decisions, feeling like you're frozen.

Coping:

- Ground yourself using your senses. (54321 etc)
- Start with small movements.
- Engage in a focused activity.
- Be kind to yourself.

(source: Various)

FAWN RESPONSE



What Happens?

People-pleasing to avoid conflict or threat. Over-apologising, trying to please others, neglecting your own needs.

Anxious about others' approval, fear of rejection or conflict.

Thoughts: Worrying about what others think, difficulty saying "no."

Coping:

- Set Boundaries: Start small to build confidence.
- Prioritise your own needs and well-being.
- Remind yourself that your needs and desires are important.

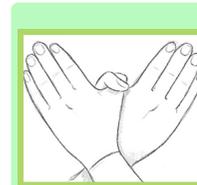
(source: Various)

Butterfly Technique

Cross your hands and join thumbs (like image). Place on top of chest so fingers on each collarbone.

Close your eyes & gently tap one hand at a time

After a little while, pause and take a deep breath. Continue tapping until you feel relaxed.



Boundaries Might Sound Like:

No!

I am not responsible for your actions or emotions.

I need to take a break from this conversation

I need some time to think about this.

I am sorry, but I am not comfortable with that.

I need to set some boundaries for our relationship to work

I need some space right now

I cant commit to that right now, but thank you for asking

How I treat others
My choices My Boundaries
My attitude
THINGS I CAN CONTROL
My actions Asking for help My values
How I react My thoughts

What happens around me
The weather Others feelings The past
THINGS I CAN'T CONTROL
If people dislike me
How others react Others mistakes

The Power of YET!

I can't do this..... **YET!**

I'm not good at this..... **YET!**

I don't understand this..... **YET!**

It doesn't work..... **YET!**

It doesn't make sense..... **YET!**

5 4 3 2 1

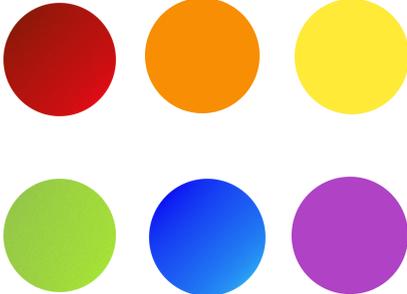
Ground yourself by Naming:

- 5 Things you can SEE
- 4 Things you can TOUCH
- 3 Things you can HEAR
- 2 Things you can SMELL
- 1 Thing you can TASTE



RAINBOW GROUNDING

Look around your environment and identify all of these colours.



When I feel Anxious, I could try....

Remembering that the feeling in my body is the fight, flight, freeze response. It is not dangerous, and I have managed this feeling before.

S.T.O.P

S Stop what you are doing, press pause and take a step back from whatever you are doing.

T Take a deep breath to centre yourself. You can count if you need to,

O Observe what is going on in your body and any thoughts right now. Give yourself permission for them.

P Proceed, choose how you want to move forward and focus on activities or thoughts that make you feel good.

(source: Various DBT)

Anxiety Coping Statements

This is a Feeling and it will Pass

I am Safe and I will be Ok

I have Survived this Before.

Not all Thoughts are Facts

My Anxiety doesn't Define Me

I choose to Slow Down and Breathe

I will Focus on the Present

3 - 3 - 3 Rule

Name 3 things You can see

↓

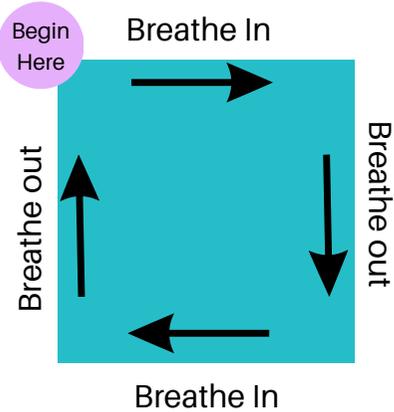
Identify 3 Sounds

↓

Move 3 Body Parts

Square Breathing

Place your finger on the "begin here" sign. Take a moment to trace around the shape whilst breathing deeply



Tips for Journaling your emotions

- 1 Find a quiet and relaxing place to write
- 2 There are no rules for writing down/drawing your emotions. find what works for you.
- 3 You don't need to write every day or for hours.
- 4 You can scribble all over the page or write single words.
- 5 Its about getting whats in your head out on a page.
- 6 If it feels like a chore, Take a break and rember why you started.

Role of the Vagus Nerve

The vagus nerve regulates the body's relaxation response by communicating between the brain and major organs, including the heart, lungs, and digestive system.

Impact on Anxiety

Stimulating the vagus nerve through exercises like deep breathing, humming, or yoga can help calm the nervous system, reduce heart rate, and lower anxiety levels.

Benefits:

Improved mood, reduced stress, and enhanced overall well-being

(source: Various)

Reset Vagus Nerve

The Basic Exercise

- Lie on back
- interweave fingers on both hands & place behind head.
- without turning your head, look to the right.
- Remain here until you spontaneously yawn or swallow.
- Return to the Neutral State with head and eyes straight.
- Repeat on the other side.

Reset Vagus Nerve

Diving Reflex with Cold Water

To stimulate the diving reflex, you need cold exposure.

You can splash cold water on your face or put cold water or ice cubes in a zip lock bag against your face.

The diving reflex slows your heart rate, increases blood flow to your brain, reduces anger and relaxes the body

Reset Vagus Nerve

Humming, Singing or Gargling

Did you know that humming, singing or gargling can make you feel better.

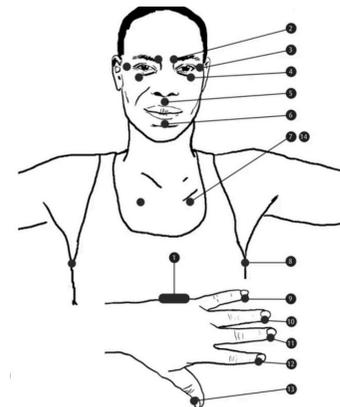
Try humming or singing along to a song and see how you feel, or gargle some water.

Doing this activates your vagus nerve



TTT Tapping

Think lightly about whatever is bothering you, and tap firmly and quickly, approx 15 times on each point shown below using 2 fingers. Take 2 deep breathes with a longer exhale when done and repeat



(Source: Play-it-through.co.uk)

TIPP

Temperature

Change your body temperature. Splash your face with cold water, Blow a Fan in your face, Hold an ice cube or put your hands under cold water.

Intense Exercise

Do intense exercise to match the intense emotion. Sprinting, jumping jacks, dancing, skipping etc

Paced Breathing

Try some of the breathing techniques in this pack such as box breathing, 4-7-8, alongside the safety hold.

Paired Muscle relaxation

Focus on your muscles one at a time, start with your toes. Tighten as much as possible for count of 5 and release. do this up your body focusing on one muslce at a time.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Get Comfortable: Sit or lie down comfortably with eyes closed. Deep Breaths: Inhale deeply through your nose, hold briefly, exhale slowly.

Tense:

- Hands: Clench fists tightly, hold 5 seconds, then relax.
- Arms: Bend elbows, tense biceps, hold 5 seconds, then relax.
- Shoulders: Shrug up, hold 5 seconds, then relax.
- Neck: Tilt head back, tense neck, hold 5 seconds, then relax.
- Face: Scrunch up face, hold 5 seconds, then relax.
- Chest: Inhale deeply, hold breath, tense chest, hold 5 seconds, exhale and relax.
- Stomach: Tighten stomach, hold 5 seconds, then relax.
- Legs: Tense thighs, hold 5 seconds, then relax.
- Feet: Curl toes downward, hold 5 seconds, then relax.

Take a few more deep breaths and
FINISH

Panic Attack

I am having a panic attack

It isn't dangerous, even though it feels awful



It Will PASS

Breathing steady and slowly helps.
try the safety hold and use some
breathing techniques.

Safety Hold

Place your hands firmly on
your heart and stomach like
the image below:

Do box breathing or 4-7-8 and notice the
sensations in your hands as your chest
and stomach rise and fall. Do this
two to 3 times or until feel Calm.



Medical Alert

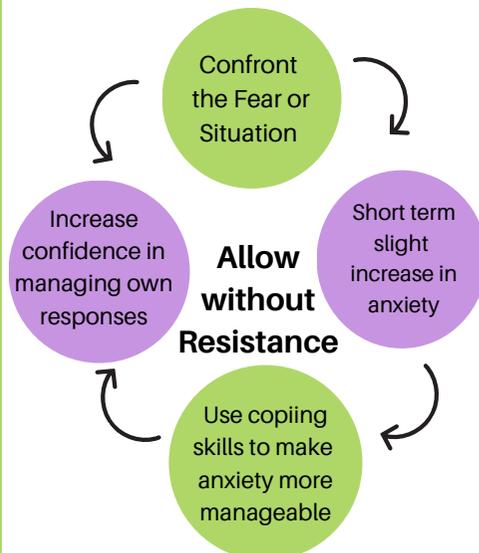
I am having a panic attack. It isn't
dangerous but it's scary. I need some
help to calm down.

How you can Help

- Talking to me can help
- don't ask questions, don't expect replies
- Talk about the weather, something on TV, anything that distracts me.
- Sometimes counting can help. I need to try and breathe slowly and steadily; counting can help me focus on my breathing.
- Don't let people crowd me. I need space. Can you help me move somewhere quiet, it will help.
- Remind me I am safe and this is just a panic attack.

**Thank you for helping. I appreciate
it even if i cant show it right now.**

Reversing the Cycle of Anxiety



(Source: simple psychology.org)

Take control & stop negative
thoughts from dominating your day.

Time for Worry

- Pick a specific time daily for worry time, about 15-20 minutes.
- Use this time to freely worry about anything bothering you.
- During worry time, question negative thoughts. Look for evidence supporting or against them.
- If you identify issues, jot down potential solutions.
- Postpone Worries: Outside of worry time, redirect anxious thoughts by reminding yourself of the scheduled session.
- Practice daily to regain control over anxiety and enhance focus throughout the day.



Affirmations

- I am safe
- I am allowed to struggle.
- My anxiety is lying to me.
- Worrying won't change the outcome.
- It is ok if all i did today was breathe.
- Don't believe everything i'm thinking.
- I am worthy
- I can feel anxious & still handle this.
- It's ok to have a bad day, week or month.
- I am in control



Affirmations

- Breathe!
- This feeling will pass.
- Be kind with yourself
- The panic I feel is only temporary.
- It's ok to not know what I need.
- I am allowed to ask for help.
- My anxiety doesn't define me.
- I deserve to be loved and treated well.
- I can take things one step at a time.
- I am allowed to say NO!





About

My name is Michelle Founder of the Award Winning Creative Healing NI, as a social worker and therapist. I created these cards as a free resource, bringing together various well-known online resources. With the hope of offering comfort and support when it is needed most. I hope that they will be a helpful tool for those managing anxiety to foster greater well-being. Please feel free to share.

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These flashcards have been created using a Canva template. While I have compiled and designed these cards, it is important to acknowledge that the content within them includes well-known resources and information widely recognised in the field. There may be other similar resources available.

Whenever possible, sources have been referenced and cited appropriately. However, in some instances, it has not been feasible to identify all sources due to the multiplicity and varied origins of the information.

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