

Anxiety Starter Plan

Name three situations where you experience intense anxiety:

1. 2. 3.

Name three anxious thoughts (can also be questions):

1. 2. 3.

Name three impulses or reactions you have (body sensations, behaviours, emotions):

1. 2. 3.

Identify three things that help you to manage your anxiety:

1. 2. 3.

How would you like to feel?

Anxiety Coping Plan

Level 1: Environment and lifestyle factors

Audit your time and determine what you can reasonably handle in one day	Prioritize sleep (7-9 hours per night)
Develop a daily contemplative practice (Examples: yoga, meditation, prayer)	Schedule 3-5 restorative practices per week (naps, baths, yoga, walking)
Avoid overstimulation (caffeine, media, phone alerts, noise)	Consider supplementation or medication (magnesium, probiotics, SSRIs, sleeping medication)
Develop an exercise routine (30 minutes at least 3 times per week)	Eat a diet of whole foods with adequate protein and fats
Organize your life and schedule to favour routine, efficiency, and structure	Adding more socialization, play, gratitude, and positivity into your life

Level 2: Self-regulation skills

Increase capacity to shift and focus attention through meditation	Develop the ability to shift states and relax body
Develop the skills to identify and redirect deceptive brain messages / cognitive distortions	Identify and connect to your authentic self and preferred states of being
Develop distress tolerance and acceptance skills (DBT)	Find ways to calm the body and interrupt the chronic stress response
Develop a third-party/observer perspective (what would another person do in this situation?)	Beware of overthinking small decisions or wasting energy unimportant things (loss of perspective)

Options of self-regulation skills (for anxiety above a 5/10):

1. Boundary bubble	7. Slow and deep breaths
2. Container	8. Opposite action
3. Safe or calm place	9. Grounding
4. Fire hose or dial	10. Orientation
5. Mountain pose	11. Bilateral tapping
6. Shaking out the body	12. Taking short breaks

For panic:

1. Shake out the body, particularly the arms
2. Improve the moment (do the next right thing)
3. Breathing out for 4-5 counts, hold for two, breathing in slowly, repeat
4. Try panting for 4-5 breaths, with two deeper breaths

Level 3: Unhelpful thinking and beliefs¹

Unhelpful thoughts	Unhelpful beliefs
1. Emotional reasoning	1. I am inadequate
2. Catastrophizing	2. I am unlovable
3. Fortune telling	3. I am worthless
4. All-or-nothing thinking	4. The world is unsafe
5. Discounting the positive	5. I have no control over my anxiety

Tips for working with unhelpful beliefs and thoughts:

1. Improve your ability to identify your unhelpful thought patterns
2. Explore and work with different techniques to disrupt the pattern (this is established through trial and error)
3. Choose one technique and create a way to remember it
4. When the thoughts come up implement that technique over and over until it becomes a new pattern (this takes 2-4 weeks before you see results often)

Christina's Favourite Strategies

1. [Exposure therapy](#) is one of the best treatments for anxiety. This involves making a list of the things that create anxiety and gradually frequently exposing yourself to small doses of them until you habituate.
2. A strong body is an essential tool to dissipate excess anxiety. Commit to a regular practice of intense exercise of at least 20 minutes, and practice [breath holds](#) daily (holding your breath until moderately uncomfortable). This will help your body get better at utilizing oxygen. Slowing your breathing rate also helps anxiety.
3. Training your mind to shift gears to focus on the present is also an important skill. [Focused attention](#) meditation is a great practice to do daily, as well as the [4-steps](#) of Jeffrey Schwartz.
4. Gratitude practices, [lovingkindness meditation](#), and positive psychology techniques, and social connection are also an important antidote to anxiety.

¹ Adapted from [Feeling Good](#) by David Burns (Cognitive Therapy)

Final thoughts:

- Anxiety is a deeply conditioned response. The most effective way to cope with it is to practice exposure therapy (exposing yourself to what you fear while practicing techniques). This takes daily discipline and mental focus
- It is normal to feel the anxiety intensify as you start to practice new skills
- Don't give up! It takes 2-4 weeks for many of the strategies to take effect, with regular daily practice, and up to 12 weeks to see significant results
- Anxiety can change throughout the day so be careful not to make predictions if you are having a bad moment or hour that it will continue (called fortune telling)
- We have a limited amount of willpower to make change, so go slowly. Try to make one major change every three weeks and re-evaluate over time
- Over time you may experience intense anxiety but may become better at bringing yourself back to a calmer state in less time
- Everyone's system is different and trial and error is a part of the process
- Focus on progress, not perfection ☺.

Resources

Books

[*You are not your brain*](#) – Jeffrey Schwartz
[*Practices for embracing anxiety*](#) – Karla McLaren
[*Ease your anxiety*](#) – Joan Rosenberg
[*Stopping the noise in your head*](#) – Reid Wilson
[*The mind and emotions*](#) – Matthew McKay
[*Dancing with fear*](#) – Paul Foxman

Videos

[Christine Korol – Quiet Mind #1 – What is Anxiety?](#)
[Joan Rosenberg – Emotional Mastery \(TED talk\)](#)
[Jeffrey Schwartz – 4 steps to changing your brain for good](#)
[Joseph LeDoux – The Amygdala in 5 minutes](#) [Kelli Walker – Anxiety cycle](#)
[Hatha Yoga with David Procyshyn: Yoga for Anxiety and Depression](#)

Online Programs

[Rick Hanson's Dealing With Anxiety](#)
[Irene Lyon's 21-day Nervous System Tune-Up](#)

Podcasts

[Not Another Anxiety Show](#) by Kelli Walker

Apps

Anxiety release (based on EMDR)

Calm

Insight Timer