

Coping Skills for Anxiety

Deep Breathing

Deep breathing is a simple technique that can be used anytime, anywhere to help reduce feelings of anxiety.

- Place one hand on your belly.
- Breathe in slowly through your nose and let your belly fill with air. As you breathe in, count to 3.
- Hold the air in your lungs for 3 seconds.
- Exhale slowly through your mouth as if you are blowing into a straw. As you exhale, count to 3.

Remember that the key is to **take it slow**.

Imagery

Using imagery, you can create a comforting scene/situation that is different than the one you are currently in. This can help improve your mood and reduce anxiety.

Think of a place where you feel safe. This can be your home, a secluded beach, your favorite park or a nature trail. Close your eyes and use your 5 senses to really imagine this place in great detail.

- What do you **SEE** in your safe place? Look around and imagine all of your surroundings.
- What do you **HEAR**? Do you hear anything clearly? What about off in the distance?
- Can you **TASTE** anything? Are you eating or drinking?
- What do you **SMELL**? Are there any distinctive scents?
- What do you **FEEL**? What is the temperature? Allow yourself to truly feel the sensations.



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Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) is a technique used to give you control over body's anxiety response.

- **Forehead.** Squeeze the muscles in your forehead, holding for 15 seconds. Allow the muscles to become tighter and tenser. Then, slowly release the tension in your forehead counting to 30.
- **Jaw.** Tense the muscles in your jaw, holding for 15 seconds. Then, release the tension slowly while counting to 30.
- **Neck and Shoulders.** Raise your shoulders up toward your ears and hold for 15 seconds. Allow yourself to feel the tension building up in your neck and shoulders. Then, slowly release the tension while counting to 30.
- **Arms and hands.** Slowly draw both of your hands into fists. Pull your fists into your chest and hold for 15 seconds, squeezing as tight as you can. Then, slowly open your hands while you count to 30.
- **Buttocks.** Slowly clench your buttocks over 15 seconds. Then, slowly release the tension while counting to 30.
- **Legs and Feet.** Increase the tension from your legs down to your feet. You can do this point your feet out and flexing as hard as you can.
- **Torso.** Suck in your abdomen as tight as you can. Then, release the tension and let it expand.



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Change Your Thoughts

Your thoughts play the biggest role in anxiety. By changing your thoughts, you can greatly reduce the feeling of anxiety.

- **Catch it.** Identify the negative thoughts that are causing your anxiety. The best way to do this is to use your emotions as 'cues'. When you feel anxious, what are the thoughts that are running through your mind? What are you thinking about in those moments?
- **Check it.** Pause and analyze the thought(s). Are these proven facts? Do you have evidence to support this? Naturally, our first instinct is to believe that we are right. However, the truth is, our thoughts are usually not reality. It's incredibly difficult challenge our own thoughts objectively. If you need help, contact your therapist or peer support.
- **Change it.** Practice replacing your irrational thoughts with rational ones. Whenever you have a negative or anxiety inducing thought, replace it with facts. Focusing on facts can keep you from allowing anxiety to take over.

