

SELF-GUIDED INTERVENTIONS
MANAGING ANXIETY
IN THE WORKPLACE



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Thought Stopping

Continuously trying to suppress a thought often makes it come back stronger. Instead we can simply postpone it, giving us back control over our day and our thoughts.

- 1** Allocate 30 minutes of your day to indulge in self-defeating negative thoughts. Don't indulge in those thoughts beyond those 30 minutes.
- 2** Set a reminder on your phone to buzz every 45 min. Each time it buzzes, check in with yourself to see if you are ruminating on self-defeating thoughts.
- 3** Whenever a negative thought comes in, tell yourself the word "Stop" and drink a sip of water.
- 4** Immediately write down the negative thought (a word or two) so you can think about it during your next 30 minute session for negative thoughts.
- 5** During your 30 minutes for negative thoughts, decide if you want to think about what you wrote.
- 6** Try to follow your 30 minutes of thinking with an activity that will lift your mood.
- 7** Slowly and steadily, reduce the time you have allocated for self-defeating negative thoughts.





54321 Grounding Technique

Anxiety can be overwhelming. Many physiological symptoms can accompany this feeling, including increased heart rate, heavy breathing, sweating, and trembling. Just as a ship uses an anchor, we can use our senses to keep ourselves from being swayed by the waves of anxiety.

- 5 Look around the room and name **five things that you can see** around you.
- 4 Focus on **four things that you can feel or touch**. Touch them. What is their texture?
- 3 Listen to **three sounds** that you can hear around you. Name those three things softly.
- 2 Notice **two things that you can smell** around you right now. Smell those things and reflect on their scent.
- 1 **Taste one thing**. Feel it on your tongue before eating or drinking it. If you do not have concerns with acidity, choose lemon juice and take a sip of it.





Square Breathing

Anxious thoughts can make our breathing feel heavy. For those who find anxiety a frequent but not debilitating experience, the following exercises can help to reduce its symptoms. Square breathing helps regulate our heart which can often be out of balance when anxiety is at play.

- 1** Sit or stand upright.
- 2** Slowly take in a deep breath for 4 seconds
- 3** Hold your breath for 4 seconds
- 4** Breath out in 4 seconds
- 5** Hold yourself from breathing in again for 4 seconds
- 6** Repeat 7 more times





Body Awareness

Anxious thoughts can create a sense of uneasiness. This exercise will bring you into the here-and-now by directing your focus to sensations in the body. Pay special attention to the physical sensations created by each step.

- 1** Take 5 long, deep breaths through your nose and exhale through your mouth.
- 2** Place both feet flat on the floor. Wiggle your toes. Curl and uncurl your toes several times.
- 3** Stomp your feet on the ground several times. Feel the sensations in your legs as they contact the ground.
- 4** Clench your hands into fists at least 5 times.
- 5** Press your palms together. Press them harder and hold this pose for 15 seconds.
- 6** Briskly rub your palms together. Note the sound/warmth.
- 7** Place your palms on your eyes and feel the warmth.
- 8** Reach your hands over your head like you're trying to reach the sky for 5 seconds. Bring your arms down and let them relax at your sides.
- 9** Take 5 more deep breaths and notice the feeling of calm in your body.





Raisin Meditation

This exercise requires you to focus your mind on the present moment using all your senses, helping to reduce anxiety. By focusing all your attention on one tiny raisin, you help to bring your mind into the moment and train it to notice the present.

- 1 Find a raisin and a quiet spot to sit and relax.
- 2 With the raisin in front of you, take a few deep breaths. Hold them for a few seconds and slowly let them go.
- 3 Look at the raisin as if you're seeing it for the first time. Concentrate. Let your eyes roam over the surface and pick out all the details—the colour, the areas of light and dark, the ridges and shine.
- 4 Touch it as if for the first time. Feel its smallness in your palm. Is it waxy? Are there edges? Is it soft or hard?
- 5 Smell it. Inhale deeply and concentrate on its fragrance. Is it sweet? Earthy? Does it make you hungry?
- 6 Taste it, but don't chew. Notice how your hand instinctively knows where to go. How does it feel on your tongue? Turn it over in your mouth and feel its texture. Take a bite. How does it taste? How has it changed?
- 7 Hear the sound as you chew and swallow. Notice your intention to swallow followed by the physical action.
- 8 Track the sensation of it going to your stomach, then take a moment to notice how your whole body feels.





Safe Space Exercise

Simply imagining a safe place can be helpful during times of vulnerability. When practiced regularly, it can create a neural pathway that will help you feel safe when feeling anxious.

- 1** Inhale deeply, hold it briefly, and slowly let it go.
- 2** Relax your shoulders. Let the muscles be loose.
- 3** Imagine a place where you feel calm, peaceful, and safe. It may be a place you've been before, somewhere you've seen a picture of, or a place you create in your mind.
- 4** Look around you in that place. Notice the colors and shapes. What else do you notice?
- 5** Notice the sounds or perhaps the silence, both far away and nearer to you, noticeable and subtle.
- 6** Think about the smells you notice there
- 7** Focus on skin sensations—whatever's beneath you, supporting you, the temperature, the movement of the air.
- 8** Notice the pleasant physical sensations in your body.
- 9** You might choose to give it a name—a word or a phrase that you can use to bring that image back anytime you need it.
- 10** Linger there a while, if you choose. Enjoy the peacefulness and serenity. Leave whenever you want by simply opening your eyes and being aware of where you are, bringing yourself back to alertness in the 'here and now'.





Cognitive Diffusion

Cognitive Diffusion exercises are designed to address the thoughts that can create anxiousness and stress, helping us to look at them, rather than through them.

- 1** Sit in a comfortable space. Focus on your breathing. Inhale deeply, hold a few seconds, and let it go. Repeat 5 times.
- 2** Identify an unhelpful or hurtful self-criticism that you would like to defuse—any thought that has created a sense of self-doubt or anxiousness.
- 3** Try to keep it simple. It may be hard at first, but try to get to the heart of the issue. For example, “I am not a nice person because I am not being able to be there for my partner when she needs me” can become “I’m an uncaring partner.”
- 4** Let yourself engage with, and truly relate to the thought. It might help to verbalize the sentence or repeat it mentally.
- 5** Replay the thought, but begin with “I’m having the thought that...”, so your sentence becomes “I’m having the thought that I’m an uncaring partner.”
- 6** To further defuse the thought, take another mental step back. This time, precede the painful thought with “I notice I’m having the thought that...”; so, “I notice I’m having the thought that I’m an uncaring partner.”
- 7** Give yourself a chance to reflect on the mental shift which likely occurred, or at least started to take place.

