

Coping with Anxiety: Practical Tools & Techniques

This packet includes practical anxiety worksheets designed to act as a small toolkit for managing intense or overwhelming moments of anxiety. Inside, you'll find worksheets on safety behaviours, grounding techniques, sensory soothing exercises, and a range of coping skills to help you respond to anxious thoughts and physical symptoms. It also includes a brief "Quick Thought Check" to gently support more balanced thinking.

Safety Behaviours

Safety Behaviours are actions we use to try to avoid or reduce anxiety, specifically in social situations. For example, someone who feels anxious about being the centre of attention in a group might speak very quietly. While this may reduce anxiety in the moment, it can also make it more challenging to connect with others and achieve long-term goals, like making friends.

Instructions: Circle the safety behaviours you notice yourself doing to avoid social anxiety, or write your own. This can help you identify patterns and become more aware of the strategies you rely on, even if you weren't consciously aware of them before.

Speak softly or very little	Keep distance from others to avoid conversation	Avoid eye contact	Hold back personal information
Avoid eating in front of others	Find reasons to leave social situations early	Laugh nervously or over-apologise	Worry about how you look / check appearance in mirror
Wear makeup or certain clothing to hide signs of anxiety or blend in	Rehearse what to say excessively before socialising	Talk a lot to fill silences	Stretch the truth to seem more confident or likeable
Seek reassurance or approval from others	Go along with what others want to avoid conflict	Use distractions to appear busy (e.g., phone, TV, drinks, gum)	Carry "security objects" (e.g., bag, notebook, water bottle)
Avoid initiating conversations	Stay near familiar people only	Fidget with hair or clothing	Adjust posture repeatedly (e.g., hide hands, slouch)

Grounding Techniques

Grounding techniques help you focus on the present moment. They can calm your body, ease anxious thoughts, and help you feel more in control when emotions feel strong. Try the exercises below whenever you notice anxiety or heightened emotions.

1. *5-4-3-2-1 Technique:* This exercise uses your five senses to bring attention back to the present. Notice small details around you that you might usually overlook.

Take a deep breath and list:

- 5 things you can see
 - 4 things you can feel
 - 3 things you can hear
 - 2 things you smell
 - 1 thing you can taste
2. *Deep Breathing:* Deep breathing can help calm your body and mind.
 - Sit or lie in a comfortable position and place a hand on your stomach
 - Inhale slowly through your nose for 4 seconds
 - Hold your breath for 4 seconds
 - Exhale slowly through your mouth for 6 seconds
 - Repeat for 2-5 minutes, noticing your hand rise and fall with each breath
 3. *Body Scan:* Notice sensations in your body, starting from your feet and moving upwards.
 - Sit or lie comfortably and take a few deep breaths
 - Focus on your feet and notice any tension, warmth, or other sensations – try not to judge or change them
 - Then, move upwards to your legs and repeat
 - Continue upwards to your torso, arms, and head and repeat
 - Finish with a few slow deep breaths, feeling your body as a whole
 4. *External Mindfulness:* These exercises can help you feel more present using your surroundings.
 - Pick a colour and name as many things around you in that colour as you can
 - Listen to music, focusing on one instrument or sound
 - Touch different textures around you and notice how they feel
 - Focus on the flavour of your next snack or meal

Sensory Soothing

Sensory soothing activities are things you find calming or comforting through your five senses. When anxiety feels heightened, it can be difficult to remember what soothes you. Use the spaces below to list activities, objects, or experiences that can help you feel calmer for each sense.

Touch: What textures, objects, or physical sensations help you feel soothed?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Vision: What sights bring you a sense of calm or peace?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Hearing: What sounds or types of music help you feel relaxed?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Smell: What scents do you find comforting or soothing?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Taste: What flavours or foods help you feel calmer?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Coping Skills

When anxiety feels heightened, coping skills can help reduce physical sensations and calm anxious thoughts. Checkmark the ones you enjoy or are willing to try, and add any of your own in the spaces provided.

Creative & Relaxing Activities

- Write in a journal
- Draw or paint
- Do a puzzle
- Watch a movie or TV show
- Listen to music or a podcast
- Start a blog
- Read a book
- Cook or bake
- Play games

Environment & Routine

- Watch the sunset
- Go stargazing
- Organise, clean, or rearrange your room
- Lifestyle changes (e.g., balanced diet, good sleep hygiene, exercise, routines)
- Try a new food
- Discover new music

Others

- _____
- _____
- _____

Movement & Physical Activities

- Go for a walk or exercise
- Go for a bike ride
- Do yoga
- Dance
- Play with a pet

Social & Connection

- Call or hang out with a friend
- Volunteer
- Go out for a coffee or a meal
- Explore somewhere new

Mindfulness & Thoughts-Based Skills

- Meditate
- Deep breathing
- Challenge anxious thoughts
- Develop a strategy for when anxiety arises
- Identify anxiety triggers



Quick Thought Check

When you notice anxiety, pause and gently check in with your thoughts.

What is going through your mind right now?

What emotion am I feeling? How strong is it (0–10)?

Is there another way of looking at this situation?

What would I say to a friend in this situation?

Want to explore your thoughts in more depth?

You might find it helpful to use a thought log to gently challenge anxious thinking patterns. Check out my Negative Thought Log on my Resources page.