**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:*

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| --- |
| 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 (see dietdoctor.com) |
| 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 beliefs[[1]](#footnote-1)***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **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)

**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*](https://www.amazon.ca/You-Are-Not-Your-Brain-ebook/dp/B004XFYRMA/ref%3Dsr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1510091604&sr=1-1&keywords=you+are+not+your+brain) *–* Jeffrey Schwartz

[*Ease your anxiety*](https://www.amazon.ca/Ease-Your-Anxiety-Joan-Rosenberg/dp/198817905X/ref%3Dsr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1510091625&sr=1-1&keywords=ease+your+anxiety) *–* Joan Rosenberg

[*Stopping the noise in your head*](https://www.amazon.ca/Stopping-Noise-Your-Head-Overcome/dp/0757319068/ref%3Dsr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1510091649&sr=1-1&keywords=stopping+the+noise+in+your+head) *–* Reid Wilson

[*The mind and emotions*](https://www.amazon.ca/Mind-Emotions-Universal-Treatment-Emotional/dp/1608820157/ref%3Dsr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1510091672&sr=1-1&keywords=the+mind+and+emotions) *–* Matthew McKay

[*Dancing with fear*](https://www.amazon.ca/Dancing-Fear-Controlling-Creating-Anxiety/dp/0897934768/ref%3Dsr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1510091692&sr=1-1&keywords=dancing+with+fear) *–* Paul Foxman

*Videos*

[Christine Korol – Quiet Mind #1 – What is Anxiety?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q71BorSRAVk)

[Joan Rosenberg – Emotional Mastery (TED talk)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKy19WzkPxE&t=765s)

[Jeffrey Schwartz – 4 steps to changing your brain for good](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kuABDAAns7w)

[Joseph LeDoux – The Amygdala in 5 minutes](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDD5wvFMH6U&t=43s) [Kelli Walker](http://www.panicandanxietycoach.com/livinganxiously/) – Anxiety cycle

[Hatha Yoga with David Procyshyn: Yoga for Anxiety and Depression](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gkQGuxaHn28&t=1057s)

*Apps*

Anxiety release (based on EMDR)

Calm

Insight Timer

1. Adapted from [Feeling Good](https://www.amazon.ca/Feeling-Good-New-Mood-Therapy/dp/0380810336/ref%3Dsr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1510091302&sr=8-1&keywords=feeling+good) by David Burns (Cognitive Therapy) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)