

The background is a light beige color with several abstract, organic shapes in shades of olive green and terracotta. In the top right corner, there are stylized leaf shapes. On the left side, there are several oval shapes. At the bottom, there are larger, curved shapes. A white, torn-edge rectangular box is centered on the page, containing the title and subtitle.

Resources & Strategies

*Coping with Stress, Anxiety, and
Depression*

Anxiety

COPING SKILLS

Deep Breathing

Deep breathing is a simple technique that's excellent for managing emotions. Not only is deep breathing effective, it's also discreet and easy to use at any time or place.



Sit comfortably and place one hand on your abdomen. Breathe in through your nose, deeply enough that the hand on your abdomen rises. Hold the air in your lungs, and then exhale slowly through your mouth, with your lips puckered as if you are blowing through a straw. The secret is to go slow: Time the inhalation (4s), pause (4s), and exhalation (6s). Practice for 3 to 5 minutes.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

By tensing and relaxing the muscles throughout your body, you can achieve a powerful feeling of relaxation. Additionally, progressive muscle relaxation will help you spot anxiety by teaching you to recognize feelings of muscle tension.

Sit back or lie down in a comfortable position. For each area of the body listed below, you will tense your muscles tightly, but not to the point of strain. Hold the tension for 10 seconds, and pay close attention to how it feels. Then, release the tension, and notice how the feeling of relaxation differs from the feeling of tension.

Feet ~ Curl your toes tightly into your feet, then release them.

Calves ~ Point or flex your feet, then let them relax.

Thighs ~ Squeeze your thighs together tightly, then let them relax.

Torso ~ Suck in your abdomen, then release the tension and let it fall.

Back ~ Squeeze your shoulder blades together, then release them.

Shoulders ~ Lift and squeeze your shoulders toward your ears, then let them drop.

Arms ~ Make fists and squeeze them toward your shoulders, then let them drop.

Hands ~ Make a fist by curling your fingers into your palm, then relax your fingers.

Face ~ Scrunch your facial features to the center of your face, then relax.

Full Body ~ Squeeze all muscles together, then release all tension.

Anxiety

COPING SKILLS CONT.

Challenging Irrational Thoughts

Anxiety can be magnified by irrational thoughts. For example, the thoughts that "something bad will happen" or "I will make a mistake" might lack evidence, but still have an impact on how you feel. By examining the evidence and challenging these thoughts, you can reduce anxiety.

Put thoughts on trial ~ Choose a thought that has contributed to your anxiety. Gather evidence in support of your thought (verifiable facts only), and against your thought. Compare the evidence and determine whether your thought is accurate or not.

Use Socratic questioning ~ Question the thoughts that contribute to your anxiety. Ask yourself: "Is my thought based on facts or feelings?" "How would my best friend see this situation?" "How likely is it that my fear will come true?" "What's most likely to happen?" "If my fear comes true, will it still matter in a week? A month? A year?"

Imagery

Think of a place that you find comforting. It could be a secluded beach, your bedroom, a quiet mountaintop, or even a loud concert. For 5 to 10 minutes, use all your senses to imagine this setting in great detail. Don't just think fleetingly about this place - really imagine it.

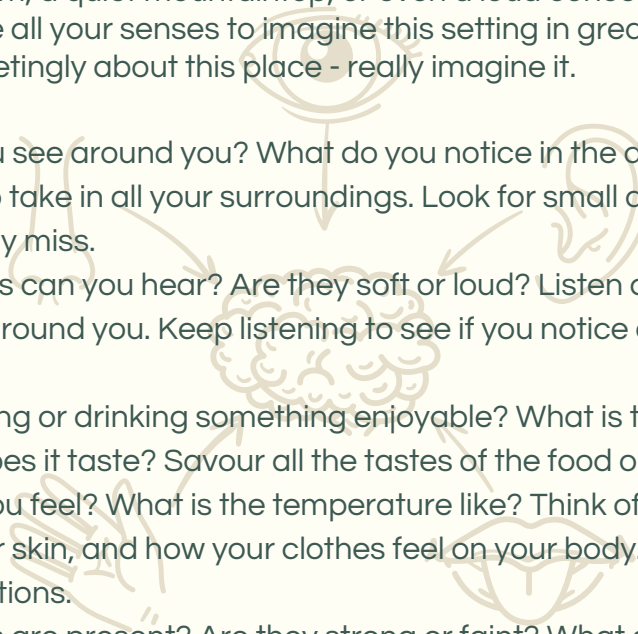
What do you see around you? What do you notice in the distance? Look all around to take in all your surroundings. Look for small details you would usually miss.

What sounds can you hear? Are they soft or loud? Listen closely to everything around you. Keep listening to see if you notice any distant sounds.

Are you eating or drinking something enjoyable? What is the flavour like? How does it taste? Savour all the tastes of the food or drink.

What can you feel? What is the temperature like? Think of how the air feels on your skin, and how your clothes feel on your body. Soak in all these sensations.

What scents are present? Are they strong or faint? What does the air smell like? Take some time to appreciate the scents.



Depression

COPING SKILLS

Behavioural Activation

Depression saps a person's energy to do just about anything—even activities they enjoy. As a result, people with depression tend to become less active, which causes the depression to worsen. However, even a little bit of activity can help stop this cycle.

1. Choose activities you are likely to complete.

Exercise ~ walk, go for a bike ride, weightlift, follow an exercise video, swim, practice yoga

Socialise ~ call or text a friend, organize a group dinner, visit family, join a club / group

Responsibilities ~ cleaning / housework, pay bills, professional development, homework

Hobbies ~ sports, gardening, drawing, playing music, hiking, playing with a pet, cooking

Personal care ~ dress up, get a haircut, prepare a healthy meal, tend to spiritual needs

2. Practice your chosen activities. Use the following tips to improve consistency

Start small ~ If needed, break activities into smaller pieces. Some activity is better than none.

Make a plan ~ Set an alarm as a reminder, or tie an activity to something you already do. For example, practice a hobby immediately after dinner every day.

Bring a friend ~ Including a friend will increase your commitment and make things more fun.

Depression

COPING SKILLS CONT.

Social Support

Social isolation is a common symptom of depression. Related issues—such as fatigue, lowered self-esteem, and anxiety—exacerbate this problem. Resisting social isolation, and instead leaning on social support, can improve resilience to stress and depression.

Lean on your existing relationships ~ Make it a priority to socialise with friends or family every day. If this is proving difficult, or if no one is nearby, plan times to interact remotely. Try cooking together on a video call, playing a game together, or sharing a coffee over the phone.

Say “yes” to socialising ~ Depression makes it tempting to stay home, isolated from friends and family. Make a habit of saying “yes” to social opportunities, even when you’re tempted to stay in.

Join a support group ~ Support groups let you connect with others who are dealing with issues similar to yours. You’ll benefit from sharing and receiving advice and support.

Three Good Things

Negative thinking is a defining feature of depression. Positive experiences are minimised, while negative experiences are magnified. Gratitude helps combat this tendency by shifting focus toward positive experiences, rather than negative ones.

Write about three positive experiences from your day ~

These experiences can be small (“The weather was perfect when I walked to work”) or big (“I got a promotion at work”).

Choose one of the following questions to answer about each of the three good things: ~

- Why did this happen?
- Why was this good thing meaningful?
- How can I experience more of this good thing?

Repeat this exercise every day for 1 week. ~

Mindfulness

SKILLS

Mindfulness Meditation

Find a place where you can sit quietly and undisturbed for a few moments. To begin, you might want to set a time for about 10 minutes, but after some experience you should not be too concerned about the length of time you spend meditating.

Begin by bringing your attention to the present moment by noticing your breathing. Pay attention to your breath as it enters and then leaves your body. Before long, your mind will begin to wander, pulling you out of the present moment. That's ok. Notice your thoughts and feelings as if you are an outside observer watching what's happening in your brain. Take note, and allow yourself to return to your breathing.

Sometimes you might feel frustrated or bored. That's fine - these are just a few more feelings to notice. Your mind might start to plan an upcoming weekend, worry about a responsibility. Notice where your thoughts are going, and accept what's happening.

Whenever you are able to, return your concentration to your breathing. Continue this process until your timer rings, or until you are ready to be done.

Body Scan

During the body scan exercise you will pay close attention to physical sensations throughout your body. The goal isn't to change or relax your body, but instead notice and become more aware of it. Don't worry too much about how long you practice, but do move slowly.

Begin by paying attention to the sensations in your feet. Notice any sensations such as warmth, coolness, pressure, pain, or a breeze moving over your skin. Slowly move up your body - to your calves, thighs, pelvis, stomach, chest, back, shoulders, arms, hands, fingers, neck, and finally your head. Spend some time on each of these body parts, just noticing the sensations.

After you travel up your body, begin to move back down, through each body part, until you reach your feet again. Remember: move slowly, and just pay attention.

Mindfulness

SKILLS CONT.

Mindful Eating

Choose a food you would like to practice with. Move slowly through these steps, taking a moment to focus on each one.

Before you pick up your food, notice how it looks on the table in front of you. Notice its colour, how the light reflects from its surface, and its size.

Now, pick up the food. Notice the weight, and how the food feels against your skin. Roll the object between your fingers, or roll it in your hand, and notice its texture. Notice if it's smooth, rough, slick, soft, firm or it has any other properties. Hold the food to your nose, and pay attention to its smell.

Next, place the food in your mouth, on your tongue, but don't eat it. Notice how it feels in your mouth. Does the texture feel the same as on your hand? What do you taste? Roll the food around in your mouth and pay attention to the feeling.

Finally, begin to slowly chew the food. Notice how your teeth sink into it, and how the texture is different inside. Pay close attention to the flavour, and how it spreads across your tongue. Notice how your body changes - does your mouth fill with saliva? Does your tongue feel hot or cold? Continue to chew your food, paying close attention to the many sensations as you finish.

Five Senses

Use this exercise to quickly ground yourself in the present when you only have a moment. The goal is to notice something that you are currently experiencing through each of your senses.

5 things you can see ~ look around you and notice 5 things you haven't noticed before. Maybe a pattern on a wall or a scratch on the floor.

4 things you can feel ~ maybe you can feel the pressure of your feet on the floor, your shirt resting on your shoulders or temperature of your skin. Pick up an object and notice its texture.

3 things you can hear ~ notice all the background sounds you had been filtering out, such as air conditioning, birds chirping or cars.

2 things you can smell ~ maybe you can smell flowers, coffee, or freshly cut grass. It doesn't have to be a nice smell either!

1 thing you can taste ~ pop a piece of gum in your mouth, sip a drink, eat a snack if you have one, or simply notice how your mouth tastes.