

ANXIETY & WORRY STRATEGIES

5, 4, 3, 2, 1 ANXIETY REDUCTION METHOD

IMPORTANT: Practice this technique when you are NOT having anxiety or a panic attack.

This way you will be 'practiced' in this anxiety reducing technique when it's needed most.

Look ahead or slightly to the left, right or up or down; just be in your normal field of vision.

Name 5 things that you SEE.

Example: I see the door, I see the window, I see my hand, I see the plant, I see the tree.

Name 5 things that you HEAR.

Example: I hear my breathing, I hear the air conditioner, I hear my teacher talking, I hear

Name 5 things that you FEEL.

NOTE: Not emotional things such as "I feel panic and like I can't breathe or think". Focus on physical feeling.

Example: I feel my hands, I feel my clothes, I feel the air, I feel my hair, I feel my feet in my shoes.

Now name 4 things you SEE and 4 things that you HEAR and 4 things that you FEEL. Then 3, then 2, then 1.

What happens as you perform the *5,4,3,2,1 method* is that you are distracting your anxiety, fears, phobias and anxious thoughts. You are also 'grounding yourself' in reality. You are shrinking your 'worry world' down and "coming to your SENSES" (quite literally, your senses of Sight, Sound and Touch). It's very hard to continue thinking irrational or non-real thoughts or even experience PTSD thoughts and or painful memories when you are talking about, seeing and feeling grounded in your *current reality*.

MAKE AN APPOINTMENT WITH YOUR WORRY AND ANXIETY



Rather than worry about something day and night that is out of your control, write into your calendar a date and time (schedule 30 minutes) for you to worry about the specific issue you are worried about. Then keep the appointment. During the appointment you will write out EVERYTHING that is connected to your worry, every possible horrible scenario and unpleasant outcome. What will happen is that you will find your brain is able to 'put away' your worry since you have told it (your brain) that you will indeed worry about it, but later. It's not gone. It's not forgotten. It's just that now is not the 'scheduled time' to worry. **Your brain will then comply and stop worrying.** You will also find, if you keep your appointment with your worry (many people find that just the act of writing down a date and time to worry is enough to remove the worry), is that this 'thing' that has occupied your every waking moment for days, weeks or even years fits onto one tiny piece of paper and isn't the entire Universe like you had been thinking and feeling it was. You will also find that your brain will naturally gravitate to 'realistic thinking' and to 'solutions' to alleviate the specific problems found within your worry.



REALISTIC THINKING

Is what you are thinking really, truly, the most **likely** thing that will happen?
(What has, in fact, happened before? What is *REAL*?)

Stick to the facts.

Is this your 'worry' doing thinking'? Is this your 'emotional mind'? Or is this your 'wise thinking mind'?
Ask "What do I know for sure?" State and stick to **ONLY** the facts.

"Accept what 'is' – for there is nothing else".

DEEP BREATHING

Put your hand on your belly and or also your leg at the same time and relax to the best of your ability. As you breathe feel your belly expand and contract (this shows you are breathing deeply and not shallow breathing we often normally do). This is meant to give you a more relaxing experience and help to ground you within the present moment.



Breathe in "I'm" (say this out loud after you inhale, or in your mind).

Breathe out "OK" (say this out loud after you exhale, or in your mind).

This is comforting and gives you Mindfulness and a measure of Inner Peace. It tells you that you truly are "OK" and brings you out of your mind (a sometimes anxious or depressing place to be) and into The Now, into your Body, into The Present Moment. This meditation gives you safety and quiet. It helps to melt anxiety away. You will find your anxiety and worries diminish and perhaps also your emotional or even physical pain may also decrease as you do this exercise.

GIVE UP AND LET GO TO MOVE FORWARD



If you are overwhelmed by 'everything you have to do', or a huge project, or if you've been avoiding something for days, weeks, months or years: GIVE UP. STOP. DO NOT EVEN TRY. LET GO OF YOUR WORRY AND ANXIETY. Take a 'vacation from your dread' (take all the time you need, you've not done anything towards XYZ prior to now anyway – and for now that's quite OK). When you feel your 'vacation' is over (a day, week, month, etc.) and you are ready to, break down your project or task into simple and easy things (the simpler the better). If you feel like it is something a 2 year old

could do, you are in the right frame of mind. If you try to do something that is 'too big', you won't (remember before your 'vacation' that you couldn't; so keep it small and simple).

EXAMPLE: I avoided filling the holes in my bathroom for 2 years (part of our home renovations).

A psychologist with 30 years experience told me to GIVE UP and don't even try or think about it anymore (much to my wife's dismay). He said *when I was ready*, for me to fill just one tiny hole and then STOP. I felt humiliated and like I was 2 years old, like the task was way too easy (this was in front of 50 other therapists) and said "I can do the entire wall, the entire bathroom!" And he said, very kindly, "Yes Matthew, but, well, what have you done in the past two years?" I sheepishly replied "Nothing, point taken". I then went home and a few days later filled just one hole. I found that I had the energy to do the entire bathroom, but would not have started if I didn't first STOP and make my unmanageable project far more simple, easy and manageable. And if I only managed to fill 'just one hole', well, that would have been 100% more than I had done the entire previous two years and I could then build on that and do one more hole the next day, and another the next day, etc.



ACCEPT YOUR "CRAZY AUNT BETTY" (and show her to her room)

We **all** have weird, 'crazy', 'different' kinds of thoughts (doctors, therapists, parents: all of us).

Sometimes when we try to stop or change our thoughts we actually give them more power and strength, and far more of our time and energy than they deserve.

EXAMPLE: If your 'crazy Aunt Betty' shows up you may try to close the door but she fights and pushes it open and so you go back and forth trying to close and open the door (that's a lot of energy). What if instead you said "Hi Aunt Betty, so nice to see you, please come in" (no more fighting). Then you show her to her room in your 'house' (mind). In the room is a couch, TV, books, phone, and an attached bathroom, everything Aunt Betty needs. You then say "I don't have time to talk to you right now, make yourself at home, and I'll see you again soon". Your crazy Aunt Betty is a part of you. Don't fight her for you are only fighting yourself. Let go of the fight, but put her somewhere, accept that she's there, and move on with your day. You do *not* need to check on her, she's fine (trust me, she talks to me *all* the time). ☺

HEALTHY LIVING STRATEGIES

YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

Reduce and or eliminate processed flours and especially sugar, bread, chips, pop, candies, chocolate bars. Eat more vegetables and fruits and natural raw and whole foods and salads.



Benefits: weight loss / maintenance, migraine headache elimination or reduction; you will have more energy; no more 'brain fog'; you will feel amazingly amazing overall.



EXERCISE DAILY

Do something daily towards moving your body and increasing your heart rate. Walk, run, jog, stretch, yoga, bike, weights, aerobics, tennis, sports, swim, etc.

SOCIALIZE – WE ALL NEED TO FEEL LOVED AND CONNECTED

FRIENDS: *Old friends* you haven't connected with in 'forever'.

New friends you'd like to make, "We should have coffee sometime".

Join a social group (sports team, chess club, golf club, whatever interests you - find a social group that shares that interest; online check out Meet Up / Do Something New Groups. Maybe a church group (non-cult-like, pro-inclusive, or else you may find yourself oppressing others and or yourself and that leads to depression).



FAMILY: Healthy, loving, supportive and appropriate family (immediate and extended family).

Perhaps you may need to create 'new family' if yours is not healthy or appropriate (volunteer somewhere with children or elderly; or be a big brother or sister or Aunt or Uncle).



CONNECT TO NATURE

We are all a part of nature. Connecting to nature produces peace and tranquility (and lowers blood pressure). Walk. Hike. Fish. Visit the Zoo. Touch the grass or a tree. Plant a garden.

Lie down on the grass and watch the clouds. Reconnect and breathe it in. Repeat often.

LEARN AND GROW (*Mentally, Emotionally, Spiritually*)

A stagnant mind becomes a stagnant spirit and a stagnant life; so keep reading, learning, exploring, and living! Get a library card *and use it weekly*. Take a course, certificate or degree. Keep your mind and soul active, alive and vibrant! There are so many wonderful and exciting things to learn, do and discover in this life!

