

# Anxiety Coping Skills

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**Anxiety** can feel different day to day. The helpfulness of different techniques may change based on the feeling and severity of the anxiety you're experiencing. Use this coping skills list to explore different strategies, and take note of a few that work best for you when things get difficult.



## Journaling

This can help us express, process and relieve difficult emotional thought trains. Journaling can be structured (including dates, times, and done daily) or unstructured (freely writing without worries of grammar, dates, etc.) Find a rhythm that works best for you, and keep it in a safe, private space.

### Helpful Prompt Suggestions:

**Awareness:** What am I worried about right now?

**Expression:** What's it like going through this?

**Processing:** What can I control vs. what can't I control?

**Solution:** Is there a small, meaningful action I can take to address my worry?

**Self-Care:** What can I do to take care of myself right now?

**Compassion:** What advice would I give to a friend in this situation?

**Gratitude:** What are things that are going well in my life right now?



## Guided Meditation

These exercises can be an effective way to direct your focus toward a calming experience. Meditations can be audio-only or include visuals, depending on your preference and are paced by the instructor. **Where to look:** You can find guided meditations on YouTube that focus on a variety of topics including stress, anxiety, grief, and more.

## Thought Reframing

This is a psychological technique in which you investigate the evidence behind an anxious thought and balance it with evidence, potential outcomes, different perspectives and problem solving. It often helps to do this exercise in a journal.

### Example:

**Thought:** “I’m nervous about my blood test results.”

**Evidence:** “I’ve been feeling really off lately.”

**Outcomes:** “I may have a severe illness or I may just be fighting a virus.”

**Perspective:** “If it’s something severe, I trust my doctors to help me navigate it.”

**Solution:** “If I’m sick, I’ll make the changes necessary or take the medication recommended to improve my health.”

## Creative Expression

There are a wide range of creative outlets that could help you explore, process and express your emotions. Certain outlets may help us express feelings that can be difficult to communicate with words, while others may help give us an outside perspective on our feelings.

### Creative Outlet Ideas:

- **Paint or draw your emotion:** Can help express and relieve emotions.
- **Write a creative story:** Can help process and explore anxiety from the outside.
- **Utilize a coloring book:** Can act as a low stimulus focus and relaxation activity.

## Deep Breathing

Breathwork is often a core part of anxiety relief and nervous system regulation exercises, which work by supplying your brain with oxygen, signaling that you’re safe.

### Popular Exercises:

**Box Breathing:** Inhale for **4** seconds, hold for **4** seconds, exhale for **4** seconds, hold for **4** seconds. Repeat for 2 to 5 minutes.

**4-7-8 Breathing:** Inhale for **4** seconds. Hold for **7** seconds. Exhale for **8** seconds.

## Worry Time

Instead of letting worries occupy your attention throughout the day, you contain them to a specific window, which helps reassure that they'll be addressed, but gives you control over your day. **What to do:** Schedule a brief period during the day (10 to 15 minutes) to think about your worries. Utilize journaling and thought reframing to help structure this time.

## Engage a Hobby

Often the things we enjoy on a good day, we can also enjoy on a difficult day. Engaging in something low stress, but productive and interesting, can help you occupy your attention and help you take space from your worry.

### Interest Ideas:

- Watch an interesting YouTube video.
- Start a new book or podcast series.
- Practice an instrument, making art, or a sport.

## Go for a Walk

A 15 to 20 minute walk is all you need to provide immediate benefits for relieving stress and improving your focus. **Additional tip:** You can also incorporate a podcast, audio book or music to help with any intrusive anxious thoughts.

## Take a Nap

In moments of especially high anxiety and stress, taking a nap can help you recharge and reset your mood. The ideal “power nap” is 15 to 20 minutes and roughly 8 hours before your actual bedtime. **Watch out:** It's important that your nap doesn't interfere with your overall night's sleep, as this can worsen your anxiety symptoms.



## Change your Environment

Our brain can naturally attach thoughts and information with actual physical locations. This is why changing your environment or moving to a new one can help you regulate or reset. These changes can look big or small depending on what you need.

### Examples:

- Go outside for fresh air.
- Rearrange your furniture or re-decorate a room.
- Utilize an ambience video or music.
- Visualize a relaxing place in your mind.



## Sensory Modulation

This uses our five senses, sight, taste, smell, touch, and hearing to influence our mood and experience. Our brain associates different sensations with various feelings and memories.

### Sensory Ideas:

**Sight:** Low lighting, ambient nature video.

**Taste:** Hard candy, comforting beverage (tea, hot chocolate).

**Smell:** Scented candle, essential oil mist.

**Touch:** Cozy blanket, fidget toy, bath or shower.

**Hearing:** Favorite music, nature sounds, white noise.



## Call a Safe Person

Reach out to a friend or family member you feel safe and comfortable with. This could be someone that will make you laugh, engage you in interesting conversation, or know how to help you feel confident when you're worried.



# Tend to Physical Needs

The brain is a body part. Neglecting our physical needs can cause or worsen anxiety symptoms. Make sure you're getting enough sleep, movement, eating healthy, and staying hydrated. Limit or eliminate substances that promote anxiety such as caffeine and alcohol.