lyra

WORKSHOP HANDOUT

Managing Anxiety

Tools and Support

Anxiety is a feeling of unease and nervousness about what might happen in the future, especially about things that could go wrong. It is also a sign that we care about the future and want it to go well. When it's at manageable levels, anxiety can help us keep safe, boost our chances of success, and prepare for the future.



What does anxiety look like for you?

Think about the times where anxiety surfaces

What do you get anxious about? Check all that apply.

☐ Family	☐ Health
☐ Social interactions/relationships	☐ State of the world
☐ Public speaking	☐ Politics
☐ Money	☐ Many of the these
☐ Job/career	☐ Other:

Are your thoughts typically negative?

For example, do you think things like, “What if the worst happens?”; “This is going to turn out terribly”; or, “How will I ever manage?”

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

What feelings do you get in your body? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Frozen
- ☐ On-edge
- ☐ Upset stomach
- ☐ Fast breathing
- ☐ Muscle tension
- ☐ Rapid heart beat
- ☐ Other:

How do you respond to anxiety?

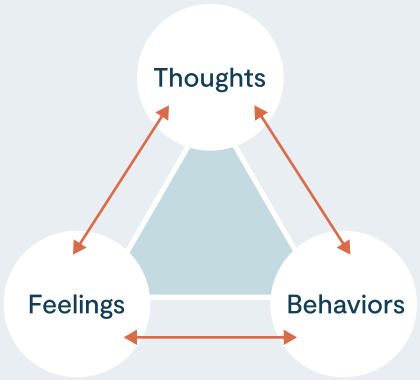
Think about how you typically respond when anxiety surfaces

What do you usually do or feel like doing?

- ☐ Plan by focusing on what I can control and taking reasonable action
- ☐ Plan for all possible outcomes, including trying to predict and control the uncontrollable
- ☐ Avoid the situation that causes the anxiety and/or the anxious feelings

Our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors work together to fuel anxiety

Our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors can work together to fuel anxiety and grow it to an unhelpful size. As anxiety increases, it doesn't always help keep us safe, prepare us for the future, or boost our chances of success. Instead, we may actually become more likely to behave in ways that continue to fuel the anxiety, rather than help us.



- We may try to plan for all possible outcomes, including trying to predict or control the uncontrollable—which can be tiring and ineffective
- We may try to avoid situations that cause anxiety or the feelings of anxiety—which can keep us from important parts of our lives

Coping with anxiety

Following are some research backed skills that can be helpful in coping with anxiety. For personalized recommendations and help coping with anxiety, reach out for 1:1 professional mental health support.



Checking in with yourself

Noticing and recognizing what's fueling your anxiety is the first step to coping with it. You can check in by asking yourself the following questions:



- What am I thinking?
- How am I feeling?
- What am I doing or what do I feel like doing?

You can plan to check in with yourself when you're likely to be more anxious—whether that's at certain times of the day or if there are spaces that tend to heighten your anxiety (for example: your supervisor's office).

You can also remind yourself to check in on your anxiety levels throughout the day, by:

- Setting an alarm on your phone with the label “check in”
- Selecting a visual cue, like a sticker or a certain object, that reminds you to check in



Is there a strategy you want to experiment with? If so, which one:

Working with your thoughts

Don’t treat your thoughts like facts

When we are feeling very anxious, our thoughts can take on a lot of power. We might treat them like facts or like accurate predictions about the future, even when they’re not necessarily true.

Take some power back by reminding yourself that thoughts are simply thoughts—and not always the final truth or unarguable facts.

We can get closer to seeing our thoughts this way with a few strategies:

- Saying “I’m having the thought that” and then repeating the thought that came up
- Saying “My mind is saying that” and then repeating the thought, or
- When a difficult thought comes up, respond to it by thinking, “This old thought again...”

Reframing your thoughts

Another way to take some of the power back from unhelpful thoughts is to pause and consider how balanced, useful, and realistic they are. Start by asking yourself the following questions:



- What is the impact of that thought?
- How useful is it to focus on this thought?
- How accurate is this thought?
- What is within my control that I can focus on?

You can then use the answers to these questions to help you try to craft a new, more balanced, realistic, and useful thought.

Is there a strategy you want to experiment with? If so, which one:

Calming anxious feelings

Releasing tension exercise

You can experience relief through deliberate, focused release of tension. Follow these steps, avoiding areas that are injured or prone to pain:

- On an inhale, tighten a muscle group (e.g., your shoulders) for 10 secs.
- Next, exhale and slowly release tension in those muscles
- After a brief rest, move on to another muscle group
- Repeat for 5-10 minutes, targeting different muscle groups



You can do this exercise across the whole body, or in isolated places in just a few muscle groups.

Deep breathing exercise

You can cultivate calm by practicing deep belly breathing. Breathe in through your nose and exhale through pursed lips, following a 4-7-8 pattern:

- Inhale (4 sec)
- Hold (7 sec)
- Exhale (8 sec)



Try this pattern of breathing for 10 minutes.

Is there a strategy you want to experiment with? If so, which one:

Trying different behaviors

Taking small steps

Whether you tend to avoid or over prepare when you are anxious, taking small steps toward the opposite can help.

- When you are avoiding a situation or task, ask yourself: “What is the smallest step I can take to move forward ?” (*For example, if you’re avoiding a conversation, can you write down just a few things you’d like to say?*)
- When you are over-preparing, ask yourself: “How can I cut down, just a little bit?” (*For example, if you’re planning to work on a task for 5 hours, can you reduce it down to 4 hours and 45 minutes?*)



Is there a strategy you want to experiment with? If so, which one:

Showing up for the future

You can build your muscle of showing up for the future, and accepting all the uncertainty that it holds, without avoiding or over preparing by purposefully putting yourself in situations that don’t have predictable outcomes. You can practice with:

- Small, low-risk activities (e.g., go outside without checking the weather)
- Fun activities (e.g., a new hobby, games with surprising elements)

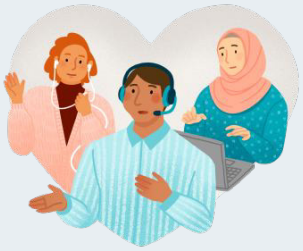


Is there a strategy you want to experiment with? If so, which one:

When should you reach out for support?

You can reach out:

- If you want a personalized assessment of your symptoms and help with a personalized coping plan
- If coping skills aren't helping as much as you'd like, and you want help trying out or troubleshooting skills
- If anxiety becomes confusing or overwhelming, this is an important time to consider reaching out for support
- **Whenever—anytime is the right time.** You don't have to wait for things to feel confusing or overwhelming to reach out for support. You don't need to have an anxiety disorder or think you do to reach out.



Remember: This handout covers general strategies for coping with anxiety. Everyone's anxiety is different and people will respond better to different types of strategies. 1:1 care with a mental health provider can help guide you to what is best for you.

Lyra is here to support you. Reach out to

care.lyrahealth.com