

A woman with short, curly, light-colored hair is treading water in the ocean. She is wearing a dark, low-cut top. The water is dark and rippling, and the background shows a sunset sky with soft light. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

Anxiety and Depression
Workbook

PUSH THROUGH

when you can, and when you can't... just tread water

DR. PAULA S. NEWMAN

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Acknowledgment

Thanks to Between Sessions Resources* and other contributing clinicians for allowing me to compile and share the resources contained in this workbook.

The past few months have been difficult for all of us. The coronavirus pandemic and the violence followed by protests and discussions about race and systemic injustice against communities of color, have some people feeling stressed and anxious. There are others who are not necessarily feeling anxious but are feeling immense sadness about the loss of life 'as we knew it' or about the uncertainty of the future. The stay-at-home orders, safer-at-home orders, and overall social distancing has made it hard for some of us to utilize the coping strategies we are used to using in times of stress (e.g. fitness center, bowling, movies, weekend getaways). One of my colleagues expressed it best when she shared that she is used to 'working hard' so that she can 'play hard', but in this pandemic, she is finding that she is working hard without the benefit of playing hard (e.g. traveling, going out to eat with friends). I agree.

We are living through challenging times. People are tense, stressed, and worried. These are normal responses to what we are experiencing. Everyone feels stressed and/or anxious at times. But it is only a problem when it starts to impact our daily functioning. Therefore, when possible, we should maintain our regular routine.

Most of us have been in situations where we have felt afraid. We experience fear when we face danger; fear is a survival instinct. The experience of anxiety is like the experience of fear. The difference is that anxiety occurs in the absence of *real* danger. Anxiety is usually a feeling we have about a perceived, anticipated, belief that something negative *may* happen.

When you are feeling **anxious**, I encourage you to **push through! Adjust your thinking and swim toward your goal.**

Maybe you are not feeling anxious at all, but are feeling extremely sad, for most of the day, every day and you have been feeling like this for at least a couple of weeks. If you are feeling sad, empty, hopeless, irritable, and have a lost interest in the things you usually like to do, you *may* be depressed. If you are eating everything in sight and have gained lots of weight or don't have an appetite and everyone is constantly asking you if you've eaten and you've noticed that you've lost weight; you are sleeping too much or don't seem to be sleeping at all; are feeling worthless; are fixated on past failures; are having difficulty concentrating and making decisions; and, are just miserable and unhappy overall, you *may* be depressed.

When you are feeling **depressed**, I encourage you to **tread water**. Try to keep your head above water. If you do not have the energy to swim in any specific direction, toward any goal, just tread water. Use the least amount of energy needed to stay afloat, rest. But, stay in place, do not leave the water, do not give up! You will regain your energy and when you do, **push through**.

As we continue to experience the treacherous waters of the coronavirus pandemic and the pursuit of racial equity, I ask that you push through when you can and when you can't, just tread water (rest).

I encourage you to use the worksheets in this workbook to support your getting to a different 'mind space' when you are feeling anxious and/or depressed, whether you are feeling like **pushing through** or resting. If you find that you need additional support, you are welcomed to contact me at **Paula S. Newman, PLLC**, 1921 North Pointe Drive, Suite 207, Durham, NC 27705; (919) 473-9139; or email me at pdsnewman@msn.com. You may find additional information about me and the services I provide on my website, <http://www.paulasnewman.com>.

You may also request an appointment via the “Request Appointment” button on the website. I offer face-to-face sessions as well as telehealth sessions. **You may contact me for a free 15-minute phone consultation.**

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paula S. Newman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paula S. Newman, Ph.D., LCMHCS, NCC



Paula S. Newman, PLLC is a Professional Limited Liability Company that provides behavioral counseling and consulting services. **Dr. Paula Sanders Newman is the sole practitioner, who is an Educational Psychologist, Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor Supervisor, and a National Board Certified Counselor** who provides individual, family, and group therapy for children, adolescents, and young adults, ages 5-25. She takes a client-centered approach toward helping those she works with to develop the insight and skills necessary to meet behavioral and emotional challenges. She enjoys working with children and families to help them identify and achieve their goals. She offers a combination of skill and insight-building activities, play therapy, parent education, behavioral therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, and supportive counseling in her treatment approach. Her counseling approach is informed by Adlerian, Family Systems, and Cognitive Behavioral theories. She holds a bachelor’s degree in Psychology from East Carolina University (Greenville, NC), a master’s degree in Counseling from Webster University (St. Louis, MO), and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Psychology from Walden University (Minneapolis, MN). She has worked in behavioral health since 1992 and has been a licensed counselor since 2005.

Accepting Unpleasant Experiences, Thoughts, and Feelings

Objective

To identify unpleasant thoughts and feelings associated with life experiences to increase opportunities for positive and rewarding experiences.

You Should Know

Language is used to describe experiences, including those that have caused unpleasant or uncomfortable feelings. If you label experiences negatively, you might limit, avoid, or try to control situations to decrease or eliminate discomfort associated with those experiences. As a result, you may miss opportunities, encounter harm, or experience overall dissatisfaction with life. For example, if you label a party as boring because you felt left out of the conversation, you may decide that you will not go to any more parties.

This worksheet will help you understand that your experience of the present moment does not have to be determined by past experiences that you have identified as unpleasant or uncomfortable. Accepting unpleasant thoughts and feelings, rather than actively avoiding them, creates opportunities for positive and rewarding experiences that you might otherwise have missed.

What to Do

Identify five negative thoughts or feelings that cause you to limit, avoid, or control certain activities (for example, anxiety, worry, sadness, jealousy, fear, insecurity, etc.):

Write down situations you avoid to keep from experiencing discomfort.

Identify and describe positive thoughts and feelings you could have if you permitted yourself to engage in these situations, rather than avoid them. Be as specific and descriptive as possible. This will help you identify the experiences you are choosing to miss out on.

Now, choose one activity you have avoided in the past: _____

Do this activity, then describe your thoughts and feelings throughout the experience.

What did you do to change your negative thoughts and/or feelings to create a more positive experience?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

Acts of Kindness Lead to Happiness

Objective

To increase happiness by planning weekly acts of kindness.

You Should Know

Research indicates that being kind will not just benefit people you help, but can also make you happy, too. Regular acts of kindness can lift your mood on a permanent basis.

According to research by Dr. Sonja Lyubomirsky, author of The How of Happiness, kindness can start a chain of positive social consequences, bringing you closer to others and helping you appreciate the most positive aspects of human nature. The Random Acts of Kindness movement advocates thoughtful and considerate acts as a way of life, but research actually shows that the “happiness benefits” of acts of kindness are greatest when you consciously decide to do a kind act just one day a week. On that day, you can seek to do a significant act of kindness, for example, not just holding the door for someone but perhaps taking the time to write a note of appreciation to someone important in your life. Use this worksheet to plan and then record your weekly act of kindness.

What to Do

Rate your happiness, where 1 = Very unhappy to 10 = I am the happiest I have ever been: _____

Think about people or organizations that could benefit from your acts of kindness. Describe things you can do or people who might benefit from your kind acts.

Decide what day of the week you will engage in your act of kindness, and schedule an activity or action each week. After you have participated for the first time, discuss your experiences.

After one month of weekly experiences or activities, write down any thoughts about what you did and what happened.

Now, rate your happiness after practicing acts of kindness for one month, where 1 = Very unhappy to 10 = I am the happiest I have ever been: _____

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn about yourself during this activity?

Are Your Worries Realistic?

Objective

To understand and accept that events are influenced by the laws of probability rather than your worries.

You Should Know

Just because something is possible does not mean it is probable. People with anxiety disorders are often consumed with the idea that something terrible will happen if they don't act in a certain way. They become so overwhelmed by anxiety, they often don't take the time to realistically examine whether what they fear most is likely to come true. For example, it is *possible* that you could be struck by lightning, but statistically it is *not probable*. It is also *possible* that you could win the lottery, but statistically it is *not probable*. Anxiety disorders can make it difficult to distinguish between what is possible and what is probable.

What if you applied the theory of probability to your anxiety disorder? Probability is the likelihood that an event will occur. Of course, it is always possible that your fears may be warranted, but is it probable? Most people with anxiety disorders imagine the worst outcome and act accordingly to prevent it. But think about this: If it is possible for the worst outcome to occur, it is equally possible for the best outcome to take place.

What to Do

This exercise will help your rational mind better understand the concept of probability. You will begin by thinking about something you worry about because you think it could have a terrible outcome. Then you will look at nine other possible outcomes. With each outcome, you will consider the likelihood (probability) that the outcome will happen and why.

Determining the Probability of a Good or Bad Outcome

Begin by writing down the worst outcome you can imagine. Then write down other possible outcomes. Try and write down at least nine other possible outcomes, *making sure that at least three of the possibilities are positive ones.*

Now go back and write in the probability that each outcome will occur and the reasons for your probability estimate. Write out whether the probability is low, medium, or high.

Possible Outcome	Probability	Reasons/Comments
I will make an idiot out of myself and get fired.	Low	This is not probable because I spent more than 10 hours practicing the presentation. And besides, my work is really appreciated, so why would I be fired for screwing up a presentation?
I will spill a glass of water on my presentation.	Low	I'll take a sip of water before the presentation and won't even have a glass of water near where I am speaking.
I'll get a standing ovation.	Low	Even if I give a great presentation, the subject is not that exciting!
People will be interested in what I say and someone will give me a compliment.	High	This is what happened before.
I'll have to go to the bathroom in the middle of the presentation.	Low	This has never happened, and I'll use the bathroom before I start.
I'll talk too softly, and someone will ask me to speak up.	Medium	This has happened before, but it wasn't too bad.

Now try this for yourself on the next page.

Possible Outcome	Probability	Reasons/Comments

Reflections on This Exercise

Did you find yourself becoming anxious during this exercise? What thoughts came to mind when doing this exercise?

Write down some worries where you need to examine the probability of the outcomes

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything you learned from the exercise?

Becoming Aware of Your Upsetting Thoughts and Feelings

Objective

To help you become aware of how you are avoiding the things that cause you to be anxious and upset.

You Should Know

Many people deal with their problems by trying to avoid painful thoughts, feelings, sensations, and memories. They think that if they just distract themselves from these inner experiences, then they will be fine. However, while avoiding these unpleasant inner experiences may help temporarily, these strategies usually only work for a short period of time.

There is also a significant personal cost to your avoidance. Some people spend hours each day avoiding the things that could upset them instead of using this time to enjoy life. This exercise is designed to help you examine how you are avoiding the things that cause you to be anxious and upset, and how this keeps you from having a happier and more fulfilling life.

What to Do

Begin by listing the inner experiences you are trying to avoid. List three thoughts that upset you.

List three feelings that upset you.

List three sensations that upset you.

List three memories that upset you.

Write any additional upsetting thoughts, feelings, sensations, or memories here.

Now think about the things you do to avoid these unpleasant inner experiences. List the things you do to distract yourself from unpleasant inner experiences.

List the activities or events you avoid to keep from having painful inner experiences.

List the places you avoid to keep from having painful inner experiences.

List the people you avoid to keep from having painful inner experiences.

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything you learned from this exercise?

Breaking the Cycle of Stress and Depression

Objective

To identify actions you can do every day to fight the negative impact of stress on your depression.

You Should Know

Dealing with your stress in a constructive way can be an important part of overcoming your depression. Of course, not all stress is bad. A small amount of stress is good for you, keeping you alert and motivated. But sustained stress will elevate stress biochemicals such as cortisol which can take a toll on your mood and your body. Over time, cortisol can also weaken your immune system and even affect your memory.

Sustained stress also interferes with “happiness biochemicals” such as serotonin and dopamine. These are biochemicals produced in the brain and body which translate into feelings of calm, happiness, and well-being. They are the same biochemicals that are affected when you take anti-depressant medication.

The connection between stress and depression is complex and circular. Besides the direct impact on your body and mood, excess stress can lead to poor habits like drinking and overeating which will then exacerbate your feelings of depression.

Fortunately, you have it in your power to break the cycle of stress and depression. Researchers tell us that specific activities can reduce the harmful biochemicals associated with prolonged stress and elevate the biochemicals associated with feelings of satisfaction and well-being.

The worksheet on the next page shows you things you can do every day to fight the negative impact of stress on your depression. When you make these activities daily habits, they will not only help you overcome your depression but will also help prevent physical problems.

What to Do

Put a check mark by the activities you are most likely to do. See if you can find one activity to do in each category. Then estimate the time you will do the activities each day. Finally, put a check mark when you have accomplished this activity each day in a week. Keep this chart for three weeks.

Week of _____ (Date)

Activity	Check If Interested	Estimated Time/Day	Achieved (put a check mark for each day)
Scheduled Relaxation			
Deep breathing			
Meditation			
Visualization			
Relax with quiet music			
Yoga			
Other			
Self-Care			
7-9 hours of sleep			
Good nutrition			
Minimum ½ hour exercise			
Massage			
Other			
Social Activities			
Meaningful conversation(s)			
Fun activities with family or friends			
Meals with family or friends			
Spiritual activities with others			
Other			
Time Management			
Set goals and steps to achieve them			
Realistic 'to do' list			
Delegating appropriate responsibilities			
Realistic scheduling and planning			
Other			
Creative and Fun Activities			
Journaling			
Hobbies			
Time with pets			
Play			
Other			

List other things you can do reduce stress in your life:

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything you learned from this exercise?

Challenging Your Negative Beliefs About Yourself

Objective

To identify your basic beliefs about yourself and what you can accomplish in your life and how these beliefs affect your overall happiness and life fulfillment.

You Should Know

Many people with social anxiety believe that they are different from other people. And, for many, “different” doesn’t mean better than or more special. Unfortunately, it often means the opposite—that they are somehow less important or less worthy than others—and this can cause a great deal of suffering. Most of the time, those beliefs are laid down early on in life, as a result of internalizing criticism or demands for perfectionism from parents or caretakers.

Awareness is the first step toward change. With awareness, you can begin to unravel those internalized messages. Most experts agree that cognitive-behavioral techniques are highly effective in challenging one’s negative beliefs, even if they *seem* like a fixed part of your personality. That’s because, according to neuroscientists, the brain is changeable, which is referred to as “neuroplasticity.” It may take time, but most valuable things in life do. Can you imagine having a lighter, happier, more positive view of yourself? Are you willing to hold a mirror up to yourself even if it seems difficult at first? Excellent. Then you’re already on your way.

What to Do

In this worksheet, you will identify your basic or core beliefs that seem true to you, and that might be holding you back from enjoying a more fulfilling life. Then you will create some challenging statements, along with evidence to start contradicting those beliefs.

On the lines below, write down the most common negative phrases or messages that come to mind when you think about yourself. What makes you feel “not good enough”?

Some examples include:

- I was born anxious and nothing’s going to change that.
- No therapy will ever work for me.
- I am not like other people.
- I am incompetent at everything I try.
- I don’t belong anywhere.
- I have no value.
- I am worthless.
- I am powerless.
- I am always wrong.
- I am unsure of myself.

Core Belief:

Challenging Statement:

Core Belief:

Challenging Statement:

Core Belief:

Challenging Statement:

Core Belief:

Challenging Statement:

Core Belief:

Challenging Statement:

Core Belief:

Challenging Statement:

Core Belief:

Challenging Statement:

Reflections on This Exercise

1. Write down some thoughts about what your life might be like if you had a more positive self-view.

2. How would you like to use your Challenging Statements to work on changing your negative beliefs about yourself (i.e., repeat the phrases often; share them with your therapist; notice the critical voice when it arises, and so on)?

3. Name three people in your life you can ask to offer you positive feedback about yourself.

Make a commitment to contact them in the next week or so.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What else could you do differently to make progress in this area?

Creating a Gratitude Journal

Objective

To adopt a daily “attitude of gratitude” to enhance mood.

You Should Know

Researchers who study why some people are happier than others consistently find that adopting a daily “attitude of gratitude” lifts our spirits and acts as a barrier to the small and large things that would normally upset us. People who are consistently grateful have been found to be happier, more energetic, more hopeful, and report more frequent positive emotions.

Being grateful is more than just saying “thank you.” Robert Emmons, a prominent researcher on how gratitude affects our lives, describes gratitude as “a felt sense of wonder, thankfulness, and appreciation for life.” Dr. Sonja Lyubomirsky, a professor at the University of California and author of *The How of Happiness*, notes that gratitude has many benefits in our daily lives, focusing us on positive experiences, helping us be more connected to others, and increasing our satisfaction with life.

What to Do

Use the “Daily Gratitude Calendar” to record something you are grateful for each day. Don’t repeat yourself, but rather look for something new to be grateful for as soon as you wake up.

Write down something you are grateful for each day for 30 days. Try not to repeat yourself.

Day	What I Am Grateful For

Creating an Emotional Emergency First Aid Kit

Objective

To create an emotional emergency first aid kit for times when you are stressed or upset.

You Should Know

It is important to take care of your mental health every day. Just like with your physical health, you should practice a variety of good habits, including getting enough sleep, exercising, eating nutritious food, spending time with your family and friends, practicing relaxation techniques, and more. All these activities affect the “feel good” biochemicals in your brain and will help you develop a sense of calm and well-being.

Sometimes, however, you may have an emotional emergency, and just like responding to a physical emergency, having the right Emotional Emergency First Aid Kit can help. This worksheet will give you ideas about tools you can use when you are feeling especially anxious or depressed, particularly if you feel you are going to do something that will cause you harm.

You can create a physical Emergency Kit from the list below, assembling objects in a large plastic baggie or other small container, and/or you can create a digital Emergency Kit with tools on your smart phone or tablet. The important thing is to have these tools and techniques within easy reach when you might experience an emotional emergency.

Begin by checking off the tools you think would be helpful to keep in your Emotional Emergency Kit. Then go ahead and assemble the kit and make sure that you keep it with you at times when you anticipate you will be stressed or upset.

What to Do

Check off the tools you think would be most useful to use when you feel overwhelmed by emotions. Add additional ideas at the bottom of this page.

____ **A “grounding” object such as a small ball or stone**

Just squeezing this object, and paying attention to your physical reaction, can help calm your emotions.

____ **A list of people you can call**

This list would include three or four people who are emotionally supportive. If you can't reach them, write down what you want to say, but don't send them an email or text. Wait until you can talk to the people on this list to ask for support.

____ **A journal to write down your feelings or to draw and doodle**

You can do this digitally or use a notebook and pen or pencil.

Dealing with Depression During the COVID-19 Pandemic

You Should Know

The coronavirus pandemic has undoubtedly caused abrupt changes in your daily life, disrupting your sense of stability, structure, and control. Even routine activities you once took for granted, such as grocery shopping, working out at the gym, or meeting a friend for coffee, have been disrupted. This time of uncertainty, combined with social distancing measures, might cause you to feel isolated, lonely, or depressed.

If you are already living with a current or past diagnosis of depression, this situation can feel even more overwhelming. The stressful life changes and losses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic can trigger or exacerbate depression symptoms like despair, helplessness, and hopelessness.

Check off any of the following symptoms of depression that have recurred or increased since the coronavirus outbreak:

- Decreased or increased appetite.
- Changes in energy and activity levels.
- Problems sleeping, such as insomnia or nightmares.
- Difficulty staying awake during the day or the desire to stay in bed all day.
- Physical reactions, such as headaches, body pains, stomach problems, or skin rashes.
- Relying on alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs to cope.
- Emotional detachment or numbness.
- Hopelessness about the future.
- Lack of purpose.
- Restlessness and irritability.
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions.
- Crying for what seems like no reason.
- Feeling helpless or overwhelmed.
- Thoughts of suicide or self-harm.

If you are thinking of hurting yourself or killing yourself, call 9-1-1 or the National Suicide Hotline at 1-800-SUICIDE (784-2433)

What to Do

Below are some suggested strategies to help manage your depression during this time. Although the situation can feel overwhelming, it is important to acknowledge that it is temporary and that things will slowly return to normal at some point.

Identify resources that can provide assistance and support. Think about the friends, family, clergy, healthcare providers, and others you trust who can support you when you are

depressed. Reach out to the people in your life who make you laugh or smile when you are feeling down. Write down their names and contact information here.

Get help from a professional. If you already have a therapist, continue your treatment virtually using teletherapy. If you need to find a therapist, visit [SAMHSA's National Helpline](#), or call 1-800-662-HELP (4357) for a local referral to low- or no-cost services. You can also text the [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#) crisis line 24/7 by texting 741741. Additionally, there are several online psychotherapy providers such as [BetterHelp](#) or [TalkSpace](#).

Connect to your social networks on Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter, and other social media. Which social media platforms do you find most helpful for resources, advice, and inspiration?

Move your body. Physical activity is important for your physical and mental health. The CDC encourages everyone who can safely go outside to enjoy fresh air (with safe distancing from others, of course). Taking a walk, run, or bike ride, or walking your dog around the neighborhood, can improve your mood and your energy level. If you prefer to exercise indoors, try working out to an online video, dance to music you enjoy, or use your own exercise equipment (treadmill, weights, etc.).

Which types of exercise do you enjoy, or would you like to start?

Stay connected with video conferencing. Video conferencing using platforms like Zoom, Facetime, or Skype, have become the new way for people to socialize. While these platforms are not the same as seeing people in person, they give you the experience of interacting with people in real time. You can schedule regular meetings with friends and families, join support groups, and even have a virtual "happy hour" with co-workers.

How can you use video conferencing do get the experience of connecting with people?

Center yourself. Meditation, deep breathing, and relaxation exercises can help you feel calm. There are many apps and videos to guide you through short but effective meditations and breathing exercises. Listening to music or burning scented candles may also help soothe your body and mind. As you sit quietly, you might find that thoughts and feelings begin rising to the surface, which is normal. When this happens, it is important to acknowledge your emotions without judgment. You can say, “I feel sad,” or “I am lonely.”

What methods have you used in the past to center yourself, or which would you like to try?

Keep busy. Participate in activities that provide fulfillment, accomplishment, or a simple distraction. These can range from projects like home repairs and decluttering a closet, to actions done for sheer enjoyment, like coloring, scrapbooking, binge-watching your favorite series, or working on the Great American Novel. Have a good laugh by watching a silly comedy, a comedian’s standup routine, or some funny videos on YouTube or Facebook.

What activities are most effective in providing fulfillment, accomplishment, or distraction?

Are there additional strategies have you tried in the past to elevate your mood? List them.

Now, choose at least three strategies to try for the next week. It may be helpful to ask one or more of the supports you identified above to offer encouragement, motivation, and accountability. List your selected strategies here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Use the chart to rate the severity of your depression before and after you engage in your selected strategies. Use a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 = not depressed at all, and 10 = severe depression; unable to function. Use the ‘Notes’ section to share your observations about your experiences.

Date	Depression Level Before (1-10)	Strategy/Activity	Depression Level After (1-10)	Notes

Reflections on This Exercise

Which strategies did you find most effective in reducing your depression? Explain.

Which resources and people did you find most supportive? Explain.

Did you come up with other ways to cope with your depression? Describe.

Developing Your Nurturing Inner Voice

Objective

To develop a nurturing inner voice that you can listen to when you are feeling low and you are questioning your self-worth.

You Should Know

Many people have an internal voice that is constantly criticizing them and attacking their self-worth. This voice may have originated with a parent, a teacher, or another overly critical adult in your childhood. It may be a mixture of harsh comments you heard when you were growing up. You may not even be able to remember just where or when the criticizing voice in your head appeared, but it is important to know that you don't have to listen to it anymore.

Instead of listening to the critical voices in your head, you can develop a nurturing inner voice that you can listen to when you are feeling low and you are questioning your self-worth.

What to Do

Begin by writing down five nurturing statements that you want to hear. These are the kind of statements that someone who cares deeply about you might say to you.

Some examples might be:

I'm really proud of what you have accomplished.

You always amaze me.

You should give yourself more credit for all that you do.

Now write in things you'd like to hear:

Now think of someone you consider to be very nurturing. It can be someone you know, or it can be someone you don't know well at all, but you think of as a nurturing person. It could even be someone from fiction or someone you made up in your mind. Now Imagine that this person is saying any or all the above statements to you. Describe the situation (room, clothing, body position) you are in.

Think about this scene until it is very vivid in your mind. What else is this person saying to you or doing that makes you feel cared for?

What are you saying back?

Now change the channel to your critical voice, just for moment. Imagine that your critical voice is back talking to you in your head. What is it saying?

Now change the voice in your head back to your nurturing voice. Was this easy to do? With practice you can switch to your nurturing voice whenever you hear your critical voice.

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything you learned from this exercise?

Does Your Anxiety Make You Depressed?

Objective:

To help you determine if you need treatment for depression as well as anxiety

You Should Know

It is common for people with anxiety disorders to also have symptoms of depression. In fact, research indicates that up to 70% of people with anxiety disorders also shows symptoms of depression. These two problems are very different, but they do share some symptoms in common. Both depression and anxiety often cause people to be nervous, irritable, find it hard to focus, and to have trouble sleeping.

It is often difficult to determine which problem came first. Being depressed can make you anxious and being anxious can make you depressed.

However, depression comes along with a different set of symptoms that need to be addressed.

The major indicators that you are depressed include:

- a frequent sad mood
- an inability to enjoy daily activities
- a lack of energy
- feelings of guilt or worthlessness

If you want to find out more about your depression, you can take a short test at Mental Health America. <https://screening.mentalhealthamerica.net/screening-tools/depression>. Please note that the site will ask you a few personal questions after the screening, but it is completely anonymous, and you will not be asked any questions that could identify you.

Please note: If you have suicidal thoughts immediately seek help. Call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 800-273-8255.

What to Do

This worksheet will address one of the most common problems associated with depression, the inability to do activities that bring meaning to your life. Planning your day so that it includes meaningful activities can help motivate you to spend more time doing things that will lift your mood and bring purpose to your life. Your success or lack of success with this exercise can help you determine if you need additional treatment for depression.

Activities That Give Your Life Meaning

You should begin this exercise by writing down activities that will make any day more meaningful.

Write down an activity that expresses your values.

Write down an activity that always makes you smile.

Write down an activity that always relaxes you.

Write down an activity that always connects you with people you care about.

Write down an activity that always stimulates your thinking.

Write down an activity that makes you proud of yourself.

Write down an activity that brings back wonderful memories.

Write down a spiritual activity that makes you feel connected to a higher power.

Write down an activity that is always fun.

Write down other activities that give your life meaning and purpose.

On the chart below, schedule at least two meaningful activities from the previous page each day. Choose activities that you know are logistically possible to do. In other words, don't plan a trip to the beach if you are hundreds of miles away from the beach, but rather plan activities that require relatively little effort. At the end of each activity, rate your mood, from 1 = sad and hopeless to 10 = happy and satisfied with my life. You can also add comments about each activity.

Make copies of this chart and fill in a chart every day for at least a week.

Date: _____

Time	Activity	Rating	Comments
7am			
8am			
9am			
10am			
11am			
Noon			
1pm			
2pm			
3pm			
4pm			
5pm			
6pm			
7pm			
8pm			
9pm			
10pm			

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything you learned from this exercise?

Do-It-Yourself Exposure and Response Prevention Guide

Objective

To learn to tolerate the anxiety and distress your fears provoke by directly exposing yourself to them.

You Should Know

Exposure and response prevention therapy (ERP) is the best-known and most successful method used to treat stubborn obsessions and their accompanying compulsions.

This therapy has two goals:

- Facing your fears by accepting and tolerating your obsessions no matter how distressful and intrusive they are
- Committing to not engaging in time-consuming and useless compulsions to escape from your fears

Exposure refers to the process of deliberately exposing yourself to your obsessions. Response prevention refers to making a mindful decision to accept what makes you uncomfortable and anxious without responding to it.

There are two ways to use ERP, and you can choose the one that is best for you:

- **Graded exposure:** This is the most popular method of exposure. It consists of constructing a fear hierarchy, or ladder, in which feared objects, activities, or situations are ranked from the least difficult exposure to the most disturbing one.
- **Flooding:** This method includes using the fear hierarchy to begin with an immediate exposure to the most difficult tasks. This is considered the best way to conduct ERP, but only if the anxiety can be tolerated.

What to Do

Step 1: Prepare for change.

This therapy is often done in a therapist's office but with proper guidance, grit, and commitment can be done independently as well. It can be overwhelming, and you may have some anxiety surrounding it, which is to be expected. However, know that it can also be the most rewarding endeavor you have ever taken on. Just remember not to become alarmed if you are experiencing some initial doubts and fears surrounding the process.

Step 2: Focus on your goals.

It is important to specifically identify what obsessions and compulsions you would like to extinguish. Having an overall goal will help you focus on what is important to you.

List the goals you would like to reach by participating in ERP therapy.

Step 3: Build your support.

Ask for the help and support of friends or family members who can coach you and offer you emotional support along your journey. Make a list of those who will support you and what they will do.

Step 4: Commit to the time.

Answer the following questions to reflect on how you will plan for the time necessary to complete your exposure plan.

How will you make time for your exposure?

How will it impact your work and family time?

Know that ERP therapy cannot be accomplished in a day. Please prepare to set aside at least three to six weeks to complete the program and allow at least two to three hours a day to work through the anxiety you will experience practicing the art of accepting but not engaging in your compulsions.

Step 5: Develop a plan.

1. List the triggers you would like to work on exposing yourself to, and rate how anxious each makes you on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest.
2. Select a trigger you would like to make your goal. You should probably choose a trigger that is no higher than a 7 and not lower than a 2 for your first goal and then work your way to a higher trigger.
3. Carry out the exposure for at least a two-week period, even though your anxiety level may seem high, while committing to not engaging in the compulsion.
4. Repeat the exposure until your anxiety rating is 2 or below.

Use this worksheet to track your progress in exposing yourself to the trigger you have selected as your goal.

Triggers	Anxiety rating of trigger (1–10)

How did it feel to make the pledge to challenge your fears?

How did you address finding the time necessary to work on the exposure plan?

How did you address any difficulties you experienced while trying to meet your goals?

What skills do you think you gained from engaging in your exposure plan? How do you think you could transfer those skills into other areas of your life?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything you learned from this exercise?

Don't Be Alone

Objective

To help people identify social activities to overcome their depression.

You Should Know

Humans are social animals, and our genetic makeup predisposes us to want to seek the company of others. But, like most genetic character traits, there appears to be a significant variation in how much individuals desire to be social. Some people say they can't stand to be alone for even a few hours. Others say they prefer to be alone much of the time. But, despite the variation in the desire for social contact, from a psychological perspective, social isolation can be a big problem, particularly during times of emotional stress.

Ideally, people should have at least several close friends, as well as a group of people who make them feel they are connected to a community. A close-knit family, of course, is also important. If you find yourself being alone much of the time—even if it “feels” okay to you—you should consider increasing your social contact.

What to Do

Look at the social activities listed below. When you get up each morning, think about at least one social activity you can do each day. Note: Internet-based social activities like social media and email are helpful but they do not replace real-life contact with people.

Social Activities Checklist (Choose at least one to do each day)

- Have dinner with a friend.
- Attend a Meetup (go to Meetup.com for groups in your area).
- Take a walk with a friend.
- Attend a community service group (Rotary Club, Kiwanis, and so on).
- Reconnect with friends and family. List two or three people who come to mind:

- Attend a spiritual or religious group. _____

- _____ Go on a nature-related activity (e.g., hiking, bird watching, travel).
- _____ Attend a hobby or craft-related group (e.g., knitting, photography, etc.).
- _____ Attend a course.
- _____ Attend a community or political meeting.
- _____ Attend a support group.
- _____ Volunteer to help others.
- _____ Attend local lectures at the library.
- _____ Join a sports team.
- _____ Attend a religious service.
- _____ Join a book club (or start one).
- _____ Try Couchsurfing.org, a community of travelers (you can share your couch with people from around the world) that also sponsors local events in thousands of cities.
- _____ Take a cooking class.

Other ideas?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

Eliminating Unhelpful Coping Strategies

Objective

To help you identify and eliminate unhelpful coping strategies you use to “protect” yourself from anxiety.

You Should Know

Anxiety can be very unpleasant, so it is only natural to try and avoid fearful situations at all costs. But studies tell us that avoiding things that make you anxious is the worst thing you can do. In fact, most of the things that people do to protect themselves from anxiety are unhelpful and just prolong this problem. This worksheet is designed to help you identify the things you do to “protect” yourself from experiencing anxiety. Remember, there is no need for protection from danger that doesn’t exist. Giving up these unhelpful strategies will help you rid yourself of your anxiety.

List the situations you avoid because you are afraid they may trigger you. Then rate each one on how hard it will be to give this up, where 1 = not hard at all, and 10 = extremely hard.

List any rituals you use in the hope that they will magically help you avoid feeling anxious:

_____	Rating _____
_____	Rating _____
_____	Rating _____
_____	Rating _____

List ways you distract yourself when you are anxious:

_____	Rating _____
_____	Rating _____
_____	Rating _____

List any people you feel you must have with you in situations you think might trigger anxiety:

_____	Rating _____
_____	Rating _____
_____	Rating _____

List any objects that you feel magically protect you from anxiety:

_____	Rating _____
_____	Rating _____

_____ Rating _____

Are there things you must “check” several times when you feel anxious?

_____ Rating _____

_____ Rating _____

_____ Rating _____

List the unhelpful strategies you are ready to give up, starting with the ones with the lowest rating:

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything you learned from this exercise?

Embrace the Unexpected

Objective

To increase your tolerance for the unexpected and decrease the anxiety you feel surrounding uncertain situations by reframing the role uncertainty plays in your life.

You Should Know

Uncertainty is a universal part of life, wide-ranging and unavoidable. People feel concerned about the impact of global issues, such as terrorism or climate change, and are uncertain about what the future holds. The experience of uncertainty can be intensely personal and can involve the anxiety surrounding the birth of a child, a medical diagnosis, or the results of a job interview. It can also involve the mundane, where you find yourself fretting over whether your favorite football team will win, or if the shoes you're buying will match the dress you have at home.

What is not universal is the way people interpret and react to uncertainty. People without anxiety can have all these experiences and may feel some fear. They may even feel somewhat overwhelmed; however, their feelings are fleeting and not overpowering. Those with anxiety might feel distraught over these competing uncertainties and engage in behaviors to ease their fears.

Think about some uncertainties that are already in your life but that you take for granted and are able to tolerate; for example, when you start a new project at work or drive to a new destination. What makes those situations tolerable in comparison to others? Think about times when uncertainty has been a positive part of your life; for example, presents that were a surprise, an unexpected hug from a loved one, or your child's first step or word.

As you learn to tolerate uncertainty, you can try reframing it to expand the way you interpret it.

What to Do

These are some common traits of those who experience a strong sense of uncertainty. Place a check next to the traits you recognize in yourself.

_____ Seeking reassurance

_____ Making extensive lists

_____ Procrastinating

_____ Refusing to delegate tasks or allow anyone to help you

_____ Having to plan every vacation and every other event you are involved in

_____ Looking for an exorbitant amount of information about every event, problem, or activity you want to engage in

Exposure and response prevention therapy (ERP), the best-known treatment for anxiety, consists of gradually exposing yourself to your fears over a period of time. In this activity, you will expose yourself to situations that make you feel uncertain, until you feel less and less anxiety. Engaging in the exposures will allow you to acknowledge and accept your fear of recurring uncertainty so that your anxiety surrounding these situations will decrease significantly.

Start by asking yourself these questions:

What are some disadvantages you experience because of your inability to tolerate uncertainty?

What are some advantages to tolerating uncertainty, and what do you specifically have to gain from learning to tolerate uncertainty?

Next, follow these steps:

1. Make a list of uncertain situations that cause you anxiety. You can choose from the examples provided, and/or add situations that are unique to you.
2. Rate the situations on a scale from 1 to 10, according to your anxiety level.
3. Expose yourself to one or more situations a week. Use the weekly exposure sheet to track your progress.
4. Engage in the exposure at least three times per week.
5. Repeat the exposure until your anxiety level drops to a 2 or below.
6. Increase your exposure tolerance by inventing new and random situations to expose yourself to.

Uncertain Situations List

- Go to the grocery store without a list.
- Ask a friend to choose a movie for you both to see, without telling you its title.
- Fix a meal and eat your dessert first.
- Fix breakfast for dinner or dinner for breakfast.
- Have a friend or family member buy an item of clothing for you, and then wear it.
- Read the first book of a series you want to read; don't read the sequel for two weeks.
- Take a different driving route to work.
- Make a simple dish without using a recipe.
- Go to a restaurant and order something you have never eaten before.
- Eat at a type of restaurant new to you.
- Jog without counting your steps or miles. Continue until you feel like it is time to stop.
- Go on a short errand without wearing something you always wear: earrings, makeup, your favorite shirt, or a lucky watch.
- Write an email or a text to a friend. Send it without checking it for grammar or anything else.

Uncertain Situations That Cause You Anxiety

Situation	Anxiety level from 1-10

Weekly Exposure

	Uncertain situation	Anxiety level before exposure	Anxiety level after exposure	Notes on experience
Day 1				
Day 2				
Day 3				
Day 4				
Day 5				
Day 6				
Day 7				

Was tolerating uncertainty easier or more difficult than you expected? In what ways?

Did most of your exposure practice turn out positive? If so, did that surprise you?

When your exposure practice did not work as expected, how did you cope with it?

What do you think it would look like if you incorporated uncertainty into your life on a daily basis?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything you learned from this exercise?

Fighting Depression Scorecard

Objective

To fight your depression daily.

You Should Know

Depression is a disease and like any disease, you must fight it.

And you need to do whatever you can to win!

As you know, a mild illness like the common cold does not need that much attention. If you drink fluids and rest, you will likely feel better in a few days. But a life-threatening disease, like cancer, takes all the strength you can muster and every known medical treatment you can find.

If you are deeply depressed, you need to bring everything you can to fight your depression. Your depression is a life-threatening disease!

Can you fight your depression? The following scorecard will help. The scorecard lists 10 activities that are known to fight depression. Some psychologists speculate that these activities can literally change your brain, producing the biochemicals associated with a better mood (serotonin, dopamine, and endorphins).

What to Do

Use the scorecard to keep track of your efforts in fighting your depression. Make at least 30 copies of this page. Use this scorecard every day and see if you can get a score of 8 or more. You get 1 point for each item you check.

We know this is hard! This worksheet will be most helpful if you share your daily scorecard with a friend or relative who is supportive and encouraging.

FIGHTING DEPRESSION SCORECARD

1. _____ Talk to a friend or relative for at least 15 minutes.
2. _____ Do a pleasurable activity (listen to music, read a book, engage in a hobby, etc.) for at least 30 minutes.
3. _____ Take a walk or do some other form of exercise for at least 20 minutes.
4. _____ Do a random act of kindness.
5. _____ Laugh. Find anything (an Internet site, a show, a cartoon) that makes you laugh.
6. _____ Show self-compassion by simply writing down a supportive statement about yourself (e.g., "I give myself credit for trying.").
7. _____ Do something *productive* you are good at (e.g., fixing something, cleaning your home, helping someone out, etc.).
8. _____ Tell someone what you need. It doesn't matter how big or how small.
9. _____ Practice deep breathing (or meditation) for 10 minutes or more.
10. _____ Identify three good things that happened in your day.

Daily Score: _____

Notes:

Use the following chart to keep track of your 'Fighting Depression' score and your mood for one month.

Rate your mood on a 10-point scale, where 1 = Extremely depressed to 10 = Feeling exceptionally good about my life.

Day	Score	Mood Rating	Comments/Thoughts
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			
18			
19			
20			
21			
22			
23			
24			
25			
26			
27			
28			
29			
30			
31			

Reflections on this Exercise

What obstacles did you encounter in doing things to fight your depression?

What did you do to “bounce back” from bad days (low scores)?

Did you see any trends in your behavior or your mood?

What are other factors that influence your depression?

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything you learned from this exercise?

Five Steps to Deal with Intrusive Thoughts

Objective

To learn how to handle intrusive and recurring thoughts by accepting them rather than fighting them.

You Should Know

Everyone has unacceptable intrusive thoughts at some time. Look at these examples:

- Josh walked down the corridor of his school and suddenly had the thought that he might pull the fire alarm.
- Samantha stood near the edge of the rooftop of her building and suddenly thought she might jump off.
- Nadia was religious, but while she was sitting in church, she suddenly felt like she might shout out some obscene words.

Most of the time these are passing thoughts. Although they are totally unacceptable and completely out of character, they come and go very quickly and minutes later people forget all about them. In many ways, they are more of a curiosity than a problem.

But for some people, intrusive and unacceptable thoughts get “stuck” in their brains. For example, a common intrusive thought of people with anxiety disorders is that something will happen to a family member and they will be hurt or even killed. This happened to Maureen each time her 16-year-old took out the car. Maureen would spend the evening imagining gory scenes of automobile crashes. She tried to distract herself with TV shows, binge eating ice cream, and, on occasion, drinking too much wine. Her relief only came when her son came home. But this relief was only temporary. Every time her son took out the car, Maureen’s troubling thoughts seemed to get worse.

Researchers in the field of anxiety disorders tell us that Maureen’s way of coping with her unacceptable thoughts were exactly opposite to what would help her. They tell us that the more you try and get rid of intrusive thoughts, the more they are sure to come back.

Instead of trying to fight your intrusive thoughts, the recommendation is to accept them, and these five steps can help you do just that.

1. Label your intrusive thoughts as “just thoughts.” Remind yourself that they have no power over you.
2. Tell yourself that these thoughts are just your brain going on “automatic,” and you can safely ignore them.
3. Accept and allow the thoughts into your mind. Do not try to push them away.

4. Breathe from your diaphragm until your anxiety starts to go down.
5. Continue whatever you were doing prior to the intrusive thought.

What to Do

This may seem strange, but the next thing you need to do is to *practice* having upsetting thoughts. Forcing yourself to have the upsetting thoughts you have been avoiding is the only way you can learn to accept them with the Five-Step Acceptance procedure described above. When you learn to accept your upsetting intrusive thoughts rather than fighting them, they will soon stop being a big part of your life.

Here is what to do.

Write down the situations that regularly trigger your intrusive thoughts. Write down the most common thoughts that you have. Then rate the distress you experience while having these thoughts from 1 = they really don't bother me to 10 = I can't stand them anymore. Then practice the 5-Step Acceptance Procedure. It will normally take 15 to 20 minutes. Finally rate your distress again, from 1 to 10.

Do this every day for at least two weeks and see if your intrusive thoughts are still playing a big part in your life.

Trigger Situations	Common Intrusive Thoughts	Level of Distress	5-Step Procedure (Y/N)	Level of Distress

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 1- = extremely helpful)

Is there anything you learned from this exercise?

Getting More Sleep Can Help Improve Your Mood

Objective

To track sleep and the methods you use to sleep better to improve your mood.

You Should Know

Do you have a hard time falling asleep or staying asleep? A lack of sleep will reduce the serotonin levels in your brain, which may make it harder to control your moods during the day. There are a variety of techniques that can help you get the sleep you need, but, of course, they only work if you are diligent at trying them and then using the ones that work best. Getting enough sleep is an important part of your overall plan to overcome your depression and is also important for your general health.

There are a variety of medications available to help you sleep, including prescription medication, herbs, and supplements, but always consult a physician before taking any kind of sleep aid.

Here are some other things you can try.

Techniques to Help You Get More Sleep

- Listen to soft music, read, take a warm shower, or meditate before going to bed.
- Exercise for at least a half-hour each day, but not before you go to bed.
- Write a to-do list for the following day and then clear your head of those concerns.
- Practice deep breathing or progressive muscle relaxation before bedtime.
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine, either entirely or at least in the evenings.
- Keep your bedroom at a cool temperature (65–68 degrees).
- If you are sensitive to light and sound, wear earplugs and a sleep mask or try a white noise machine to mask the sound. There are various white-noise apps available if you have a smartphone.
- If you are having trouble falling asleep, get out of bed and do some light activity (like reading) in another room. Go back to bed when you feel drowsy.
- Go to bed and get up at the same time every day.

- Avoid eating heavy meals for at least 2-3 hours before bed.
- Make sure your mattress and pillows are comfortable.

Write down other ideas to help you get more sleep:

Use this chart to keep track of your sleep and the methods you use to sleep better. Record your progress for at least two weeks.

Date	Hours Slept	Trouble Sleeping?	Methods Tried	Successful?
		] Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		] Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
		] Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		] Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
		] Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		] Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
		] Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		] Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
		] Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		] Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
		] Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		] Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
		] Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		] Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
		] Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		] Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

How Diet Affects Your Mood

Objective

To become more mindful of what you're putting in your body to find small ways to improve your mood.

You Should Know

Diet, stress, and mood are all intertwined, so it's important to consider what you're putting in your body, not only for your physical health but also for your emotional wellbeing. It is not necessary to go to extremes in changing your diet. By simply being more mindful of what you're putting in your body, you can find small ways to improve and that can add up to big changes.

The troublemakers:

- Caffeine – You'll find this stimulant in coffee, tea, chocolate, soda, energy drinks, and some over-the-counter medications. The temporary boost it provides can end in fatigue, headache, and tension. Caffeine has also been identified as a potential trigger for anxiety attacks and a contributor to other health issues such as insomnia, heartburn, aggression, irritability, heart palpitations, and high blood pressure.
- Salt – Sodium is present in many processed foods, so check labels and look for low-sodium or salt-free alternatives. Also, be aware of how much salt you use while cooking. Sodium consumption affects fluid retention, weight, and blood pressure, all of which, in turn, can affect your mood.
- Sugar – Excessive intake of simple sugars (such as white or brown sugar and honey) can cause health problems such as diabetes and hypoglycemia, the latter of which is often accompanied by symptoms similar to those experienced during a panic attack. Also, the temporary uplifting effects come with some other serious downsides, including an increased risk of depression in those who have a sugar-heavy diet.
- Preservatives and hormones – These substances are present in processed foods and many types of meats. Our bodies were not built to handle these additives, and their possible side effects have been heavily debated. Swapping in some whole, unprocessed, organic foods can help reduce consumption of these potentially harmful substances.

- Nicotine and alcohol – Introducing these substances into your system can cause a range of problems, not the least of which is aggravating anxiety. Nicotine is a stimulant, like caffeine, and alcohol a depressant. The addictive properties of both nicotine and alcohol have also been well documented.

It should also be mentioned that what you don't put in your body can also be problematic. Nutrient deficiencies and dehydration can cause irritability, anxiety, and fatigue. So, stop skipping meals and make sure you are drinking enough water.

What to Do

For the next week, keep track of how often you consume any of the above-listed items, and write in the predominant moods you had each day.

Day	Food and Drink	Your Moods
Sunday		
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

How Do You View Yourself?

Objective

To help you develop a positive but realistic self-image.

You Should Know

Sometimes people have a poor self-image and dwell on their faults rather than their strengths. They measure themselves against an unrealistic ideal of the way that think they “should be.” Where does that unrealistic ideal come from? People who grew up in families where there was a high demand for perfection or achievement sometimes struggle as adults to fulfill those expectations in their work or home lives. Others who were subject to criticism for the least little flaw grew to focus on those flaws as core parts of their self-image, not learning that nobody’s perfect. If they do 99 out of 100 things right, they’ll dwell on the one “wrong” thing.

Does this sound familiar? Do you have a running narrative in your mind about how you are not living up to your own self-imposed standards? Do you criticize yourself or feel you are not “good enough”? What would it be like to embrace yourself fully, “warts and all”? Wouldn’t your day be a little easier, a little more pleasant?

What to Do

Here are some ways that you can learn to improve your self-image. After each item, write down one or two *specific things* you will do in relation to that item and when and how you would like to build that skill. For instance, for “Exercise,” you might say, “I will take a 20-minute walk at least four times a week, starting next Monday.” Or for “Step Out of Your Bubble,” you might say, “I will go to a museum with a friend sometime in the next month.”

1. Challenge your negative thoughts. Listen closely to what your inner critic says. Ask yourself, is that true? Challenge those ingrained beliefs that bring down your self-esteem. Write some statements to counter them here. Example: Instead of “I am not good enough,” try, “I am a worthy and capable human being with strengths and weaknesses.”

Does this happen to you?

5. Notice what's in your control and what isn't. If your poor self-image is related to things you can't control ("If only I were taller, I'd be happier," "If only I looked like Beyoncé, I'd be sexy," etc.), then you are setting yourself up for continued misery. Focus your energy on identifying things in your life that you can do something about and begin to act on those. Write them here.

7. Do something you love to do! Are you passionate about cooking? Reading? Singing? Sports? Computers? Animals? What are you currently doing or not doing to invest time and energy into your passions? What would you like to do more of? Note any excuses or rationalizations you might think of that keep you from pursuing these activities.

8. Be grateful. Current research shows the establishing a "gratitude practice" every day can help boost your mood and your self-esteem. List here some things you are grateful for—it can be small, like the pleasure of chewing a tasty piece of cheese, or big, like your health or your family or having a warm bed at night.

9. Give Back/Pay It Forward. If you suffer from low self-esteem, it's often hard to think about anything but your flaws and limitations. You might have trouble seeing other people's needs sometimes. Consider volunteering some time or money to a cause that has meaning for you, such as the Food Bank or an animal shelter. You might also consider what skills and talents you have that you could pass along to someone else—look into being a mentor or volunteer who helps others to discover their own strengths. What goes around comes around, as they say. Studies show that the happiest people are the ones who are involved in serving others.

10. Find Positive People in Your Life. Maybe you feel down a lot and avoid hanging out with others whose lives might seem "better" than yours. Identify the people in your life whom you feel comfortable with, who bolster your self-esteem, who see your wonderful qualities and accept your flaws and mistakes. Try to spend more time with them and less time with people who bring you down. What would you like to do toward meeting that goal?

11. Exercise! Sure, you've probably heard this a million times but it's true. Exercise has been proven to be a true, natural anti-depressant and can help people with a poor self-image to feel better about themselves. Set small, realistic goals (e.g., walking for a few minutes a day) and build up to more if you wish. Releasing positive hormones such as endorphins can be a great side effect of increased movement. As they say, just do it!

12. Step Out of Your Bubble. Are you stuck in a routine? Do you feel like a stick-in-the-mud as a result? Make a plan to do something different—whether it's driving a different route to work or visiting a place you've never been or reconnecting with an old friend or going to an event where you are likely to meet new people. It can feel challenging at first, but moving out of your comfort zone can give you a boost of energy and a new perspective on the possibilities for your life.

Reflections on This Exercise

1. How was it to reflect on the above suggestions? Which ones do you feel excited about? Which ones do you feel some resistance to?

2. For those you feel some resistance to, what encouraging words would you like to offer that part of yourself to boost your motivation?

3. Who can you identify in your life who loves you unconditionally? Try to connect with that person regularly to remind yourself of your worth and your positive qualities. Then remember to tell yourself the things they tell you.

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

How Do Your Worries Affect Others?

Objective

To help you see how your excessive worrying and anxiety is affecting those around you.

You Should Know

For most people with anxiety disorders, their worries are so prevalent and uncontrolled that they cannot see how their constant worrying affects those around them. If you find yourself worrying and anxious all the time, then it is almost certain that your state of mind and your behaviors are affecting those around you.

The following are five common ways that your anxiety can affect your relationships. You should note that your anxiety can affect your relationships in different ways at different times.

You may be overly dependent. People with anxiety disorders often seek constant reassurance from those around them. They may want to hear that everything is going to be okay and they may also require the physical presence of certain people in anxiety provoking situations.

You may reject the company of others. Anxiety disorders can cause people to avoid certain social situations as well as certain people. Some people with anxiety disorders are ashamed of their constant worrying and associated fears and behaviors, so they find it easier to just be alone.

You may adopt a restricted lifestyle that also restricts those around you. Anxiety disorders typically cause people to lead a restricted life. This can be hard on the people around you who are constantly disappointed. People with anxiety disorders may avoid traveling, going to crowded places, or doing things that are unfamiliar. In general, people with anxiety disorders seek familiarity and avoid situations where there may be unwanted surprises. This cautious lifestyle will also affect those around you who may limit activities to keep you from getting upset.

You may turn to alcohol or drugs to calm your anxiety. It is common for people with anxiety disorders to try and self-medicate using drugs and alcohol. Obviously, this can present an entirely new set of problems that will affect those around you.

This worksheet is designed to help you put yourself in other people's shoes and consider how your anxiety is affecting them. This exercise is not intended to make you feel guilty about your behavior, and it is certainly not intended to make you feel more anxious. Rather this exercise can help you better understand your anxiety disorder and hopefully motivate you to conquer your worries and fears, if not for your own well-being, then for the sake of others.

What to Do

Fill in the names of significant people in your life who are affected by your anxiety disorders. These could be relatives, friends, or co-workers. Then go back and think about how your anxious behaviors affect each person. In the third column, you may wish to verify your thoughts with each person. You may see that you are correct about how others are affected, but you may also be wrong. It is entirely possible that many people close to you are not that aware of your anxiety.

Significant Person	How does	Verification (What did they say?)	What Can You Do Differently?

Reflections on This Exercise

Is there one person in your life that is most affected by your problems with worrying and anxiety?

Is that person aware you are trying to overcome your problems?

How do you think life will change for that person if you overcome your anxiety and excessive worrying?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 1- = extremely helpful)

Is there anything you learned from this exercise?

Identifying Symptoms of Depression

Objective

To identify your most troubling symptoms of depression to focus on what you need to do to feel better.

You Should Know

Depression takes many forms, including ones that may not seem related to a depressed mood. Identifying your most troubling symptoms can help you focus on what you need to do to feel better.

What to Do

This is a list of common symptoms of depression. Rate each symptom you are currently experiencing with a number from 0 to 3, 0 = never 1 = occasionally 2 = frequently 3 = most of the time.

- Trouble sleeping
- Unhappiness
- Constant feelings of sadness
- Significant weight change
- Reckless behavior
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Feeling that nothing in your life is important or worthwhile
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Feeling helpless
- Feeling hopeless much of the time
- Constant boredom
- Skipping classes often
- Fear of death
- Increased irritability
- No interest in activities that used to give you pleasure
- Excessive use of drugs, alcohol, and/or caffeine
- Feeling worthless
- Trouble focusing
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Desire to be alone
- Irritation and anger
- Difficulty making decisions
- Negative attitude
- Frequent crying

- ____ Strong feelings of guilt
- ____ Feeling like a failure
- ____ The desire to hurt yourself
- ____ Suicidal thoughts
- ____ Disappointment in yourself
- ____ Physical or verbal aggression toward others
- ____ Forgetfulness
- ____ Conflicts with family, friends, and/or coworkers
- ____ Withdrawal
- ____ A lack of interest in personal hygiene
- ____ Constant restlessness

1. Which of these symptoms do you feel affect you the most?

2. Describe anything else you have experienced that you think may be a symptom of depression.

3. When would you say you first started to have symptoms of depression?

4. What was going on in your life at that time?

Reflections on This Exercise

What was the hardest part about doing this exercise?

What was the easiest part?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful).

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

Identifying Your Automatic and Irrational Thoughts

Objective

To recognize automatic thoughts and replace them with rational ones to help overcome depression.

You Should Know

Psychologists believe that people who are depressed have certain kinds of automatic and irrational thoughts that distort their view of themselves and their world. These thoughts are “irrational” because they are not based on any facts; however, depressed people still act as if they are true. Recognizing your automatic thoughts and replacing them with rational ones can be an important part of overcoming your depression.

What to Do

First, think about these different kinds of automatic and irrational thoughts and see if you can give an example of when you have this type of irrational thought.

Discounting

You insist that your accomplishments or positive qualities “don’t count.”

Mind Reading

You assume that people are reacting negatively to you when there’s no real evidence for this.

Fortune Telling

You arbitrarily predict that things will turn out badly.

Magnification/Minimization

You blow negative possibilities way out of proportion. You minimize the importance of positive interactions or events.

Emotional Reasoning

You reason from how you feel rather than from what logic would tell you. For example, you might feel that someone is disappointed with you, even when there is no evidence this is true.

“Should” Statements

You criticize yourself or other people with “shoulds” or “shouldn’ts,” “musts,” “oughts,” and “have to’s.”

Labeling

You identify with your shortcomings. Instead of saying, “I made a mistake,” you tell yourself, “I’m a jerk,” “a fool,” “a loser.”

Catastrophic Thinking

You imagine that the worst possible thing could happen in a given situation, even though there is no evidence that this might be so.

Looking back at the types of automatic/irrational thoughts, which ones do you think you are most likely to have?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

Increase Your Social Activities

Objective

To increase your social activities rather than isolate yourself.

You Should Know

When people are depressed or feel suicidal, they often feel that no one will really miss them if they are gone. They may try to make this a “self-fulfilling prophecy” by withdrawing from people and isolating themselves more and more. It is often challenging for people to get up the energy to participate in activities or to be social when they are feeling depressed.

But taking action is essential, even if it’s one small step at a time, to remind you that you are not alone, and that people care about you and enjoy your company, even if you are not feeling at your “best.”

This worksheet is designed to help you stay connected with other people—family, friends, and strangers. Internet-based social activities, such as texting, messaging, or social media exchanges are helpful, but they do not replace real-life contact with people.

What to Do

First, list up to ten activities that you are currently doing or would consider doing. Then name at least five people you would like to contact to join you, both in your family and out of your family. On the following pages, you will find a list of activities to choose from if you need some help.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

10. _____

People I could contact to do activities together:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Here is a list of social activities. When you get up each morning, plan to do at least one social activity that day and keep a record of what you do.

attending a prayer group
camping
canoeing
dancing
discussing books
doing arts and crafts
entertaining
exercising
fishing
flying kites
gardening
going bowling
going horseback riding
going on a date
going on a picnic
going on vacation
going out to dinner
going sailing
going skating
going swimming
going to a Meet Up group
going to a movie
going to church
going to a museum

going to the mountains
golfing
hang gliding
having a political discussion
having a family get-together
having lunch with a friend
hiking
jogging
kayaking
meditation class
painting class
photography class
play a musical instrument with others
playing cards
playing soccer
playing softball
playing tennis
playing volleyball
practicing karate or martial arts
shooting pool
sightseeing
singing with groups
skiing
spectator sports

going to the beach
taking a college class
taking ballet or tap
taking children places
teaching
volunteering
walks in the woods
yoga class
Your ideas:

going to plays and concerts surfing
taking an adult education class traveling abroad or in the United States

Now list the activities you would like to schedule and when you want to do them by. Record over the next week or two which activities you did and what it was like for you. Refer to this list, delete and add, as needed. And have fun!

Activity	Do by	When done	Reflections

Reflection on This Exercise

1. What activities brought you the most pleasure of the ones you chose to do?

2. Which activities were fun but challenging for you? How motivated are you to try that again?

3. Who else could you reach out to when you are feeling isolated and/or depressed?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

Increasing Your Self-Esteem

Objective

To help you identify ways to improve your self-image and reduce your self-criticism.

You Should Know

There are lots of reasons why people might have low self-esteem, but most of the time the roots go back to childhood and the view that you might have internalized as a result of criticism or negative messages you heard and, perhaps, believed (and still believe). Maybe you feel that you are not attractive enough, not smart enough, or that you haven't accomplished as much as other people. Sometimes people dwell on their faults as adults or measure themselves against an unrealistic ideal of the way that think they "should be."

Does this sound familiar? Do you have a running narrative in your mind about how you are just "not good enough"? What would it be like to embrace yourself fully, "warts and all"? Wouldn't your day be a little easier, a little more pleasant?

This worksheet is designed to help you develop a better self-image through various strategies—some involve inner reflection; some involve outward action. Don't give up—keep trying and experimenting until you are able to bust through some of the old, negative messages and experience a newfound view of yourself.

What to Do

Here are 11 ways that you can learn to improve your self-image. Review the items below and commit yourself to working on at least four or five of them in the coming week or so. Keep this list handy to work on the others over the coming weeks and months.

1. Challenge your negative thoughts. Listen closely to what your inner critic says. Ask yourself, is that true? Challenge those ingrained beliefs that bring down your self-esteem. Write some statements to counter them here. Example: Instead of "I am not good enough," try, "I am a worthy and capable human being with strengths and weaknesses." Repeat as needed. Write down some positive affirmations below.

5. Notice what's in your control and what isn't. If your poor self-image is related to things you can't control ("If only I were taller, I'd be happier," "If only I looked like Beyoncé, I'd be sexy," etc.), then you are setting yourself up for continued misery. Focus your energy on identifying things in your life that you can do something about and begin to act on those. Write them here.

6. Do something you love to do! Are you passionate about cooking? Reading? Singing? Sports? Computers? Animals? What are you currently doing or not doing to invest time and energy into your passions? What would you like to do more of? Note any excuses or rationalizations you might think of that keep you from pursuing these activities.

7. Be grateful. Current research shows the establishing a "gratitude practice" every day can help boost your mood and your self-esteem. List here some things you are grateful for—it can be small, like the pleasure of chewing a tasty piece of cheese, or big, like your health or your family or having a warm bed at night.

8. Give Back/Pay It Forward. If you suffer from low self-esteem, it's often hard to think about anything but your flaws and limitations. You might have trouble seeing other people's needs sometimes. Consider volunteering some time or money to a cause that has meaning for you, such as the Food Bank or an animal shelter. You might also consider what skills and talents you have that you could pass along to someone else—look into being a mentor or volunteer who helps others to discover their own strengths. What goes around comes around, as they say. Studies show that the happiest people are the ones who are involved in serving others.

9. Find Positive People in Your Life. Maybe you feel down a lot and avoid hanging out with others whose lives might seem “better” than yours. Identify the people in your life whom you feel comfortable with, who bolster your self-esteem, who see your wonderful qualities and accept your flaws and mistakes. Try to spend more time with them and less time with people who bring you down. What would you like to do toward meeting that goal?

10. Exercise! Sure, you've probably heard this a million times but it's true. Exercise has been proven to be a true, natural anti-depressant and can help people with a poor self-image to feel better about themselves. Set small, realistic goals (e.g., walking for a few minutes a day) and build up to more if you wish. Releasing positive hormones such as endorphins can be a great side effect of increased movement. As they say, just do it!

11. Step Out of Your Bubble. Are you stuck in a routine? Do you feel like a stick-in-the-mud as a result? Make a plan to do something different—whether it’s driving a different route to work or visiting a place you’ve never been or reconnecting with an old friend or going to an event where you are likely to meet new people. It can feel challenging at first, but moving out of your comfort zone can give you a boost of energy and a new perspective on the possibilities for your life.

Reflections on This Exercise

1. How was it to reflect on the above suggestions? Which ones do you feel excited about? Which ones do you feel some resistance to?

2. For those you feel some resistance to, what encouraging words would you like to offer that part of yourself to boost your motivation?

3. Who can you identify in your life who loves you unconditionally? Try to connect with that person regularly to remind yourself of your worth and your positive qualities. Then remember to tell yourself the things they tell you.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

Motivating Yourself to Change

Objective

To identify ways to become motivated to change.

You Should Know

Some of the most debilitating symptoms of depression are lethargy, hopelessness, and a sense that things will never get better. So how are you going to motivate yourself to change? Let's face it, change is not easy. But research on motivation tells us that there are many techniques that can help.

What to Do

Read through the ten motivation tips below and then go back and rate each as to whether you think it would be helpful for you to use to make changes to overcome your depression. Rate each technique on a seven-point scale, where 1 = I don't think this would be helpful and 7 = I think this would be very helpful. Choose at least three motivational techniques to help you focus on overcoming your depression, and remind yourself of these techniques at the start of each day.

_____ 1. Schedule your assignments.

Pick a time each day to work on a therapy assignment. Write it down, just like you would any important appointment and do your best to do this work at the appointed time. Try and work on overcoming your depression every day!

_____ 2. Reward yourself when you are done with an assignment.

You already know that people (or animals) will be more likely to do something when they experience a reward immediately after doing something new or difficult. Think of some ways you can reward yourself after you do something that helps you overcome your depression.

_____ 3. Sign a contract and commit to it.

Contracts are surprisingly helpful when it comes to making changes in your life.

_____ 4. Share what you are doing with people you know.

One of the most effective motivators for change is to tell a select group of friends and family about what you are trying to do. You don't have to confide everything about your problem if you don't want to, but just let these people know that you are working on a specific aspect of your life and ask for their support. It goes without saying that you should only ask for support from people who can give it to you.

Can you identify people who can help you overcome your depression?

____ 5. Set a goal.

Set a tangible behavior goal for yourself. You might also wish to identify the sub-goals or steps you need to take to achieve your main goal.

____ 6. Track your progress.

Recording your progress every day is essential to keeping you motivated, even when change seems difficult to achieve.

____ 7. Set your intention.

Many coaches and therapists encourage people to “set their intention” at the beginning of each day, preferably before meditating. Deepak Chopra, best-selling spiritual writer, notes: “The sages of India observed thousands of years ago that our destiny is ultimately shaped by our deepest intentions and desires. An intention is a directed impulse of consciousness that contains the seed form of that which you aim to create.”

____ 8. Adopt a compassionate attitude toward your efforts.

Being self-critical and perfectionistic will likely get in the way of your efforts to change. You will have setbacks and even reversals, for that is only human. You can learn to be a good “parent” to yourself as you change. A good parent guides and encourages a child toward a goal, always believing that the goal can be achieved, but also being compassionate and loving.

____ 9. Act like your heroes.

Inspiration is an important aspect of motivation. Think about someone who has inspired you because he/she has overcome an almost insurmountable problem. Take a moment during the day to imagine what that person would say to you to encourage your efforts to conquer your problem.

____ 10. Look for progress each day.

Focus on the small positive changes that you make in your life each day, rather than on the things that are causing you problems. Even when times are difficult, you can do things each day that will help you lead a happier and fulfilling life.

Reflections on This Exercise

1. What was the hardest part about doing this exercise?

2. What was the easiest part?

3. What are your feelings about practicing these skills in a real-life situation?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful). What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

Own Your Thoughts

Objective

To diminish the power your thoughts have over you by learning to separate your interpretation of your thoughts from the actual thoughts themselves.

You Should Know

Have you ever imagined yourself engaging in some unthinkable, inappropriate behavior: standing up and screaming in a classroom where everyone is silent or walking by a fire alarm and pulling it? This is completely normal. Everyone has thoughts that are weird, unpleasant, and even disturbing at times. Most people will quickly have the disturbing thought and then just as quickly forget about it.

Most people define these types of thoughts as “good” or “bad” and then judge themselves as possibly being good or bad people based on the positive or negative meaning they apply to the thought. And most people would be tempted to fight against the thought by controlling it or trying to stop it altogether.

If you have obsessive thoughts, you might have a different experience, in which you not only can't let the upsetting thought go but also find yourself attaching personal meaning to it, elevating it to the point where your obsession becomes entrenched. Trying to control a thought or stop it are strategies that do not help stop obsessions and most likely make them stronger.

Instead, learn to regard the thoughts clinically, as facts that can be explored to determine their worth in shaping your life. Practice categorizing your thoughts that bother you not as good or bad but as limiting or expanding your life, encouraging or discouraging you to thrive and prosper, or as simply being helpful or unhelpful to you.

What to Do

Create a thought interpretation notebook that will help you to

- recognize the power your thoughts have over you;
- separate your interpretation of your thoughts from the actual thoughts themselves, to diminish their power over you;
- judge your thoughts objectively to determine if they are healthy or harmful to you;
- reframe your thoughts so that they are more realistic and positive rather than negative.

To create your thought interpretation notebook, answer the following questions about each obsessive thought you have. You can use additional paper, if needed.

Obsessive thought:

What do I think my thought means to me? To my future?

How does this thought impact my life negatively or positively?

How do my negative thoughts make me feel about myself?

How does the person I defined myself to be in the previous question compare to the person I know I really am?

If I look at my thought objectively, without any interpretation, how likely is it to come true?

If I did nothing about my thoughts, what realistically might or might not happen?

Thinking of my thought objectively, how could I reframe it in a more positive manner that is helpful to me?

Obsessive thought:

What do I think my thought means to me? To my future?

How does this thought impact my life negatively or positively?

How do my negative thoughts make me feel about myself?

How does the person I defined myself to be in the previous question compare to the person I know I really am?

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If I look at my thought objectively, without any interpretation, how likely is it to come true?

If I did nothing about my thoughts, what realistically might or might not happen?

Thinking of my thought objectively, how could I reframe it in a more positive manner that is helpful to me?

Put your thought interpretation notebook to work for you!

1. To instantly evaluate your thoughts, take at least two of the most helpful questions and recite your answer to them every time you have a disturbing thought. Continue for a two-week period.
2. Use a simple two-minute meditation.
 - Close your eyes.
 - Breathe deeply in and out.
 - Imagine a group of gnats buzzing around you. As they circle your head incessantly, realize that they are annoying but harmless and that you can deal with them.
 - Now picture your disturbing thoughts as if they are noisy bugs flying at a distance. You can hear them, but they are essentially in the background. Imagine yourself ignoring them, focusing on something else more important.
3. Even though it might not feel comfortable at first, add some uncertainty to your usual response to your obsessive thought by asking yourself, "What might happen if I didn't do anything about this?"
 - Allow at least five minutes to go by before you take any action.
 - Extend the time by an additional five minutes every time you have the thought, until perhaps you don't feel the need to respond as usual at all.

How did it feel to purposely separate your thoughts from your interpretation of those thoughts?

Did you feel as though the emotions you experienced enhanced or weakened the intensity of your interpretation of your thoughts?

What did your values tell you about yourself as opposed to the messages that your OCD-fueled thoughts give you about yourself? What would it look like if you interpreted your thoughts through that lens instead?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything you learned from this exercise?

Practicing Radical Acceptance

Objective

To use radical acceptance to tolerate overwhelming emotions in a difficult situation.

You Should Know

No matter how you live your life, there will always be situations and events that cause great sadness, anger, or frustration. You may wish to avoid these painful and sometimes overwhelming emotions, but avoiding them is not helpful.

What will happen if you accept things as they are - without trying to change, escape from, or eliminate them? What will happen if you refocus your attention on what you can do *NOW*? This is called radical acceptance - accepting even the most difficult situations the way they are rather than trying to avoid them.

When you practice radical acceptance, you acknowledge the current or past situation without judgment, and without criticizing yourself or others.

Why should you practice radical acceptance?

You may have heard the saying “The only way out, is through.” This means you must go through the pain to get to the other side of it.

Remember:

- Rejecting things that make you uncomfortable does not make them go away.
- Pain is a signal that something is wrong.
- A refusal to accept reality can keep you trapped in sadness, shame, anger, or other painful emotions.
- To successfully change something in your life, you need to accept it first.

Here is the example of Kendra, who struggled with the infidelity of her husband for years before she practiced radical acceptance:

Kendra and Jon were married for 16 years when she noticed that he seemed to be losing interest in her. Jon was always going away for weekends and even when he was home, his mind seemed to be in another place. He was constantly on the computer and texting people, but Kendra was afraid to ask him what was going on.

Kendra told her sister and her best friend that she thought Jon was having an affair. She wondered if she should try and spy on him or even hire a private detective. She started thinking about Jon and what had happened to their marriage all the time. She felt guilty, angry, and worried about what will happen to her children if they divorce. The

only thing that would quiet the voices in her head was taking a few drinks and she did this every night.

Using radical acceptance, Kendra learned to acknowledge her feelings rather than giving them power over her or trying to avoid them. She stopped blaming herself and even stopped blaming Jon. Once she could accept that this was a difficult situation (but a common one), she contacted a marriage counselor and asked Jon to go with her to a session.

What You Should Do

There are several steps to practice radical acceptance:

- Stay in the present moment and pay attention to the emotions you are experiencing.
- Remind yourself that the unpleasant reality cannot be changed.
- Remind yourself that the past or present reality is shaped by numerous factors, decisions, and events that took place over time.
- Practice accepting with your mind, heart, and body. This can include relaxation techniques, mindful breathing, prayer, or visualization.
- Listen to your body’s sensations (tension, tightness, etc.) as you think about what you need to accept.
- Allow disappointment, sadness, or grief to surface.
- Recognize that life, even when it is painful, can be worth living.

There are also statements you can say to yourself that may be helpful during this practice:

- “I can’t change what’s already happened.”
- “It’s impossible to change the past.”
- “The present is the only moment I can control.”
- “This situation is the result of countless other decisions and actions.”

Now, consider radical acceptance as it relates to your own experiences. Think of a recent situation that you found distressing and answer the following questions.

Describe the situation.

What were the past events that led to this situation?

What role did you play in causing this situation?

What role did others play?

What did you have control of in this situation?

Where did you lack control in this situation?

How did you respond to this situation?

How did this response affect your thoughts and feelings?

Did you avoid dealing with upsetting thoughts and feelings?

How could the events have played out differently if you had practiced radical acceptance?

Now, practice radical acceptance on a current situation that is causing you distress. Describe the situation.

What are your thoughts and feelings about this situation?

What can you do to help you accept this situation?

Did you notice any shift in your thoughts and feelings about the situation after practicing radical acceptance? Describe those changes.

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything you learned from this exercise?

Probable or Possible?

Objective

To explore what it feels like to be more realistic about the likelihood of your worst fear coming true by using probability testing.

You Should Know

Just because something is possible does not mean it is probable. Sometimes you don't take the time to realistically examine the possibility that what you fear will actually happen. For example, it is *possible* that you could be struck by lightning, but statistically it is *not probable*. It is also *possible* that you could win the lottery, but statistically it is *not probable*.

Probability is the likelihood that an event will occur. Of course, it is always possible that your fears may be warranted, but is it probable? Sometimes you might imagine the worst outcome and act accordingly to prevent it. But think about this: If it is possible for the worst outcome to occur, it is equally possible for the best outcome to take place. There are usually many other more positive possibilities that exist among the continuum of likelihoods that might occur.

It might seem silly and even difficult to act "as if" by forcing yourself to think of alternatives instead of what you fear most occurring, but remember that to be mindful means to slow down, not speed up. Take the time to truly experience whatever feeling or moment you are having and then to consider carefully, mindfully what step to take next. You have the power to train your brain to slow down, to process, and to make decisions based on your ability to remember that it is the meaning that you give to thoughts that is important, and not the thoughts themselves.

What to Do

To help you visualize the concept that the worst scenario is not really very likely to happen, you will think of ten different possibilities that expand on an outcome you would usually define as solely negative.

You will then choose from these possibilities ten times to calculate the probability of more positive outcomes occurring.

1. Begin by writing down your prediction: one negative outcome.
2. On nine strips of equal-sized paper, write down alternative outcomes that are also possible, from the worst to the best. (If you wish to, glue each strip onto a more solid surface, like cardboard or wood, or laminate them.)
3. Put the strips of paper into a bag (paper, gift, plastic, shopping bag, or whatever you have).

4. Shake the bag so that the strips are mixed up.
5. Draw one slip of paper from the bag and record what is on it as Trial 1.
6. Read the outcome to yourself slowly, taking the time to notice the sensations you have as you are reading.
7. On a scale from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest), write down your anxiety level after you have read the result.
8. Put the slip back in the bag, shake the bag, and keep drawing again, putting each result back in the bag each time until you have drawn enough times to equal your total possibilities.
9. Using the formula for probability, calculate the likelihood of drawing a good outcome.

Your prediction: _____

Trial	Outcome	Anxiety level
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

Calculate the probability of drawing a good outcome by dividing the number of good outcomes by the total number of outcomes:

Good outcomes ÷ total outcomes = result _____%

How does expanding your thinking to include both positives and negatives feel different from or similar to your usual focus on a singular negative outcome?

What was it like to change your focus from one outcome to many outcomes?

How do you think expanding your expectations might possibly add to or detract from your life?

Was your anxiety level higher, lower, or the same when you drew a positive outcome? What do you think that means for how you experience your life?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything you learned from this exercise?

Revising Your Inner Dialogue

Objective

To minimize the likelihood of adverse consequences by learning how to reframe negative thoughts into more positive ones.

You Should Know

You might have noticed how quickly your negative thoughts can result in harmful, impulsive actions, often without noticing or honoring your feelings. The more you're aware of your thoughts and feelings, however, the more you can intervene and change direction toward a more positive outcome.

Revising your inner dialogue is not the same as positive thinking. You might remember the *Saturday Night Live* character Stuart Smalley (played by now-Senator Al Franken). The character hosted a satirical self-help show called *Daily Affirmation with Stuart Smalley*. After offering advice to others, Stuart would stand in front of a full-length mirror and repeat the following words: "You're good enough, you're smart enough, and doggone it, people like you."

There's nothing wrong with positive self-talk. But you'll need to dig a little deeper.

What to Do

In this exercise, you'll pretend that you're a great writer. Great writers don't start out with a perfect product. They start out with a first draft, then revise, revise, revise until they're satisfied with the final product. Even then, they might want to revise some more, but great writers know that perfection is not a realistic goal.

Use your creative powers to revise your inner dialogue. Pick a situation, thought, or feeling to start with and write it down. Don't worry about grammar or punctuation or spelling. We'll call it your first draft. Repeat the exercise three times this week.

First Draft 1

Now, identify any negative thoughts you've recorded and ask yourself, "What could I say to myself instead? What is a way to revise or reframe this thought or feeling to find something more positive or self-compassionate?" Write those below.

Revision 1

First Draft 2

Revision 2

First Draft 3

Revision 3

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything you learned from this exercise?

See the Big Picture

Objective

To manage your emotions by making sure you are seeing the “big picture” and not just paying attention to the negative aspects of a situation.

You Should Know

When a situation triggers overwhelming emotions, it is common to only pay attention to the upsetting or painful parts of your experience. As a result, you may overreact to the situation and jump to conclusions that are not based in reality. By focusing on the negative things, you experience – a type of thinking called “negative filtering” – you limit your ability to experience the realities of that situation.

Here are some examples of negative filtering thoughts:

- Amy accidentally deleted one page of notes before her class presentation. As she spoke, she tried to remember those missing points but became increasingly self-conscious, stammering through the rest of the presentation.
Negative filtering thought: “I can’t do anything right.”
- Mike broke his ankle after slipping on an icy sidewalk and it prevented him from going on an important business trip.
Negative filtering thought: “This is just my luck. Why does this stuff always happen to me?”
- Cassie’s boyfriend broke-up with her after dating for 5 months. This was her second breakup in less than a year.
Negative filtering thought: “Why can’t I find the right guy? What’s wrong with me?”

What You Should Do

Seeing the “big picture” means evaluating a situation from all sides, not just the negative aspects. Seeing the big picture enables you to take a step back from a difficult situation and observe things in a more objective way. This helps you better manage the thoughts and emotions that arise.

There are several questions that can guide you to see the big picture. In this example, Amy will answer the questions.

1. What happened during this situation?

“I deleted a page from my presentation and got so distracted that I had a hard time focusing.”

2. How did you think and feel because of this situation?

Thoughts: *"I can't do anything right."*

Feelings: *"Embarrassed and mad at myself."*

3. What evidence supports your thoughts and feelings?

"In spite of the hours I spent preparing, I still screwed up."

4. What evidence opposes your thoughts and feelings?

"I'm doing well in this class and my other classes, too."

5. What would be a more accurate and objective way to think and feel about this situation?

"I'm disappointed in myself. I moved too fast and deleted an important page. I'll be more careful next time."

6. How could you react to that situation in a healthier way (e.g., calling a friend, using positive statements)?

"I'm human, and mistakes happen to everyone."

Now, it's your turn. Think of a recent negative situation where you felt badly because you were only seeing the negative aspects of the situation. Use the following chart to help you see the big picture.

Questions About the Situation	Your Answers
What happened during this situation?	
How did you think and feel because of this situation?	Thoughts: Feelings:
What evidence supports your thoughts and feelings?	
What evidence opposes your thoughts and feelings?	
What would be a more accurate and objective way to think and feel about this situation?	
How could you react to that situation in a healthier way?	

Do you often only see the negative aspects of a situation? Give another example of when you have done this.

What is an area of life where it will help you most to see the “big picture” (e.g., work, school, relationships, family, and so on)?

Do you know of anyone else who has difficulty in seeing the “big picture?” How does negative filtering affect them?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything you learned from this exercise?

Seeing How Others Value You

Objective

To help you see your importance to other people.

You Should Know

When you are feeling depressed you may only see the things you don't like about yourself, and you can easily forget that other people see your positive qualities. This worksheet can help you see how important you are to others.

What to Do

List the people who love and value you. Next to each of the following words write the name of the person who loves and values you.

Mother	_____	Father	_____
Sisters	_____		_____
	_____		_____
Brothers	_____		_____
	_____		_____
Aunts	_____		_____
Uncles	_____		_____
Grandfather	_____		_____
Grandmother	_____		_____
Cousins	_____		_____
	_____		_____
Friends	_____		_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
Teachers	_____		_____

Coaches _____

Neighbors _____

Significant Other/Spouse _____

Write the names of anyone else who loves and values you.

Find out how others view you. Talk to three of the people on your list.

Ask why they love and value you.

Who did you talk to?

What did he/she have to say?

Who did you talk to?

What did he/she have to say?

Who did you talk to?

What did he/she have to say?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?

The Grounding Technique

Objective

To bring awareness to the present moment by learning and practicing grounding techniques.

You Should Know

Grounding Techniques are a set of tools used to assist individuals to stay in the present moment during episodes of intense anxiety or other overwhelming emotions. Staying in the present moment allows people to feel safe and in control by focusing on the physical world and how they experience it.

Grounding is easy to do. Just focus on some aspect of the physical world, rather than on your internal thoughts and feelings (see suggestions below). Focus on the present rather than the past. Practice your grounding techniques so that they will come naturally when you are upset. Let go of any negative feelings. Try a variety of techniques and rate the effectiveness of each technique in keeping you calm. Have others assist you in using these techniques by reminding you to practice them and use them as soon as you are feeling emotionally distressed.

Here are some Grounding Technique suggestions, but you can make up your own as well.

- Run cool water over your hands.
- Grab tightly onto your chair as hard as you can.
- Touch various objects around you: a pen, keys, your clothing, or the wall.
- Dig your heels into the floor, literally “grounding” them! Notice the tension centered in your heels as you do this. Remind yourself you are connected to the ground.
- Carry a grounding object in your pocket, which you can touch whenever you feel triggered.
- Notice your body: the weight of your body in the chair; wiggle your toes in your socks; notice the feel of your chair against your back.
- Stretch. Roll your head around.
- Clench and release your fists.
- Walk slowly; notice each footstep, saying “left” or “right” ... to yourself.
- Focus on your breathing ... notice each inhale and exhale.
- Eat something, describing the flavors to yourself.

Other ideas: _____

Recording Your Use of the Grounding Technique

Directions: Begin by writing in five or more techniques you want to practice. Practice them several times a day for five minutes or until you feel calm and in control.

Circle the number that best describes the effectiveness of each technique.

1 = no effect, 2 = little effect, 3 = effective but took time, 4 = effective in keeping me calm and focused, 5 = immediate calming effect

Technique	Date Started	Rating	Comments
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	

Technique	Date Started	Rating	Comments
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	
		1 2 3 4 5	

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything you learned from this exercise?

Tolerating the Physical Discomfort from Your Anxiety

Objective

To learn how to tolerate physical discomfort caused by anxiety.

You Should Know

It's common for people to experience physical discomfort when they are fearful and anxious. If you start thinking about a speech you have to deliver or being in an enclosed place, or going to a crowded concert, your heart might start beating faster, your chest may tighten, you may sweat and even feel like you are going to faint.

These physical reactions can be very scary, and some people say they feel like they are having a heart attack or that they feel removed from reality. When this happens, people can become just as afraid of the physical reaction as they are of the actual situation that causes their anxiety. This is what some call "the fear of fear."

However, there is one proven way to break this cycle of anxiety and fear: to practice the physical sensations that make you nervous and panicky. If this doesn't sound like fun, you're right, it isn't. However, there are many studies that tell us that this is an important step to take in conquering your anxiety.

There are three parts to this exercise. The first part is to determine the physical sensations that accompany your anxiety. You do this in the first column of the chart on the next page. Circle the physical symptoms you are most likely to have when you are feeling anxious and panicky.

The second part of this exercise is to create these uncomfortable feelings. The second column on the chart on the next page will give you some ideas how to do this. Note: You should initially practice these several times with a coach or friend in the room. The coach will encourage you to perform the exercises so that you mimic the physical sensations associated with your anxiety and will also protect you from any possible physical injury, like falling if you get dizzy.

The third and final part of this exercise is to record your practice recreating the physical discomfort that you associate with your fear and anxiety. Although this isn't pleasant, the more you practice, the sooner you will be able to master your anxiety and lead a more fulfilling life.

Recreating Your Physical Discomfort

The more you practice the physical feelings that you associate with anxiety and panic, the less likely you are to be influenced by these feelings. To prevent any possible injury, you should practice these physical exercises in the presence of a supportive person and in an appropriate place.

Uncomfortable Feelings	Creating Those Feelings
Lightheadedness, feeling faint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hyperventilate for one minute. Breathe loudly and rapidly (similar to a panting dog) at a rate of approximately 45 breaths per minute. • Place your head between your legs for one minute, then quickly sit up.
Feeling weird and unreal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think of how big the universe is and how small you are. • Think about the 200,000 years that humans have been on the earth as well as all your ancestors. • Sit in a completely dark and completely quiet room for five minutes.
Blurred vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stare at a lightbulb for one minute and then attempt to read.
Difficulty breathing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold your nose and breathe through a thin straw for one minute.
Increased heart rate or tightness in your chest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink an espresso or other caffeine-based drink. • Do five minutes of moderately intensive cardiovascular exercise like running up and down the stairs
Upset stomach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do 20 jumping jacks after a meal.
Feeling shaky	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tense all your muscles and hold the tension for one minute.
Sweating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear a jacket or wrap yourself in a blanket in a hot room.
Feeling dizzy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spin around really fast for one minute.
Write other physical problems you have when you are anxious:	How can you replicate these feelings?

Practicing Being Physically Uncomfortable

The phrase “practice makes perfect” has never been truer than for people overcoming feelings of anxiety and panic. Although it is not pleasant, practicing the uncomfortable feelings that accompany your anxiety will help you control your emotions rather than having them control you. Use this chart to record the time and dates of your practice as well as your reactions. Rate your anxiety about each session from 1 = no anxiety to 10 = a great deal of anxiety.

Date and Time	Physical Feeling	Rating

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything you learned from this exercise?

Tolerating Uncertainty

Objective

To increase your tolerance of the uncertainty in your life.

You Should Know

Uncertainty is an unavoidable part of life. No one can predict the future, so we must all learn to accept that there is some degree of uncertainty in everyday life - and in certain situations there is a great deal of uncertainty.

Most people simply accept uncertainty as a natural part of life, but people with anxiety disorders find it hard to accept uncertainty, particularly in certain situations. For people who worry too much, the uncertainty of certain situations can act as a magnifier for their worries, feelings of anxiety, and even physical problems associated with stress.

Most people with anxiety disorders try to avoid situations that will increase their awareness of the uncertainty in life. They may avoid travelling, avoid changing jobs, even avoid meeting new people. Some people avoid going to the doctor for a check-up because just making an appointment triggers their worry that something might be wrong with their health.

Avoiding situations that trigger your uncertainty will only diminish your life and narrow your choices. However, with practice, you can learn to accept aspects of life that are ambiguous and uncertain that cause you to worry unnecessarily. This worksheet is designed to teach you a simple process that can help you deal with uncertainty. The acronym, A-P-P-L-E-S, will help you remember the mindfulness skills you need when you are uncomfortable with uncertainty.

Acknowledge - Notice and simply observe uncertainty as it enters your awareness.

Pause - Choose to respond, rather than react, to your experience. In fact, let go of the impulse to react altogether. Put your mind on "pause" and breathe calmly.

Pull Back - Remind yourself that in this moment, it is fear, anxiety, or worry doing the talking. Thoughts and emotions are not "facts." Notice that the need for certainty is not effective and is an impossible quest.

Let Go - Give yourself permission to release yourself of the illusory need for certainty. No matter how intensely or loudly your thoughts and emotions may insist that you need certainty, remember that the intensity of these thoughts and emotions are temporary and will pass.

Explore - Take a moment to explore your internal experience. Pay attention to your breathing and to all your senses. Observe the sensations around you, the sights, the sounds, the smells, the taste, and what you are touching. The emotional intensity associated with your distress will likely lessen as you do this. Now, choose to actively redirect your attention toward something different than what you are worrying about. Be present in your life.

Stand Alone - Do not rely on other people to help you through uncertain situations. Do not ask anyone to go with you when you are facing an uncertain situation that triggers your anxiety, nor should you try to keep in touch with people through calls or texting.

The only way to learn to tolerate more uncertainty in your life is to put yourself into situations that would normally bother you and then see that being uncertain is not so bad. You can tolerate the thoughts and feelings that go with uncertainty and you can learn to live in the moment. You can use the APPLES technique to develop an attitude of acceptance, letting go, and paying attention to your thoughts and feelings rather than trying to avoid them.

What to Do

On the chart below, describe situations that commonly trigger your uncertainty. Rate how uncomfortable you feel, where 1= just a little uncomfortable to 10 = extremely uncomfortable. Then choose at least one situation to practice the APPLES technique. See how many minutes you can spend each week tolerating uncertain situations. Each week see if you can spend *more* time tolerating uncertain situations.

Situation	Date	Rate your discomfort	Minutes

Tolerating Your Distressing Thoughts & Feelings with Mindfulness

Objective

To become aware of upsetting thoughts and practice a mindfulness technique to decrease physical responses.

You Should Know

When you are prone to anxiety, just thinking about something can make you upset and cause your body to react. Your thoughts can trigger a fear response in your body, like a tightness in your chest or shallow breathing.

This mindfulness exercise is designed to help you be aware of upsetting thoughts, without allowing them to trigger a physical response in your body.

Being mindful means acknowledging your thoughts and feelings without responding to them in a typically negative way. Mindfulness is a technique that increases your awareness of the present moment while being non-judgmental. Being non-judgmental is the key, and that's what we're going to work on with this exercise.

Begin by sitting in a comfortable chair. Now read the unpleasant phrases below and pick one to visualize. Take your time (at least five minutes) visualizing the image and use all the appropriate senses. Experience the sounds and the smells you associate with this image and the taste and touch if appropriate.

Even though the images these phrases provoke may be repellant, don't judge them. See if you can be aware of them without any negative reaction.

1. A person vomiting on you.
2. Opening a door and finding a dead animal in the room.
3. Looking at an open, oozing sore.
4. Sitting in a dark cave with insects crawling around you.

Can you think of other images which would be repellant to you?

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

Practice this mindfulness technique with two more phrases for five minutes each. Rate how you did with each image, using the scale: 1 = "I didn't respond to the image at all" and 7 = "I was completely disgusted by the image."

Now, write down one situation that normally causes you to be very anxious and upset:

Practice this same exercise, thinking about this situation in a mindful and non-judgmental manner at least once a day for at least seven days. Use this page to record your progress.

Situation That Causes You to Be Anxious	Date and Time of Practice	Rating

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything you learned from this exercise?

Understanding How Social Media Affects Your Social Anxiety

Objective

To help you understand how social media relates to social anxiety and to identify ways to develop more social relationships in the real world.

You Should Know

Social anxiety is defined as a fear of embarrassing or humiliating oneself in social situations. It is different from shyness. Social anxiety tends to cause people to avoid social situations and become isolated. With the advent of social media as an acceptable means of communicating 24/7, people with social anxiety now have even more ways and more excuses to avoid being around other people in person.

Oddly enough, however, the increase in use of social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, etc., can increase one's social anxiety. Signs of depression and anxiety, especially among young people, are associated with being online too much. People get "addicted" to "likes" and measure their self-esteem accordingly. The more "friends," the happier? Studies show just the opposite. Comparing yourself to others and their seemingly perfect lives? This is a recipe for more anxiety and depression.

Let's be clear. There are many benefits to social media—information sharing, photo sharing, networking, venting feelings, getting support, and more. But studies show that people with social anxiety are prone to hiding out on social media, which can be a form of escaping "real life." Thus, use of technology can be a coping mechanism for social anxiety, but one that may cause the social anxiety to worsen, because it isn't dealt with.

Overcoming social anxiety can best be achieved through repeated practice with people in person. The less you practice social skills, the harder it is to improve those skills. In this worksheet, you will evaluate your social media use, learn some alternatives to using social media, and reflect on next steps.

What to Do

Write down the devices and applications you use on a regular basis and estimate how much time you spend per day on each device, noting the mode of communication (e.g., text, email, IM, social media, etc.). For help in assessing your device time, you might want to install a time-tracking app such as [Moment](#) or [\(OFF\)TIME](#) to gather data.

Now, for those items on your list of the negative effects, think about how you can change your use of technology. Here are some suggestions from experts. In the space below the list, write down what you are willing to try in the next week or so:

- Schedule social activities that feel safe to you—individual or small-group gatherings with people you know. Go to a concert, movie, sporting events.
- When you feel anxious, instead of reaching for your phone, move your body—walk, go up and down stairs, activate your body and bring oxygen to your brain.
- Try to be social in small groups without using your phones. Work at making eye contact with others and making “low-risk” small talk about mutually comfortable subjects.
- Practice sharing, in person, your thoughts and feelings with friends and loved ones. Resist the urge to hide behind the “safety” and “anonymity” of texting or emails.
- Plan to reduce time on devices—set a goal of limiting tech use to a specific number of minutes per day. Then stick to it.
- Alternatively, carefully *schedule in* your use of technology (e.g., 7:00 to 7:15, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)
- Install a blocking app that restricts your access to social media.
- Shut off all devices an hour before bedtime. Remember what it is like to simply think; or read, perhaps write in a journal.
- Make time to be in nature, walking, hiking, engaging in pleasant activities with people you know.
- Take a meditation or yoga class.
- Go to the gym. Or join one for the first time.
- If you tend to feel extreme anxiety, consult a mental health professional. It is possible to overcome social anxiety through directed techniques such as cognitive behavioral therapy, which often includes “exposure therapy,” that is, doing the things you fear to master them.

Add your own ideas here:

More to Think About

1. Which of the alternatives to using technology listed above seem the easiest and most fun for you? Explain.

2. Which alternatives seem the most challenging? Explain.

3. Of the easy and the challenging alternatives you identified, which ones can you commit to trying in the next week or so, despite any resistance you might feel?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything you learned from this exercise?

Using “Opposite Action” to Deal with Difficult Emotions

Objective

To help you learn to take action, in response to difficult emotions, that is contrary to what you might naturally do, using a technique called “opposite action.”

You Should Know

When we experience a strong emotion, such as fear, anger, or sadness, our tendency is to take action in response. It is a natural instinct to do something to make it go away. Sometimes that is a good strategy. For instance, if you see a snake slithering on the sidewalk and you experience fear, it is a good strategy to run in the other direction as a response to potential danger. But sometimes we experience fear when there is no actual danger, and running away from the situation doesn’t solve the problem.

Psychologist Marsha Linehan, who developed a therapeutic approach called Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), suggests a tool for identifying and regulating our emotions, which she calls “Opposite Action.” So, as the snake example makes sense, what about a person who must give a speech and feels fear? That fear may be very real but dashing out of the room might not make sense—and, in reality, there is no actual danger, just a worry about something bad happening. That person might choose to face into it, take deep breaths, tell themselves that they are going to be all right. That is what Linehan means by “opposite action,” that is, taking charge of the emotion and, with repeated practice, mastering it.

The skill of opposite action is not the same as suppressing our emotions. We remain present and notice the emotion, then consciously use it to take a different action. With practice, this action can change *the emotion* over time. With sadness or depression, for example, the habitual action is to stay in bed, hide away. An opposite action would be to visit a friend, go to the gym, cook a nice meal. It’s not that you’re denying the emotion. You are working with it, challenging it by acting opposite to it, and, eventually, turning it around.

What to Do

In this worksheet, you will notice when and in what situations you experience difficult emotions, then keep track of what you typically do in response. Then you will have a chance to try out various ways of taking “opposite action” in response.

Typical responses to difficult emotions include: Fear—
 running away or avoiding the perceived danger
 Anger—fighting back or becoming defensive
 Sadness— isolate, withdraw, retreat

In the chart below, write down your experience of fear, anger, or sadness, and your typical response:

Date/Situation	Emotion Experienced	Typical Action Taken	Reflections/Notes

To practice opposite action, try the following.

Fear—stay in the situation; take deep breaths; tell yourself “I can do this”; stand up straight; keep your eyes up

Anger—step away from the situation or person you feel anger toward; take deep breaths; count to ten; consider the other person’s side; practice compassion; write down your feelings

Sadness—don’t avoid the situation; let yourself cry if you feel sad; don’t choose “numbing” distractions such as substances or entertainment; choose an activity that is engaging and productive, with other people; don’t isolate or retreat

Opposite action is most effective when your emotions *do not fit* the actual reality of the situation, as in the public speaking example above where there is no actual danger. So, your experience of “terror” ends up not being effective in helping you overcome your fear. Doing the

opposite, and doing it with all your energy and commitment, is important to this skill. You can change your thoughts, your words, even your facial expressions and physical stance.

Start with emotions that aren't too intense so you can practice experiencing the change from "habitual/typical" to "effective." Repeat this as often as necessary before moving on to tackling, and mastering, stronger or more intense emotional situations. Think of the process as learning and practicing a new language—it might feel awkward at first, but it will get easier over time.

Date/Situation	Emotion Experienced	Opposite Action Taken	Reflections/Notes

Reflections on This Exercise

1. What did you notice about your typical or habitual ways of dealing with difficult emotions?

2. Are your typical ways of handling emotions effective or ineffective? Explain.

3. Describe what happened when you tried to do “opposite action.” Was it easy? Challenging? What can you do to continue practicing this skill? Elaborate below or on a separate piece of paper.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What could you do differently to make progress in this area?
