

Managing Anxiety during the Pandemic

Tools to help you reduce your anxiety levels and build resilience during this difficult time.

Welcome

We are here to help

During these unprecedented times, it is crucial for our community to seek the support they need when they need it. With our mental health services being overrun it is important that as coaches we come together and support where we can and is the exact reason why I have put together this workbook to support you with managing your anxieties during this time and to build a level of resilience to see you through.

Please use this workbook and the strategies within it to guide and support you during those times you feel anxious. The strategies will support you in understanding your emotions and teach you effective CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) techniques to help reduce your anxiety.

I hope you find this workbook helpful and please reach out if you need any further support.

Take care and stay safe,

Bobie x

Thriveology – Mind and Body Health Coaching

Let's meet where you are

The first thing to note is that right now it is completely normal to be experiencing a wide range of emotions. Accepting what and how you are feeling during this time is the first step to building resilience. Simply taking the time to sit for a moment and 'tune in' to yourself to recognize how you are feeling and then name that feeling can benefit your overall wellbeing hugely.

So, I'd like to take a moment now, sit quietly in a comfy chair, close your eyes and roll your shoulders back. Just take a few deep breaths and let yourself sink a little into the chair. Then I want you to draw your attention to how you are feeling. What emotions are coming up for you? Can you name each one that surfaces? If so, below I'd like you to circle each of the emotions you currently feel:

- Anxious
- Stressed
- Worried
- Fearful
- Low
- Overwhelmed
- Frustrated
- Helpless
- Lonely
- Angry
- Guilty
- Sad
- Lost

Your Control Circle

If you are someone who finds their anxieties can be triggered by hypothetical worry, then you may find the following practice really helpful.

Some anxieties are triggered from that feeling of 'losing control' or 'what if' and when we are in this heightened state it can easily feel like we are spiraling further into the feelings of anxiety. However, research shows that by a simply shift in focus, the overwhelm of anxiety can reduce almost instantly.

We do this by becoming more aware of ourselves and our thought processes. If you are reading this a recognize that you are prone to hypothetical worry, then you are already part way there to awareness! We need to build that awareness around the type of thoughts we are having. What do we feel out of control in? What is the 'what if' scenario that we have on repeat? By noticing these thoughts, you are then able to being to redirect them to the areas that are within your control.

I'd like you to take some time to write down what you have control over inside the circle on the following page. Then, write the things you cannot control in the outer circle. Once you have completed this activity, each time you notice those thoughts arise, refer back to your center circle; the areas you have control over and focus on those and the action you can take.

Remember:

You cannot stop those thoughts occurring, but you can control how you respond to them.

OUTSIDE MY CONTROL

My Control Circle

*List all the things that are within control vs
all the things that are outside your control.*

WITHIN MY CONTROL

Thought Challenging Techniques

Thought challenging techniques are super simply yet super powerful to reduce anxiety. These techniques are fabulous Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) strategies to enable that relief from those unhelpful thinking patterns you experience when your mind is fixated on a threat, uncertainty or negativity.

I have two different techniques to share with you and both give you the ability to broaden your mind to the bigger picture to prevent the tunnel vision we experience when faced with anxiety.

Try out each technique a few times to see which one works for you best.

Sometimes writing out each of these techniques can have more of an impact for you, especially if you are not used to doing things in your head or using your inner dialogue. These techniques can feel a little unnatural at first, so you can give the written version a go or try each one until one feels more natural to you.

The ABCDE Technique

- **Attention** – When you feel distressed, stop what you're doing and pay attention to your inner dialogue (self-talk). What is your mind telling you?
- **Believe** – Do not automatically believe your thoughts!
- **Challenge** – Defuse anxiety by broadening your focus. What's the bigger picture? Is the thought fact or opinion? What might you think if you were feeling calmer?
- **Discount** – Acknowledge that anxiety has been dominating your thinking and let the unhelpful thoughts go.
- **Explore Options** – What would be helpful to focus on right now? What options do I have available? (Here I would have a list of things you know you enjoy doing so you can act on one of those).

The THINK Technique

- **True** – Is this thought 100% true? If not, what are the facts, and what is opinion?
- **Helpful** – Is paying attention to the thought useful to me or others?
- **Inspiring** – Does the thought inspire me, or does it have the opposite effect?
- **Necessary** – Is it important for me to focus on the thought? Is it necessary to act on it?
- **Kind** – Is the thought kind? If not, what would be a kinder thought?

Reducing Anxiety through Distraction Activities

If you find your mind continues to spiral and the unhelpful thoughts are coming through at full force, using the distraction technique can be a really effective tool to help exacerbate them.

It is important when using the distraction technique that the distraction activities are very attention focused to ensure your anxiety is effectively reduced. If you find that a particular activity does not work as well, then make sure you take some time to reflect on why that may have been and if there are ways you can alter it to make it more attention focused.

Distraction activities can also make you feel happier, more motivated and more energized, as well as diffusing any feelings of boredom as an added bonus. See the following page to free write your list of distraction activities.

Low activity and social disconnection are the two most fundamental maintaining factors of low mood, motivation and energy.

My Distraction Activities

Take some time to write a list of things that you enjoy doing, easy tasks that you are able to get straight into and refocus your attention on.

You could write a "I get to do" list or write: "Now I have more free time, I get to..."

Use the space below to write and brainstorm your own distraction activities.

Daily Gratitude Practice

Your final strategy to try is to start your very own gratitude practice. Cultivating gratitude has a range of benefits including:

- Reducing stress and anxiety
- Boosting your mood
- Strengthening your immune system
- Improving sleep

The easiest way to implement gratitude into your life is by starting your very own gratitude journal. Set aside some time out of each day to write 1-3 things you are grateful for.

This is a beautiful strategy to implement as it enables you to see the most out of each day and begin to notice things around you that you may not have seen before. It can be an incredibly empowering practice and really support that reduction in anxiety as you are actively training your brain to see the positive in each day.

I am stronger
than this
emotion.
I am stronger
than this
thought.

I truly hope you have found these strategies and techniques helpful and some you are able to implement into your life.

Please know there is always someone there to reach out to and you do not have to face anything alone. Know that you are stronger than you think you are.

'Anxiety isn't a weakness. Living with anxiety, turning up and doing stuff with anxiety, takes a strength most will never know'.

You've got this! x