



Understanding Your Anxiety: Participant Handout

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Adult Outcomes Questionnaire (AOQ)

The AOQ is a tool that measures how much your symptoms are affecting you. It's like your blood pressure or a lab test. It gives you feedback that tells you how you're doing.

This self-assessment is not meant to give a diagnosis (only a physician or mental health professional can do this). It's designed for adults 18 years and older.

Your results will not be shared with any Kaiser Permanente health provider or saved in your medical record.

AOQ-with-PHQ-8

Medical Record No. _____		Date _____			
Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-8) Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems? (Circle only one number per line.)					
	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day	
1. Little interest or pleasure in doing things	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	
2. Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	
3. Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	
4. Feeling tired or having little energy	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	
5. Poor appetite or overeating	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	
6. Feeling bad about yourself—or that you are a failure or have let yourself down or your family down	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	
7. Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	
8. Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed. Or the opposite—being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	

Developed by Spitzer, Williams, Kroenke et al. with education grant from Pfizer.

Add the circled numbers in each column; then add the sums: 0 + + + = **A**

9. Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
10. Not being able to stop or control worrying	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
11. Feeling unproductive at work or other daily activities	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
12. Having trouble focusing on achieving your goals	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3

Add the circled numbers in each column; then add the sums: 0 + + + = **B**

Global Distress Score (GDS): TOTAL (A + B) = **GDS**

See next page for scoring instructions.

Scoring

What does my score mean?

PHQ-8 Score	Global Distress Score	Severity Level	Action
0–4	0–5	None	Health Ed classes, Online materials
5–9	6–10	Mild	Health Ed classes, Online materials
10–14	11–20	Moderate distress	Self-monitor and get evaluation if no change or worse. Health Ed classes, Online materials
15–19	21–30	Severe distress	Evaluation by your doctor or mental health clinician strongly recommended.
20–24	31–36	Very severe distress	Contact your Mental Health Department for an appointment.

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AOQ Progress Record – Tracking Your Score

Name: _____

Date: _____

Week: Score:	1	2	3	4	5	6
35 Severe						
30						
25 Moderately Severe						
20						
15 Moderate						
10						
5 Mild						
0						

What is anxiety?

Everyone's body has an "alarm clock" that's activated when there's real danger. This alarm clock makes us very uncomfortable, so we're motivated to take action. When we're excited—even about something positive—it can feel similar to anxiety (heart rate and breathing get faster).

Anxiety is when our alarm is activated but there's no actual danger. It's like a false alarm.

What is a false alarm?

Everyone's body has a built-in alarm system. It's there from birth, and its purpose is to keep you safe.

When you're in real danger, your alarm is activated. It warns you about the danger, and gets you moving so you can escape and survive.

It does this by making you **very** uncomfortable from head to toe. You may feel like:

- Your heart is racing.
- You're choking or about to pass out.
- Your whole body is tense.

Your alarm needs to be **very** convincing. It needs to instantly change you from a normal, calm, rational person into a hyperalert, reactive, probably terrified person. This is how humans evolved to survive danger.

Here's the problem: Our alarm system isn't always perfect.

What contributes anxiety?

Anxiety can have several causes. Some people are very sensitive and their alarms get triggered very easily. Being stressed, especially ongoing or severe stress, can trigger the alarm, as well as suddenly remembering dangerous events from your past.

Anxiety can be linked to:

- Past trauma (adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs).
- Chronic (ongoing) stress.
- Chronic health conditions, such as asthma, heart disease, or thyroid disorders.
- Genetics. Anxiety disorders may run in families.
- Medications
- Drug or alcohol use disorder. Marijuana use is especially associated with panic and anxiety.

Many people with anxiety have a history of adverse (difficult) experiences during childhood (ACEs).

ACEs can include child abuse or neglect. This can be physical, emotional, mental, or sexual abuse, or ongoing neglect. ACEs can also include living with family members with mental illness or drug or alcohol use disorders, or domestic or neighborhood violence. If you've experienced any of these in your life, please read the following section and check the Resources.

Adverse childhood experiences

Most children have positive experiences with parents and other trusted adults. These safe, nurturing relationships help children grow into secure, confident adults.

Some children suffer emotional and physical harm, abuse, neglect, and other household traumas. These adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) can continue to affect them as adults.

ACEs are very common. Two out of 3 adults have experienced at least one ACE, and many have experienced multiple ACEs.

ACEs can have long-term impacts on life and health. The more ACEs you've experienced, the higher the risk for mental and physical health problems. ACEs can cause chronic or "toxic" stress.

Toxic stress caused by ACEs can affect future health risks in several ways:

- Children's neurologic, hormonal, and other key systems can be damaged by chronic stress during their development.
- Teens or adults may make unhealthy choices, attempting to escape or numb their stress. This can include overeating, smoking, drinking, drug use, or risky sex.

Building resilience

It's important to know that people are more than their ACEs.

You can recover from ACEs and reduce negative impacts on your life and health. If you're a parent, learn to protect your child from ACEs as well. The key is learning to build resilience—skills that help you bounce back from tough times. It's never too late to learn resilience skills.

You can overcome the effects of trauma and live a healthy life. The best thing you can do is to take care of your mental, emotional, and physical health. Your clinician and care team are here to help you do this. Talk with them about your ACEs and ask about support services and resources. To get counseling support, contact our **Mental Health Department** at your local medical center and request an assessment (without a clinician's referral).

Road to Resilience Screening

Resilience is how well we handle stressful experiences. We can build our coping skills over time to help become more resilient and protect our health during difficult times. Please complete this tool to understand your resilience.

Instructions: Below is a list of resilience statements. Please place a check mark next to the response that best describes your *current* experience.

Resilience statement	Yes	Sometimes	Not Yet
1. I have good friends who I rely on for support.	☐	☐	☐
2. I'm a good, caring friend to people in need.	☐	☐	☐
3. I'm a strong person who can deal with difficult situations.	☐	☐	☐
4. I'm hopeful and able to take control of my future.	☐	☐	☐
5. I try different ways to solve problems and can ask for help when needed.	☐	☐	☐
6. I'm open to new ideas and can handle change.	☐	☐	☐
7. I can handle stressful situations without losing control.	☐	☐	☐
8. I can calm myself down and stay focused.	☐	☐	☐

Ways to Build Resilience

- **Create and nurture safe, stable relationships.** Foster connections with family, friends, co-workers, or spiritual/religious leaders.
- **Make healthy habits.** Eating healthy and get enough sleep.
- **Spend time in nature,** whether in the woods, park, or garden.
- **Get creative.** Cooking, painting, dancing or any form of artistic expression.
- **Get exercise most days.** Take a walk. Dance in your living room. Hike with a friend.
- **Practice mindfulness.** Keep your thoughts on present moment, not the past or future. Listen to the sound of water and notice the soap as you wash your hands.
- **Address current health concerns.** Talk with your doctor and stay up to date on preventive care.
- **Address health-harming behaviors.** We have resources to help you quit smoking and get help if you have a substance use disorder.
- **Get the support you need.** Try wellness coaching, taking other behavioral health classes, connecting with resources in your community, or counseling.

Belly breathing exercise

Diaphragmatic breathing encourages relaxation and supports stress reduction.

Here's the belly breathing practice we learned together in Session 1. You can practice this at home, for 10 minutes or so. Good times to practice are when you get up in the morning or just before bed.

Once you learn it, you can take a few calming breaths this way, anytime you feel anxious or just want to feel calmer.

If you like, you can record yourself reading these guiding words. That way you can listen and practice without having to read or remember the instructions.

Get into a comfortable position sitting or lying down. You can put a pillow under your knees to add comfort.

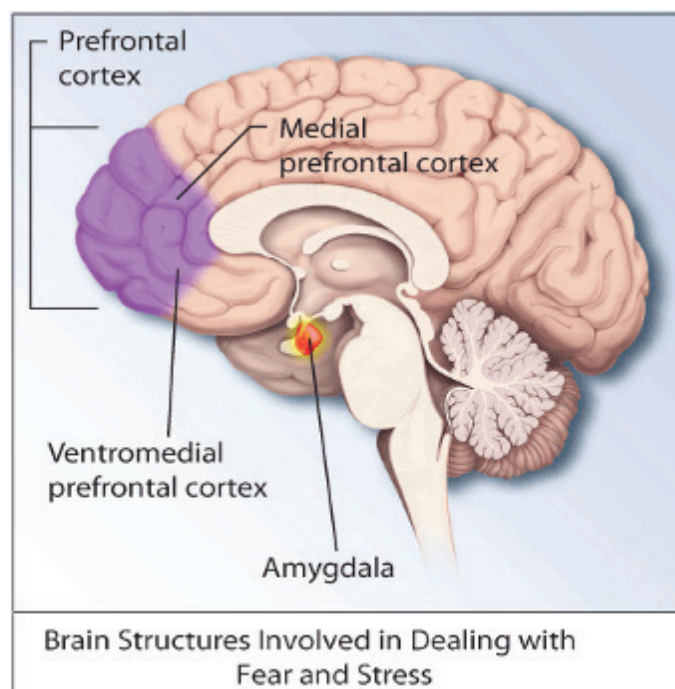
- Close your eyes, or let your gaze be soft and downward. Place one hand on your upper chest and one on your belly, over your belly button.
- Take a breath in, then gently “sigh” it out through your mouth. Feel into your shoulders and neck ... let them relax a bit more each time you “sigh” your breath out.
- Become aware of the natural rhythm of your breath. Where do you feel it in your body ... in your chest, or lower? Sense into your hands to help you feel where your breath is, as you inhale and exhale.
- Now, breathe in slowly through your nose, then slowly exhale, through your nose (if you're congested, it's okay to breathe through your mouth).
- Now feel the hand that's resting on your belly, and as you breath in, feel your hand rise a bit. Allow yourself to breathe a bit more deeply than usual ... feel yourself “breathing into your belly.”
- Now slowly breathe out. Feel your hand as you exhale ... it's okay to press it gently into the belly if that feels comfortable and useful. Feel into a deeper breathing rhythm that is easeful. Continue like this for your next several breaths.
- Now come back to simpler, more usual breathing, in and out. With your next few breaths, again “sigh out” through your mouth, and feel any remaining tension flowing away from your jaw, neck, and shoulders.
- Now simply feel your whole body as you sit quietly. When ready, open your eyes and look around the room where you are.

Biology of anxiety

Our body's alarm system is controlled by our brain, including the:

- Prefrontal cortex (PFC), which is involved in judgment, decision making, and problem solving (the “thinking brain”). Our thinking brain enables us to analyze whether we're actually in danger or safe, based on facts.
- Amygdala, which activates our natural “fight-or-flight” response (“reacting brain”). Our reacting brain is automatic and activates our body-mind very fast.

- ✓ **Prefrontal cortex (PFC)** — Involved in judgment, decision making, and problem solving (“thinking brain”)
- ✓ **Amygdala** — Activates our sympathetic nervous system, or our natural “fight-or-flight” response (“reacting brain”)



The Reacting Brain vs. The Thinking Brain

Acts like a Bodyguard : Always awake looking for danger	Acts like a problem-solver: Analyzes
Primitive	More Advanced
Reacts Automatically	Thinks
Can't Evaluate	Can Evaluate
Can't know if information about danger is true or not	Can use facts to know if information about danger is true or not
Learns danger easily. Learns safety slowly.	Learns danger or safety depending on the facts
Only learns from repeated experience that something's safe	Can learn something's safe from words and facts

Relaxation response and self-care

Our body has a built-in system for balancing the “fight-or-flight” reaction. We can learn to use this relaxation response to return to balance when we feel anxious. The first step is to learn to “tune in” to your body and notice what’s going on there.

In this session, you used a scale to “tune in” and rate your physical symptoms. You can also use it home.

The belly breathing practice we learned in Session 1 is another good way to intentionally engage your body’s relaxation response.

In addition, exercise or other physical activity helps you release stress. You can also explore the CALM app for meditation and relaxation exercises (at no cost for Northern California Kaiser Permanente members).

Tune In: Know Your Number

- ✓ Tune in and observe what’s happening in your body.
 - Rate your physical discomfort on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high).
 - List physical symptoms.
- ✓ You don’t have to do anything else, just notice and observe.

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Exercise App

< Health and wellness
Fitness deals

We’re making it easier to exercise from anywhere. Regular workouts can help improve your mood, sharpen your mind, and help you feel healthier and happier overall. That’s why we’ve teamed up with One Pass Select Affinity to make it easy for you to exercise from the comfort of home.

Get started at kp.org/exercise

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Self-Care Apps

Calm

The #1 app for meditation and sleep.
You can choose from hundreds of programs and activities, including:

- Guided meditations
- Sleep Stories
- Mindful movement videos

headspace care

1-on-1 emotional support coaching and self-care activities to help with many common challenges.

- Coaches are available by text 24/7
- You can use text-based coaching services at no cost, no referral needed*

Get started at kp.org/selfcareapps

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Action Plan

Select one self-care activity listed below and plan a goal for this week.

Self-care activities

Balanced diet

Physical activity

Adequate rest and sleep

Relaxation practice

Gratitude

This week I will _____ (what)
 _____ (how much)
 _____ (when)
 _____ (how often)

Be sure to include:

- What you're going to do. Be very specific.
- How much you're going to do it (amount of time, number of repetitions, etc.).
- When you're going to do it (day of the week and time of the day).
- How many days a week you're going to do it.

Day	Checkoff	Comments
Monday	☐	
Tuesday	☐	
Wednesday	☐	
Thursday	☐	
Friday	☐	
Saturday	☐	
Sunday	☐	

Action Plan

Week 1: Action items

- ✓ Download the Calm app
- ✓ Passively accept physical stress reaction, don't react
- ✓ Relaxation: Practice belly breathing
- ✓ Self-care: Exercise
- ✓ Review Session 1 handouts

Question: What is one thing you learned today that you want to try this week?



SMART Goals

SMART Guideline	Needs Improvement	Improved
S Specific Includes the what, when, where, and how of the goal	“I’ll get more exercise this week.”	“I’ll go on a 15-minute walk on my lunch break on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday this week.”
M Measurable Clearly shows how you’ll reach the goal	“I’ll make better beverage choices at lunch this week.”	“I’ll drink water instead of soda for lunch at least 3 times this week.”
A Action-oriented States an action for the goal	“I’ll improve my self-esteem.”	“I’ll do affirmation exercises for 5 minutes each morning before I leave for work.”
R Realistic Includes a realistic goal	“I’ll jog an hour every day after work (and I’m currently sedentary).”	“I’ll walk at least 15 minutes per day after work on at least 3 days this week.”
T Timely Includes an end date to accomplish the goal	“I’ll go to the grocery store.”	“I’ll go to the grocery store by Sunday night.”

Session 2: Cognitive Behavioral Skills

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Adult Outcomes Questionnaire (AOQ)

Name _____ Medical Record No. _____ Date _____

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2. Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
3. Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
4. Feeling tired or having little energy	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
5. Poor appetite or overeating	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
6. Feeling bad about yourself—or that you are a failure or have let yourself down or your family down	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
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Add the circled numbers in each column; then add the sums: 0 + + + = **A**

9. Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
10. Not being able to stop or control worrying	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
11. Feeling unproductive at work or other daily activities	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
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See next page for scoring instructions.

Scoring

What does my score mean?

PHQ-8 Score	Global Distress Score	Severity Level	Action
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20–24	31–36	Very severe distress	Contact your Mental Health Department for an appointment.

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AOQ Progress Record – Tracking Your Score

Name: _____

Date: _____

Week: Score:	1	2	3	4	5	6
Severe 35						
30						
Moderately Severe 25						
20						
Moderate 15						
10						
Mild 5						
0						

Anxiety medications

Here is a brief overview of some medications used to treat anxiety disorders. Talk with your clinician about any questions you have about medications.

The 2 main medication types used to treat anxiety are antidepressants and benzodiazepines.

Antidepressants work by increasing serotonin levels and making more serotonin available to nerve cells. People with anxiety or depression can have lower than normal serotonin levels.

Usually SSRIs (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors), SNRIs (norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors), and buspirone (Buspar) medication must be taken for several weeks to notice benefits. Your dose may need to be adjusted. Continue to take your medication during dose adjustment.

Benzodiazepines are used for short-term treatment of anxiety disorders. Best practice recommendations for anxiety treatment note that benzodiazepines can reduce patients' motivation to use cognitive behavior skills. This can worsen anxiety.

- These medications may cause physical or psychological dependence.
- Stopping these medications all at once can be life threatening. Talk to your doctor before stopping this or any medication.

Drug Class	Some Common Drug Names
SSRIs (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors)	Celexa Lexapro Zoloft Prozac Paxil
SNRIs (serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors)	Cymbalta Effexor
Non-benzodiazepine	Buspirone (Buspar)
Benzodiazepines	Clonazepam (Klonopin) Lorazepam (Ativan) Oxazepam (Serax)

Fear thoughts and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) skills

Stress reactions not only affect your body (“fight-or-flight” reactions) but also send your brain fear thoughts.

Fear thoughts exaggerate dangers to you and minimize your sense of personal power.

These quick, reactive thoughts tend to have some or all of these qualities:

- Negative
- Judgmental
- Exaggerated
- Inflexible or rigid
- Usually **very convincing**

What you think affects how you feel and contributes to negative feelings, such as anxiety and helplessness.

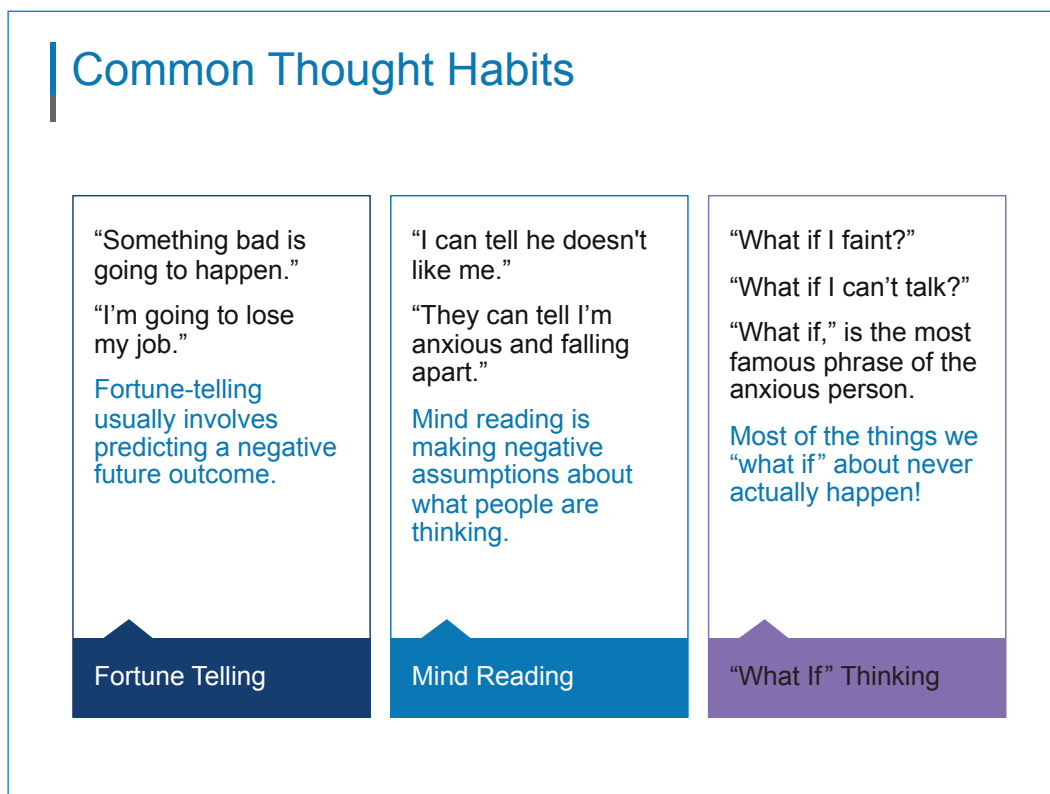
When you feel anxious, take a moment to notice what you’re thinking. Over time, you can see that your fear thoughts make patterns. They occur over and over again.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

CBT is a proven therapeutic method for breaking fear thought patterns. You can learn to replace fear thoughts with useful, realistic thoughts.

See next page for some common thought distortions/habits and how to identify them.

Here are some common thinking habits/distortions:



Common thought habits/distortions continued:

Common Thought Habits

"I need to perform perfectly for them to like or accept me."

"I have to get this right so I won't look bad."

No one performs perfectly all the time.

Trying to be perfect actually drives anxiety.

Perfectionism

"We don't have enough money to be happy"

"My job sucks!"

Negative filtering is looking at what is going wrong in your life rather than what is working.

Negative Filter

"My job as a competent human being is to control everything that matters in my life."

I should be able to control my body, my thinking, my kids, my boss ...

Trying to control things creates anxiety.

Control Fallacies

Common Thought Habits

"I'm going to be like this the rest of my life."

Exaggerating reality in your thinking magnifies anxiety in your body.

Enlarging the problem to an irrational extent (which rarely happens).

Magnification

"I feel like I'm dying."

"I feel trapped in this situation."

The unspoken reasoning is that, "if I feel it, it must be true."

Feelings are not facts, don't use as evidence!

Emotional Reasoning

"They will hate me or love me."

"Everyone is better than me."

Operating in the extremes creates additional emotional stress.

Practice moderate thinking.

All-or-Nothing

Let's practice – identify thought habits/distortions and use a Thought Journal:

LET'S PRACTICE

Identify Unhelpful Thought Habits

- | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Fortune Telling | 4. Magnification | 7. Mind Reading |
| 2. Emotional Reasoning | 5. All-or-Nothing Thinking | 8. Perfectionism |
| 3. Negative Filtering | 6. Control Fallacies | 9. "What if" Thinking |

- _____ a. "I feel like I'm having a heart attack."
- _____ b. "I have to make this perfect for the event."
- _____ c. "I'm looking so anxious, people will think I'm stupid."
- _____ d. "What if I get hurt?"
- _____ e. "No one ever likes me."
- _____ f. "This panic attack is causing me to be totally dysfunctional."
- _____ g. "My car is going to break down on this dirt road."
- _____ h. "I should be able to stop my kids from arguing."
- _____ i. "My kids pose one problem after another, and now this anxiety is wrecking my life as well."

Thought Journal

Anxiety Rating Scale



What was happening at the moment you felt anxious?

Feelings (Anxiety Rating)	Automatic Thoughts	Thought Habit Category	Replacement Thought (Believability Rating)

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Relaxation practice: Body scan

This relaxation practice continues what we learned with the belly breathing practice in Session 1.

The body scan helps you to become more aware of your whole body and deepens relaxation.

Once you've done the body scan for a while, you can do it anywhere, anytime in just a minute or two. It's a proven way to return to calm when you want or need to do so.

Make yourself comfortable either sitting or lying down. Loosen any tight or restrictive clothing.

Allow your back to be straight, but not stiff. Allow your hands to be relaxed in your lap or resting palms up at your sides.

Allow your eyes to close, if that's comfortable. If you're not comfortable closing your eyes, let your gaze be downward and softly focused.

Slowly shift your attention from the outside world, to inside yourself.

Now take a slow, deep breath. Breathe in deeply and exhale fully. Feel your belly rise as you inhale and release as you exhale.

Continue like this for several breaths, finding an easeful rhythm for breathing.

Now, begin to slowly move your awareness through your body. If you like, you can start with your head and end with your feet.

If an area feels tight or tense, take a breath in, imagining sending the breath into the tense area.

As you exhale, allow the tension or discomfort to soften and release.

If an area feels good, take a moment to feel the qualities present there. Perhaps you feel warmth, or a sense of openness. Inhale and exhale once or twice while experiencing this ease.

Now, continue slowly moving your awareness through your body.

[Pause, allow several minutes of quiet.]

Now, once again bring your awareness up to your head area. Take a big breath in, and as you exhale, imagine your breath sweeping down through your whole body to your feet. Sense your whole body, easeful and relaxed.

Rest here, and let your breathing return to normal.

[Pause for about a minute.]

Now, slowly open your eyes. When ready, if you like, look around the room. Be aware of your body as you return to your regular day.

Action Plan

Select one self-care activity listed below and plan a goal for this week.

Self-care activities

Balanced diet

Physical activity

Adequate rest and sleep

Relaxation practice

Gratitude

This week I will _____ (what)
 _____ (how much)
 _____ (when)
 _____ (how often)

Be sure to include:

- What you're going to do. Be very specific.
- How much you're going to do it (amount of time, number of repetitions, etc.).
- When you're going to do it (day of the week and time of the day).
- How many days a week you're going to do it.

Day	Checkoff	Comments
Monday	☐	
Tuesday	☐	
Wednesday	☐	
Thursday	☐	
Friday	☐	
Saturday	☐	
Sunday	☐	

Action Plan

Week 2: Action items

- ✓ **CBT:** Use a Thought Journal
- ✓ **Relaxation:** Body scan (Calm app)
- ✓ **Self-care:** Consider limiting or avoiding foods that can increase anxiety.
- ✓ **Follow through** with your SMART goal.
- ✓ Review Session 2 handouts



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SMART Goals

SMART Guideline	Needs Improvement	Improved
S Specific Includes the what, when, where, and how of the goal	“I’ll get more exercise this week.”	“I’ll go on a 15-minute walk on my lunch break on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday this week.”
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2. Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless	0	1	2	3
3. Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much	0	1	2	3
4. Feeling tired or having little energy	0	1	2	3
5. Poor appetite or overeating	0	1	2	3
6. Feeling bad about yourself—or that you are a failure or have let yourself down or your family down	0	1	2	3
7. Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television	0	1	2	3
8. Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed. Or the opposite—being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual	0	1	2	3

Developed by Spitzer, Williams, Kroenke et al. with education grant from Pfizer.

Add the circled numbers in each column; then add the sums: 0 + + + = **A**

9. Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge	0	1	2	3
10. Not being able to stop or control worrying	0	1	2	3
11. Feeling unproductive at work or other daily activities	0	1	2	3
12. Having trouble focusing on achieving your goals	0	1	2	3

Add the circled numbers in each column; then add the sums: 0 + + + = **B**

Global Distress Score (GDS): TOTAL (A + B) =
GDS

See next page for scoring instructions.

Scoring

What does my score mean?

PHQ-8 Score	Global Distress Score	Severity Level	Action
0–4	0–5	None	Health Ed classes, Online materials
5–9	6–10	Mild	Health Ed classes, Online materials
10–14	11–20	Moderate distress	Self-monitor and get evaluation if no change or worse. Health Ed classes, Online materials
15–19	21–30	Severe distress	Evaluation by your doctor or mental health clinician strongly recommended.
20–24	31–36	Very severe distress	Contact your Mental Health Department for an appointment.

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AOQ Progress Record – Tracking Your Score

Name: _____

Date: _____

Week: Score:	1	2	3	4	5	6
Severe 35	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Moderately Severe 25	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Moderate 15	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mild 5	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
0	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Mindfulness skills and health benefits

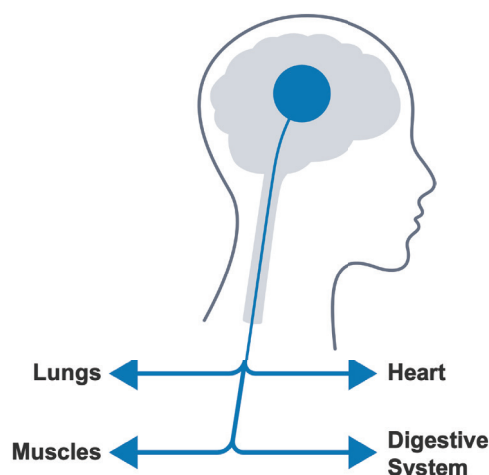
Mindfulness is “the awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally.” (Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD, founder, MBSR)

Mindfulness skills can help you tolerate your anxiety. You can learn to observe and be present rather than react or fear the anxiety.

Mindfulness affects our brain, nervous system, immune system, and whole body in many positive ways.

What are health benefits of mindfulness?

- Reduced blood pressure
- Reduced pain (low back, stomach)
- Relaxed muscles
- Improved sleep
- Increased ability to resist infection (immune system benefits)



What happens in the brain when you practice mindfulness?

Research shows:

- Growth in the part of the brain associated with learning, memory, and emotional regulation.
- Less emotional reactivity in the amygdala, the part of the brain associated with fear.

Principles of mindfulness that are especially useful for coping with anxiety include “observing mind,” nonjudging (your thoughts, yourself), and self-compassion.

Observing mind: It’s stopping and saying in a curious way, “Hey, what’s going on here? What am I thinking? What am I feeling?”

Instead of getting lost in our thoughts, we can begin to observe our thoughts and have more of a choice about which ones we want to pursue. Instead of just automatically acting out a behavior, we can begin to wake up to our actions in the moment and ask, “Hey, is this something I really want to do right now?”

Not judging: There are so many parts of ourselves that we tend to push away or judge harshly. Mindfulness allows us to embrace these parts in a curious, nonjudgmental way.

Self-compassion: As you would have compassion or love for someone else without blame or criticism, you cultivate this same compassion for yourself.

Mind-watching practice

This exercise can help you be mindful, which means bringing your attention to the present, not the future or the past. You can learn to observe and be present rather than react or fear your anxiety.

Follow these guidelines for practice:

- Start by getting comfortable, sitting in a chair or lying down.
- Breathe in slowly.
- Exhale slowly and let yourself relax.
- Continue like this for several slow breaths.
- Imagine your mind is a room with two doors in it. Thoughts enter through one door and leave through another.
- As thoughts enter your mind, label them as a **judgmental thought** or **nonjudgmental thought** (this means that you aren't labeling the experience or yourself as good or bad). When you have a judgmental thought, you might label it "there's judging."
- Just watch and label each thought.
- Continue to breathe, in and out. Feel your breath in your body.
- No need to force yourself to hold on to any thought, or push them away, or do anything with them. Just notice and label.
- No need to get caught up in thoughts. No need to react to them.
- Breathing in, breathing out.
- Noticing each thought as it arrives, like a visitor passing through the room of your mind. Let thoughts come and go as they will. No need to force anything, no need to figure anything out, or wonder how you could act out any thought.

Continue like this for several more minutes (or longer if you like).

When you're ready, gently open your eyes and come back to your surroundings. (If in class, reengage with the class.)

Now take a few minutes to reflect on your practice. Did you begin to feel less "caught" in thoughts, less reactive?

Mind watching is a way for you to "get some distance" from worrisome, repetitive thoughts.

Additional tools to manage fear thoughts

Managing Fear Thoughts

Supportive Statements

Practice affirmations daily:
Talk back, encourage yourself
as you work towards change!

- ✓ I'm beginning to ...
- ✓ I'm learning to believe ...

ACTIVITY

Write down your affirmation on a sticky note and paste it somewhere you'll read it often.



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Managing Fear Thoughts

Encapsulate

- ✓ Means to separate from yourself
- ✓ Helps prevent the negative thoughts from influencing your emotional and physical state

ACTIVITY

Think of a negative thought and then put it in a "bubble" and watch this bubble flow away from you.



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Managing Fear Thoughts

Sensory Grounding

- ✓ Brings your attention to the present moment.
- ✓ Disrupts "fortune telling" or "what if" thinking.
- ✓ Examples: Step out into the cold, roll down your window, and feel the cool air.

ACTIVITY

5.4.3.2.1 Sensory Technique



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Managing Fear Thoughts

Worry Time

- ✓ Should last about 15 minutes
- ✓ No interruptions
- ✓ Write down whatever you are worrying about

ONE IMPORTANT RULE!

Only worry during worry time

- ✓ Use a Worry box and walk away
- ✓ Get busy with something else



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Reality Testing

Challenge Unhelpful Thought Habits

- ✓ Is this really true?
- ✓ Am I jumping to conclusions?
- ✓ What is the evidence?
- ✓ What if it happens?
- ✓ Is it really as bad as it seems?
- ✓ Does it help me to keep thinking this way?
- ✓ Is there another way to look at the situation?



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Thought Defusion



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Plan a pleasant activity

Doing things that are relaxing, revitalizing, rewarding, or just fun makes you feel better. Doing more of these things can get you out of the anxiety cycle.

These don't have to be special activities. Many are things you can do every day. Think of the last enjoyable thing you did:

- Was it taking walk or reading a book?
- Visiting a friend or seeing a movie?

What did you enjoy about it? How did it affect how you felt? Here is the Pleasant Activity Worksheet. Use it to track your activities. In the next week, mark which days you did the activity.

Pleasant Activity Worksheet

Activity	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Go to the beach							
Help other people							
Go to a show, concert, or ball game							
Plan a day trip or vacation							
Play games							
Take a long shower or bath							
Go out on a boat (canoe, rowboat)							
Write poetry, stories, or music							
Visit friends							
Sit in the sun							
Go to a fair, park, or zoo							
Give gifts							
Hear jokes or comedy routines							
Eat a good meal							
Listen to music							
Go for a hike							
Play frisbee or catch							
Learn to do something new							
Sew or do needlework							
Go to the library							
Be with someone I love							
Do things with children							
Play with pets							
Do volunteer work							
Other							
Other							
Other							

Action Plan

Select one self-care activity listed below and plan a goal for this week.

Self-care activities

Balanced diet

Physical activity

Adequate rest and sleep

Relaxation practice

Gratitude

This week I will _____ (what)
 _____ (how much)
 _____ (when)
 _____ (how often)

Be sure to include:

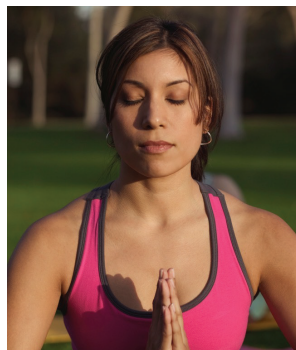
- What you're going to do. Be very specific.
- How much you're going to do it (amount of time, number of repetitions, etc.).
- When you're going to do it (day of the week and time of the day).
- How many days a week you're going to do it.

Day	Checkoff	Comments
Monday	☐	
Tuesday	☐	
Wednesday	☐	
Thursday	☐	
Friday	☐	
Saturday	☐	
Sunday	☐	

Action Plan

Session 3: Action items

- ✓ **Self-care:** Planned pleasant activity and daily affirmations
- ✓ **Mindfulness:** Observing mind, not judging, self-compassion
- ✓ **Thought Journal:** Continue use, try a few of the tools you learned today
- ✓ Review Session 3 handouts



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SMART Goals

SMART Guideline	Needs Improvement	Improved
S Specific Includes the what, when, where, and how of the goal	“I’ll get more exercise this week.”	“I’ll go on a 15-minute walk on my lunch break on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday this week.”
M Measurable Clearly shows how you’ll reach the goal	“I’ll make better beverage choices at lunch this week.”	“I’ll drink water instead of soda for lunch at least 3 times this week.”
A Action-oriented States an action for the goal	“I’ll improve my self-esteem.”	“I’ll do affirmation exercises for 5 minutes each morning before I leave for work.”
R Realistic Includes a realistic goal	“I’ll jog an hour every day after work (and I’m currently sedentary).”	“I’ll walk at least 15 minutes per day after work on at least 3 days this week.”
T Timely Includes an end date to accomplish the goal	“I’ll go to the grocery store.”	“I’ll go to the grocery store by Sunday night.”

Session 4: Exposure and Self-Compassion

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Adult Outcomes Questionnaire (AOQ)

Name _____ Medical Record No. _____ Date _____

Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-8) Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems? (Circle only one number per line.)	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day
1. Little interest or pleasure in doing things	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
2. Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
3. Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
4. Feeling tired or having little energy	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
5. Poor appetite or overeating	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
6. Feeling bad about yourself—or that you are a failure or have let yourself down or your family down	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
7. Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
8. Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed. Or the opposite—being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3

Developed by Spitzer, Williams, Kroenke et al. with education grant from Pfizer.

Add the circled numbers in each column; then add the sums: 0 + + + = **A**

9. Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
10. Not being able to stop or control worrying	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
11. Feeling unproductive at work or other daily activities	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
12. Having trouble focusing on achieving your goals	☐ 0	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3

Add the circled numbers in each column; then add the sums: 0 + + + = **B**

Global Distress Score (GDS): TOTAL (A + B) = **GDS**

See next page for scoring instructions.

Scoring

What does my score mean?

PHQ-8 Score	Global Distress Score	Severity Level	Action
0–4	0–5	None	Health Ed classes, Online materials
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AOQ Progress Record – Tracking Your Score

Name: _____

Date: _____

Week: Score:	1	2	3	4	5	6
Severe 35	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Moderately Severe 25	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Moderate 15	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mild 5	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
0	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Reprogramming the false alarm

The best way to reduce anxiety is to do the opposite! For example:

- Escaping – Enduring
- Scanning – Calming
- Avoiding – Approaching
- Fighting – Accepting

While retraining your “false alarm” reactions, remember to use:

- Patience
- Persistence
- Repetition
- Small, doable steps

And celebrate successes, small or big!

Endure instead of Escape

When you feel like escaping a situation that makes you anxious, instead learn to Endure instead. Here are the steps:

- Make a plan to deal with the situation.
- Explain your plan and needs to those involved. Request their understanding and support.
- Notice your anxiety triggers early, when they are less intense.
- Take long slow deep breaths or use another calming method (you need to practice calming methods regularly when not under stress, so they’ll work when you need them).
- Ignore fear thoughts and repeat to yourself “I can do this and I’m going to be OK.”
- Recognize and congratulate yourself when you successfully endure!

Approach instead of Avoid

Common avoidance behaviors sparked by anxiety include:

- Leaving work or social events early
- Pulling over off the road
- Taking a different route
- Cancelling plans
- Using substances (alcohol, marijuana etc.) to calm yourself down
- Turning down invitations

Avoiding brings only short-term relief. Anxiety comes back afterward and can get stronger than ever. This can become a vicious cycle.

Here are steps to learning to Approach instead of avoid.

- Make a goal, for example to shop at a place you’ve been avoiding.
- Practice anxiety-calming methods daily.
- Set up times to practice your Approach experience (3 times per week over 2 weeks usually works).
- Break your Approach activity into small, doable steps (called an “exposure ladder”).
- Once you’re OK with a step, move on to next step until you complete the whole activity without feeling triggered.



continued on next page

Calm instead of Scan

Scanning is when a person constantly thinks of and looks for potential danger. It's physically and mentally exhausting. It fuels anxiety.

Calming means soothing anxiety at its source – inside you – instead of scanning for external danger. For example, if you feel anxious, notice it and do a soothing activity, such as walking the dog or doing a body scan. Once you feel calm, go ahead with the activity that had started to trigger “scanning” thoughts or actions.

Accept instead of Fight

You may frequently feel frustrated or angry when anxiety is triggered. Getting angry can be a temporary release of built-up anxious energy, but it doesn't help, and the pressure will build back up.

It works better to Accept your anxious feelings, instead of fighting. For example, you could go for a run. When you feel calmer, tell yourself “It was just a false alarm! No need to get upset.” This is how you can learn to Accept anxious feelings.

Imaginal Exposure

Use these steps when you feel ready to do this practice.

1. Pick a recent place or event when you felt anxious or think of something you worry about.
2. Begin to imagine this place or event in your mind or imagine what you worry about really happening.
 - Where are you?
 - Who is there?
 - What sounds do you hear?
 - What smells?
3. Become aware of your feelings.
4. Rate your anxiety on a scale of 1 to 10.
5. Let the feelings build to a 4 or 5.
6. Notice how your body feels, notice your thoughts.
7. Now turn off the scene and observe anxiety as it changes and decreases.
8. Rate your anxiety again.

Ask yourself:

- How did imagery exposure work for you?
- Did you notice the anxiety change as you imagined the scene?
- What thoughts were you having?
- Did you find you were able to tolerate the anxiety?

Preparing for real-life exposure

Do this practice several times during the week:

- Choose situations you rated 4 or 5 on the anxiety scale when practicing imagery exposure (above).
- Plan to do exposure exercises in one-hour chunks of time at least 3 days during the week.
- Rate anxiety both before and after exposure.
- Reward yourself for successfully completing each exposure exercise.

Self-Compassion Journal

Definition of self-compassion:

- Unconditional kindness to all beings, including yourself
- Can be used to deal with difficult sensations
- Helpful when practicing exposure

“Being kind and understanding to yourself when confronted with personal failings.”

—Kristen Neff, PhD, self-compassion researcher/educator

Keep a daily self-compassion journal for one week (longer if you like.) Journaling is an effective way to express emotions. Studies show journaling can improve mental and physical well-being.

Take a few quiet moments in the evening to review your day.

1. Write down anything that:
 - You felt bad about.
 - You judged yourself for.
 - Was difficult and caused you pain. (Example: “I felt angry with a waitress who took forever to bring the check, so I left no tip. I felt ashamed and embarrassed about this afterward.”)
2. For each event, use mindfulness, understanding of common humanity, and self-kindness to see the event and your response with more compassion.

Mindfulness

Become aware of the painful emotions that arose due to judging yourself, or difficult circumstances. Write about how you felt: sad, ashamed, frightened, stressed. Write from an accepting, nonjudgmental point of view. No need to belittle or overdramatize your experience. (For example, “I was frustrated because she was being so slow. I got angry, overreacted, and felt foolish afterwards.”)

Common humanity

Write about how your experience was connected to the larger human experience. You might include, for instance, that being human means being imperfect and everyone has some painful experiences. Note down the causes and conditions related to the event. (“I was already worried I’d be late for my doctor’s appointment across town, because there was a lot of traffic that day.”)

Self-kindness

Write kind, understanding, words to comfort yourself. Use a gentle, reassuring tone. (“It’s okay. I messed up but it wasn’t the end of the world. Maybe I can try being extra patient and generous to other wait-staff...”)

This writing exercise helps organize your thoughts and emotions and strengthens elements that help you develop self-compassion. Journaling regularly can help self-compassion become stronger and become part of your daily life.

Action Plan

Select one self-care activity listed below and plan a goal for this week.

Self-care activities

Balanced diet

Physical activity

Adequate rest and sleep

Relaxation practice

Gratitude

This week I will _____ (what)
 _____ (how much)
 _____ (when)
 _____ (how often)

Be sure to include:

- What you're going to do. Be very specific.
- How much you're going to do it (amount of time, number of repetitions, etc.).
- When you're going to do it (day of the week and time of the day).
- How many days a week you're going to do it.

Day	Checkoff	Comments
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

Action Plan

Week 4: Action items

- ✓ Self-Care: Self-compassion
- ✓ Imaginal exposure/Real-life exposure
- ✓ Continue setting SMART goals and working towards improvement.
- ✓ If your AOQ scores are elevated, consider taking any additional recommended steps to improve your symptoms.



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SMART Goals

SMART Guideline	Needs Improvement	Improved
S Specific Includes the what, when, where, and how of the goal	“I’ll get more exercise this week.”	“I’ll go on a 15-minute walk on my lunch break on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday this week.”
M Measurable Clearly shows how you’ll reach the goal	“I’ll make better beverage choices at lunch this week.”	“I’ll drink water instead of soda for lunch at least 3 times this week.”
A Action-oriented States an action for the goal	“I’ll improve my self-esteem.”	“I’ll do affirmation exercises for 5 minutes each morning before I leave for work.”
R Realistic Includes a realistic goal	“I’ll jog an hour every day after work (and I’m currently sedentary).”	“I’ll walk at least 15 minutes per day after work on at least 3 days this week.”
T Timely Includes an end date to accomplish the goal	“I’ll go to the grocery store.”	“I’ll go to the grocery store by Sunday night.”

To do at home

- Use your Self-Compassion Journal.
- Practice belly breathing, body scan relaxation, mind watching, or the half-smile practice daily (10 minutes or longer).
- Do imagery exposure and real-life exposure practices.
- Read Session 4 handouts.

Half-smile practice

Start by finding a relaxed position, sitting up or lying down. Close your eyes or let your gaze be softly downward. Bring yourself to the present moment. Let go of the day. Breathe slowly in and out, deepening your breathing. If you like, as you breathe out, open your lips and feel like you're gently blowing out a candle. Feel tension leaving your body.

Now remember a time in the last week when you were mild to moderately annoyed by a situation... someplace where you were just stuck and couldn't do anything about it, such as annoying traffic, a line at the grocery store, or a slightly unpleasant conversation.

Bring the corners of your mouth down into a half-frown. How do you feel? How do your feelings affect how you view the annoying situation?

Now let your mouth be in a neutral position.

And then take your mouth up into a half-smile... not a full smile, but a half-smile. How do you feel? How do your feelings affect how you view the situation?

Just note any changes in your feelings and thoughts about the annoying situation.

Let your mouth be neutral again. Let go of the situation you were recalling and return again to being here, in the present moment.

Once again, take the corners of your mouth up into a half-smile. Breathe, enjoy.

When you're ready, slowly open your eyes, look at your surroundings.

Resources

My Doctor Online



Anxiety article
(kpdoc.org/anxiety)



Wellness resources
(kp.org/wellnessresources)



Get the app:



Apple iOS



Google Play



Self-Care Apps (kp.org/selfcareapps)

- **Calm:** For meditation, mental resilience, and sleep.
- **Headspace Care (formerly Ginger):** 1-on-1 emotional support coaching and self-care activities for many common challenges like anxiety, stress, and relationship issues.



Fitness offerings (kp.org/exercise)

Find access to gyms and fitness locations nationwide. Live, digital fitness classes and on-demand workouts are available.



Classes on stress, sleep, and depression are available to you.

Contact your local Health Education Department to learn more. (kpdoc.org/healtheducation)



Wellness Coaching

1:1 Wellness Coaches (kpdoc.org/wellnesscoaching) are available to help you with stress, smoking cessation, healthy eating, and increasing activity.

Other Resources

■ Books:

Rewire Your Anxious Brain
by Catherine M. Pittmann,
PhD, and Elizabeth N.
Karle, MLIS



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013306-006 (Revised 12/25)