



How to Handle Anxious Thinking

Step One: Notice Your Anxious Thoughts: When we feel anxious, we are usually telling ourselves these two things:

1. Something bad is likely to happen!
2. If something bad happens, I couldn't handle it!

Think of a situation that made you anxious recently and write the specific bad things you worried might happen:

Step Two: Face Fears to Overcome Them

Face Your Fears ("Exposure"): The best and fastest way to get past anxiety is to face the situations that scare you (as long as they are not too dangerous) to learn that bad things aren't so likely to happen, or if they do you can handle them. Your counselor can help you plan this.

Step Two and a Half: To Make Facing Fears a Little Easier, Try These Thinking Strategies!

Coping Thoughts: Try saying something to yourself that helps you feel brave and do what you need to do. Circle any you like, or make your own.

- I can do it!
- I did it last time, I can do it again.
- Be brave.
- I like a good challenge.
- Practice makes it easier!
- Everyone makes a mistake sometimes.
- It is not very likely that something bad will happen.
- I'll get through it.
- Facing the fear will help me get over it, and achieve my goals!
- If something bad happened, I could cope with it.

Write a coping thought or two for yourself here:

Remind Yourself That Anxious Feelings are Helpful: Anxious feelings are signs that your body and your brain are getting ready to perform at their best. Anxiety is actually just a form of excitement. Try telling yourself:

- *I'm just excited!*
- *Anxiety is like pressing the "nitro" button on a fast car—it is the body's way to make me perform my best.*

If you get really stuck, you can use the following questions to challenge your anxious thoughts.

Questions to Challenge Your Anxious Thoughts:

Answer these questions and then see if you can come up with a more accurate or helpful thought.

- *Do I know for sure this is going to happen?*
- *What else might happen, other than what I first thought?*
- *Has it happened before?*
- *Has this happened to anyone I know?*
- *How many times has it happened before?*
- *Is there any evidence it is not likely?*
- *Is there any evidence I could handle it?*
- *After collecting the evidence, what are the odds of _____?*
- *Is worrying about this helping me?*
- *What am I missing out on because I am worrying?*

Now that you've answered these questions, come up with a new, more accurate or more helpful thought to tell yourself when you feel anxious about this: