

# Practical Tips for Managing Anxiety

Anxiety is a normal, human reaction. It keeps us safe and protects us from harm. It lets you know that your body is working to ensure your survival. However, when anxiety is long-term or is interfering with your day-to-day functioning, it may be necessary to intervene. Having some tools to help you cope with anxiety in the moment can be helpful to have on hand.

1. **Self-Awareness** It's important to be aware of what anxiety feels like so that you can notice when you're anxious. Being self-aware is the first step of learning to manage anxiety.
2. **Scale Your Anxiety** Rating the level of anxiety you're feeling (On a scale of 0-10, 10 being worst anxiety ever and 0 being no anxiety at all) and noticing when anxiety is rising and lowering can help you feel a sense of control.
3. **Find Your Coping Skills** Use coping skills of your choosing to lower the level of anxiety to a manageable level.
  - **Grounding Techniques**
    - Notice 3 things in the room that are red, blue, green, orange, etc.
    - Draw your attention to your body. Rub your arms, notice what your feet feel like in your shoes, notice where in your body you feel the anxiety.
  - **Deep Breathing**
    - Deep breathing has been proven to counteract the physical effects of anxiety by creating a relaxation response in the body.
    - Breathe in through your nose to the count of 4, out through your mouth like blowing a bubble to the count of 8. Research has shown that extending your exhale longer than your inhale activates the part of your brain that calms the body.
  - **Guided Relaxation**
    - This can calm the body and may have long-term effects if done consistently.
    - Find audio files, apps or initiate this yourself once you're familiar with it.
4. **Notice Your Thoughts** Your brain doesn't know the difference between a real or an imagined threat – so when our minds tell us we're in danger or we feel like we're being judged, our brains react as if it is threatened and we feel anxious. **Affirmations** can help by restructuring our thoughts to better cope with our anxiety in the future. Find an affirmation that works for you and repeat it to yourself or write it down every day.

## Visualization Exercise

1. Imagine yourself in a situation where you have been anxious in the past. Notice how your body feels when thinking about that situation. What do you feel physically? Where do you feel the anxiety in your body? What color is the anxiety?

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2. Now try to remember some of the thoughts that were going through your mind during that situation. These may be things that you tell yourself internally or things you think other people are saying. Write those here.

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3. Think of a color you associate with calmness and confidence. Close your eyes if you need to. Visualize what calm and confident look like to you. Imagine yourself in the anxious situation, and see that this color of calmness and confidence is filling your body as you breathe in and out, and as your body fills with this color of calmness, you notice the color of anxiety leaving. What color do you see as calm and confident?

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4. Now that you can see yourself calm and confident, what are your thoughts in the situation? What are the thoughts that you may have had in another situation where you felt calm and confident? Write those here. Notice how different these thoughts are from the thoughts in number 2.

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