

Relaxation & Coping Strategies for Anxiety

Diaphragmatic Breathing (aka Balloon Breathing) is useful for managing emotions and can be done anywhere at any time!

Steps for Success:

1. Inhale breath slowly through the nose for 4 counts
2. Pause, hold your breath for 5 counts
3. Exhale breath slowly through the mouth for 6 counts
4. Repeat 3 or more times

Make it fun! Pretend that you are using dragon breaths, smelling the cupcake and blowing out the candles, or smelling flowers

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (aka Lemon Squeezers) helps relax the whole body through tensing and relaxing muscles. This exercise teaches how to identify anxiety within our bodies through muscle tension.

Steps for Success:

1. Starting at the feet, tense the foot muscles for 5 counts, then relax
2. Repeat this throughout the whole body, from the bottom up: legs, bottom, stomach, hands and arms, shoulders, face
3. Tense your whole body at once and hold for 5 counts

Make it fun! To practice this skill, try to stretch like a cat, squish mud between your toes, or hide in your shell

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Grounding (5, 4, 3, 2, 1 technique) focuses on the present moment, away from any thoughts or worries by using each of the senses.

Steps for Success:

- 5 things you SEE
- 4 things you FEEL
- 3 things you HEAR
- 2 things you SMELL
- 1 thing you TASTE

Make it fun! I spy with my little eye, ABC game

Mindfulness focuses one's awareness in the present moment, while accepting any feelings, thoughts, and body sensations. It teaches us to become kind and patient with ourselves and others.

Steps for Success:

1. Pick a time to get comfortable and settled
2. Observe the present moment and focus on your breath
3. Acknowledge thoughts and judgments, let them float by like bubbles in a bathtub or clouds passing in the sky
4. Go back to observing the present moment and focusing on your breath (practice showing kindness to yourself!)
5. Practice, practice, practice!