

## 7 Ways to help with Anxiety in the Moment.

Anxiety can come in and cripple our day to day life. It doesn't have to be in control. With anxiety, our nervous system is running fast, "hot" and always on. We get stuck in flight/ fright. The body and mind are moving way too fast. The key is to slow down. These steps will help you do this!

Remember the acronym B-R-E-A-T-H-E

### ❖ Breathwork:

Breathing techniques are tools for major transformation and healing. Breathwork encompasses a broad range of whole-being therapeutic practices and exercises used to relieve mental, physical, and emotional tension. When you are anxious, most people tend to take quick, shallow breaths, which can trigger your fight or flight response. Once it's activated, a surge of hormones (ie: cortisol/adrenaline) causes an increase in blood pressure and a state of constant alert. Deep belly breathing will activate the body's relaxation response.

Example: inhale to the count of 5, filling your belly first then your chest. Hold breath to the count of 5, and exhale slowly to the count of 5. Repeat this as many times as necessary.

\*Tip: It helps to practice breathing techniques while calm so you know how to do them while you are anxious.

### ❖ Release:

When you are anxious it can feel like every muscle in your body is tense. You need to release it! Relaxation techniques involve refocusing your attention on something calming and increasing awareness of your body.

Learning a basic relaxation technique is easy, free or at low cost, and versatile.

Some examples of relaxation techniques include meditation, yoga, music and art therapy, aromatherapy, and massages

When you have anxiety/stress in your life, one of the ways your body responds is through muscle tension. Progressive muscle relaxation is an exercise that reduces stress and anxiety in your body by having you slowly tense and then relax each muscle. The following exercise can provide an immediate feeling of relaxation. It's best to practice frequently, but it works in the moment as well.

Muscle relaxation exercise:

1. Start by lying or sitting down. Relax your entire body. Take 5 deep, slow breaths
2. Lift your toes upward. Hold for about 5 seconds, then let go and relax for about 30 seconds. Pull your toes downward. Hold for another 5 seconds, and relax for 30 seconds afterward.
3. Next, tense your calf muscles, then let go.
4. Move your knees toward each other. Hold, then let go.
5. Squeeze your thigh muscles. Hold, then let go.
6. Clench your hands. Hold, then let go.
7. Tense your arms. Hold, then let go.
8. Squeeze your buttocks. Pause, then let go.
9. Contract your abdominal muscles. Pause, then let go.
10. Inhale and tighten your chest. Hold, then exhale and let go.
11. Raise your shoulders to your ears. Pause, then let go
12. Open your mouth wide. Hold, then let go.
13. Close your eyes tightly. Pause, then release.
14. Lift your eyebrows. Hold, then release.

❖ Environment:

Get some fresh air! Leave entirely or just leave the situation for a few minutes. The temperature, air circulation and overall energy in a room can increase your anxiety. Remove yourself from that environment. If possible, go outside for a few minutes. Evaluate your environment. Notice anything different? Look around. Be aware of sights and sounds. What is going on right now? Shift your focus on staying in the present moment. A good way to practice being present is to follow the 333 rule. Simply look around and name 3 things you can see, 3 things you can hear and lastly, move 3 parts of your body. This is a mental trick that can help center your mind bringing you back into the present moment.

❖ Acceptance and Affirmations:

Allow yourself to say that you are anxious. When you label how you are feeling and allow yourself to express it, the anxiety you are experiencing may decrease into it. Notice it. Sit with it. Accept it. Accepting your anxiety does not mean liking it. It simply means you would benefit by accepting reality as it is and in that moment, reality includes anxiety. Acceptance is important because ignoring it often makes matters worse. Getting into a pattern of rethinking helps train your brain to come up with a rational way to deal with your anxious thoughts. This will actually help lessen your tendency of falling back into old patterns.

AMP it up with Affirmations/Mantras/Prayers!

- Affirmations are simple, motivational statements that are designed to create self change. They can serve as inspiration or simply reminders. Self affirmation encourages you to think positively. Therefore, positive affirmations are powerful when it comes to helping with anxiety. They release you from fear, anxiety, and worry. When affirmations are repeated over and over again they begin to take charge of your thoughts, slowly changing your pattern

of thinking. Some great examples of affirmations to say to yourself are:

I am enough.

I am at peace with who I am as a person.

I trust myself to make the right decision.

I allow myself to be who I am without judgement.

- Mantras are sacred sounds or phrases used in meditation. It is believed to raise the physical vibration and positively affect the body and mind. Simply repeating “om” or “aum” will help ease anxiety
- Prayers are said more for the meaning rather than the sound of words. Prayers is a way to communicate with God and it is done by those who trust the power of word and thought.

#### ❖ Thought Challenge

It is tricky to identify negative thinking patterns because our thoughts feel so immediate and true. We have a habit of accepting them uncritically, without any questions. Our mind can keep us in a mental cage with our ruminating thoughts running on repetitive mental loops, which can trigger or worsen anxiety.

It is time to be a story buster, to reframe your thinking patterns, and to let the dust settle in your mind. Take captive every thought. Ask yourself, “what is true right now?” Challenging your thoughts is a repetitive practice, but it is a very successful one. Get your mind out of a cage and into the open fields of grace; take it out of the tight mental circles that are keeping you from finding true fulfillment and happiness.

\*Tip: This is a wonderful opportunity to add gratitude practice to your thought patterns. Gratitude does not have to be saved for the “big” things in life. The habit of being grateful starts with appreciating every good

thing in your life and recognizing that there is nothing too small for you to be thankful for.

#### ❖ Humor

Humor is about seeing the playfulness in life, even when things seem hopeless; it's about choosing to laugh instead of fretting over the obstacles of life. A good sense of humor is never insensitive, it pokes fun and heals everyone without putting anyone else down or making them uncomfortable.

It's not hard to find humor. You can use apps, movies, tv shows or even your own friends and family to help lift your spirits.

The distraction technique is any activity that you engage in to redirect your mind off current emotions. Instead of putting all of your energy into an upsetting emotion, you shift your attention to something else. When you distract yourself, you are able to manage those strong emotions. Some examples of how you can shift your focus include coloring, reading, listening to music, painting, taking a walk, drawing, meditating, cuddling with pets, and journaling.

\*Quick tip: You can also run your hands under cold water while focusing on feeling the water run over them. The sensorial stimulation of the cold water can break through feelings that often accompany anxiety.

#### ❖ Engage

Exercise in almost any form can act as an anxiety/stress reliever. Being active can boost your feel good endorphins and distract you from daily worries. When made part of your daily routine, physical activity can help you unwind and become an important part of your approach to ease anxiety.

Always choose something you can enjoy and stick with. Set achievable goals that fit your schedule. It is important not think of exercise as just

another thing to do on your list. Some other ideas of exercise are walking, running, dancing, yoga, pilates, and even gardening. It's all about getting active!

Engage in positive self talk! You may not have spent much time thinking about your inner voice, much less giving it attention. Start by following one simple note: Don't say anything to yourself that you wouldn't say someone you love. Be gentle and encouraging, respond with positive affirmations of what is good about you. Some examples are:

- I can learn from this situation and grow as a person
- I am capable, strong, and I can get through this
- I can't control what other people think, say or do. I can only control myself.