



FAMILYSUPPORT.NET

STEPS FOR DEALING WITH ANXIETY

Family Support Network | Susan Lieberman
3292 Bayview Avenue Suite 202, Toronto ON, M2M45J
tel:416.512.6356 | web: www.familysupport.net



STEPS FOR DEALING WITH ANXIETY

If you've ever experienced anxiety or a full blown panic attack then you know how overwhelming it can be. Anxiety can hit without warning and can leave you feeling helpless, depressed and frustrated. Luckily, there are many tools and strategies that can be used to deal with these feelings and very real physical reactions.

SELF-TALK:

1. Recognize your physical symptoms of anxiety (i.e. stomach aches, sweating, pounding heart, shortness of breath). When you recognize your physical symptoms, use them as "cues" to begin relaxation techniques and steps 2-4.
2. Recognize your "self-talk" when you are anxious. Self-talk is what the individual says to themselves- often internally and without awareness. When a person is anxious, their self-talk tends to be negative and critical. It is important to recognize what you say to yourself and what you are worried about. For example, if you are anxious about flying your negative self-talk might be "the plane could crash." Or, if you are in school and suffer from test anxiety then your negative self-talk may be "there is no way I am going to do well on this test."
3. Think about different coping statements that you can use in the situation that is provoking anxiety. These statements are based on problem solving and are a form of positive self-talk. Statements such as "I can do it," or "I studied hard and am going to great," are examples of positive self-talk. Positive self-talk takes practice because unfortunately it is human nature to think more negatively. It can be helpful to think about possible stressful situations before they happen and what positive reactions you can have to them. Prepare yourself and practice your positive self-talk before anxiety occurs.
4. After you have had a chance to put you positive self-talk into action, it is important to follow-up with yourself. Ask yourself what you liked about how you handled the situation and what would you do differently? Afterwards, reward yourself for what you feel you handled well in the anxious situation.

It is important to realize just how powerful the human brain is. How we talk to ourselves can determine how well we succeed and how much we accomplish. With self-talk we can gain control over anxiety and take away it's power. Do not underestimate the strength of your own words. Anxiety is not to be feared, it is to be conquered.



BREATHING:

Aside from self-talk, breathing is another useful technique for dealing with anxiety. When an individual begins to feel anxious, their breathing often becomes more shallow and faster. This is often identified as shortness of breath or hyperventilating. There is a visualization strategy which helps to slow breathing and thus decrease the feeling of anxiety.

- Imagine a square or find something in the room that is square i.e. a picture on a wall
- Starting at the bottom of one of the edges on the square, slowly take a breath in as you visualize an arrow moving from the bottom to the top of the edge. This breath in should take approximately 10 seconds.
- Once at the top, hold your breath as you visualize the arrow going across the square edge.
- As you visualize the arrow going down the next edge, slowly exhale- again, this exhale should last approximately 10 seconds.
- For the last edge, visualize the arrow going across as you once again hold your breath.

With enough practice, this breathing technique should become familiar enough so that you can implement it quite naturally as soon as you begin to feel anxious. Along with self-talk, breathing is a technique that can significantly decrease the degree of your anxiety and can give you back some of the control that you feel you have lost.