Anxiety and Ways to Overcome It

Participant Handout & Reflection Workbook | Anxiety and recovery

Anxiety is a common response to uncertainty, stress, and perceived danger. It can sometimes help us prepare. When it becomes intense, persistent, or disruptive, additional support can help. This worksheet is for reflection, not diagnosis.

1 | Understanding anxiety

Anxiety may show up as worried thoughts, restlessness, muscle tension, stomach discomfort, a racing heart, or a wish to avoid a situation. People experience it differently.

Describe a situation that caused anxiety. What did you notice?

_____

_____

_____

_____

2 | Anxiety and its effects

Think of a recent or fictional example. Notice the difference between the situation, your interpretation, your body response, and what you did next.

Situation:

_____

_____

Thought or prediction:

_____

_____

Body sensations:

_____

_____

Urge or action:

_____

_____

Short-term result:

_____

_____

3 | Anxiety and substance use

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Some people use alcohol or other substances to manage anxious feelings. Others experience anxiety associated with intoxication, withdrawal, or separate health conditions. Not everyone has the same experience.

How have substances been connected with anxiety for you, if at all? A fictional example is also welcome.

_____

_____

_____

_____

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4 | Notice, examine, respond

Notice: “I am having the thought that ____.” Thoughts are experiences, not automatically facts.

Examine: What supports this thought? What other explanations are possible? What would I say to a friend?

Respond: Choose a realistic, balanced thought and one supportive action.

My anxious thought:

_____

_____

Evidence that supports it:

_____

_____

Evidence that challenges it or offers another explanation:

_____

_____

A balanced alternative thought:

_____

_____

One action I can take:

_____

_____

5 | My coping options

Check or circle what might help. None is required or universally effective: walking or stretching; feet-on-floor grounding; writing thoughts down; talking with a trusted person; a comfortable breathing pace; a structured routine; sleep support; counseling or other treatment; attending a recovery support group.

One skill I will try this week:

_____

_____

When I will try it:

_____

_____

Who or what can support me:

_____

_____

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6 | Discussion and reflection

1. Describe a situation that has caused you to experience anxiety. What did you notice in your body, thoughts, and actions?

_____

_____

2. How, if at all, have alcohol or other substances been connected to attempts to manage anxiety? You may use a fictional example instead.

_____

_____

3. Which anxious thought might benefit from a second look?

_____

_____

4. What is one coping response you can practice, and who could support you?

_____

_____

When to seek additional help

If anxiety is intense, persistent, or interfering with daily life, consider speaking with a healthcare or mental-health professional. Sudden severe chest pain, fainting, or significant trouble breathing requires urgent medical assessment. Alcohol or sedative withdrawal can require medical care. In the U.S., call or text 988 for emotional crisis support; use emergency services for immediate danger.

Educational notice: Adapted from the original “Anxiety and Ways to Overcome It” group lesson attributed to Joseph Zacarolo, CADC-R, Carolina Center for Recovery. This adaptation does not imply endorsement by that organization.

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