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Coping with Anxiety

Introduction

Most people experience a healthy level of anxiety each day whether it be worrying about an upcoming job interview, a test, or even a first date. However, some people experience anxiety that interrupts their daily activities. Generally, this level of anxiety can be reduced using grounding and breathing techniques.

Physical Symptoms of Anxiety

Anxiety comes in different levels from mild to panic which generally have different physical symptoms. Below is a chart detailing different physical symptoms for different levels of anxiety. This list does not cover each symptom, and they may change depending on why the anxiety is occurring.

Level of Anxiety	Physical Symptoms
Mild	Increased Heart Rate Increased Sweat Production Restlessness
Moderate	Nausea Feeling Tense Increased Breathing
Severe	Feeling Lightheaded Shaking/Trembling

	Rapid Breathing
Panic	Hyperventilation Rapid Heart Rate Chest Pain

Grounding Techniques

Notice Your Surroundings

Take a moment to observe your surroundings. Are there people around? Is it loud or quiet? What does the temperature feel like? Do you notice any strong smells? What else do you notice about your surroundings?

This allows you to take an inventory of your surroundings. Anxiety can often make people feel like they are in danger even when there is none. Taking an inventory of your surroundings may indirectly feel safer. This activity can also bring your mind into the present instead of focusing on your anxious thoughts.

Shock Your Senses

This can be done using ice or eating something very sour. Note: When using ice make sure to not hold it in the same hand too long.

This tool is best used when the anxious thoughts and feelings are becoming overwhelming. Shocking your senses forces you to be back in the present in a healthy manner. Eating something extremely sour or holding cold ice are difficult sensations to be distracted from while posing no risk to you or your body. This can allow you to be quickly redirected from building panic.

Breathing Techniques

Box Breathing

Breathe in for five seconds, hold your breath for five seconds, breathe out for five seconds, hold for five seconds, and repeat.

This allows you to focus on your breathing rather than the feelings of anxiety. This technique can also help regulate your breathing and slow your heart rate which can reduce the other physical symptoms of anxiety.

Belly Breathing

Place one hand on your stomach and the other hand on your chest. As you practice deep breathing attempt to breathe through your stomach rather than your chest. You can also place a hand in front of your mouth to notice the temperature of your breath. Warm air usually means you are breathing slowly and through your stomach while cool air usually means you are taking fast, shallow breaths through your chest.

This allows you to focus on changing your breathing patterns while also connecting with your body physically. Focusing on your breathing itself, where you are breathing from, and the temperature/speed of your breaths can take your mind away from your anxious thoughts back into the present.

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