

How to Control Anxiety

20 Techniques to help you deal with Anxiety, Fear & Worry

1. Befriend your feelings – accept them, stop fighting them. Work with non-attachment, non-reaction and non-resistance to allow your feelings to just be. This allows you to be aware of your feelings without having to react to them instantly. Regulation of your attention to your feelings leads directly to regulation of your emotions, including anxiety, fear or worry.
2. Have compassion for the you who is suffering – compassion can feel like empathy, concern, kindness, care, forgiveness, mercy, benevolence, thoughtfulness, tolerance, supportiveness, acceptance, understanding, friendliness, sympathy. Feel the pain and be kind to yourself in the midst of your pain. It means entering into your experience with softness and kindness, which takes the struggle out of it. Emotional freedom starts with kindness toward your suffering self.
3. Ask yourself "What is the compassionate thing to do for me right now?" and "Is this harming me?"
4. Treat yourself to an enjoyable activity such as: music, a vacation or break, go flying kites, attend worship, think about sex, read a novel, buy a new CD, take a drive, garden, go for a bike ride or swim, go to a movie, cook something delicious, go for a walk, collect shells.....
5. Silence the inner critic.
6. Engage in an intentional activity that has meaning for you.
7. Consciously engage with an activity or person, be present, and connect.
8. Soften into your body and your belly or to a feeling. Use soft breath and soft awareness
9. Use a mantra or phrase to focus your awareness on something nurturing and supportive such as "This too will pass", or "It's just another day", or "It is what it is."
10. Use a peaceful, positive visualization, engaging your imagination and emotions in a positive, supportive way.
11. Have compassion for your brain which works so hard at worrying, and being anxious.
12. Relate to others – connect with someone so that you don't feel isolated. This helps create meaning.
13. Cultivate the values you hold most dear and engage in an activity that manifests those values.
14. Allow yourself to consciously savour something – such as a moment of gratitude, a beautiful sky, a conversation with a friend.....
15. Focus on your strengths. Name them, recall them, feel them, appreciate them.
16. When you identify a negative emotion, name it and then don't resist it, but don't identify with it. Find a place of awareness and non-attachment.
17. Cultivate flexibility and tolerance. Meditate on the mantra "I am loving, patient, tolerant and kind with myself and others." Work at really feeling each of these characteristics as you repeat this phrase.
18. Shift your awareness to your heart and out of your head.
19. Use slow, deep abdominal breathing to get yourself out of the fight of flight.
20. Say hello to your Worry Wart, or Pleaser, or Perfectionist, or Scared Self and reassure them that you are okay, and you need to be in charge, not them.

These techniques have evolved from 26 years in private practice and are inspired by many great teachers and colleagues, including Christopher Germer, Stephen Levine and others.