

things you can do to feel a little better

#1 relax your body to relax your mind

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page 1: progressive muscle relaxation

anxiety includes both emotional distress and physical tension

changing emotions is hard, but you can learn how to change the physical symptoms of anxiety

if you can relax your body, you will also decrease your emotional distress

progressive muscle relaxation is a technique used to untense the body and decrease anxiety

anyone can learn it with practice

page 2: how to practice progressive muscle relaxation

start by tensing your arm (not too tight)

make a fist, bend your elbow, curl your bicep

notice how the tension feels

really notice it

page 3: let the tension go

slowly release the tension in your arm

untense it as much as you can

really let go

page 4: now the important part

when you think you've relaxed your arm as much as possible, untense it **even more**

take your time

notice how relaxation feels

does your arm feel warm? tingly? heavy? light?

try tensing and untensing again, becoming familiar with these sensations

page 5: you got this

now that you know how to do progressive muscle relaxation with your arms, practice tensing and untensing different areas:

1. arms and forearms
2. forehead and lips
3. jaws and tongue
4. neck and shoulders
5. abdomen and torso
6. legs and buttocks

practice at least 15 minutes every day for the best results

page 6: relax your body to relax your mind

your body and mind are connected: if you can relax your body, you will soothe your emotions too

with practice, you will learn to notice and reduce the physical symptoms of emotional distress before anxiety becomes overwhelming

progressive muscle relaxation is not a cure for the problems which cause anxiety, but it can make coping with anxiety a little easier

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#2 cultivate peace with loving-kindness meditation

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page 1: loving-kindness meditation

loving-kindness meditation is a type of Buddhist meditation

anyone can try it, you don't have to be Buddhist or religious

the purpose of loving—kindness meditation is to cultivate feelings of compassion and peace towards yourself and others

page 2: send loving-kindness to yourself

find a comfortable position and take a few slow deep breaths

meditation practice begins by sending loving-kindness to yourself

some people feel selfish when they send loving-kindness to themselves

but receiving unconditional love is never selfish

page 3: four wishes for yourself

set a timer for 5-10 minutes and repeat these wishes quietly to yourself:

“may I be safe”

“may I be healthy”

“may I be happy”

“may I be at peace”

take your time and pay attention to the meaning of each word

page 4: send loving-kindness to others

if you want, you can also send loving-kindness to someone you choose

here are some people to whom you might send loving-kindness, arranged from easiest to most challenging:

- a loved one
- a neutral acquaintance
- a stranger
- a difficult person

- all beings everywhere

select the recipient of your loving-kindness and picture them in your mind

page 5: four wishes for someone else

set a timer for 5-10 minutes and repeat these wishes quietly while thinking about the recipient of your loving-kindness:

“may you be safe”

“may you be healthy”

“may you be happy”

“may you be at peace”

take your time and pay attention to the meaning of each word

page 6: keep cultivating peace

you can practice loving-kindness meditation whenever you like

consider contacting a Buddhist practitioner or teacher if you want to learn more about this type of meditation

loving-kindness meditation is not a cure for all problems, but it can make coping a little easier

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#3 achieve your goals with better to-do lists

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page 1: why use a to-do list?

to-do lists move information outside of your memory, onto a piece of paper

this is called externalizing information

if something is written down in a place you will see, you don't need to worry about forgetting it

people who struggle with forgetfulness, inattention, and low motivation can benefit from using to-do lists

these tips will help you use to-do lists more effectively

page 2: to-do list basics

use no more than **two** to-do lists: one for school/work and one for personal tasks and commitments

all tasks should go on one of these two lists (no sticky notes)

write your to-do lists on **paper** (no smartphone apps)

keep your to-do lists in an **easily visible** place where you will look at them at least once **every day**

ideally, you will keep your to-do lists in a visible place where you can look at them **multiple times** throughout the day

page 3: break up big tasks into small ones

will any task on your to-do list take more than 30 minutes?

is there a task you are avoiding, one that has been on your to-do list for a while?

break these up into smaller steps

you can also try writing only the next unfinished step on your to-do list

example: instead of writing "wash clothes" you could write "gather clothes into laundry basket"

page 4: prioritize tasks

visually mark the most important or urgent items on your to-do list

example: you can circle, underline, or star these items

beware of perfectionism

striving to maintain a perfectly organized or aesthetically pleasing to-do list will discourage you from using it

give yourself permission to keep a messy imperfect list

page 5: increase your motivation to complete tasks

not making progress on your to-do list?

schedule alarms or electronic reminders to remind you to look at your to-do list throughout the day

when adding tasks to your to-do list, write why completing the task is important to you

example: instead of writing “gather clothes into laundry basket” you could write “gather clothes into laundry basket so my floor will be tidy and my bedroom will be more restful”

page 6: record completion dates

next to each completed item, write the date you crossed it off of your to-do list

save old lists as a reminder of all the past goals you achieved

give yourself a chance to establish new habits

it takes time to establish new habits

commit to using these tips every day for **four weeks** before you decide they won't work for you

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#4 regulate strong emotions, part I

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page 1: emotion regulation

emotion regulation skills help you to change the duration and intensity of strong emotions

you can't change which emotion you are feeling

but you can make negative emotions pass more quickly and gently

before learning emotion regulation skills, you should practice not reacting to negative emotions immediately

name the emotion you are having

don't avoid or resist it

(avoidance makes negative emotions more intense)

page 2: selecting the situation

most emotions are reactions to **situations**

before entering a situation or starting an activity, predict how it will make you feel

be intentional about the situations you enter or avoid

avoiding situations that cause negative emotions is usually **not** a long-term solution

avoidance can prevent you from doing things you need to achieve your goals

but you can choose when to enter difficult situations, and when to withdraw, rest, and prepare

page 3: change the situation

some behaviors can help you change the emotional impact of a difficult situation

speak up for yourself in an assertive voice

ask others for what you need to get through the situation

(you can practice what you want to say beforehand)

dress yourself in a way that makes you feel more confident or comfortable

support another person in the same difficult situation

page 4: change your focus

sometimes people focus their attention on things that prolong negative emotions

rumination is focusing on events in the past

worry is focusing on events in the future

notice when you are ruminating or worrying, and try changing your focus to something in the present moment

find something to focus on in the present situation that makes you feel curious, peaceful, amused, safe, or grateful

page 5: challenge your beliefs about the situation

two beliefs can prolong or intensify negative emotions:

- 1) believing that unwanted events **must** affect how you see yourself
- 2) believing that unwanted emotions are **unacceptable**

notice when you ask yourself “what does this situation mean for me?” or when you tell yourself “I shouldn’t feel this way!”

challenge these beliefs by saying “maybe this isn’t about me” and “it’s okay to feel how I feel”

page 6: ride the emotional wave

negative emotions are sometimes unavoidable

resisting or avoiding them will only prolong negative emotions

instead of resisting, imagine each negative emotion is a wave

you can ride the wave as it rises and falls

listen to what the emotion is teaching you about your situation

watch as the emotion passes

(every negative emotion will eventually pass)