

# Anxiety Toolbox

Thoughts, Feelings, Behaviors

Student Workbook



**University of Colorado – Boulder  
Counseling and Psychiatric Services  
(303) 492-2277  
counseling.colorado.edu**

Feedback Form: [https://cuboulder.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_3L7zIHZZMCIMyMJ](https://cuboulder.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3L7zIHZZMCIMyMJ)

# Welcome!

Welcome to **Anxiety Toolbox**, a fast-paced, 2-session seminar intended to help increase your understanding and knowledge about anxiety. The goal is to provide you with some skills to recognize and manage symptoms you may be experiencing. We hope you find it helpful.

The goal of this seminar is to provide you with life-long tools you can use while facing anxiety-triggering situations. Remember, this intervention is not intended to “get rid of” your anxiety. While occasionally unpleasant, some anxiety can actually be a helpful and motivating emotion. Our hope is that these two sessions provide you with a jumping board from which to integrate skills into your daily life in the service of reducing anxiety.

By the end of this course, you will have received a lot of information and at times it may feel overwhelming. Remember that like any skill (e.g., learning to ride a bike), the skills you will learn in **Anxiety Toolbox** take time and practice to master. At times, you may encounter obstacles and/or find it difficult to integrate these skills into your daily life. That’s okay, it’s how change works, and as with all change, it’s important to practice as much as you can, even after encountering setbacks.

Think of your practice of these skills as a form of “mental health hygiene.” At the outset, it may seem tedious and you may question why you need to practice these skills so often. Think of it like dental hygiene—you brush your teeth multiple times a day to prevent the buildup of plaque and ultimately to prevent cavities. Similar to brushing your teeth, daily practice prevents a buildup of anxiety and stress over time. The more you practice and use these skills as part of your daily routine, the less tedious they may seem because they simply become a regular part of daily life.

Should you wish to focus more in depth on any of your anxiety related concerns, you may debrief with a therapist following completion of **Anxiety Toolbox** to discuss options.

If at any time you feel that you need additional support, please let your **Anxiety Toolbox** leader know or contact CAPS at (303)-492- 2277. You may also find additional resources online at [www.colorado.edu/counseling](http://www.colorado.edu/counseling)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is Anxiety Toolbox?**

Anxiety Toolbox is a fast-paced two-session seminar specifically designed to help people who struggle with a variety of anxiety-related concerns (e.g., panic attacks, Generalized Anxiety, test anxiety). The goal of this seminar is to provide education on anxiety and to teach coping skills for managing anxiety symptoms.

### **Why does Anxiety Toolbox use a 2-session model?**

Teaching Anxiety Toolbox over the course of 2 sessions allows you sufficient time to learn the concepts with time to practice between sessions. Keeping it to two 60-minute sessions allows you to find time in your busy schedule to learn these skills.

### **What if I need more than 2 weeks to learn the model?**

You are not alone. The skills taught in Anxiety Toolbox are difficult and take time to build. For this reason, we offer follow up options for anyone who would like additional support. Please see the front desk to schedule a follow up.

### **What if I don't feel comfortable in groups?**

Many people feel a little anxious about participating in a group. Anxiety Toolbox is structured and curriculum-driven, like an academic class. You are not required to speak to the entire group if you do not feel comfortable doing so. The facilitators respect each participant's right to share only what they are comfortable sharing and never require you to share sensitive or potentially embarrassing information.

### **What if I have an urgent need to see a counselor during Anxiety Toolbox?**

Simply let the facilitator or CAPS front desk staff know and they will facilitate you getting the help you need. Walk in hours at CAPS are Mondays through Friday 10am to 3:30pm with limited exceptions. The CAPS phone number is available to you 24/7 at (303) 492-2277.

### **Why do I have to do homework?**

The focus of this workshop is on building skills to cope with anxiety; in order to achieve that goal, regular practice is essential. Any homework offered is simply a suggestion for ongoing practice. The more you practice, the more you may find you get out of this workshop. You will not be required to provide your responses at any time.

# IN SESSION WORKSHEETS

# Common Anxiety Symptoms

## Physical Symptoms

- Increased heart rate
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain or pressure
- Choking sensation
- Dizziness, lightheadedness
- Sweating, hot flashes, chills
- Nausea, upset stomach, diarrhea
- Trembling, shaking
- Weakness, unsteadiness, faintness
- Tense muscles, rigidity
- Dry mouth
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Behavioral Symptoms

- **Avoidance** of threat cues or situations
- **Escape**, flight
- Pursuit of safety, reassurance
- Restlessness, agitation, pacing
- Hyperventilation
- Freezing, motionlessness
- Difficulty speaking
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Cognitive Symptoms

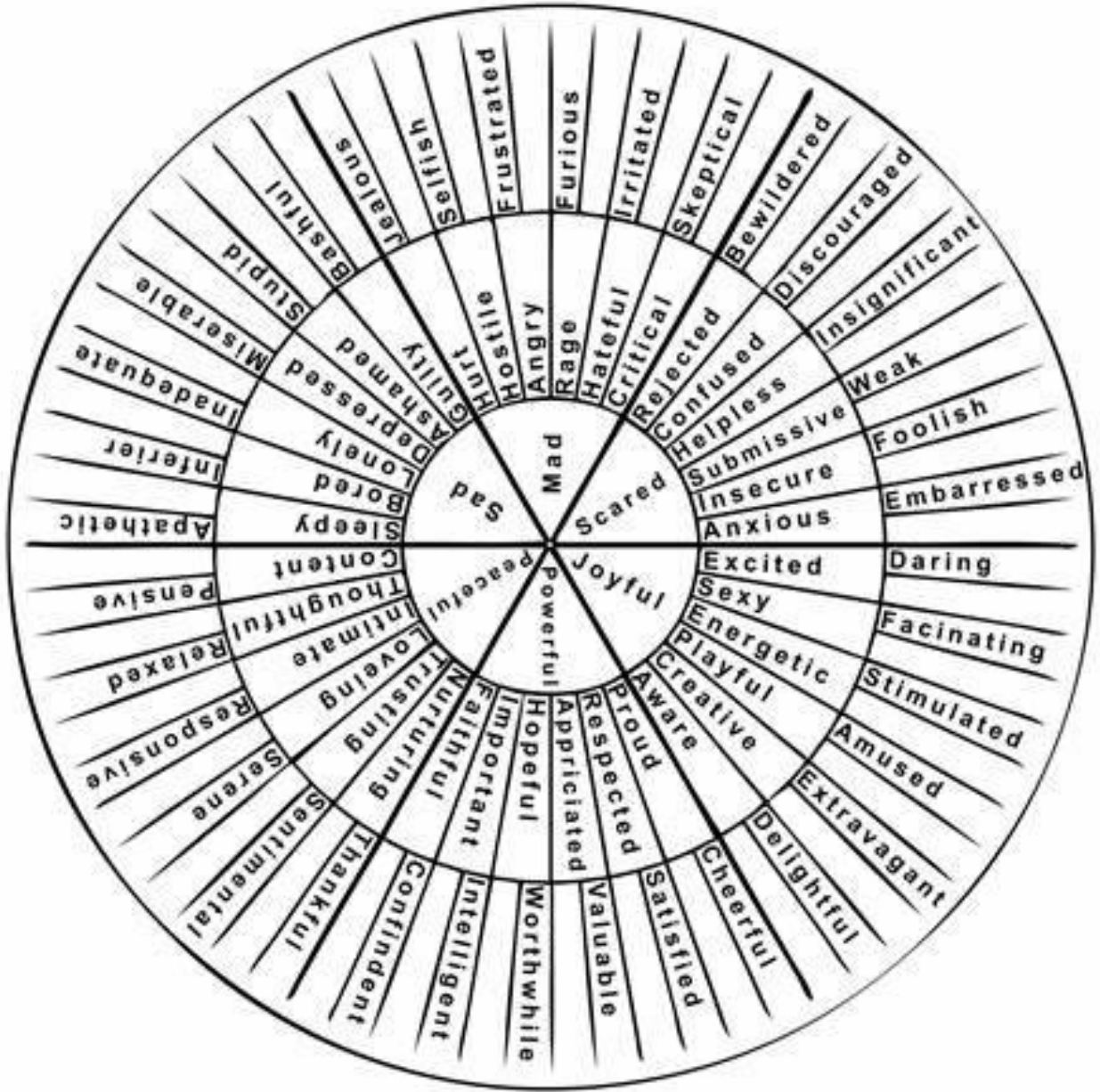
- Fear of losing control, being unable to cope
- Fear of physical injury or death
- Fear of “going crazy”
- Fear of negative evaluations by others
- Frightening thoughts, images, or memories
- Perceptions of unreality or detachment
- Poor concentration, confusion, distractibility
- Narrowing of attention, hypervigilance for threat
- Poor memory
- Difficulty in reasoning, loss of objectivity
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Emotional Symptoms

- Feeling nervous, tense, wound up
- Feeling frightened, fearful, terrified
- Being edgy, jumpy, jittery
- Being impatient, frustrated
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Adapted from *The Anxiety and Worry Workbook* by Clark and Beck

# Feelings Wheel



# Cross Sectional Formulation

**Situation** (*When? Where? What? With whom? What did you feel anxious about?*)

A student invited me to a party, but I didn't know her very well and felt anxious about going.

**Physical** (*When anxious, what physical sensations did you experience? What did you notice in your body?*)

**Heart racing, tight chest, shallow breathing, hot**

**Emotional** (*What emotions came up for you when you felt anxious?*)

**Scared, ashamed,  
Lonely, agitated, nervous**

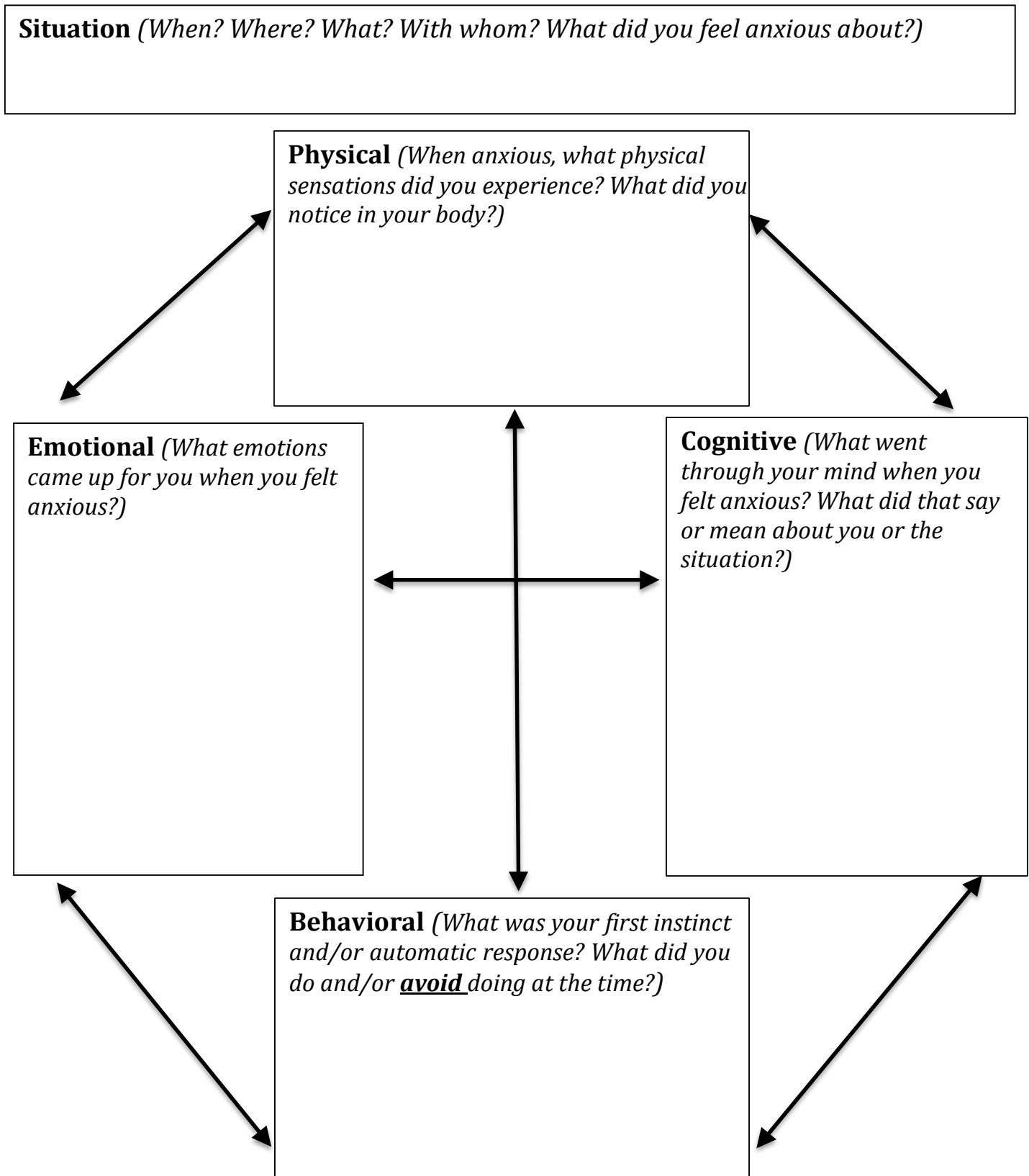
**Cognitive** (*What went through your mind when you felt anxious? What did that say or mean about you or the situation?*)

**I won't know anyone at the party and will feel awkward. No one will like me because I'm so socially awkward. I won't have fun. But if I say no, this person won't like me and I wouldn't make friends.**

**Behavioral** (*What was your first instinct and/or automatic response? What did you do and/or avoid doing at the time?*)

**My first instinct was to say no. I avoided saying no but telling her that I would think about it. I never got back to her. I didn't go to the party.**


# Cross Sectional Formulation





# Unhelpful Thinking Styles

**All or nothing thinking**




Sometimes called 'black and white thinking'

*If I'm not perfect I have failed*


*Either I do it right or not at all*

**Over-generalizing**



Seeing a pattern based upon a single event, or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw

**Mental filter**



Only paying attention to certain types of evidence.

*Noticing our failures but not seeing our successes*

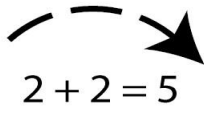
**Disqualifying the positive**



Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done for some reason or another

*That doesn't count*

**Jumping to conclusions**

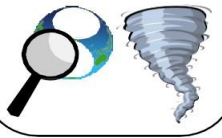


There are two key types of jumping to conclusions:

- **Mind reading** (imagining we know what others are thinking)
- **Fortune telling** (predicting the future)


$2 + 2 = 5$

**Magnification (catastrophizing) & minimization**



Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophizing), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important

**Emotional reasoning**



Assuming that because we feel a certain way what we think must be true.


*I feel embarrassed so I must be an idiot*

**should must**

Using critical words like 'should', 'must', or 'ought' can make us feel guilty, or like we have already failed

If we apply 'shoulds' to other people the result is often frustration

**Labeling**



Assigning labels to ourselves or other people

*I'm a loser*

*I'm completely useless*

*They're such an idiot*

**Personalization**

**"this is my fault"**

Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn't completely your fault. Conversely, blaming other people for something that was your fault.

## Alternative Response Worksheet

**Situation:** *(When? Where? What? With whom? What did you feel anxious about?)*

**A student invited me to a party, but I didn't know her very well and felt anxious about going.**

**Alternative Thoughts and Images:** *(Are these thoughts helpful? Are the anxious thoughts 100% true/accurate, 100% of the time? What are other ways of looking at this? What is the bigger picture? )*

***I may not be as socially awkward as I think.***

***If she invited me, she probably wants me there.***

***I might still have an okay time even if I am anxious***

**Alternative Behaviors:** *(What could you do that would be more helpful for you, others, &/or the situation? What are coping strategies that might be helpful?)*

**Coping Strategies I Can Use:**

- Deep breathing*
- Distract myself*
- Seek support from a friend/ family member*
- Do a pleasurable activity*
- Use alternative response worksheet*

**Alternative Feelings:** *(What are feelings that are more helpful? What if you acted and thought differently about the situation? How might these changes help you feel differently?)*

***Excited***

***Wanted***

***Liked***

***Hopeful***

**Original Outcome:** *(What was the original outcome?)* ***I stayed in my room and watched Netflix.***

**Desired Outcome:** *(Using these new alternatives, what would you like the outcome to be in the future?)* ***I want to go to the party so that I can make friends. If I feel too uncomfortable, I can always leave.***

## If you're having trouble, ask yourself these questions:

Whenever we recognize an anxiety-related thought, feeling or behavior, it can be very helpful to ask ourselves the following questions:

### Alternative THOUGHTS:

1. What are other ways of looking at this situation?
2. Am I looking at the whole picture?
3. What might be a more helpful way of picturing this situation?
4. What unhelpful thinking styles might I be using here (see below)?
5. What is the evidence that my thoughts are true? Is there an alternative way of thinking about this situation that is more true?
6. What is the probability that my thoughts will happen? What are some other things that could happen that are equally, if not more, probable?
7. Have I had any experiences in the past that suggests that this thought might not be COMPLETELY true ALL of the time?
8. Can I really predict the future? Is it helpful to try? What is more helpful?
9. Am I exaggerating how bad the result might be? What is more realistic?
10. Can I read people's minds? What else might they be thinking (that's not so negative)?
11. If a friend or loved one were in this situation and had this thought, what would I tell them?

<b><i>Common Cognitive Distortions (Unhelpful Thinking Styles)</i></b>	
<b>All or Nothing Thinking:</b> thinking in absolute, black and white categories	<b>Over-generalizing:</b> seeing a pattern based upon a single event or being overly broad in conclusions we draw
<b>Mental Filter:</b> only paying attention to certain types of evidence (e.g., dwelling on the negatives)	<b>Disqualifying the positive:</b> discounting the good things that have happened
<b>Jumping to Conclusions:</b> <b>Mind reading:</b> imagining we know what others are thinking <b>Fortune telling:</b> predicting the future	<b>Magnification (catastrophizing) and minimization:</b> blowing things out of proportion or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important
<b>Emotional Reasoning:</b> assuming because we feel a certain way, what we think must be true	<b>Should/Must Thinking:</b> Using words like "should", "must", "ought to" or "have to"
<b>Labeling:</b> assigning labels to ourselves or others	<b>Personalization:</b> blaming yourself for something you weren't entirely responsible for OR blaming others and overlooking ways you may have contributed to the outcome

Alternative BEHAVIORS:

1. What could I do in the moment that would be more helpful?
2. What's the best thing to do (for me, for others, or for the situation)?
3. If my feared situation happens, how will I cope? What coping skills can I use to handle my feared situation? What have I done in the past that was successful?
4. Am I needing to work on acceptance, letting go of control, being okay with less than perfect, or having faith in the future and myself?
5. Breathe: Focus your attention on your breathing. Imagine you have a balloon in your belly, inflating on the in-breath, deflating on the out-breath.

Alternative FEELINGS:

1. What might it feel like if I acted/thought differently?
2. When I'm not feeling this way, do I think about this situation differently?
3. Are there any strengths or positives in me or the situation that I might be ignoring?
4. What else might this anxiety be related to? Is it *really* about feeling\_\_\_\_\_?
5. Tell yourself: "This feeling will pass. It's a normal body reaction."

# Alternative Response Worksheet

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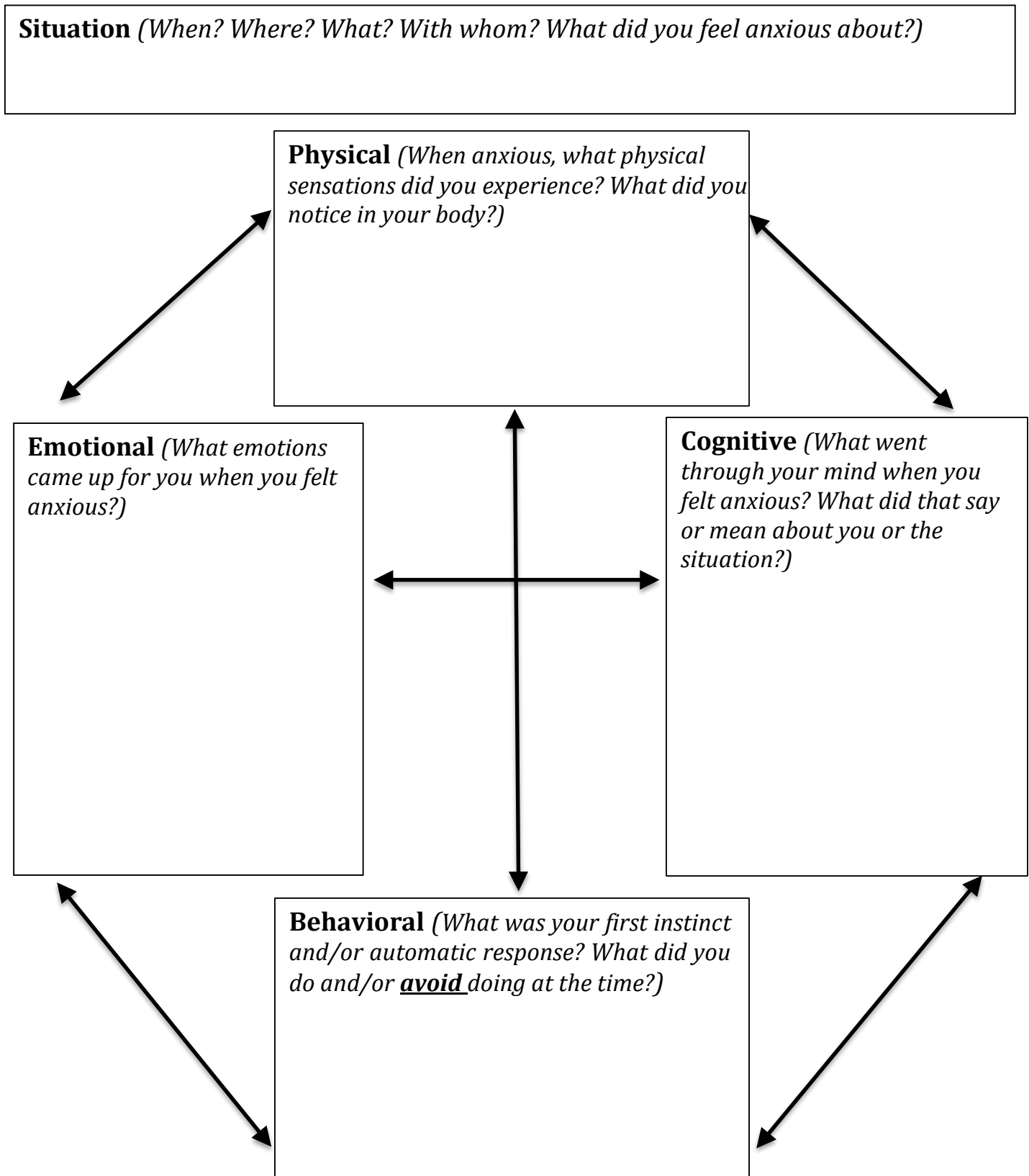
**Alternative Feelings:** (*What are feelings that are more helpful? What if you acted and thought differently about the situation? How might these changes help you feel differently?*)

**Original Outcome:** (*What was the original outcome?*)

**Desired Outcome:** (*Using these new alternatives, what would you like the outcome to be in the future?*)

# APPENDIX

# Cross Sectional Formulation



# Alternative Response Worksheet

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# Pleasant Activities

Acting	Amusing people	Attending a concert	Beachcombing	Being alone	Being with animals	Being at the beach
Being complimented	Being coached	Being counseled	Being in the country	Being at a family get-together	Being at a fraternity/sorority	Being with friends
Being with happy people	Being in the mountains	Being with my roommate	Being with someone I love	Being told I am loved	Being with my parents	Bird-watching
Boating/canoeing	Budgeting my time	Buying things for myself	Buying something for someone I care about	Camping	Caring for plants	Canning/Making preserves
Cheering for something	Collecting things	Combing/brushing my hair	Completing a difficult task	Complimenting or praising someone	Cooking	Counseling someone
Dancing	Dating someone I like	Designing/Drafting	Discussing my favorite hobby	Doing art work	Doing experiments	Doing favors for people I like
Doing housework	Dreaming at night	Driving long distances	Eating good meals	Exploring/Hiking	Expressing love to someone	Feeling the presence of a Higher Power
Fishing	Fixing machines	Gardening/Doing yardwork	Gathering natural objects	Giving gifts	Giving a party for someone	Getting up early
Getting massages	Giving massages	Going to an amusement park/zoo	Going to a barber/beautician	Going to a concert	Going to lectures	Going to a luncheon/potluck
Going to a health club/sauna/spa	Going to the movies	Going to a museum	Going on nature walks/field trips	Going to a play	Going to a restaurant	Going to a reunion
Going to a spiritual/peaceful place	Going to a sports event	Having coffee/tea with friends	Having daydreams	Having friends over to visit	Having a lively talk	Having lunch with friends
Having an original idea	Having spare time	Hearing jokes	Helping someone	Hiking	Horseback riding	Improving my health
Kicking sand/pebbles/leaves	Kissing	Knitting/crocheting	Laughing	Learning something new	Listening to the radio	Listening to music
Looking at the stars/moon	Making charitable donations	Making food to give away	Making a new friend	Meditating/Doing yoga	Planning or organizing something	Playing sports
Playing cards	Playing music	Playing with a pet	Playing in nature	Playing a board game/chess	Photography	Repairing things
Reading	Reminiscing	Riding in an airplane	Running/jogging	Saying prayers	Seeing beautiful scenery	Seeing old friends
Sewing	Shaving	Singing	Sleeping late	Smelling a flower or plant	Seeing good things happen to people	Solving a puzzle/crossword
Speaking a foreign language	Staying up late	Smiling at people	Taking a bath	Using my strengths	Watching TV	Writing in a journal

## CAPS Workshops

***Please note workshop offerings are subject to change each semester. Please call CAPS at (303) 492-2277 for the most up to date information on CAPS' current offerings.***

### **Anxiety Toolbox:**

This workshop is a two-part series designed to help you understand anxiety symptoms and build skills to manage these symptoms. The sessions include modules dedicated to understanding anxiety, learning deep breathing and grounding skills, introducing a method for slowing down and disentangling anxious thoughts, and developing alternative responses to anxiety.

### **Feel Better Fast:**

This workshop is a three-part series designed to help you make a change in your life by learning mindfulness techniques, as well as ways to cope with distressing emotions and thoughts. Some of the skills you will learn include how to make balanced decisions, to self-soothe, to take a step back from your thoughts and to live by your values. With guidance and support, this workshop might be all you need to get back on track and feeling better in no time.

### **COVID Workshop Series**

The COVID workshop series is composed of 4 independent workshops designed to help you cope with ways in which COVID-19 has changed our lives. This is a great option if you're short on time, wanting some quick coping skills, and/or are noticing distress related to COVID. They include the following:

**Mindfully Thriving:** Learn how to stay present during times of unease. Now more than ever we can all benefit from learning mindfulness skills to stay grounded and present during the pandemic. This workshop teaches mindfulness skills and guides you through 3 different mindfulness exercises you can easily practice at home.

**Anxiety Toolbox for COVID:** acknowledges the ways in which COVID-19 can increase anxiety. Learn skills and tools to help you manage challenging or triggering thoughts, feelings and behaviors using examples from the current pandemic.

**Coping with COVID:** normalizes the different responses people have been experiencing related to COVID-19. Learn skills for managing overwhelming emotions and reducing emotional vulnerability during this stressful time.

**How to Survive Quarantine with Other People:** Because of COVID, more of us are spending more hours than usual at home with family members, partners, or roommates. Learn to address conflict, develop listening skills, and develop healthy boundaries to manage tension and conflict that many have experienced due to that challenges of increased time with others.

## **Feel Good Fridays:**

This drop-in workshop is an opportunity to be led through a powerful guided meditation to undo stress, soothe the nervous system and feel better. Students, staff and faculty are welcome to attend. Participants are encouraged to bring materials for personal comfort that will aid meditation (e.g., yoga mat, a small pillow or cushion, etc.). Please arrive on time so the meditation is not disturbed. There will be no late admittance.

## **Identity and Sexuality Exploration**

Do you have questions about sexuality, gender or relationships? Do you need help navigating gender-affirming healthcare? This workshop provides an inclusive and affirming space to develop knowledge and skills for your personal journey. An informal consultation with a queer-friendly nurse practitioner and clinical psychologist can provide insight for sex and sexuality questions, initiating sexual health exams and testing, gender-affirming treatment options and relationship health. All identities and questions are welcome!

## **Apps for your Smartphone, Tablet, or Computer**

ACT Coach

CBTi-Coach

Calm

Happify: for Stress and Worry

Mindfulness Coach

Stop, Breathe, & Think

Breathe2relax

Headspace (has a student discount)

Mindshift CBT

Sanvello

T2 Mood Tracker

## Online Resources

Cal Poly SLO Counseling Services - Guided Meditations

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLI44jVzqiSNuYrPNPWHc6BTqrwBXtlhrS>

Centre for Clinical Interventions

<https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself/Anxiety>

<https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself/Worry-and-Rumination>

Mayo Clinic Stress Reduction Website

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/mindfulness-exercises/MY02124>

Meditation Oasis [www.meditationoasis.com](http://www.meditationoasis.com)

Mindful [www.mindful.org](http://www.mindful.org)

Mindfulness Research Guide <http://www.mindfulexperience.org/>

UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center- Guided Meditations

<http://marc.ucla.edu/body.cfm?id=22>

## Books for Further Reading

An End to Panic by Zuercher-White (1998)

The Anxiety and Worry Workbook by Clark & Beck (2012)

Feeling Good by Burns (2008)

Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life by Hayes & Smith (2005)

Mind and Emotions by McKay, Fanning, and Ona (2011)

The Relaxation & Stress Reduction Workbook by Davis, Robbins, Eshelman & McKay (2008)

Things Might Go Terribly Horribly Wrong by Wilson and DuFrene (2010)

When Panic Attacks by Burns (2006)