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_3L7zlHzZMCIMyMJ
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
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

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

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

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

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

**Behavioral** *(What was your first instinct and/or automatic response? What did you do and/or avoid doing at the time?)*
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
  - "nothing good ever happens"

- **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**
  - 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

- **must**
  - Assigning labels to ourselves or other people
  - I'm a loser
  - I'm completely useless
  - They're such an idiot

- **Personalization**
  - Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn't completely your fault.
  - Conversely, blaming other people for something that was your fault.
  - "this is my 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.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>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?)</th>
<th>Alternative Behaviors: (What could you do that would be more helpful for you, others, &amp;/or the situation? What are coping strategies that might be helpful?)</th>
<th>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?)</th>
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</table>
| I may not be as socially awkward as I think. | **Coping Strategies I Can Use:** | **Excited**
| If she invited me, she probably wants me there. | ❑ Deep breathing | **Wanted**
| *I might still have an okay time even if I am anxious* | ❑ Distract myself | **Liked**
|  | ❑ Seek support from a friend/family member | **Hopeful**
|  | ❑ Do a pleasurable activity |  |
|  | ❑ Use alternative response worksheet |  |

**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?

### Common Cognitive Distortions (Unhelpful Thinking Styles)

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

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

### 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?)*

### 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?)*

### 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Amusing people</th>
<th>Attending a concert</th>
<th>Beachcombing</th>
<th>Being alone</th>
<th>Being with animals</th>
<th>Being at the beach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being complimented</td>
<td>Being coached</td>
<td>Being counseled</td>
<td>Being in the country</td>
<td>Being at a family get-together</td>
<td>Being at a fraternity/sorority</td>
<td>Being with friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being happy people</td>
<td>Being in the mountains</td>
<td>Being with my roommate</td>
<td>Being with someone I love</td>
<td>Being told I am loved</td>
<td>Being with my parents</td>
<td>Bird-watching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boating/canoeing</td>
<td>Budgeting my time</td>
<td>Buying things for myself</td>
<td>Buying something for someone I care about</td>
<td>Camping</td>
<td>Caring for plants</td>
<td>Canning/Making preserves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheering for something</td>
<td>Collecting things</td>
<td>Combing/brushing my hair</td>
<td>Completing a difficult task</td>
<td>Complimenting or praising someone</td>
<td>Cooking</td>
<td>Counseling someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancing</td>
<td>Dating someone I like</td>
<td>Designing/Drafting</td>
<td>Discussing my favorite hobby</td>
<td>Doing art work</td>
<td>Doing experiments</td>
<td>Doing favors for people I like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing housework</td>
<td>Dreaming at night</td>
<td>Driving long distances</td>
<td>Eating good meals</td>
<td>Exploring/Hiking</td>
<td>Expressing love to someone</td>
<td>Feeling the presence of a Higher Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>Fixing machines</td>
<td>Gardening/Doing yardwork</td>
<td>Gathering natural objects</td>
<td>Giving gifts</td>
<td>Giving a party for someone</td>
<td>Getting up early</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting massages</td>
<td>Giving massages</td>
<td>Going to an amusement park/zoo</td>
<td>Going to a barber/beautician</td>
<td>Going to a concert</td>
<td>Going to lectures</td>
<td>Going to a luncheon/potluck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to a health club/sauna/spa</td>
<td>Going to the movies</td>
<td>Going to a museum</td>
<td>Going on nature walks/field trips</td>
<td>Going to a play</td>
<td>Going to a restaurant</td>
<td>Going to a reunion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to a spiritual/peaceful place</td>
<td>Going to a sports event</td>
<td>Having coffee/tea with friends</td>
<td>Having daydreams</td>
<td>Having friends over to visit</td>
<td>Having a lively talk</td>
<td>Having lunch with friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having an original idea</td>
<td>Having spare time</td>
<td>Hearing jokes</td>
<td>Helping someone</td>
<td>Hiking</td>
<td>Horseback riding</td>
<td>Improving my health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kicking sand/pebbles/leaves</td>
<td>Kissing</td>
<td>Knitting/crocheting</td>
<td>Laughing</td>
<td>Learning something new</td>
<td>Listening to the ratio</td>
<td>Listening to music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking at the stars/moon</td>
<td>Making charitable donations</td>
<td>Making food to give away</td>
<td>Making a new friend</td>
<td>Meditating/Doing yoga</td>
<td>Planning or organizing something</td>
<td>Playing sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing cards</td>
<td>Playing music</td>
<td>Playing with a pet</td>
<td>Playing in nature</td>
<td>Playing a board game/chess</td>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>Repairing things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Reminiscing</td>
<td>Riding in an airplane</td>
<td>Running/jogging</td>
<td>Saying prayers</td>
<td>Seeing beautiful scenery</td>
<td>Seeing old friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewing</td>
<td>Shaving</td>
<td>Singing</td>
<td>Sleeping late</td>
<td>Smelling a flower or plant</td>
<td>Seeing good things happen to people</td>
<td>Solving a puzzle/crossword</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking a foreign language</td>
<td>Staying up late</td>
<td>Smiling at people</td>
<td>Taking a bath</td>
<td>Using my strengths</td>
<td>Watching TV</td>
<td>Writing in a journal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 | Breathe2relax |
| CBTi-Coach | Headspace (has a student discount) |
| Calm | Mindshift CBT |
| Happify: for Stress and Worry | Sanvello |
| Mindfulness Coach | T2 Mood Tracker |
| Stop, Breathe, & Think | |

(303) 492-2277 (24/7) counseling.colorado.edu
Online Resources

Cal Poly SLO Counseling Services - Guided Meditations
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLI44jVzqiSNuYrPNPWHc6BTqrwBXtlhrS

Centre for Clinical Interventions

Mayo Clinic Stress Reduction Website
http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/mindfulness-exercises/MY02124

Meditation Oasis www.meditationoasis.com

Mindful www.mindful.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)
Things Might Go Terribly Horribly Wrong by Wilson and DuFrene (2010)
When Panic Attacks by Burns (2006)