



## The Anxiety Compass: Coping Across Four Dimensions

### Opening Exercise: Anxiety Response Style Quiz

Instructions: For each question, rate how much you agree with the statement on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree.

**Scale 1-5: 1 (Strongly Disagree) ----- 5 (Strongly Agree)**

#### Mental: Coping with anxiety using thought-based techniques

- When faced with anxiety, I find it helpful to challenge negative thoughts and replace them with more realistic ones.
- I tend to pause and systematically break down situations in my head in an effort to understand them better when I feel anxious.
- I often use positive self-talk or affirmations to calm myself down when I'm anxious.

#### Emotional: Skills for coping with anxiety based on managing feelings and emotions

- When I'm anxious, I find it helpful to express my emotions through journaling, art, or music or another positive medium.
- I reach out to supportive friends or family members to talk about my feelings when I'm anxious.
- When I am anxious, I practice getting honest with myself about my real feelings even at first, I feel awkward, ashamed, or embarrassed of them.

#### Physical: Coping skills based on physical movement, exercise, etc.

- Engaging in physical exercise like walking, running, hiking, working out, etc. helps me reduce my anxiety.
- I notice that my anxiety decreases when I get up and get involved in activities that require physical movement.
- I practice relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or stretching to soothe my anxiety.

#### Existential: Coping skills based on spiritual or mindfully aware practices

- Practicing mindfulness or calm introspection helps me stay grounded during anxious moments.
- I find solace in connecting with nature or spending time outdoors when I'm feeling anxious.
- Engaging in spiritual practices such as prayer, meditation, searching for meaning, or attending religious services helps me cope with anxiety.



### Scoring and Interpretation:

- Add up your scores for each section (Mental, Emotional, Physical, Existential).
- The section(s) with the highest score(s) indicates your primary anxiety response style. You may have more than one.

➤ **Discuss – Based on your scores: Which areas stood out the most to you?**

### Anxiety Coping Skills Review

The following is a list of anxiety coping skills in each area. Consider skills that work for you as well as new skills that you would like to try using more.

#### Mental Coping Skills:

##### ***Cognitive Restructuring:***

- Identify and challenge negative thought patterns.
- Replace irrational thoughts with more realistic and positive ones.
- Use affirmations and positive self-talk to reframe situations.

##### ***Problem-Solving Strategies:***

- Break down overwhelming problems into smaller, manageable tasks.
- Develop goals and action plans to address specific concerns or stressors.
- Seek support from trusted individuals or professionals when needed.

***Acceptance:*** Acknowledge and accept anxious thoughts and feelings without trying to control or suppress them, reducing the struggle against anxiety.

***Positive Self-Talk:*** Replace negative thoughts with positive reassurances, challenging anxious beliefs and promoting self-compassion.

***Affirmations:*** Create and repeat encouraging and inspiring statements about yourself and your abilities, reinforcing self-confidence.

***Visualization:*** Imagine yourself in a peaceful and calming place, engaging your senses to create a relaxing mental imagery.

***Setting Boundaries:*** Establish clear boundaries in relationships and commitments to reduce stressors and create a sense of control over your environment.

***Thought Records:*** Use worksheets to identify and challenge anxious thoughts, examining evidence and alternative perspectives to reduce distress.

***Other?*** – Can the group think of any other thought-based or mental coping strategies for anxiety?

**"You are the master of your thoughts and the architect of your reality." - Unknown**



## **Emotional Coping Skills:**

### ***Expressive Arts Therapy:***

- Engage in creative activities such as painting, drawing, sculpting, or graphic design to express emotions.
- Use creative music, poetry, or writing as outlets for emotional expression and processing.
- Explore different art modalities to find what resonates best with you.

### ***Social Support:***

- Reach out to friends, family members, or support groups for emotional support.
- Share your feelings and experiences with trusted individuals who can provide empathy and understanding.
- Join online communities or peer support groups to connect with others facing similar challenges.

### ***Journaling:***

- Write down your thoughts, feelings, and concerns to gain clarity and perspective.
- Use journal prompts to explore emotions and identify triggers for anxiety.
- Reflect on positive experiences and achievements to boost self-esteem.

### ***Emotion Regulation Strategies:***

- Identify and label your emotions to better understand and manage them.
- Develop coping mechanisms for dealing with intense emotions, such as distraction techniques or grounding.
- Learn to tolerate distress by practicing open minded self-awareness in the face of challenging emotions.

***Pet Therapy:*** Spend time with animals, such as therapy dogs or cats, to experience the calming and soothing effects of companionship and unconditional love.

***Laughter Therapy:*** Watch funny movies or stand-up comedy, engage in playful activities, or spend time with humorous friends to lighten mood and reduce anxiety.

***Music Therapy:*** Listen to calming music or nature sounds to regulate emotions, induce relaxation, and distract from anxious thoughts.

***Grounding Techniques:*** Use your senses to connect with the present moment, such as focusing on objects around you or feeling the texture of surfaces.

***Other?*** – Can the group think of any other emotionally based strategies for anxiety?

**"Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass, it's about learning how to dance in the rain." -  
Vivian Greene**



## **Physical Coping Skills:**

### ***Regular Exercise Routine:***

- Incorporate aerobic exercises, strength training, or flexibility exercises into your weekly schedule.
- Choose activities that you enjoy and can sustain over time, such as walking, cycling, or dancing.
- Set realistic goals and track your progress to stay motivated and committed to your exercise routine.

### ***Healthy Lifestyle Habits:***

- Prioritize quality sleep by establishing a consistent bedtime routine in a restful environment.
- Maintain a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins.
- Limit caffeine and alcohol intake, as they can exacerbate anxiety and disrupt sleep patterns.

### ***Relaxation and Stress Reduction Techniques:***

- Practice relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, stretching, or progressive muscle relaxation
- Engage in activities that promote relaxation, such as taking a warm bath or listening to calming music
- Schedule regular breaks throughout the day to rest and recharge, especially during periods of high stress.

***Sensory Strategies:*** Use sensory tools such as stress balls and fidget spinners to soothe anxiety.

***Grounding Objects:*** Carry a small object in your pocket or purse that you can touch or hold onto during moments of anxiety, providing a sense of comfort and grounding.

***Hobbies and Interests:*** Participate in enjoyable activities that distract from anxious thoughts and promote a sense of fulfillment and relaxation.

***Aromatherapy:*** Use essential oils or scented candles with calming scents such as lavender or chamomile to promote relaxation and reduce stress.

***Hot/Cold Therapy:*** Alternate between hot and cold sensations, such as a warm shower followed by a cool splash, to stimulate circulation, relax muscles, and soothe anxiety.

***Other?*** – Can the group think of any other strategies for anxiety that require physical sensations or movement?

**"It's not about perfect. It's about effort. And when you bring that effort every single day, that's where transformation happens. That's how change occurs." - Jillian Michaels**



## **Existential Coping Skills:**

### ***Mindfulness Practices:***

- Cultivate mindfulness by being present in the moment, observing thoughts and feelings without judgment.
- Incorporate gratitude practices to foster a sense of connection and appreciation for life.

### ***Connecting with Nature:***

- Spend time outdoors in natural settings such as parks, forests, or beaches.
- Engage in activities like hiking, gardening, or birdwatching to connect with the beauty of the natural world.
- Practice mindfulness while in nature, noticing sights, sounds, and sensations with curiosity and openness.

### ***Spiritual Interests:***

- Engage in personal prayer, meditation, or spiritual practices that align with your beliefs and values.
- Participate in spiritual communities or activities that provide support and a sense of belonging.

### ***Self-Reflection and Meaning-Making:***

- Reflect on life's purpose, values, and goals to gain a wider perspective and improved sense of direction.
- Explore existential questions about meaning, purpose, and spirituality through research or dialogue.
- Find meaning in challenges and adversity by viewing them as opportunities for spiritual growth.

***Volunteering:*** Engage in acts of kindness and altruism by volunteering for causes that are meaningful to you, fostering a sense of purpose and connection.

***Other?*** – Can the group think of any other existential strategies for anxiety?

**"We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope." - Martin Luther King Jr.**

