Coping Skills Toolbox For Teens

Alison Kelly, MA
Visit website for more resources:
www.KellyCounselingAndCoaching.com
404-386-6130
1. Exercise (running, walking, etc.).
2. Put on fake tattoos.
3. Write (poetry, stories, journal).
4. Scribble/doodle on paper.
5. Be with other people.
6. Watch a favorite TV show.
7. Post on web boards, and answer others' posts.
8. Go see a movie.
9. Do a wordsearch or crossword.
10. Do schoolwork.
11. Play a musical instrument.
12. Paint your nails, do your make-up or hair.
13. Sing.
14. Study the sky.
15. Punch a punching bag.
16. Cover yourself with Band-Aids where you want to cut.
17. Let yourself cry.
18. Take a nap (only if you are tired).
19. Take a hot shower or relaxing bath.
20. Play with a pet.
22. Clean something.
23. Knit or sew.
25. Listen to music.
26. Try some aromatherapy (candle, lotion, room spray).
27. Meditate.
28. Go somewhere very public.
29. Bake cookies.
30. Alphabetize your CDs/DVDs/books.
31. Paint a drawing.
32. Rip paper into itty-bitty pieces
33. Shoot hoops, kick a ball.
34. Write a letter or send an email.
35. Plan your dream room (colors/furniture).
36. Hug a pillow or stuffed animal.
37. Hyperfocus on something like a rock, hand, etc.
38. Dance.
39. Make hot chocolate, milkshake or smoothie.
40. Play with modeling clay or Play-Dough.
41. Build a pillow fort.
42. Go for a nice, long drive.
43. Complete something you've been putting off.
44. Draw on yourself with a marker.
45. Take up a new hobby.
46. Look up recipes, cook a meal.
47. Look at pretty things, like flowers or art.
48. Create or build something.
49. Pray.
50. Make a list of blessings in your life.
51. Read the Bible.
52. Go to a friend's house.
53. Jump on a trampoline.
54. Watch an old, happy movie.
55. Contact a hotline/your therapist.
56. Talk to someone close to you.
57. Ride a bicycle.
58. Feed the ducks, birds, or squirrels.
59. Color with Crayons.
60. Memorize a poem, play, or song.
61. Stretch.
63. "Shop" on-line (without buying anything).
64. Color-coordinate your wardrobe.
65. Watch fish.
66. Make a CD/playlist of your favorite songs.
67. Play the "15 minute game." (Avoid something for 15 minutes, when time is up start again.)
68. Plan your wedding/prom/other event.
69. Plant some seeds.
70. Hunt for your perfect home or car on-line.
71. Try to make as many words out of your full name as possible.
72. Sort through your photographs.
73. Play with a balloon.
74. Give yourself a facial.
75. Find yourself some toys and play.
76. Start collecting something.
77. Play video/computer games.
78. Clean up trash at your local park.
79. Perform a random act of kindness for someone.
80. Text or call an old friend.
81. Write yourself an "I love you because..." letter.
82. Look up new words and use them.
83. Rearrange furniture.
84. Write a letter to someone that you may never send.
85. Smile at least five people.
86. Play with little kids.
87. Go for a walk (with or without a friend).
88. Put a puzzle together.
89. Clean your room/closet.
90. Try to do handstands, cartwheels, or backbends.
91. Yoga.
92. Teach your pet a new trick.
93. Learn a new language.
94. Move EVERYTHING in your room to a new spot.
95. Get together with friends and play Frisbee, soccer or basketball.
96. Hug a friend or family member.
97. Search on-line for new songs/artists.
98. Make a list of goals for the week/month/year/5 years.
99. Face paint.
Mindfulness Meditation

The goal of mindfulness meditation is simple: to pay attention to the present moment, without judgement. However, as you practice, you’ll find that this is easier said than done.

During mindfulness meditation, you will focus on your breathing as a tool to ground yourself in the present moment. It’s normal that your mind will wander. You’ll simply bring yourself back into the moment by refocusing on your breathing, again and again.

Follow the instructions below to begin practicing mindfulness meditation.

Time & Place

Aim to practice daily for 15-30 minutes. More frequent, consistent, and longer-term practice leads to the best results. However, some practice is better than no practice.

Find a time and place where you are unlikely to be interrupted. Silence your phone and other devices, and set a timer for your desired practice length.

Posture

❖ Sit in chair, or on the floor with a cushion for support.
❖ Straighten your back, but not to the point of stiffness.
❖ Let your chin drop slightly, and gaze downward at a point in front of you.
❖ If in a chair, place the soles of your feet on the ground. If on the floor, cross your legs.
❖ Let your arms fall naturally to your sides, with your palms resting on your thighs.
❖ If your pose becomes too uncomfortable, feel free to take a break or adjust.

Awareness of Breathing

Because the sensations of breathing are always present, they are useful as a tool to help you focus on the present moment. Whenever you become distracted during meditation, turn your focus back to breathing.

Notice the sensation of air as it passes through your nose or mouth, the rise and fall of your belly, and the feeling of air being exhaled, back into the world. Notice the sounds that accompany each inhalation and exhalation.

Wandering Mind

It’s normal that your thoughts will wander during mindfulness meditation. At times, it might feel like a constant battle to maintain focus on your breathing. Don’t worry—that’s normal. Instead of struggling against your thoughts, simply notice them, without judgment.

Acknowledge that your mind has wandered, and return your attention to breathing. Expect to repeat this process again and again.
Deep Breathing

**How Deep Breathing Works**

During periods of anxiety, the body triggers a set of symptoms called the stress response. Breathing becomes shallow and rapid, heart rate increases, and muscles become tense. In opposition to the stress response is the relaxation response. Breathing becomes deeper and slower, and the symptoms of anxiety fade away. Deep breathing triggers this response.

**Instructions**

Sit back or lie down in a comfortable position. Close your eyes, if you would like to do so. When you’re learning, try placing a hand on your stomach. If you breathe deeply enough, you should notice it rising and falling with each inhalation and exhalation.

1. **Inhale.** Breathe in slowly through your nose for 4 seconds.
2. **Pause.** Hold the air in your lungs for 4 seconds.
3. **Exhale.** Breathe out slowly through your mouth for 6 seconds.
   - **Tip:** Pucker your lips, as if you are blowing through a straw, to slow your exhalation.
4. **Repeat.** Practice for at least 2 minutes, but preferably 5 to 10 minutes.

**Tips**

- If it isn’t working, slow down! The most common mistake is breathing too fast. Time each step in your head, counting slowly as you do so.
- Counting out your breaths serves a second purpose. It takes your mind off the source of your anxiety. Whenever you catch your mind wandering, simply return your focus to counting.
- The times we use for each step are suggestions, and can be lengthened or decreased. Lengthen the time if it feels natural to do so, or decrease the time if you feel discomfort.
Building Happiness

Promotions, new relationships, and even winning the lottery will give you only a temporary boost in happiness. Each person has a baseline level of happiness that they quickly return to. Sustained happiness takes work. Listed below are exercises that, when practiced frequently, can build genuine and lasting happiness.

Gratitudes: Write down three things for which you are grateful every day. Don’t worry if they seem simple or mundane—just get something down on paper. Writing gratitudes will help you identify positive aspects of even the worst days.

Acts of kindness: Make a conscious effort to do something nice for no reason other than to help. You might be surprised how a simple act of kindness can turn around the day for both you and the kindness recipient.

Exercise: The positive effects of exercise are astounding. Physically active people have increased energy, superior immune systems, and a frequent sense of accomplishment. Exercise can reduce insomnia, stimulate brain growth, and even act as an anti-depressant. If jogging or lifting weights seems like too much, don’t be afraid to start with a 30 minute walk or a slow bike ride.

Meditation: Research has linked meditation with reduced anxiety and more positive emotions. Those who meditate regularly may even permanently restructure their brains to create sustained happiness.

Positive journaling: Take some time to write about positive events in your life. Write about a fun day spent with friends, a good movie, or an activity you enjoyed. Positive journaling will get you into the habit of focusing on the positive.

Fostering relationships: Strong social connections are thought to be one of the most powerful influences on our mood. Those who are dedicated to spending time with friends and family show the highest levels of happiness. If you can’t see your loved ones every day you can still send an email or make a phone call. If it feels like you never see your loved ones, schedule time that can be dedicated to them.
Gratitude Journal

Keeping a journal of the things you’re grateful for has been shown to have a powerful effect on mental wellbeing. Among other benefits, journaling about gratitude reduces stress, increases happiness, and improves self-esteem.

Instructions: Two times a week, write a detailed entry about one thing you are grateful for. This could be a person, a job, a great meal with friends, or anything else that comes to mind.

Journaling Tips

• Don’t rush to write down the first thing that comes to your mind. Take time to truly think about what you’re grateful for. Expect each entry to take between 10-20 minutes.

• Writing about the people who you’re grateful for tends to be more powerful than writing about things.

• Explain, in detail, why you’re grateful. For example, if you’re grateful for a friend who is nice, describe what they do that’s nice, and why that makes you grateful.

• Aim for two solid entries each week. Keep your journal somewhere you’ll see it, and plan when you can write. Set an alarm on your phone if you might forget.

Journaling Prompts

Note: The use of prompts is optional. Feel free to write about anything for which you are grateful.

Someone whose company I enjoy... A fun experience I had...
The best part about today... An act of kindness I witnessed or received...
A reason to be excited for the future... Someone I can always rely on...
A valuable lesson I learned... Something I can be proud of...
Someone who I admire... An unexpected good thing that happened...
Something beautiful I saw... An experience I feel lucky to have had...
# Gratitude Journal

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Writing a story about your life can help you find meaning and value in your experiences. It will allow you to organize your thoughts and use them to grow. People who develop stories about their life tend to experience a greater sense of meaning, which can contribute to happiness.

**The Past**
Write the story of your past. Be sure to describe challenges you’ve overcome, and the personal strengths that allowed you to do so.
The Present
Describe your life and who you are now. How do you differ from your past self? What are your strengths now? What challenges are you facing?
The Future

Write about your ideal future. How will your life be different than it is now? How will you be different than you are now?
# Self-Esteem Journal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Positive Actions and Feelings</th>
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| MON. | Something I did well today...  
Today I had fun when...  
I felt proud when... |
| TUE. | Today I accomplished...  
I had a positive experience with...  
Something I did for someone... |
| WED. | I felt good about myself when...  
I was proud of someone else...  
Today was interesting because... |
| THUR. | I felt proud when...  
A positive thing I witnessed...  
Today I accomplished... |
| FRI. | Something I did well today...  
I had a positive experience with (a person, place, or thing)...  
I was proud of someone when... |
| SAT. | Today I had fun when...  
Something I did for someone...  
I felt good about myself when... |
| SUN. | A positive thing I witnessed...  
Today was interesting because...  
I felt proud when... |
Every day brings a combination of good and bad experiences. Unfortunately, the human brain tends to focus more heavily on the bad experiences, while forgetting or discounting the good experiences. For example, we’re more likely to remember one awkward social interaction over hundreds of normal interactions.

**Making a point to recognize positive experiences—no matter how small—can help to improve mood. Practice by recording three positive events at the end of each day.**

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## Positive Journal

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Learning to be G.L.A.D.

G- Something you were grateful for today.

Think of something very basic you are grateful for. It could be something as simple as the sunlight or the nourishing food you eat. Write it below.

Now think of something truly important in your life like a meaningful relationship, kids, friends, or your health. Write it below.

L-Something you learned today.

Write down something positive you learned about yourself today. It might be something you already knew, but it came into focus today.

Write down something you learned about another person today. Again, it might be something you were already aware of, but you were more aware of this quality today.

Write down a fact you learned today that made you curious or more aware of the world around you.

Write down how something you learned today which changed your perspective of yourself or the world around you in a positive way.

A-One small accomplishment you did today.

Many people feel that accomplishments have to be a big important tasks, but it’s the little things that make a difference in your life. Perhaps you are working on a goal like exercising more or eating healthier or finding a new job. Small steps towards your goal are important accomplishments.

Write down something you accomplished today.

D-Something that brought you delight today.

What made you laugh or smile?
What small thing of beauty did you see today?

_____________________________________________________________________________________

What did you hear today that lifted your spirits? A song? A child’s voice? A joke?

_____________________________________________________________________________________

Now close your eyes and think of your day and what you wrote. Breathe deeply for a few minutes and visualize a positive image from the day. Write down something important from this exercise that you want to remember.

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Thinking Traps

**Mind Reading:** You assume you know what people thinking without having evidence or proof of their thoughts. “He thinks I’m an idiot.” “I’m not going to make the team.”

**Future-Telling:** You predict the future – that things will get worse or that there’s danger ahead. “If I go, people will make fun of me.” “If I talk, I will mess up and not say what I mean.”

**Catastrophizing:** You believe what might happen will be so awful and unbearable that you won’t be able to stand it. “It would be terrible if I failed.” “If I make a bad grade then I will never get into a good college.”

**Labeling:** You assign general negative traits to yourself and others. “I’m disgusting.” “He’s horrible.” “She’s irrelevant.”

**Discounting Positives:** You claim that the positives that you or others have don’t matter. “That’s what I’m supposed to do, so it doesn’t count.” “Those successes were easy so they don’t matter.”

**Negative Filter:** You focus almost exclusively on the negatives and seldom notice the positives. “Look at all the terrible things on the news.” “Girls never have anything nice to say.”

**Overgeneralizing:** You perceive the likelihood of a negative outcome based upon a single incident. “I fail all the time.”

**All-or-None Thinking:** You view events or people in all-or-none/black-and-white terms. “It was a waste of time.” “I get rejected by everyone.” “Nothing ever goes my way.”

**Shoulds:** You interpret events in terms of how things should be rather than simply focusing on what is. “I should do well; if I don’t, I’m a failure.”
**Personalizing:** You attribute a most of the blame to yourself for negative events and fail to see that certain situations are also caused by others. “My relationship ended because I wasn’t fun enough.” “It was my fault my group got a bad grade.”

**Blaming:** You focus on the other person as the source of your negative feelings and refuse to take responsibility for changing yourself. “She’s to blame for the way I feel.” “My parents caused all my problems.” “My teacher is the reason I’m not doing well.”

**Judgment Focus:** You view yourself, others, and events in terms of evaluations of “good” and “bad” or “right” and “wrong” rather than simply describing, accepting, or understanding. “I didn’t perform well.” “I tried it, and I just kept doing it wrong.” “Look how successful she is, I’m not that successful.”

**Regret Orientation:** You focus on the idea that you could have done better in the past, rather than on what you can do better now. “I could have had a better job if I had tried harder.” “I shouldn’t have said that.” “I always mess up.”

**What if:** You keep asking a series of questions about what if something happens, and fail to be satisfied with any of the answers. “Yeah, but what if I get anxious, and I can’t catch my breath.”

**Emotional Reasoning:** You let your feelings guide your interpretation of reality. “I feel sad, therefore I must be depressed.” “I feel anxious, therefore I must be in danger.”

**Inability to Disconfirm:** You reject any evidence or arguments that might contradict your negative thoughts. “I’m unlovable – my friends hang out with me only because they must feel sorry for me.” “I’m a bad person – I only help others because it makes me feel better about myself.”

**Unfair Comparisons:** You interpret events in terms of standards that are unrealistic. “Others did better than I did on the test.” “People my age are more successful than I am.”
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

**Mental filter**
Only paying attention to certain types of evidence.

- Noticing our failures but not seeing our successes

**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

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

- That doesn't count

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

- “everything is always rubbish”
- “nothing good ever happens”

**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

**Labelling**
Assigning labels to ourselves or other people

- I’m a loser
- I’m completely useless
- They’re such an idiot

**Magnification (catastrophising) & minimisation**
Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophising), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important

**Personalisation**
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”

**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

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## Name the Pattern!

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<th>Dysfunctional Pattern</th>
<th>Rational, Positive Thought</th>
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| I got into trouble at school today. I just know they’re going to kick me out tomorrow. | Jumping to Conclusions (Fortune-Telling)  
(also a bit of Catastrophizing) | I did something at school today that I’m not proud of, but everyone makes mistakes and it’s not the end of the world! I’ll try harder tomorrow not to make the same mistake again. |
<p>| My friend looked at his watch when I was talking today. He must think I’m boring. | Personification                                | I can’t know for certain why my coworker looked at his watch when I was talking. If he thought I was boring, he probably wouldn’t come over to talk to me everyday! |
| I got an award at the assembly yesterday, but that’s no big deal. I’m not really that good of a student. | Minimizing Positives                            | I worked really hard to get that award! My hard work definitely paid off!                   |
| If I don’t get a date to the homecoming dance, there’s no way I could ever go back to school and face my classmates again! | Catastrophizing                                 | It would be really difficult not to get a date to the dance, but I could still go with my friends and have a good time. Maybe there’ll be other people there without dates! |
| There’s no way I could ever be as talented as the star quarterback on the football team. I shouldn’t even try. | Comparison                                      | Our star quarterback is really talented! Even if I’m never quite as good as he is, it doesn’t mean I shouldn’t play. There are lots of other things I’m good at! |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I only got a B on my reading test. I always fail. I shouldn’t have even tried.</th>
<th>All-Or-Nothing</th>
<th>Even though a B isn’t what I was hoping for on that test, it’s still pretty good! Next time I could study even more and see if I can do even better!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can’t believe I gained 3 pounds. I’m so fat and ugly.</td>
<td>Maximizing Negatives</td>
<td>Wow. I didn’t realize I’ve gained 3 pounds, but that doesn’t define all of who I am. I’ll just make sure to get my exercise in 3 times this week and stop having Mountain Dew® with every meal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher didn’t answer me when I said hello to her this morning. She’s probably mad at me for something.</td>
<td>Jumping to Conclusions (Mind Reading)</td>
<td>My teacher didn’t answer me when I said hello to her this morning. She might be upset with me, but I can’t know that for sure unless she tells me so. Maybe she didn’t hear me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another student called me a name once today. People are always making fun of me.</td>
<td>Overgeneralization</td>
<td>A student teased me today, but that’s his problem! Lots of other people are friends with me. I don’t need to dwell on one negative experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I must get all A+’s to be a good student.</td>
<td>Shoulds/Musts</td>
<td>I’m a good student as long as I do the best that I can and work hard each day. I don’t have to be perfect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hate how I look, so I must look ugly to everyone else too.</td>
<td>Emotional Reasoning</td>
<td>Just because there are some things I don’t like about my appearance doesn’t mean everyone feels that way! No one is perfect!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHALLENGING MY UNHELPFUL IDEA

What idea have I strongly and persistently held that I now realize to be the cause of many problems — emotional or otherwise — in my life?

What’s wrong with this idea? What makes it unrealistic, extreme, illogical and/or unreasonable?

How does this idea push me and others around? What are the consequences of doggedly holding on to this idea?

Is it helping me get what I want or hurting me?

Is there any proof to support this irrational and/or unhelpful idea?

Imagine that I’m trying to convince another person why it doesn’t make sense to think that way; what persuasive counterarguments would convince him or her?

Note to myself: I will try to notice when this old unhelpful idea seems to be at the root of some new distress. I will regularly read what I’ve written on this sheet to help myself think more clearly, feel better, and act more wisely.
CHALLENGE NEGATIVE THINKING

Questions to ask yourself to help challenge your negative thoughts or self-talk:

- Am I falling into a thinking trap (e.g., catastrophizing or overestimating danger)?
- What is the evidence that this thought is true? What is the evidence that this thought is not true?
- Have I confused a thought with a fact?
- What would I tell a friend if he/she had the same thought?
- What would a friend say about my thought?
- Am I 100% sure that __________ will happen?
- How many times has __________ happened before?
- Is __________ so important that my future depends on it?
- What is the worst that could happen?
- If it did happen, what could I do to cope with or handle it?
- Is my judgment based on the way I feel instead of facts?
- Am I confusing “possibility” with “certainty”? It may be possible, but is it likely?
- Is this a hassle or a horror?
Decatastrophizing

Cognitive distortions are irrational thoughts that have the power to influence how you feel. Everyone has some cognitive distortions—they’re a normal part of being human. However, when cognitive distortions are too plentiful or extreme, they can be harmful.

One common type of cognitive distortion is called **catastrophizing**. When catastrophizing, the importance of a problem is exaggerated, or the worst possible outcome is assumed to be true. By learning to question your own thoughts, you can correct many of these cognitive distortions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are you worried about?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How likely is it that your worry will come true? Give examples of past experiences, or other evidence, to support your answer.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If your worry does come true, what’s the <strong>worst</strong> that could happen?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If your worry does come true, what’s <strong>most likely</strong> to happen?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If your worry comes true, what are the chances you’ll be okay...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In one week? _____%        In one month? _____%        In one year? _____%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Putting Thoughts on Trial**

In this exercise, you will put a thought on trial by acting as a defense attorney, prosecutor, and judge, to determine the accuracy of the thought.

**Prosecution and Defense:** Gather evidence in support of, and against, your thought. Evidence can only be used if it's a verifiable fact. No interpretations, guesses, or opinions!

**Judge:** Come to a verdict regarding your thought. Is the thought accurate and fair? Are there other thoughts that could explain the facts?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Thought</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Defense</th>
<th>The Prosecution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>evidence for the thought</td>
<td>evidence against the thought</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Judge's Verdict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Challenging Anxious Thoughts

Anxiety can be a healthy emotion—it forces us to focus on our problems, and work hard to solve them. But sometimes, anxiety grows out of control, and does just the opposite. It cripples our ability to solve problems. When this happens, irrational thoughts often play a role.

In this exercise, we will practice catching our irrational thoughts, and replacing them with rational alternatives. With enough practice, this will become a natural process that can help you manage anxiety.

Describe a common situation that triggers your anxiety:
example: "giving a speech in front of a crowd" or "driving in rush hour traffic"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worst outcome:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Best outcome:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likely outcome:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Imagine you are faced with the anxiety-producing situation from above. Describe the...

Imagine the worst outcome comes true. Would it still matter...

1 week from now:

1 month from now:

1 year from now:

Usually, anxious thoughts focus on the worst possible outcomes, even when they aren’t likely. For example, a person who is nervous about giving a speech might think: “I am going to forget everything and embarrass myself, and I’ll never live it down”.

As an outside observer, we know that an alternate, more rational thought might be: “My speech might only be OK, but if I do mess up, everyone will forget about it soon enough”.

Using your own “worst outcome” and “likely outcome” from above, describe your...

Irrational thought:

Rational thought:
**Replacement Thoughts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of thinking:</th>
<th>Try thinking:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Must</td>
<td>Prefer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should</td>
<td>Choose To</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have To</td>
<td>Want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can’t</td>
<td>Choose Not To</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ought</td>
<td>Had Better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>Many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can't Stand</td>
<td>Don't Like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awful</td>
<td>Highly Undesirable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad Person</td>
<td>Bad Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a Failure</td>
<td>I Failed At</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of Saying:</th>
<th>Exchange with:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have to do well.</td>
<td>I want to do well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You shouldn't do that.</td>
<td>I prefer you not do that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You never help me.</td>
<td>You rarely help me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can't stand my job.</td>
<td>I don't like my job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are a bad boy.</td>
<td>That behavior is undesirable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm a loser.</td>
<td>I failed at this one task.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of Saying:</th>
<th>Exchange With:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>Concerned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressed</td>
<td>Sad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>Annoyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt</td>
<td>Remorse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame</td>
<td>Regret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurt</td>
<td>Disappointed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jealous</td>
<td>Concern for my relationship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STOPPING THOSE NEGATIVE THOUGHTS
By E.J. Bourne

When I feel bad, it is hard to stop all my negative thoughts from taking over. The more I think the negative thoughts, the worse I feel. It becomes a vicious cycle, one that can be extremely hard to break free from.

But there is a way to stop it before it gets too far. I can take steps to change things. I can stop these negative thoughts from taking over my life. I can choose to be in control of my life.

Thought Stopping in Three Basic Steps

1. Notice
I cannot change something if I am not aware it is happening. The first step is to realize that I am thinking negatively while I am doing it. This may take time as negative thinking has likely become a habit I do without knowing it. It can help to ask people around me to point out when I say negative things to myself. I may only realize I have done it after the negative thoughts are done and have made me feel bad. At first, as I start paying attention to my negative thoughts, I may even feel worse. I may feel really bad when I see just how much negative thinking I do. That is okay! I know that once I start noticing my negative thinking, I can begin to work on changing it.

2. Stop
The best way to break the negative thinking habit is to do something that will take both my thoughts and my mind by surprise. Examples include: yelling something in my head (such as "stop!!" or "get out of my head!!"), snapping my wrist gently with an elastic band, or tapping my head. These actions help because they break the negative thought cycle my mind is so used to. I think of the negative thought pattern as a deep groove in the brain. It will take something drastic to get my mind out of this deep rut. If the action does not work, I will try again. It will take a lot of tries before it works really well. Once I have done it, I am able to begin a newer, healthier thought pattern (of my own choosing).

3. Do Something Different
This is where I create a newer, healthier pattern of my own choice.

   A. Analyze Thoughts:

   How true and helpful your negative thoughts are to your well-being
   I don't have to accept my negative thoughts as ultimate truths. Analyzing my negative thoughts can help me see that what I think isn't necessarily true. Also, those negative thoughts are most likely not good for my well-being. Once I see these thoughts as both not true and bad for me, it is easier to leave them behind.

   B. Replace Negative Thoughts with Positive Thoughts

   Saying positive statements about myself can help me battle the negative thoughts. They can even help me feel good about myself. These positive statements are called affirmations. Keeping a journal of my affirmations or of nice things others have said to me can remind me
about good things when I can't think of them myself. Placing post its around my home with positive sayings can also help. This way I am surrounded by positive thoughts even when I feel down. With enough repetition, I can begin to believe the good things I say to myself. After all, it's usually the same way I started thinking so negatively about myself.

C. Relax

Doing something relaxing can make me feel physically better. This can then help calm my mind and prevent the negative thoughts from taking over. After all, it is hard to think negatively when my body is at peace. I find deep breathing helps me to stop the thoughts. I start concentrating on my breath and leave the thoughts alone and find that helps them go away.

D. Distract Yourself

I find (especially at first) that the best strategy is to simply do something/anything. For example, I can count my pennies (nickels, dimes), or do the dishes, etc. This occupies my mind so I cannot dwell on the negative thoughts as much. It's hard to obsess over negative things when I keep busy. How much something will distract me depends on my mood. If I keep trying new activities, I will find what I can do that is most helpful for me in stopping the negative thoughts.

If it works, keep it. If it doesn't work, try something new!
It is MY choice whether I want to continue engaging in the same behaviors (including thinking negatively) or try new ones. One of the best things to do is examine what I currently do and how it makes me feel. If what I am doing doesn't make me happy, maybe it's time for a change.
I REMEMBER, thought stopping is a process and it takes time. It took a long time for me to say and believe the negative thoughts in my head, so it will take time to stop them. At first, all I may be able to do is notice that I am thinking negatively and nothing may distract me from it. This is okay. It will take time, like any new behaviour I engage in, it will get easier and be more effective the more I do it. As long as I keep trying, I am getting better.

Analyzing My Negative Thoughts

It is very easy to believe the negative things I tell myself when I feel upset. It is also easy to believe positive things when I feel good about myself. This shows how my thinking changes with how I feel in the moment. Questioning my negative thoughts when I feel upset can help free me from their tight grip on my life. I use the following questions to help me question my negative thinking.

I find it helpful to write down the process of questioning my negative thoughts. This helps me remember what I was thinking when I was in a different mood. It shows me I don't always think bad about myself, which gives me hope when I feel upset. It can also help remind me of reasons why I may have already decided the negative thought was not true or helpful. This can make it much easier to stop that thought when it creeps up on me again.

1. What is the evidence for this thought?
I may say really horrible things about myself without questioning it. When I actually start looking for proof for the thought/belief, I may be surprised to find I have nothing to back it up. I may even find proof for why the thought is not true. Realizing the thought is not true means when it comes up, I can remind myself "I know this is not true" and say all the reasons it is not true. This can help the thought go away.
2. Is this thought always true?
It is very easy to believe negative thoughts when I am upset and believe positive thoughts when I am happy. However, how can two extreme opposites both be true? For example, "I have no friends" and "Sarah and Katie are my good friends". If I only believe it some of the time, it is likely not true. It is likely my thoughts just trying to make me feel bad. I can remind myself of this when the negative thought comes around again.

3. Has this thought been true in the past?
Again, if I did not believe a negative thing about myself in the past, why should I believe it now? Most likely, I only believe it because I am feeling worse now. When I feel better, I will be able to go back to my healthier beliefs. I choose to confront the negative thought now and get back to my healthier beliefs sooner.

4. What are the odds of this thought really being true?
I ask myself if I would hold anyone else up to the same standards I set for myself. For example, "if I do not skip my lunches at work, ignore my coworkers, and stare at the computer screen all day long, I am not a good worker". I tend to treat others more kindly and fairly than I treat myself. If I would not talk to or think this way about others, then the thought is likely not true.

5. Am I looking at the whole picture?
When I feel bad, it is very easy to only look at the negatives and to ignore any positives. When I push aside the positives, I am choosing to think negatively. Positives are just as valid as negatives, even though when I feel bad, I may feel they are undeserved. I remember that is the negative thoughts and feelings talking. I can choose to feel better by choosing to believe in the positives. I remember to look in my journal where I write nice things others have said about me. Other people think good things about me, so there must be good things there. I can start to see the positives if I let myself look for them.

6. Am I being fully objective?
Asking someone else for their opinion can help me to clarify whether I am being realistic or not. They can tell me if there is any truth to the thoughts or if I am only making myself feel worse. Talking to others also helps me see that other people have the same worries as me. They may even be able to share ideas on how they stop their negative thoughts. Then I can try those ideas out and they may help me. We can even work together and help each other out.

7. Does the thought promote my well-being?
I know that most often, the negative thoughts I have don't do anything good for me. Sometimes I think they may motivate me to do better. What usually happens is I feel too bad with all the negative thoughts to do anything to feel better. If the negative thoughts don't do anything good for me, I can choose to leave them behind. I will replace them with healthier thoughts.

8. Did I choose the thought on my own?
Often with my negative thoughts, I have no idea where they come from. Maybe someone told me negative things about myself or someone treated me poorly. I might have thought bad things about myself to explain why I was treated poorly. I want to be able to choose what I believe about myself. I look at my whole self and decide what I want to believe about myself and what thoughts I want to tell myself. I do have this power and my choices can make a world of difference.

Once I have questioned my negative thoughts, it is MY choice to keep them or not. If I want, I can decide to eliminate them from my life by working on my thought stopping. If I want to think more healthy thoughts, repeating positive statements to
Positive Self-Talk

1. WHEN IT COMES TO THOUGHTS, YOU HAVE A LOT OF MIND CONTROL!! YOUR BODY LISTENS AND RESPONDS TO YOUR THOUGHTS!!!!

Your mental self-talk can be: POSITIVE or NEGATIVE

1. Sports Psychology is a great example of the power of mind control. An athlete is taught to stay positive, to stay calm, be focused, be confident, to “see yourself as a winner,” and to “picture the ball going in the hole.” Many athletes find success with this positive thinking and imagery.

2. Another way positive thinking and mind imagery is used in relaxation and relieving stress. You can imagine a scene, place or event that you remember as peaceful, restful, beautiful and happy. It acts as a retreat from places of stress and pressure, the body actually responds with lower blood pressure, lower pulse rate to calm down and relax.

3. Just as making positive statements to yourself helps you to build confidence, improve performance, and improve your mental skills, negative thinking damages these things.

Our sub-conscious mind can’t tell the difference between what is real and what is imagined! It takes any pictures, any thoughts that you send to it as reality. Once you direct an image or visualization to your sub-conscious brain, it will work 24 hours a day to make that image a reality, coming up with a plan to make those thoughts true for your life. So, choose your self-talk very carefully, because your sub-conscious brain takes whatever you send it as real.

Examples: If you were taught as a child that all dogs will bite you, your mind will automatically raise that fear everytime you see a dog. (even though your friend tells you that their dog is friendly, your mind believes and sends the fear message! You have to re-train your brain!!)

If you continually say, “I’m really bad at math,” then your brain will send thought reminders to you like, “I can’t do this, “ “this is too hard for me,” “I’ll never get this because I am bad at math.”

4. You can retrain and change your thinking by having positive self-talk. It’s not easy at first…but it can literally change your life!!!

Today, we are going to practice this difficult, but powerful positive self-talk.
What IS a positive attitude?
It's not necessarily positive, but necessarily not negative!
It is a sense of connectedness to something bigger than the self.
It is a sense of control over how we handle the events in our lives.
It is an ability to visualize a life with hope.

Self-talk

Self-talk is another way to help modify our thoughts. Here are examples of self-talk statements for you to use. Pick a few to practice.

A. Preparation for Stress
I've succeeded with this before.
What exactly do I have to do?
I know I can do each one of these tasks.
It's easier once I get started.
I'll jump in and be alright.
Tomorrow I'll be through it.
I won't let negative thoughts creep in.
or ________________________

B. Facing a Challenge
I will take it step by step, I won't rush.
I can do this, I'm doing it now.
I can only do my best.
Any tension I feel is a signal to use my coping exercises.
I can get help if I need it.
If I don't think about fear, I won't be afraid.
If I get tense, I'll take a deep breath and relax.
It's OK to make mistakes.
or ________________________
C. Coping with Fear

Relax now!
Just breathe deeply.
There's an end to it.
Keep my mind on right now, on the task at hand.
I can keep this within limits I can handle.
I can always call ________________________.
I am only afraid because I decided to be. I can decide not to be.
I've survived this and worse before.
Being active will lessen my fear.
or: ________________________.

D. Self Congratulations

I did it!
I did alright.
I did well.
Next time I won't have to worry so much.
I am able to relax away anxiety.
I've got to tell ________________________ about this.
It's possible not to be scared...
All I have to do is stop thinking I'm scared.
or: ________________________.

E. Affirmations

Everyday in every way I grow stronger and stronger.
I enter this day with a peaceful heart.
or: ________________________.

It is important that you accept that you may not, and indeed do not have to believe in the thoughts that you substitute for the negative ones. Remember the lemon!
Positive Self Talk

Positive self talk is a strategy that we can use to help us get through anxiety provoking situations. It helps us to break stress up and involves focusing on positive rather than negative statements. There are three key stages: preparation, coping and review.

Preparation

As we are about to enter a situation or face something we find daunting we can help ourselves to prepare with positive statements such as:

“It’s not going to be as bad as I think.”
“It won’t last long and I can cope.”
“I am getting better and need to re-build my confidence.”
“If I do get bad feelings, I know they won’t last long and I can cope with them.”
“It’s better to go than not to go. Worry doesn’t help.”
“I might enjoy it if I go.”

Coping

In order to help us cope and stay in the situation we can use positive statements such as:

“Concentrate on what is going on….not how I feel.”
“This is just anxiety; it is an unpleasant feeling but I’ve never been ill.”
“Concentrate on what I have to do.”
“I know I am going to be ok.”
“The feelings always pass.”
“Relax and think positively.”
“One step at a time.”
“Anxious feelings are unpleasant but not harmful or dangerous.”

Review

Comments to help you review your achievement and give yourself praise:

“I coped with that.”
“I achieved that; I am getting better.”
“I handled that; it should be easier next time.”
“I can be pleased with the progress I’m making.”
“I did that well.”
“If I keep this up I’m going to get really good at this.”

Even when things don’t go according to plan, you should still take time to review the situation and praise yourself for what you have achieved. Each small step is progress, so try to focus on the positives rather than the negatives.
Positive Self-talk / Coping Thoughts Worksheet

Positive statements encourage us and help us cope through distressing times. We can say these encouraging words to ourselves, and be our own personal coach. We have all survived some very distressing times, and we can use those experiences to encourage us through current difficulties.

Examples of coping thoughts might be:
- Stop, and breathe, I can do this
- This will pass
- I can be anxious/angry/sad and still deal with this
- I have done this before, and I can do it again
- This feels bad, it’s a normal body reaction – it will pass
- This feels bad, and feelings are very often wrong
- These are just feelings, they will go away
- This won’t last forever
- Short term pain for long term gain
- I can feel bad and still choose to take a new and healthy direction
- I don’t need to rush, I can take things slowly
- I have survived before, I will survive now
- I feel this way because of my past experiences, but I am safe right now
- It’s okay to feel this way, it’s a normal reaction
- Right now, I am not in danger. Right now, I’m safe
- My mind is not always my friend
- Thoughts are just thoughts – they’re not necessarily true or factual
- This is difficult and uncomfortable, but it’s only temporary
- I can use my coping skills and get through this
- I can learn from this and it will be easier next time
- Keep calm and carry on

Write down a coping thought or positive statement for each difficult or distressing situation – something you can tell yourself that will help you get through. Write them down on a piece of card and carry it in your pocket or handbag to help remind you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficult or Distressing Thought</th>
<th>Coping Thought/Positive Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex. I always feel so awkward around people</td>
<td>Ex. Just because I feel awkward does not mean that others see me that way</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Positive Data Log

Collect evidence, however small or apparently insignificant, that supports the Alternative Core Belief. Write down that evidence on the form below, as soon as possible after you notice the evidence – otherwise you might forget, minimize or discount the evidence. You might start by collecting one piece of evidence each day, and gradually increase to 2, 3 or 5 pieces of evidence each day to support the new healthy core belief.

**Alternative/Healthy Core Belief**: Ex. I’m going to fail high school and not get into a good college

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Evidence to Support The New Alternative/Healthy Core Belief</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/15</td>
<td>Ex. I got a B on my Science test</td>
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Tips for Healthy Boundaries

Personal boundaries are the limits and rules we set for ourselves within relationships. A person with healthy boundaries can say “no” to others when they want to, but they are also comfortable opening themselves up to intimacy and close relationships.

Know your limits.
Before becoming involved in a situation, know what’s acceptable to you, and what isn’t. It’s best to be as specific as possible, or you might be pulled into the trap of giving just a little bit more, over and over, until you’ve given far too much.

Know your values.
Every person’s limits are different, and they’re often determined by their personal values. For example, if you value family above all else, this might lead to stricter limits on how late you will stay at work, away from family. Know what’s most important to you, and protect it.

Listen to your emotions.
If you notice feelings of discomfort or resentment, don’t bury them. Try to understand what your feelings are telling you. Resentment, for example, can often be traced to feelings of being taken advantage of.

Have self-respect.
If you always give in to others, ask if you are showing as much respect to yourself as you show to others. Boundaries that are too open might be due to misguided attempts to be liked by elevating other people’s needs above one’s own.

Have respect for others.
Be sure that your actions are not self-serving, at the expense of others. Interactions should not be about winning, or taking as much as possible. Instead, consider what’s fair to everyone, given the setting and relationship. You might “win”, but at the cost of a relationship’s long-term health.

Be assertive.
When you know it’s time to set a boundary, don’t be shy. Say “no” respectfully, but without ambiguity. If you can make a compromise while respecting your own boundaries, try it. This is a good way to soften the “no”, while showing respect to everyone involved.

Consider the long view.
Some days you will give more than you take, and other days you will take more than you give. Be willing to take a longer view of relationships, when appropriate. But if you’re always the one who’s giving or taking, there might be a problem.
YOU WERE BORN TO BE REAL, NOT TO BE PERFECT.

The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another.

KEEP GOING, YOU ARE GETTING THERE.

You have to fight through some bad days to earn the best days of your life.

“KNOW WHO YOU ARE AND KNOW IT’S ENOUGH.”

What consumes your mind, controls your life.

Change the way you see things, and the things you see will change

IT’S OK.