

Mindfulness Exercises

Physical coping skills

The simple act of moving your body can work wonders for lowering your anxiety levels.

1. Move your body

- Some ideas for physically tackling that heightened anxiety you're feeling include:
- going for a brisk walk
- physically shaking your hands and arms to dispel tension
- jogging or running
- practicing yoga
- dancing
- doing jumping jacks
- doing burpees

Ultimately, whatever physical activity helps you calm down is a good choice.

2. Walk in nature

- A walk in a park or other green space might help you shake off some stress.

3. Grounding exercises

Grounding exercises are another anxiety coping skill that can help calm you in the moment. They help shift your focus onto the physical environment and away from anxious thoughts. Some grounding exercises you can try including:

- running your hands under cold water
- taking a cold shower
- gently shaking your whole body
- focusing on your breathing

You can also attempt to ground yourself by trying to focus on each of your senses in sequence. This grounding exercise is called the **5-4-3-2-1 technique**:

- Name 5 things you can see.
- Name 4 things you can feel.
- Name 3 things you can hear.
- Name 2 things you can smell.
- Name 1 thing you can taste.



Another similar technique for coping with anxiety is called the **3-3-3 rule**. It involves the following steps:

- looking around and naming 3 things you can see
- listening to identify 3 sounds you can hear
- moving 3 parts of your body

Blowing bubbles is an easy technique to release your messy thoughts and anxiety:

- What are you thinking right now?
- What are you feeling? (Tired? Hungry? Nervous?)
- Reflect on these thoughts and feelings
- Now blow some bubbles
- Visualize your thoughts and feelings drifting away in the bubbles



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Emotion-focused coping skills

If physical anxiety coping skills don't seem to do the trick or you want additional coping strategies, you may find that emotion-focused activities help you better manage your emotions.

4. Journaling

- Research shows that journaling can reduce anxiety and stress. Seeing your anxious thought laid out on paper, and outside your head, can help make them seem more manageable.

5. Thought exercises

- Something as simple as picturing a relaxing scene may help you cope with anxious thoughts or situations as they happen.
- Another strategy is to use diffusion techniques. These are thought exercises intended to change the way you see your thoughts. Instead of viewing them as a universal truth, diffusion allows you to gain some distance. One example of a diffusion technique is repeating your thoughts in a silly voice.

6. Meditation

- Meditation is another valuable coping skill for anxiety. Practicing mindfulness or meditation can help you create some mental space, allowing you to observe your thoughts from a different perspective.
- You might simply close your eyes and attempt to empty your mind. But if you're new to meditation, it may be helpful to try guided sessions using online videos or meditation apps for your smartphone or other device.

7. Distraction

- While distraction is not a good anxiety coping skill for the long term, it may help at times when you suddenly feel bombarded by anxious thoughts.
- When anxiety feels overwhelming, consider watching TV, reading a book, or going out with a friend. You can also use humor to keep your mind from dwelling on an anxious thought.

Daily routines to tackle anxiety

Other ways to **limit your stress levels and manage your anxious feelings include:**

- exercising regularly
- making time for the activities that reduce your stress levels
- prioritizing your sleep and improving sleep hygiene
- identifying and avoiding anxiety triggers
- eating a nutritious diet
- limiting caffeine and alcohol
- socializing with friends



You might find it beneficial to **integrate some of the previously mentioned anxiety coping strategies into your daily routine.** For instance:

- Start a daily meditation practice or try journaling in the morning to address your worries before they impact your day. Journaling at night can also help you sleep better by reducing the anxious thoughts that keep you awake.
- Poor sleep can exacerbate stress and anxiety. If you feel anxious before bedtime, research from 2019 suggests that taking a warm bath before bed may help you fall asleep faster.
- While anxiety and stress can't be completely avoided, these coping skills can help you adapt and respond more effectively to unhelpful thoughts. The next time you feel overwhelmed by worry, you'll have the tools you need to manage it.