

PAT WALKER HEALTH CENTER  
COUNSELING & PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

# COVID-19 ANXIETY WORKSHOP

HOW TO MANAGE YOUR ANXIETY EFFECTIVELY  
COVID-19 MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES



Welcome to **COVID-19 Anxiety Toolbox**, a workbook intended to help decrease your anxiety around the COVID-19 outbreak.

Infectious disease outbreaks create a unique type of crisis with a great deal of uncertainty about the nature of the disease, its spread, and its impact. This will understandably affect individuals' emotional and mental health and wellbeing even among those who have not been directly exposed to the disease. Reactions to a crisis can appear very different from person to person and can occur at any time.

The goal of this toolbox is to help reduce your anxiety about the outbreak, provide you tools to manage your anxiety, as well as provide you with life-long tools you can use while facing anxiety-triggering situations.

The purpose of this toolbox is NOT to provide you facts about the outbreak or provide you with medical or safety precautions. Accurate recommendations regarding disease prevention, self and family care, and travel guidance can be found at:

- [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/)
- [health.uark.edu/coronavirus/](http://health.uark.edu/coronavirus/)

**Resist the temptation to get your facts from social media as information might be misleading and increase your anxiety.**

*This workbook is an adaptation of CAPS' Anxiety Workshop & student workbook.  
Source material originally developed by Cal Poly Counseling Services for their Emotional Well-Being Workshop.*

## **EMOTIONAL DISTRESS IS NORMAL**

Emotional distress is common and normal in the context of uncertainty and potentially life-threatening situations, such as Covid-19 pandemic.

Stress can present itself in different ways including physical, emotional, or cognitive ways.

## **COMMON STRESS REACTIONS**

- Excessive worry, feeling overwhelmed, or realizing that it's hard to stop thinking about different aspects of the virus.
- Trouble sleeping or staying asleep; changes in eating patterns such as eating too little/too much.
- Hypervigilance, which can look like excessive or frequent checking up on the news or constantly checking in on family and friends.
- Difficulty relaxing, including muscle tension, and feeling keyed up or on edge.
- Unhealthy coping such as increased alcohol, tobacco, or drug use in order to distance yourself from stress and distress.
- Irritability, anger, and other emotional reactions, including tearfulness, and sadness.
- Wanting to be alone, or feeling detached or numb.

## **HELPFUL WEBSITES**

- Care for Your Coronavirus Anxiety: <https://www.virusanxiety.com/>
- 7 Science-Based Strategies to Cope with Coronavirus Anxiety: <https://theconversation.com/7-science-based-strategies-to-cope-with-coronavirus-anxiety-133207>
- Managing Coronavirus Virus Anxiety: 10 Practical Suggestions: [https://nickwignall.com/coronavirus-anxiety/?ck\\_subscriber\\_id=736862797](https://nickwignall.com/coronavirus-anxiety/?ck_subscriber_id=736862797)
- Five Ways to View the Coverage of Coronavirus: <https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/pandemics>
- Taking Care of Yourself in Times of Uncertainty: <https://afsp.org/taking-care-of-your-mental-health-in-the-face-of-uncertainty/>

## SELF-CARE

Engaging in pleasurable activities is important to maintain a healthy body and mind. Applying self-care is an easy strategy to reduce our symptoms of anxiety. Self-care includes the various ways we look after ourselves physically, emotionally and mentally.

While self-care can look different from person-to-person, there are some types of self-care recommended for everyone: good sleep, physical activity, and attending to your own nutritional needs.

### SELF-CARE: SLEEP

Lots of important things happen in your brain and body while you sleep. Research shows that while you sleep, your brain is hard at work forming the pathways necessary for learning and consolidating the information you've taken in that day. Sleep deprivation will impact your mood, energy, memory, grades, ability to focus and your ability to concentrate in class and on homework. Research shows you **need 7 to 8 hours of sleep consistently EVERY night** to be well-rested and perform optimally. Here are 11 strategies to improve your sleep hygiene. **Circle one strategy that you would like to implement starting tonight.**

1. **Get regular.** Go to bed and get up around the same time every day, even on weekends and days off!
2. **Get up and try again.** Try to go to sleep only when tired. If your unable to fall sleep after about 30-minutes, get up and do something calming (not stimulating) until you feel sleepy, then try again.
3. **Avoid caffeine and nicotine.** Avoid consuming any caffeine (coffee, tea, soda, chocolate) or nicotine (cigarettes, e-cig) for at least 4-6 hours before going to bed.
4. **Avoid alcohol.** Avoid alcohol for at least 4-6 hours before bed because it interrupts the quality of sleep.
5. **Bed is for sleeping.** Try not to use your bed for anything other than sleeping and sex, so your body comes to associate bed with sleep.
6. **Electronics curfew.** Don't use back-lit electronics one-hour before bed, as artificial light hinders hormones and neurons that promote sleep.
7. **No naps.** Avoid taking naps during the day. If you can't make it through the day without a nap, make sure it's before 3 p.m. and no longer than an hour.
8. **Sleep rituals.** Develop rituals to remind your body that it is time to sleep, like relaxing stretches or breathing exercises for 15 minutes before bed.
9. **No clock-watching.** Checking the clock during the night can wake you up and reinforces negative thoughts such as, "Oh no, look how late it is, I'll never get to sleep."
10. **The right space.** Make your bed and bedroom quiet and comfortable for sleeping. An eye mask and earplugs may help block out light and noise.
11. **Keep daytime routine the same.** Even if you have a bad night's sleep, it is important that you try to keep your daytime activities the same as you had planned. That is, don't avoid activities because you feel tired. This can reinforce the insomnia.

## **SELF-CARE: EXERCISE**

In addition to good sleep, exercise can lead to positive changes in our well-being.

In the short term, exercise releases endorphins, which are powerful chemicals in your brain that can improve mood, energy levels, and concentration, often leading to feelings of euphoria. Over time, consistent exercise promotes long-term changes in the brain, resulting in improved memory, coping, cognitive functioning, mood, and self-esteem.

Some people experience a sense of calm and happiness after a good hike or improved concentration after they went for a swim. **Have you ever experienced this feeling?**

Look at the exercise tips below and circle one you can implement into your everyday routine.

**\*\*\*Many fitness programs are offering free at-home, online classes during the COVID-19 outbreak\*\*\***

- 1. Find an enjoyable activity.** Exercise doesn't have to be boring. Choose a pleasurable activity, like playing Ping-Pong or doing yoga. Aim for fun, not more work.
- 2. Start small.** Commit to 10 minutes of exercise a day or add exercise to your daily routine (like walking to school or doing push-ups in your room).
- 3. Get outside.** The sun provides a mood "pick me up" of its own, producing serotonin in the brain. Take a walk or hike.
- 4. Schedule it in.** It's easy to skip exercise when we don't plan. Put it in your phone as part of your daily to-do's and celebrate when you check it off.
- 5. Mix it up.** To avoid feeling bored with exercise, try a number of different activities.
- 6. Team up.** Find an exercise buddy for accountability. Choose a workout you and your friend can do at the same time and facetime/video chat each while exercising.
- 7. Minimize equipment.** Equipment can be expensive. Identify activities that don't require you to have equipment or facilities, like walking, running, or dancing.
- 8. Follow your energy.** If your energy fluctuates throughout the day, try to plan to exercise when your energy is at its peak. Alternatively, exercise when feeling sluggish for an energy boost.
- 9. Set goals.** Achieving goals improves mood and self-esteem. Set specific achievable exercise goals and reward yourself when you accomplish them.

## **SELF-CARE WORKSHEET**

Rate current use of wellness practices in your everyday life 0 (non-existent) to 5 (use every day). Wellness practices can include, pleasant activities, yoga, meditation, journaling, etc.)

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**What are your current roadblocks to effective self-care?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**What self-care/wellness practice would you like to implement? (see list)**

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### **TIPS TO IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE SELF-CARE:**

- Choose what wellness practice you are going to implement (see the list below if you do not have activity you would like to implement)
- Create a schedule when you are going to implement the activity
- Stick to the same schedule everyday
- Identify how you will overcome a roadblock if it presents itself

**What is your plan to implement effective self-care?** \_\_\_\_\_

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## PLEASURABLE ACTIVITIES TO DO AT HOME

**\*\*\*There are many more activity ideas you can find online\*\*\***

Board Games / Puzzles	Read Book/Magazine	Dance
Watch Movie/TV	Journal	Learn New Craft
Cook / Bake	Home Spa Day	Write a Story
Take a Bath/Shower	Learn New Language	Message Friends
Call/Video Chat Friends	Reorganize home/room	Sew/Knit
Learn to Meditate	Virtual Tour of Museum/Zoo	Create Beauty Routine
Online Learning Class	Garden	Color/Draw
Play with a pet	Take a Nap	Sing
Exercise	Crossword Puzzle	Write Affirmations

## **UNDERSTAND ANXIETY: A COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL MODEL**

In order to reduce our anxiety, you need to better understand where your anxiety is coming from.

The evidence-based Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) model treats anxiety by **focusing on interactions between symptoms** in three areas: thoughts, feelings and behaviors.

When we talk about anxiety, we add physiological/physical sensations to this model because, physical sensations are a major part of the anxiety experience.

This toolbox focuses on four symptom clusters: physical, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive responses.

**Using the common symptoms below, check which symptoms you are/may experience:**

### **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: \_\_\_\_\_

### **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*

### **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
- Narrow attention, hypervigilance for threat
- Poor memory
- Difficulty in reasoning, loss of objectivity
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**The next two sections look further at physical and cognitive symptom clusters of anxiety, as well as introduce strategies to reduce symptoms in each category.**

# PHYSIOLOGICAL/PHYSICAL SENSATIONS

A big part of anxiety has to do with our physiological responses to stressors. Our amygdala is the part of the brain that triggers our anxiety switch. The amygdala has an evolutionary basis in protecting us from danger and triggering our fight, flight, or freeze response.

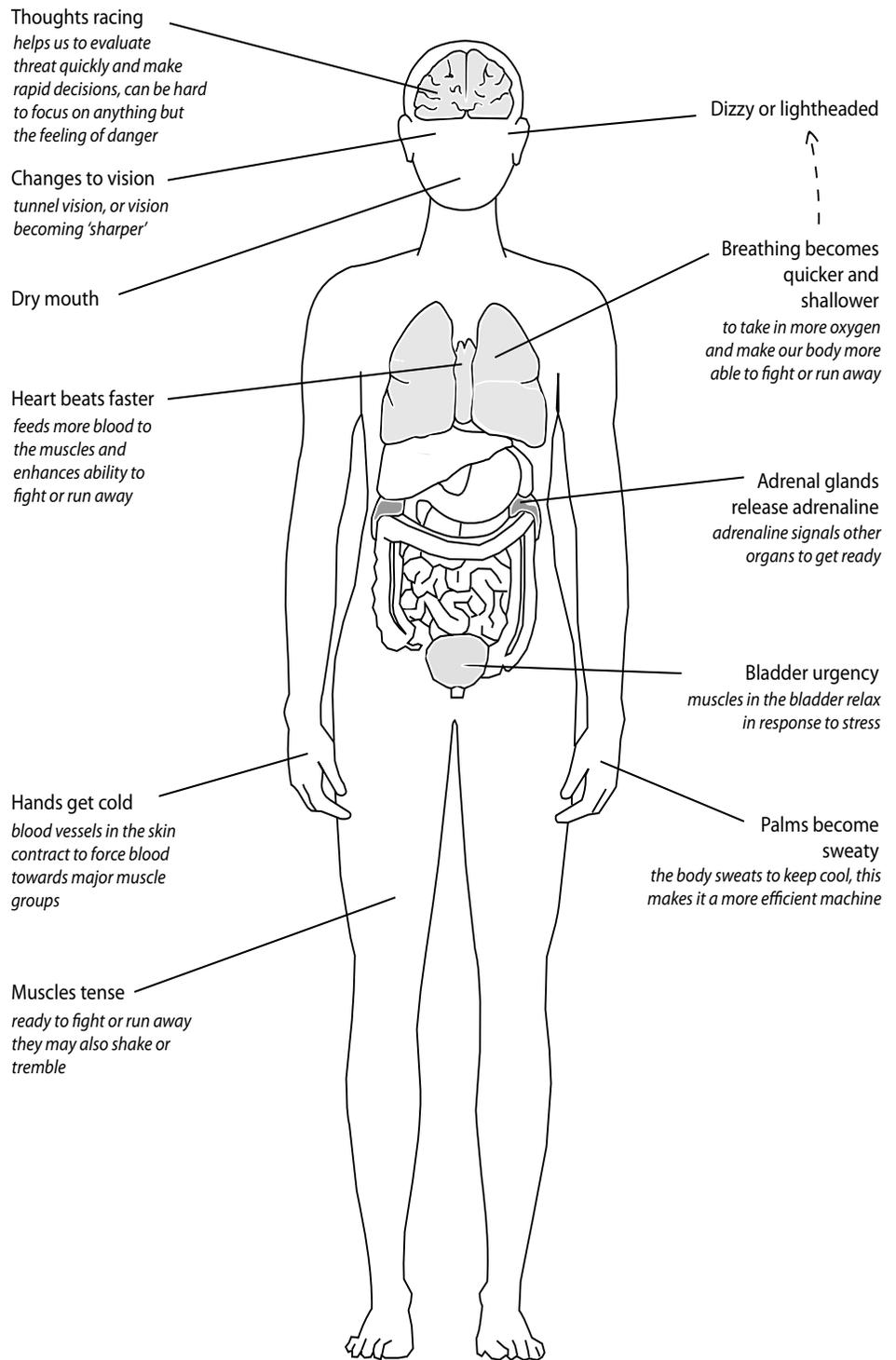
However, the fight, flight or freeze system — when it comes to our anxiety — is mis-triggered. This leads leading to our amygdala getting stuck in the “on” mode, causing us to run away from or fight danger (our anxiety) all day long and tiring ourselves out!

Additionally, the amygdala learns that this level of arousal and anxiety — this constant “on” mode — is the new norm and the amygdala adapts and adopts this new elevated level of anxiety for your body.

Therefore, the fight, flight or freeze response triggered contributes to physiological or physical symptoms of anxiety.

These physiological symptoms are uncomfortable things we avoid when we avoid anxiety-provoking situations.

**Look at the symptoms listed in the figure and circle the ones you are experiencing.**



## **RELAXATION TECHNIQUES**

One of the most effective coping strategies you can use for anxiety symptoms (particularly the physical ones) is to use deep breathing and relaxation techniques.

Below you will find a variety of techniques that can be helpful at reducing the anxiety that you are currently experiencing. Select and practice a few of the techniques that you may find helpful.

### **Helpful Practice Tips:**

- Practice these techniques daily.
- Choose a consistent time each day that is free from distractions and calm. (Before bed is a great time because it can also help with difficulties falling asleep)
- Practice these strategies in a calm environment and consistently in order to increase your ability to access them when you are stressed/anxious.
- The more you practice these strategies the easier they will be to access when you are anxious.

## **BREATHING TECHNIQUES**

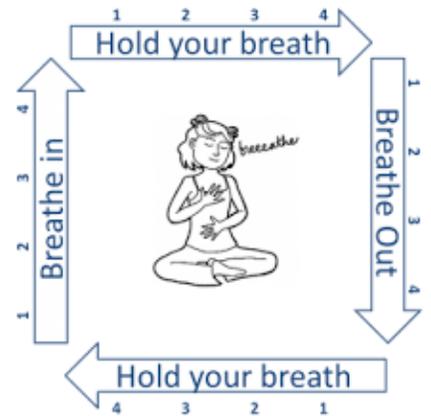
### **Belly (or Diaphragmatic) Breathing**

You can do this exercise in any position, but it is helpful to do this exercise while lying down when first learning belly breathing.

1. Lie comfortably on your back, with a pillow under your head, your knees bent and your back flat. You can stretch your legs out if that's more comfortable.
2. Place one hand on your belly and one hand on your upper chest.
3. Inhale slowly and expand your belly as you breathe so that your lower hand moves with your belly. The hand on your chest should remain as still as possible.
4. Slowly exhale, focusing on the movement of your belly and lower hand as it returns to its original position.
5. Repeat steps 3 & 4 for several minutes, always focusing on the movement of the belly as you breathe. If your mind wanders, gently bring your attention back to your breathing.

### **Square Breathing**

1. Place one hand on our stomach and one on our chest. You want to feel the hand on our stomach move in and out more than the hand on our chest.
2. Take a deep breath in through your nose. As you inhale you count in your mind 1...2...3...4 and you imagine using the air you breathe in to push against your hand on your stomach.
3. Hold for a count of 4. Then you exhale through your mouth like you are blowing out a candle.
4. Exhale for a count of 1...2...3...4
5. Pause for a count of 4 before starting again.



### **Breath-Counting Exercise**

This exercise focuses on the use of counting with the rhythm of the breath. Start with a short period of time and gradually increase the time. Set a timer so that you do not have to worry about when to stop.

1. Find a comfortable position. Take several deep breaths and settle into yourself. You may either close your eyes or keep them open, depending on your own comfort. If you keep them open, fix them on an object or a spot on the floor about four feet in front of you. Your eyes may be either focused or unfocused.
2. Take deep, comfortable breaths. Notice your inhalation. The pause between inhaling and exhaling, your exhalation, and the pause before starting again.
3. As you inhale, count, "one..." As you exhale, count, "two..." Inhale, "three..." Exhale, "four..." Continue until you reach 10 then start over.
4. If you lose count, simply begin with "one" on your next inhalation.
5. If you notice your mind has wandered, gently notice this, and return your focus back to counting your breath

## **GROUNDING TECHNIQUES**

When people become overwhelmed with distressing thoughts or feelings — including intense anxiety — doing activities that keep your mind and body connected (called “grounding”) can be helpful to regain a sense of stability and mental focus.

The following are a variety of grounding exercises that can help anchor you firmly within the present moment and provide you with space to choose where to focus your energy.

- Remind yourself of who you are now. State your name, age and where you are right now.
- Take ten slow deep breaths. Focus your attention on each breath on the way in and on the way out. Say the number of the breath to yourself as you exhale.
- Splash water on your face or place a cool wet cloth on your face.
- Pay purposeful attention as you hold a cold (non-alcoholic) beverage in your hands. Feel the coldness, and the wetness on the outside. Note the taste as you drink. You can also do this exercise with a warm beverage.
- Find a “grounding object” to hold, look at, listen to, and/or smell. This could be a soft object such as a pillow or stuffed animal, a smooth stone you found on the beach, a picture of a beautiful scene or loved one, and/or any other object that represents safety or comfort.
- Listen to music. Pay close attention and listen for something new or different.
- If you wake up suddenly during the night and feel disoriented or distressed, remind yourself who you are and where you are. Look around the room and notice familiar objects and name them. Feel your bed, softness of the sheets or blankets, the warmth or coldness of the air, and notice any sounds you hear. Remember you are safe.
- Feel the clothes on your body and the sensation of your clothes as you move in them.
- While sitting, feel the chair under you and the weight of your body and legs pressing down on it.
- If you are lying down, feel the contact between your head, your body and your legs, as they touch the surface. Starting from your head, notice how each part feels, all the way down to your feet, on the soft or hard surface.
- Stop, look, and listen. Notice and name what you can see and hear nearby and in the distance.
- Look around you, notice what is front of you and to each side, name first large objects and then smaller ones.
- Get up, walk around, take your time to notice each step as you take one then another.
- Step outside, notice the temperature, the sounds around you, the ground under your feet, the smell in the air.
- “54321” Grounding Exercise:
  - Name 5 things you can see in the room with you.
  - Name 4 things you can feel (tactile; e.g. “chair on my back” or “feet on floor”)
  - Name 3 things you can hear right now
  - Name 2 things you can smell right now
  - Name 1 good thing about yourself
- Write and/or say grounding statements:
  - This situation won’t last forever
  - This too shall pass.
  - I can ride this out and not let it get me down.
  - My anxiety/fear/sadness won’t kill me; it just doesn’t feel good right now.
  - These are just my feelings and eventually they’ll go away.

Adapted from: <http://www.livingwell.org.au/well-being/grounding-exercises/>

## SHORT RELAXATION TECHNIQUES: WHEN YOU ONLY HAVE A FEW MINUTES

Correct Breathing	Learn to always breathe using the diaphragm. Let the breath reach the bottom of the lungs, and let the chest and shoulders relax. High, shallow chest breathing is stressful and gives messages of stress to the brain.
Three-Part Breathing	Take a deep breath and imagine the lungs divided into three parts. Visualize the lowest part of the lungs filling with air; the chest should remain relatively still. Imagine the middle part of the lungs filling; visualize the rib cage expanding. Visualize the upper part filling with air as your shoulders rise slight and over backward. Exhale fully and completely; drop your shoulders, feel your rib cage contract, and force every bit of air from the bottom of the lungs. Repeat.
Stretching	Gently roll your head and shoulders many times a day. Also, gently stretch other areas of the body that may need it.
Tense-Relax Muscles	Tighten the muscles you want to relax and feel the tension. Let the muscles become loose and limp and feel the relaxation.
Body Scan	With your mind, briefly scan every muscle in your body from your toes to your head. Release any tension with a relaxing breath. Correct your posture and relax all the muscles you are not using.
Jaw Drop	Be aware of any tightness in your jaw. Allow your jaw to loosen by separating your teeth.
Heaviness and Warmth in Hands & Arms	Relax your body and feel heaviness in your arms and hands. Imagine a warmth flowing through them. Imagine and experience your shoulders, arms, hands becoming heavy, relaxed, and warm.
Mind-Quieting Meditation	Begin by focusing on your breathing. Use a special phrase that helps you focus on relaxation, and quiet your mind.
Attitudes & Perceptions	Pay attention to your perceptions and attitudes. Allow yourself to put a stress-reducing “frame” around the stressor. Remember, stress affects the body based on perceptions of the outside world.

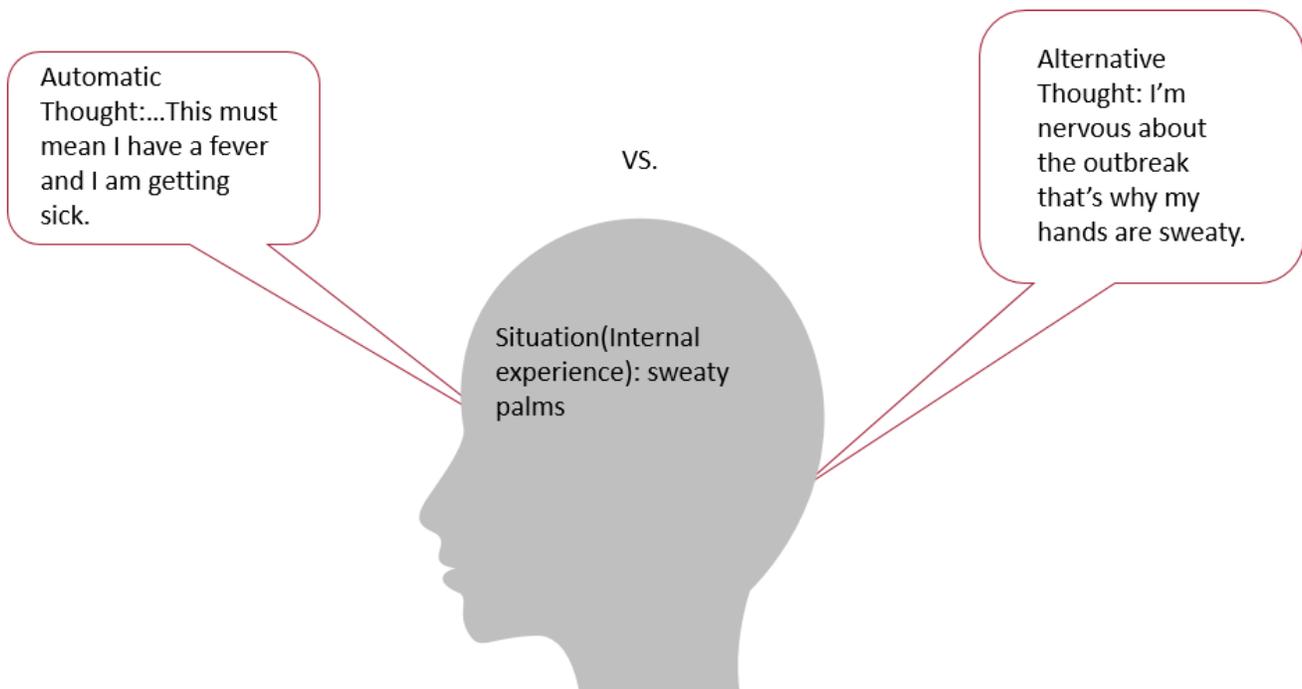
## COGNITIVE RESPONSES TO ANXIETY

During this time, you may have a variety of distressing thoughts running through your mind. These thoughts are called automatic thoughts.

Automatic thoughts are thoughts and/or images that automatically pop into our heads. We don't choose for them to happen, they just do. For example, you may be purposefully working on your homework when the automatic thought pops up that you suddenly need to clean your room or text a friend or call your mom back. Automatic thoughts can be helpful or unhelpful, and can impact the way we feel or drive us to think more.

We're going to focus on these automatic thoughts, particularly the unhelpful ones, because this is where we can start to see some difficulties when it comes to anxiety.

Let's talk about some examples of automatic thoughts that you may be having related to Covid-19 and feelings that might go with them. First, we will look at an internal experience or stimulus of sweaty palms. (See diagram below)



Imagine you notice that your palms start sweating. You may have the thought, "this must mean I have a fever and I am getting sick". What if you have the thought "I'm nervous about the outbreak that's why my hands are sweaty". Can you see how the same internal experience or stimulus (i.e., sweaty palms) can provoke different thoughts? What feelings do these different thoughts create?

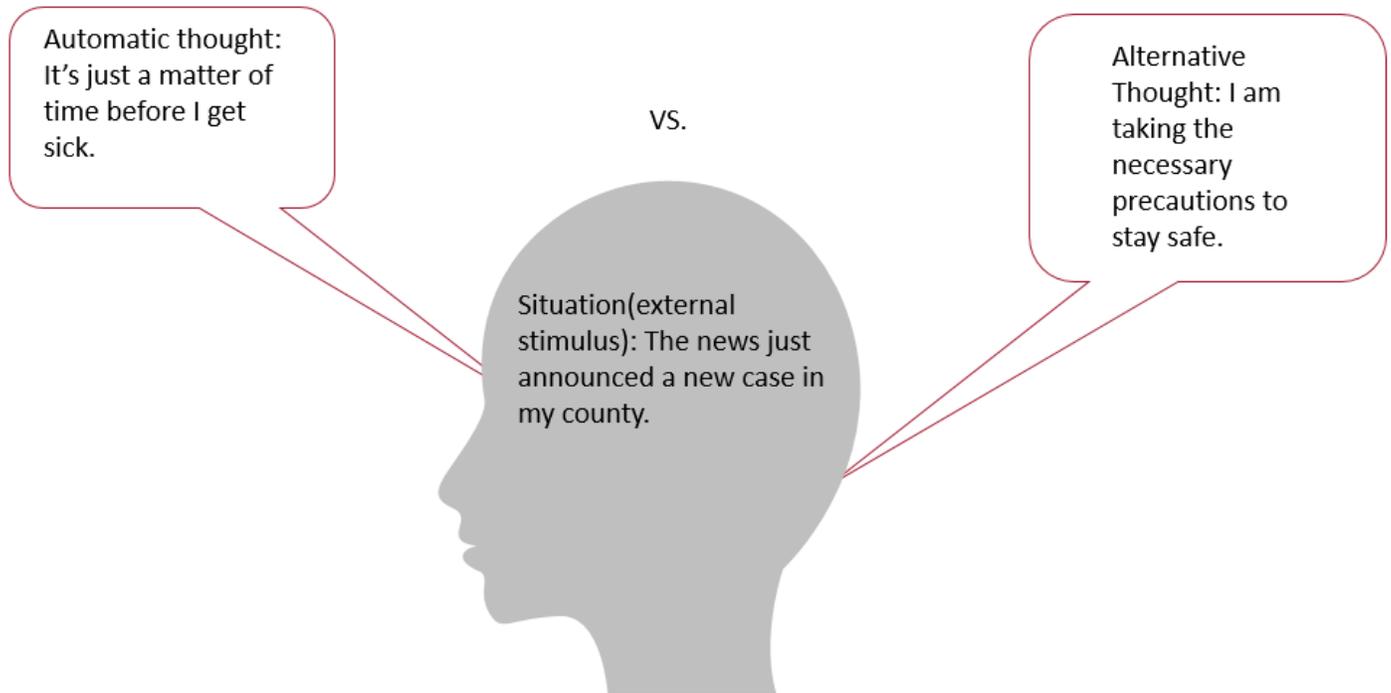
Although the alternative thought may not take away your anxiety; if you measure your anxiety on a scale from 0-10, where 0 is no anxiety and 10 is the most you have ever experienced, you may noticed your anxiety decrease thinking the alternative thought. **Using this scale can be very helpful at identifying a reduction in our anxiety.**

Where do you think your anxiety would be in this example? Mark your ratings below:

**Automatic Thought:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Alternative Thought:** \_\_\_\_\_

Here's another example, this time, our thoughts are in response to an **external stimulus**.



Imagine the government releases an update that a new case was just announced in your county and you have the automatic thought "It's just a matter of time before I get sick." What if you have the thought "I am taking the necessary precautions to stay safe." Can you see how the same **external experience** or stimulus can provoke different thoughts? What feelings do these different thoughts create? Using the anxiety scale, where 0 is no anxiety and 10 is the most you have ever experienced, where might your anxiety be for each thought? Mark your ratings below:

**Automatic Thought:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Alternative Thought:** \_\_\_\_\_

Identifying alternative thoughts/responses can be a helpful strategy in reducing your anxiety. However, many of you may be thinking, how do I come up with alternative responses to my automatic thoughts? Below you will find a list of helpful questions and prompts that can help change your thinking patterns and allow you access alternative and more helpful thoughts.

**\*\*\*It is important and helpful to approach our automatic thoughts non-judgmentally and to not label them as negative. Acknowledge that you have had the thought and then ask yourself what's another way of looking at this situation\*\*\***

### **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/loved one were in this situation and had this thought, what would I tell them?

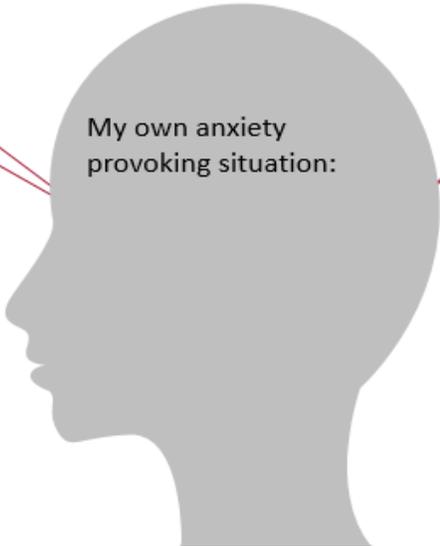
### **Now it's your turn to practice.**

Using the alternative thought questions and prompts above, identify an anxiety provoking situation (internal or external) and identify your automatic thoughts and alternative thoughts to the situation by filling out the diagram below.

Automatic Thought:

Alternative Thought:

vs.



My own anxiety provoking situation:

Rate your anxiety on a scale from 0-10 (0 no anxiety, 10 the most you have experienced)

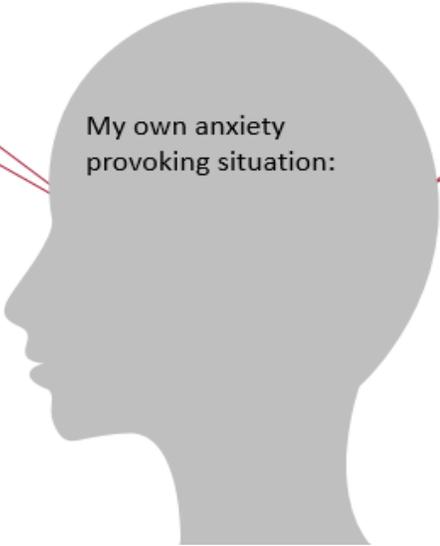
Automatic Thought | \_\_\_\_\_

Alternative Thought | \_\_\_\_\_

Automatic Thought:

Alternative Thought:

vs.



My own anxiety provoking situation:

Rate your anxiety on a scale from 0-10

Automatic Thought | \_\_\_\_\_

Alternative Thought | \_\_\_\_\_

## COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING

When you identify an alternative thought, you are utilizing a strategy called **cognitive restructuring**, or in other words, using a different thinking approach to an anxiety provoking situation.

This involves purposefully slowing down, challenging your automatic thoughts and thinking patterns, and giving yourself a **broader perspective on the situation**. This takes time and lots of practice. So be patient with yourself.

When you start to notice anxiety, think to yourself: **“Stop, pay attention and get perspective.”** This means, stop, pay attention to **what is going on in your mind and body** and then be **intentional** about what happens next. What we want to do here is to slow down the process so that you don’t get caught up in the anxiety and that you feel more in control. The ultimate goal is for the “stop and pay attention” mantra to become second nature so that you use it even before experiencing anxiety. That is going to take time and lots of practice. **Using a relaxation technique is a great way to help us “stop and pay attention.”**

To better understand this “stop and pay attention” mantra, we are going to work through an **example of alternative responses** to anxiety and then you will have a chance to complete your own.

We want to highlight that when creating an alternative response, we are **not saying “just think positive”**, because you have probably heard that before and it’s not that simple.

What we are saying is, let's look at the situation from a broader perspective.

Before we work through an example using the *Alternative Response Worksheet*, it is helpful to identify our automatic responses to anxiety using the *Cognitive Conceptualization Worksheet*, which helps break our anxiety into the four domains mentioned earlier. **We will use an example from our automatic thoughts exercise and then you will complete your own.**

The form asks you to identify your automatic responses in each of the symptom clusters. We have included the common symptoms worksheet from above and a feelings wheel to help identify your responses in each category. **\*\*\*This form can very helpful at identifying what domain our anxiety primarily falls in and as result aides us in identifying which strategy (relaxation, deep breathing, or alternative responses) may help us most. \***

# CROSS SECTIONAL FORMULATION

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

The government releases an update that a new case was just announced in your county

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

- Shortness of breath
- Stomach drops
- Headache
- Sweaty palms

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

- Anxiety is an 8 out of 10
- Fear
- Worried
- Scared
- Frustrated
- Angry
- Frightened

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

- It's just a matter time before I get sick
- Will things ever get back to normal?
- I am worried about my family's safety
- Will we have graduation?

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

- Isolate myself
- Ignore messages from friends
- Stop taking care of myself

# 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?*)

# 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: \_\_\_\_\_

## EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS

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

## BEHAVIORAL SYMPTOMS

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

## COGNITIVE SYMPTOMS

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

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



Now we will walk through the *Alternative Response Worksheet* using the same situation as above.

## ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE WORKSHEET

**Situation:** *(When? Where? What? With whom? What did you feel anxious about?)*  
**The government releases an update that a new case was just announced in your county**

<p><b>Alternative Thoughts and Images:</b> <i>(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? Use the alternative response questions worksheet below to help you)</i></p> <p><b>I am taking the necessary precautions to stay safe</b></p> <p><b>I have the resources I need if I get sick</b></p> <p><b>I can stay connected to my support system via phone, social media, and facetime</b></p>	<p><b>Alternative Behaviors:</b> <i>(What could you do that would be more helpful for you, others, &amp;/or the situation? What are coping strategies that might be helpful?)</i></p> <p><b>Coping Strategies I Can Use:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Deep breathing</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Distract myself: Find a movie to watch, exercise</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Seek support from a friend/ family member, facetime my parents once a day</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Alternative Feelings:</b> <i>(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?)</i></p> <p><b>Reassured</b></p> <p><b>Safe</b></p> <p><b>Relaxed</b></p>
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**Original Outcome:** *(What was the original outcome?)* **I stayed in bed all day, did not talk to anyone, and kept googling/reading social media posts about the outbreak.**

**Desired Outcome:** *(Using these new alternatives, what would you like the outcome to be in the future?)* **I can be productive at home, connect with family and friends, and practice self-care.**

### TIPS FOR FINDING ALTERNATIVE RESPONSES:

- Before you begin the worksheet practice a relaxation/breathing technique.
- Use the alternative thoughts, behaviors and feelings question prompts below to complete your worksheet.

# 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?*)

## **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, more accurate way of thinking?
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 experience that suggest this thought might not be COMPLETELY true ALL 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?

### **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."

## **CONCLUSION**

Remember, we must **practice these strategies regularly** to effectively manage anxiety. It can be more helpful to practice these strategies when your anxiety is low, as it makes the skills become more second nature for when you do feel anxious. **Extra worksheets are included in this packet.**

An important reminder during these stressing times is that **some amount of anxiety is normal** in the human experience.

With consistent practice, the coping strategies learned in this workbook will help you better manage your anxiety, as well as prevent feeling overwhelmed from anxiety.

If you are still experiencing heightened anxiety after completing this workshop, please do not hesitate call CAPS at 479-575-5276 to speak with a mental health clinician by telephone or zoom video chat.

CAPS is available from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday through Friday. After-hours emergency services are also available by calling the CAPS line at 479-575-5276.

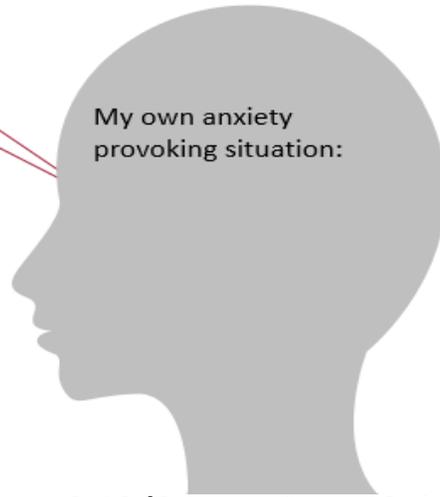
## **ADDITIONAL MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES**

- [COVID-19 & Your Mental Health \(CAPS – Pat Walker Health Center\)](#)
- [Tips to Manage Anxiety \(American Psychological Association\)](#)
- [Coronavirus Anxiety Podcast](#) (APA)
- [Coronavirus Response Research](#) (APA)
- [Psychological First Aid: Resources for Faculty in Higher Education](#) (Tufts University)
- [Managing Stress and Anxiety during COVID-19 Outbreak](#) (CDC)
- [Toolkit for Caring for Coronavirus Anxiety](#) (Shine)
- [Coping and Staying Emotionally Well During COVID-19-Related School Closures](#) (Active Minds)
- [COVID-19 and Managing Mental Health](#) (JED)
- [SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline](#): 1-800-985-5990
- [Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#): 1-800-273-TALK
- [The Trevor Lifeline for LGBTQ Youth](#): 1-866-488-7386
- [Crisis Text Line](#): Text “START” to 741-741

Automatic Thought:

Alternative Thought:

vs.



My own anxiety provoking situation:

Rate your anxiety on a scale from 0-10 (0 no anxiety, 10 the most you have experienced)

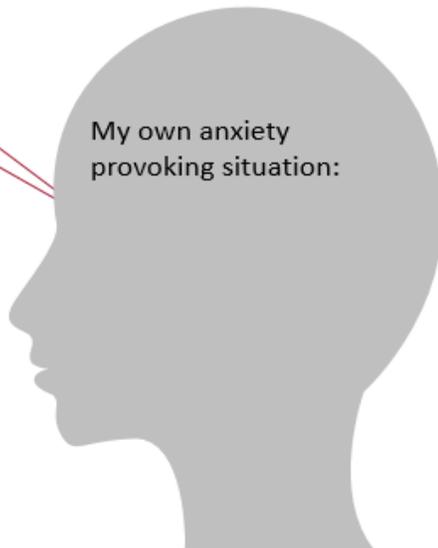
Automatic Thought | \_\_\_\_\_

Alternative Thought | \_\_\_\_\_

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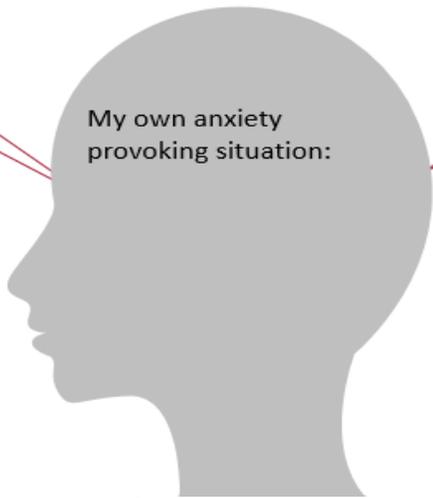
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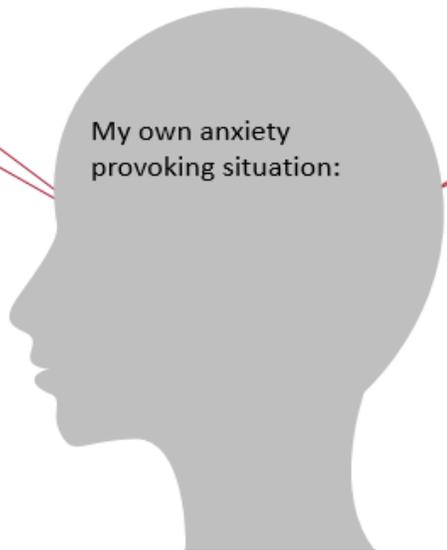
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Alternative Thought | \_\_\_\_\_

Automatic Thought:

Alternative Thought:

vs.



My own anxiety provoking situation:

Rate your anxiety on a scale from 0-10

Automatic Thought | \_\_\_\_\_

Alternative Thought | \_\_\_\_\_

# 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?*)

## ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE WORKSHEET

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## ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE WORKSHEET

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