

Anxiety

Understanding and managing anxiety

Overview

- Who is affected by anxiety
- The Biology of Anxiety
- Symptoms of Anxiety
- Types of Anxiety Disorders
- Causes of Anxiety
- Managing Anxiety
- Resources

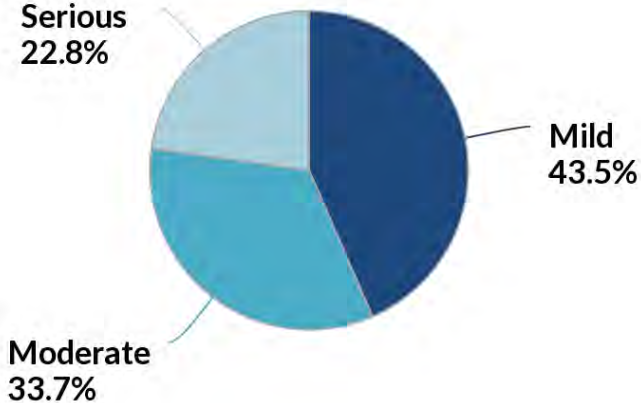


Anxiety Statistics

- Per National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) using the National Comorbidity Study Replication (NCS-R)
 - 19.1% of adults in the United States had an anxiety disorder over the past year

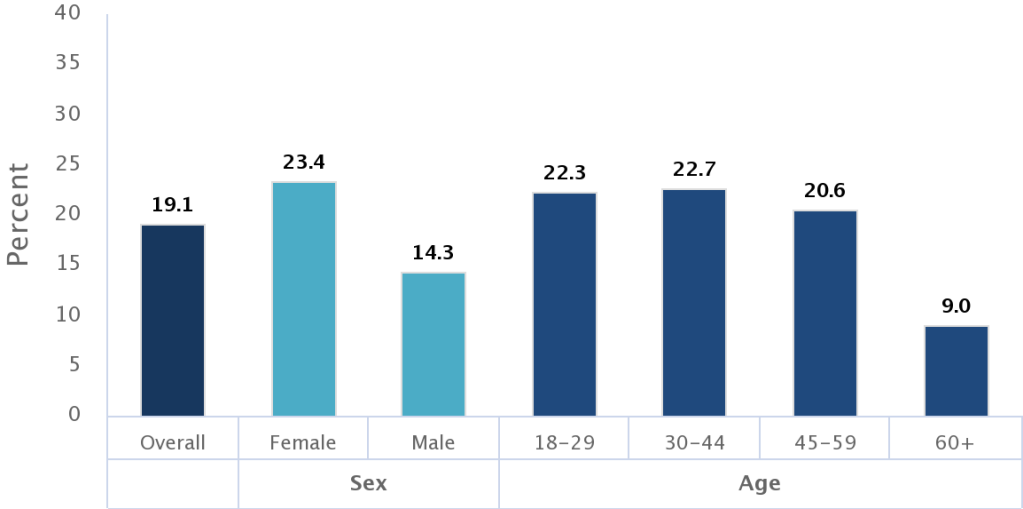
Past Year Severity of Any Anxiety Disorder Among U.S. Adults (2001–2003)

Data from National Comorbidity Survey Replication (NCS-R)



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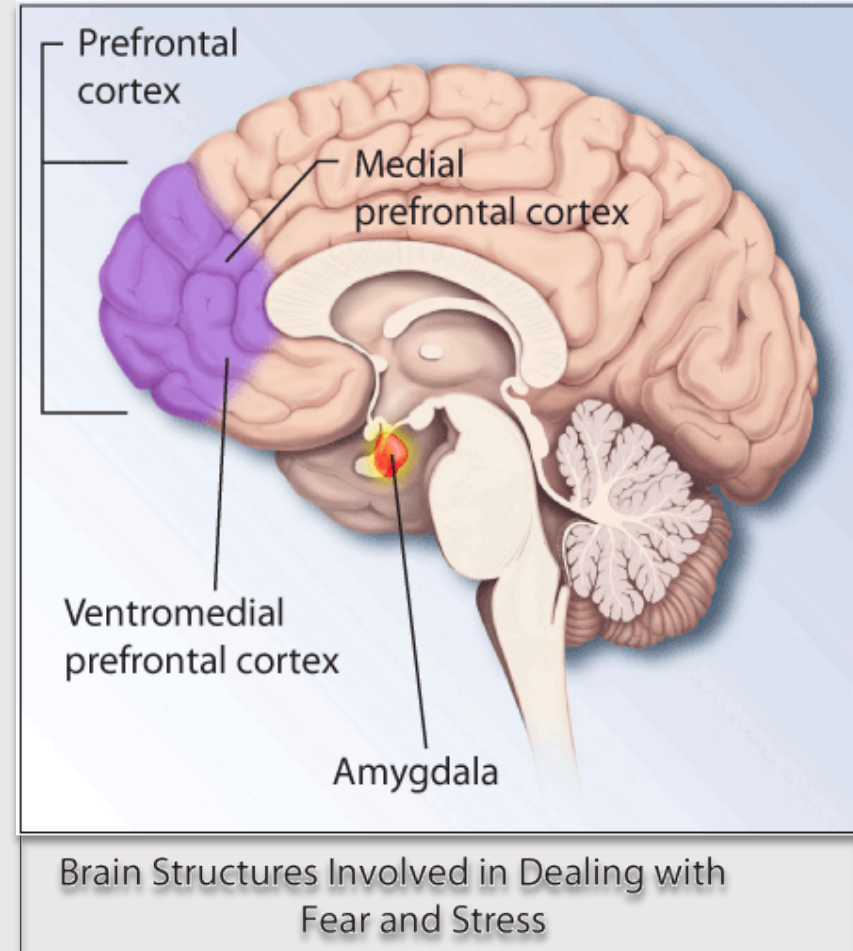
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The Biology of Anxiety

Anxiety and the brain

- We all have a built-in alarm system that helps us to navigate dangerous situations (the amygdala)
- This alarm system activates our fight/flight/freeze response
- Does not utilize the prefrontal cortex (responsible for reasoning, thinking, judgement)
- Can be activated by non-survival-based triggers (i.e., false alarms)



The Fight/Flight/Freeze Response

- Activates the sympathetic nervous system preparing us for action
 - Increased heart rate, pulse, and blood pressure
 - Increased alertness and improved senses
- Extended stress leads to the release of cortisol which keeps us prepared for action
- When we are no longer in danger our parasympathetic nervous system is activated which helps calm our bodies

What does my anxiety feel like?

- Feelings of needing to escape
- Fear of: dying, being in public, being overwhelmed, being trapped, making mistakes, passing out, losing your mind
- Thoughts that something bad will happen / feelings of impending doom
- Heightened self-awareness, or self-consciousness



What does my anxiety feel like in my body?

- Chest pain, tightness, feeling out of breath
- Blushing or blanching
- Body jolts, buzzing, zaps, shakes, tremors
- Feeling hot, shaky, dizzy, nauseous
- Clumsiness or lack of coordination
- Tingling or numbness in the extremities

What does my anxiety feel like in my mind?

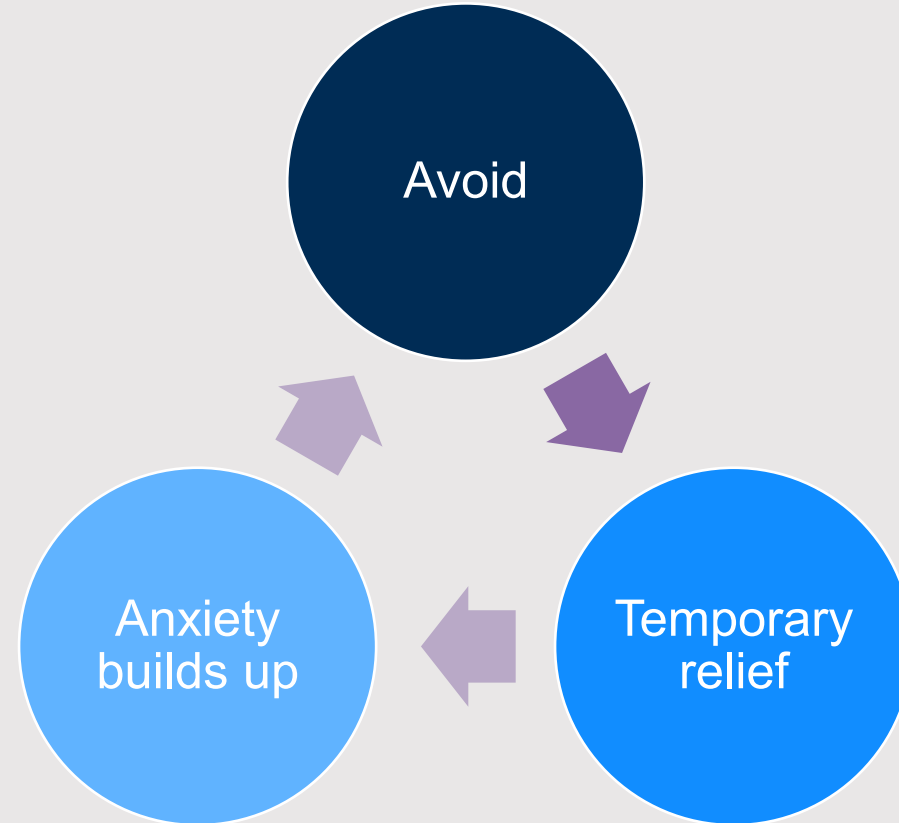
- Brain fog
- Déjà vu
- Depersonalization, derealization, desensitization
- Difficulty concentrating or memory loss
- Difficulty thinking, speaking, forming thoughts, following conversations

How does my anxiety effect my mood?

- Depression
- Dramatic mood swings
- Emotionally blunted, flat or numb
- Feeling edgy or grouchy
- Feel like crying
- Feeling under pressure all the time
- Feeling like things are unreal or dreamlike

Behavioral Symptoms

- Avoidance
- Seeking reassurance
- Scanning and prediction
- Looking for escape



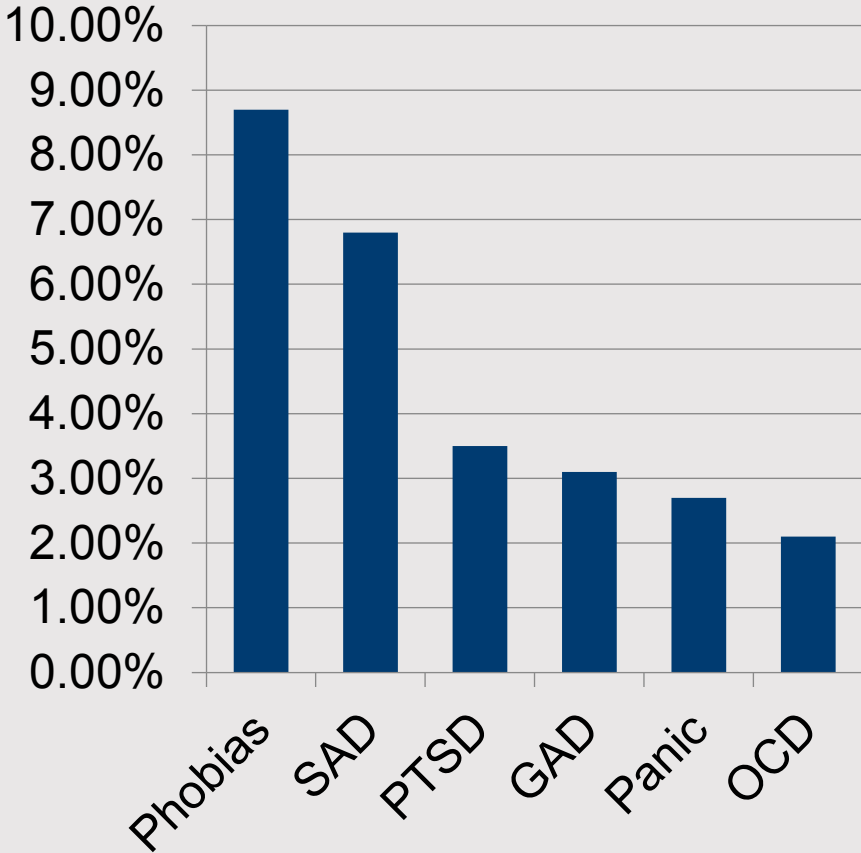
Anxiety Overview



What are Anxiety disorders

Types of Anxiety Diagnoses

Specific Phobias 8.7%	Social Anxiety Disorder 6.8%
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder 3.5%	Generalized Anxiety Disorder 3.1%
Panic Disorder 2.7%	Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder 2%



Types of Anxiety Diagnoses (cont.)

- Specific Phobias
- Panic Disorder
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- Trauma and Stressor Related Disorders
- Separation Anxiety
- Agoraphobia
- Selective Mutism
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder
- Social Anxiety Disorder

Causes of Anxiety

What causes anxiety?

- Difficult experiences during childhood
- Ongoing stress
- Heredity: Anxiety disorders can run in families
- Medical conditions: asthma, heart disease, thyroid disease
- Medications
- Drug or alcohol misuse – Note: Marijuana use is especially associated with panic and anxiety

Trauma and ACE's

- Trauma is often stored as emotional memories in the brain
- We can be triggered by people/places/situations that remind us of past trauma (can happen without conscious awareness)
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) can effect our mental and physical health outcomes later in life

How Childhood Trauma Effects Adult Outcomes

- Traumas can include: Abuse, neglect, bullying, insulting, etc
- Trauma does not guarantee that someone will go on to develop anxiety
- Can be helpful to explore past experiences when addressing anxiety and panic
- Unpredictability in childhood can lead to the development of GAD and other anxiety disorders
- Changes in the nervous system lead to hypervigilance
- Can lead to the amygdala becoming overactive

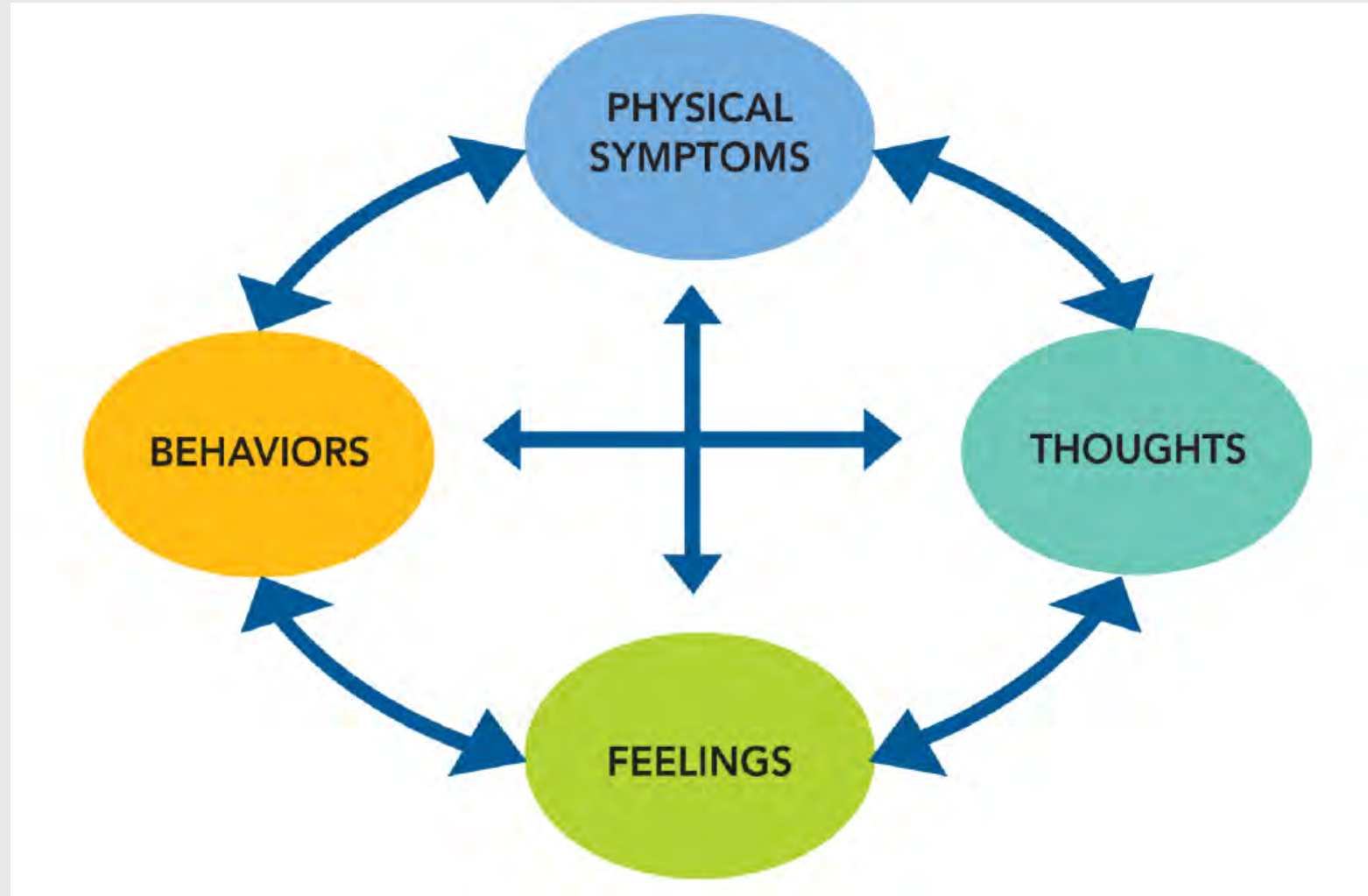
Managing Anxiety

Cognitive Behavioral Techniques

- Recognizes how our thoughts and emotions influence our behavior
- Explore our automatic thoughts and core beliefs
- Allows us to be more aware of our thoughts and thought patterns
- Better avoid getting stuck in negative thought patterns
- Allows for exploration of alternative thoughts

What you think affects how you feel

The circle shows how thoughts, feelings, behaviors and physical symptoms are connected.



Exploring Automatic Thoughts

- Types of automatic thoughts:
 - Catastrophizing/Magnification
 - All or nothing thinking
 - Perfectionism
 - Discounting the positive
 - Fortune telling
 - Mind-reading
- Often stem from our core beliefs (I'm not worthy, I'm unlovable, I'm boring, I'm worthless)



Examples of Thinking Patterns

Fortune Telling

- "Something bad is going to happen."
- "I know I will fail."
- "I'm going to lose my job."

Mind Reading

- "I can tell he doesn't like me."
- "They can tell I'm anxious and falling apart."
- "I'm looking so anxious people will think I'm stupid."

"What If" Thinking

- "What if I faint?"
- "What if I can't talk?"
- "What if I become homeless?"
- "What if I get hurt?"

Working with Automatic Thoughts

Challenge automatic thoughts

- Is this the reality of the situation
- What is the evidence for and against my thought

The 3C's, Catch it, Check it, Change it

- Catch the thought you're having
- Check the thought for accuracy
- Change the default behavior

What can I do?

- Keep a thought diary listing scenarios that made you anxious.
- What happened? Can you identify the automatic thought? Is there a core belief that best fits this scenario?

Challenging Thought Habits

What was happening at the moment you felt anxious?

Riding in the elevator when several people got on and I had to stand in the back.

Feelings Anxiety Rating	Automatic Thoughts	Thought Habit Category	Replacement Thought, Believability	Replacement Behavior
Anxiety Rating: 7	What if the elevator breaks down and I'm trapped? I'm going to get off and take the stairs.	Fortune-telling	While there is always the chance the elevator could break down, it has never broken down since I worked here. It was inspected just last month. Rating: 6	Stay on the elevator.

60 second reality check

- This is a SIMPLE but POWERFUL technique that can help you gain perspective and reduce distress
- When feeling triggered, go through the following:
 - Does this (what just happened) really matter to me?
 - In the grand scheme of things, how big a deal is it?
 - Am I taking it personally?
 - Would it make sense to take time to think through the situation and then decide how to react?
 - Are my thoughts and actions helping me or hurting me? What I'm thinking or telling myself right now- is it helpful or is it hurtful?

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)



**CREATE A
MEANINGFUL
LIFE GUIDED BY
VALUES**



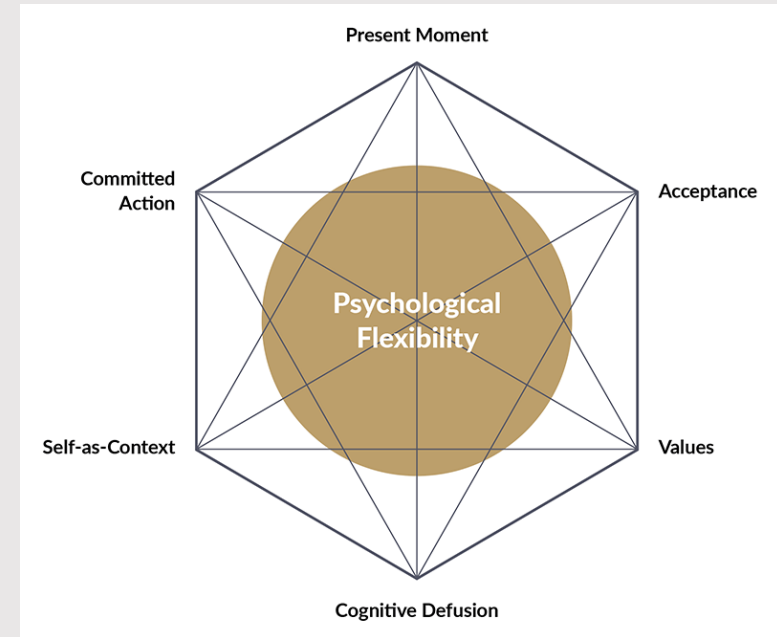
**ACCEPT PAIN AND
ANXIETY AS PART
OF LIFE**



**EXPERIENCE RELIEF OF
SYMPTOMS AND
SUFFERING THROUGH
ACCEPTANCE**

Components of ACT

1. Contact with the present moment
2. Self-as-context
3. Cognitive Defusion
4. Acceptance
5. Values
6. Committed Action



ACT: The Struggle Switch



Mindfulness

- Takes us out of autopilot
- Allows us to be present in the moment
- Can have health benefits including:
 - Decrease in blood pressure
 - Less pain
 - More relaxed muscles
 - Improved sleep
 - Better ability to resist infection
- Allows us to slow our emotional reactivity



How can mindfulness help?



Keeps you focused on the now

You are not thinking, “What if this happens or that happens?”



You **observe** anxious feelings without being overwhelmed by them



You're not trying to suppress or avoid unpleasant or anxious moments

Rather you acknowledge and observe them without labeling them good or bad.

Principles of Mindfulness

Observing mind:

- Seeing things “as if for the first time,” with curiosity and openness

Not judging:

- Impartially observing what you are thinking and feeling in the moment without judging them

Self-compassion:

- As you would have compassion or love for someone else without blame or criticism, you cultivate this awareness for yourself

Practicing Mindfulness



Breathing Techniques

- Help us to activate our parasympathetic nervous system
- Increases awareness of the present moment
- Types of breathing exercises:
 - Square breathing
 - 4-7-8 breathing
 - Pursed lip breathing
 - Diaphragmatic breathing



Breathing Techniques



Distress Tolerance

- Addresses the reality that pain and distress are part of life and that avoidance of this pain leads to increased pain and distress
- Teaches us to accept, find meaning for, and tolerate pain and distress
- Replace unhealthy ways that we currently manage stress (substance abuse, binge eating, self-harm)
- Non-judgemental observation of things as they are in the moment (we can not control them)
- A focus on acceptance and tolerance

Distress Tolerance Activities

- Wise Mind ACCEPTS
 - Activities, Contributing, Comparisons, Opposite Emotion, Pushing Away, with other Thoughts, with other Sensations
- Self-Soothe with the Five Senses
 - Vision, Hearing, Smell, Taste, Touch
- Improve the Moment
 - Imagery, Meaning, Prayer, Relaxation, One thing in the moment, Vacation, Encouragement
- Examine Pros and Cons
 - List pros and cons associated with tolerating that distress, focus on long term goals, think of positives of tolerating the distress (achieving goals), think of the negative consequences of not tolerating distress (what has happened in the past)

Grounding Techniques

- 5-4-3-2-1 Technique: 5 things you see, 4 things you feel, 3 things you hear, 2 things you smell, 1 thing you taste
- List objects that you can see / describe your environment in detail
- Put your hands in ice, run your hands under warm or cool water
- 3-3-3: 3 things you see, 3 things you hear, 3 things you touch – then see, hear, and touch 1 thing at the same time
- Say a safety statement: “I am safe right now. I am okay in this moment. This is not my past. I am located in _____; today’s date is _____”

Exposure Therapies

- Retraining your false alarm
- Practice the opposite of avoidance
- Slowly increasing your contact with those things that cause you worry or anxiety
 - May start with pictures of places/situations that bring up the worry and progress until you are able to approach that situation head-on
- Usually done with the guidance of a professional
- Begins with developing coping skills to manage anxiety before moving towards exposure

Practicing Self-Care

- Eating healthy
- Regular exercise
- Practicing good sleep hygiene
- Participate in pleasurable activities
- Practice mindfulness, relaxation, and breathing
- Reach out to supports
- Take time to laugh
- Listen to music you enjoy
- Practice self-compassion
- Be creative



When to see a professional

- If anxiety keeps you from doing your daily activities, or is causing discomfort and self-care doesn't help:
 - Contact your mental health department to schedule an appointment
- Call 911 or visit your nearest emergency room if you think you might be experiencing a mental health emergency

Questions?