

Innovations



Mindfulness Tools!

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Deep Breathing

- ❖ When you slow your breathing down, you are also slowing your brain down. In “fight or flight” mode, the shallow breathing increases heart rate and anxiety. When engaging in deep breathing, or “belly breathing”, you eliminate the shallow breaths and reduce heart rate, which triggers a relaxation response.
- ❖ When the amygdala is relaxed, and the prefrontal cortex can take back control. The prefrontal cortex is the “let’s think about this” part of the brain that gets rid of hormones and adrenaline.
- ❖ Breathe in for four seconds through the nose, until the chest fills with air. Hold for four seconds. Slowly blow out the air until it’s all gone. Repeat until relaxed.
- ❖ If you are having difficulty breathing out slowly, you can use a straw to help exhale.

Go Outside

- ❖ Nature can calm an anxious brain. Simply changing atmospheres has a calming effect. Get away from where a stressor occurred.
- ❖ Observe the environment and surrounding to help focus on something tangible. What color is the sky? How many different flowers can you find? Etc.

Incorporate Walking and Movement

- ❖ Endorphins help calm the anxious brain. They are released with exercise.
- ❖ Blood gets pumping and helps alleviate the anxious energy that has been built up and makes you feel badly.

Write It Out

- ❖ Take some time to write out something that is positive, like a “Gratitude Journal”. This helps reduce anxious thoughts residing in the brain, and it helps stop the production of new anxious thoughts.
- ❖ After writing a few entries, just going back and reading them can help refocus on a positive outlook.
- ❖ Write an “Affirmation Journal”. You will want to note things that have happened that day, or something you have done well.

Talk and Fidget

- ❖ If you get too worked up/aggressive, it’s great to have options of fidgets to use (preferably malleable). This may help you be able to talk it out simultaneously.
- ❖ Ideas: playdough, deck of cards, putty, stress ball, bean bag/bean animal, water/oil, plastic slinky, items that buckle, zip, Velcro, button, snap, click, fidget spinner, Rubik’s Cube, ice, coloring (pencils), puzzles, Sudoku, word finds, heating/cooling pad, lotion, scented markers

Sensory Grounding

- ❖ 1,2,3,4,5 → 5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, 1 good thing about yourself.
- ❖ 5 Finger Senses → trace your hand on a piece of paper. Label each finger as one of the five senses and identify something special representing each of the senses (that is unique to you). Try to memorize these, so they can be recited to help ground when the drawing is not in front of you.

Cognitive Awareness

- ❖ Orienting to place and time, ask yourself questions: “Where am I? What is today? What is the date? What is the month? What is the year? How old am I? What season is it?”

Brain Games

- ❖ Name all the red things you see around the room.
- ❖ Count the number of ceiling tiles there are in the hallway.
- ❖ Going through the alphabet, what can you name that begins with A, B, C...?

Music/White Noise

- ❖ *Weightless* by Marconi Union → can reduce anxiety by 65%.
- ❖ Anything that is not fast-paced without heavy drumming or sharp instrumentals.
- ❖ Preferably songs without words.

Guided Imagery

- ❖ *The Big White House* by Ellen Curan:

"Imagine walking along a long, white beach. You can hear the gulls and the gentle roll of the waves. Your feet sink into the warm, white sand. It is quiet and safe. You are alone walking into the soft sea wind. The sun is shining down on you, making you warm. You have been looking for a place to be quiet and comfortable. This feels as if it is your beach, yours alone.

You stop and stand, looking out over the immense, expanding ocean. It shows its green top-water, its purple mid-water, and its gray, powerful underwater. The colors are mixing and churning, creating the bubbly white crest at the top of each wave. The roll of each wave sounds like the Earth, breathing. O...cean. O...cean. Over and over again with each wave. You feel the power of the ocean the Earth.

A short distance ahead of you, you now notice a big, white house. It is beckoning to you. It looks like a temple or small castle of some sort. You walk towards it, relaxed and interested. You follow a short path to the house and see that the large door is open. You feel that it is perfectly okay for you to go inside. It is safe and calm.

You step out of the sunshine and into the coolness of this beautiful house. You find yourself in a huge hallway with plants and paintings. A magnificent, marble staircase stands before you. You know you want to go up those stairs. You become aware of a very heavy backpack that you have been carrying all this time. The backpack is full of your worries, troubles, concerns, and negative feelings. You have been carrying them for a long time, and you realize that this backpack is weighing you down. Your shoulders ache, and your back feels tight and stiff from all these feelings.

Slowly remove your backpack, and with it all your worries and concerns. You feel released, free! You can now easily ascend the staircase. Each step you take, you become lighter, happier, and quieted. Each step brings you closer to absolute comfort and joy. The comfort and joy live in you, and now there is nothing to get in the way of feeling them, reaching them, having comfort and joy.

Now at the top of the stairs, you are strong and certain. A large window is open at the top of the stairs, and in front of it is a big, white comfortable chair. You sit down and face the window, watching the magnificent ocean once again. This time is yours. You watch from your chair, by your window in your house. Breathe in the soft ocean air, and know you are home."

Meditation

- ❖ Give yourself permission to take a break, slow down, and be present.
- ❖ Try to detach yourself from worry, and the chaos inside your brain and around you. Try to release very judgmental thoughts that pop up in your mind.
- ❖ Have your own meditation guides or connect with a guided meditation to help further decrease the pressures of remembering and having to think about thinking.