

GUIDED SELF-MANAGEMENT TOOLS **FOR ANXIETY**

Teens 13-17



COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY

FOR ANXIETY



INTRODUCTION

Everyone worries sometimes. School, friends, and stress can cause anyone to feel anxiety. For some teens, anxious feelings can become difficult to manage. This can cause problems at home, school, and/or with your friends. Working with your primary care team and your parents can help you manage symptoms of anxiety.

Behavioral health specialists have worked hard to figure out ways to help manage anxiety. One of the most effective interventions is a type of therapy called Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, or CBT. This type of therapy helps people with anxiety learn how to change their thoughts and behaviors in order to feel less worried and to cope when worries do occur. The worksheets in this guide will help you and your family try CBT strategies at home. There are tips and activities for you and advice for your parents. We find that the skills are most effective when used in the order we show here. All of the skills included in our guide are *evidence-based*, meaning they are strategies that have been tested and proven to be effective through rigorous scientific research. Many teens have found these strategies to be beneficial; we hope they will work for you, too.

SKILLS & EXERCISES

Each of the skill handouts includes an explanation of the skill, a description of how it will help you and your family and instructions for how to use the strategy at home. We've also included a list of common questions and concerns people may have about each skill, along with our answers. Work through the guide along with your parents and try out each new skill for about two weeks to see which fit you best. See what's working and what's still challenging, then adjust as needed. Once you've found a set of skills that works for you, keep at it until the routine becomes second nature. It may be challenging at first, but the more you practice, the easier it will be to make these exercises and techniques a part of your daily life. Let us know how things are going and be in touch if you need any additional support for anxiety management. Good luck!



Skill 1

Fear Thermometer

These worksheets will help you pay attention to situations that make you anxious and rate your worried feelings.



Skill 2

Relaxation Skills

These worksheets teach simple skills and exercises that help increase feelings of calm and well-being. Make these skills a consistent part of your daily life in order to reduce stress.



Skill 3

Thinking Traps

These worksheets teach new ways to look at situations and suggest questions to ask in order to reduce anxious thoughts.



Skill 4

Facing Your Fears

These worksheets help you and your parents design exposures, which are opportunities to face fears in a controlled and safe way.



What is a Fear Thermometer?

- ▶ You may notice that you worry during many kinds of situations. You may also avoid certain situations or things. The anxiety may feel like it comes out of nowhere, which can make it hard for you to describe to family or friends exactly what makes you anxious. To begin managing your anxiety, you need help naming the problem.
- ▶ A fear thermometer is a tool that can do just that. A fear thermometer helps you organize or rank the things and situations that make you anxious. The things/situations that make you only a little worried are near a 1 on the thermometer. The things/situations that make you most worried are usually near the 10 on the thermometer.
- ▶ Once you have a better understanding of your worries, you can use the fear thermometer to plan ways to face your fears. These techniques can help you understand something really important: you can do things you want and need to do even when you are worried.

Here's How to Create a Fear Thermometer

Walk through the steps below; your parent can help you if you need it:

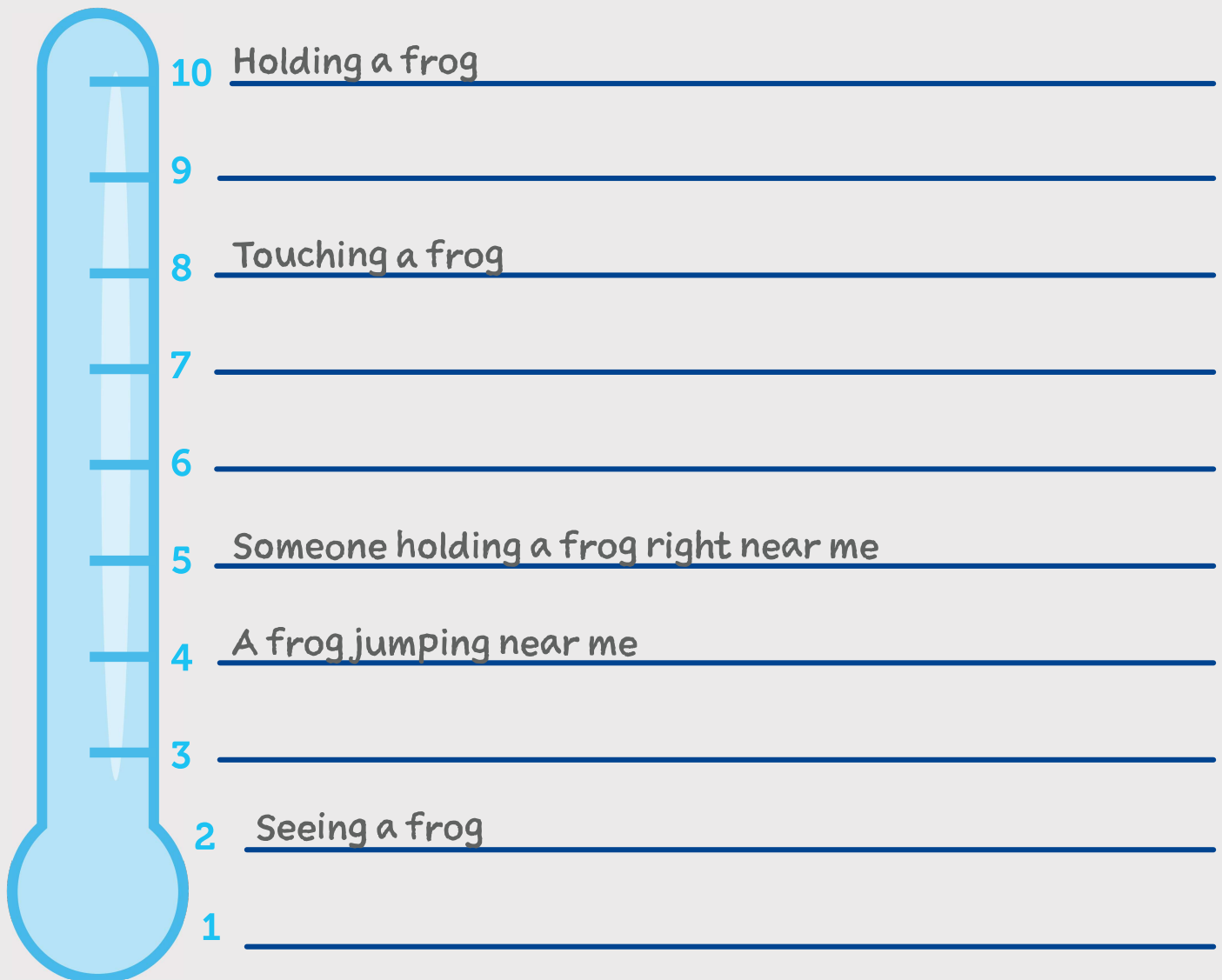
- 1 Look at the example.** Look at the example. The thermometer goes from 1 to 10. This teen is afraid of frogs! At the bottom near 1 it says, "seeing a frog," because that's something that makes the teen who made this a little worried. At 3 it has "a frog jumping near me" because that makes the teen a little more worried. The thermometer keeps going up like that until we get to 10, "holding a frog", the situation that causes this teen to feel the most worried.
- 2 List worries.** Before you make your thermometer, list all of the things you are worried about. You don't have to put them in order yet, just name everything you can think of. If you like, ask your parent for suggestions based on from things you've told them and what they've noticed.
- 3 Rate the worries and put them on the Thermometer.** Great job! Naming all of these things and talking about them is an important step to feeling less worried and anxious. Okay, now that you have your whole list, it's time to see where they go on the thermometer. Start with the first fear you wrote. Where would that fit on the thermometer: at the bottom near 1, at the top near 10, or somewhere in the middle?" Keep going! Move on to the next fear on the list.
- 4 Use your Fear Thermometer to plan next steps.** Keep your Fear Thermometer handy as you continue to work through this guide. The Fear Thermometer will be a tool to help you understand the details of your worries and pay attention to when you might need help. When these worry situations come up, you will use the skills you are going to learn in this guide to help. If you notice that you have a lot of unrelated, more generalized worries (e.g., if friends like you, thunderstorms, midterm exams, spending the night away from home, etc.), you can use Anxiety Skills 2 and 3 (Relaxation Skills and Thinking Traps) to learn tools to cope. If you notice that you have fears of a specific situation or thing (e.g., animals or heights), the other skills in this guide will be very beneficial, but it will be essential to use Anxiety Skill 4 (Facing Your Fears) to help you learn to face your fears instead of avoiding them.

TEEN WORKSHEET: MY FEAR THERMOMETER

Use this space to brainstorm all the things you are worried about, in no particular order:

- frogs
- someone holding a frog near me
- seeing a frog
- holding a frog
- touching a frog
- a frog jumping near me

Start with the first fear you wrote. Where would that fit on the thermometer: at the bottom near 1, at the top near 10, or somewhere in the middle? Write it down and move on to the next fear.



10 Holding a frog

9 _____

8 Touching a frog

7 _____

6 _____

5 Someone holding a frog right near me

4 A frog jumping near me

3 _____

2 Seeing a frog

1 _____

TEEN WORKSHEET: MY FEAR THERMOMETER



Anxiety Skill 1

Use this space to brainstorm all the things you are worried about, in no particular order:

Start with the first fear you wrote. Where would that fit on the thermometer: at the bottom near 1, at the top near 10, or somewhere in the middle? Write it down and move on to the next fear.

10 _____

9 _____

8 _____

7 _____

6 _____

5 _____

4 _____

3 _____

2 _____

1 _____



How Can Using a Fear Thermometer Help Me?

- ▶ Learning the details about what things or situations make you feel worried is a very important first step towards successfully managing anxiety.
- ▶ Increasing your understanding of your anxiety through this process will help you be more aware of when you might need support in situations that cause you stress.
- ▶ Learning to identify and express worried feelings helps you notice when a coping strategy (like the Relaxation Skills in Anxiety Skill 2) will be helpful.
- ▶ Creating a fear thermometer will also help you make a plan for facing fears. You will be able to start with facing fears that are lower on your ranking list and move up the thermometer as you feel braver (see Anxiety Skill 4, Facing Your Fears).

Common Teen Concerns

I find it hard to rank my fears.

Rating fears can seem strange at first. Look at the example in this guide to help you understand how to describe your fears in more detail. Ask yourself questions to help you rate each fear (e.g., "Is it scarier to speak in a small group or to speak in front of the whole class?"). You can change the ratings as needed, so they don't have to be "perfect." Ask a parent or other support person for help if you need it!

I rated everything at a 1 or a 10.

Ordering things from least to greatest is a hard concept! If you notice that you went through your whole list and rated each thing without using the middle ratings, ask yourself if there are some things that don't make you super worried (so less than 10) but also make you feel more than a little worried (so more than 1). If it's feeling too stressful to practice this technique with your actual fears, try to rate something fun (e.g., rate foods from not tasty (1) to the most delicious (10), or heights of family members from shortest (1) to tallest (10)).

I get upset while trying to make the ratings.

Thinking about worries can cause "in the moment" anxiety for many people. If you're having a hard time, take a break from making the fear thermometer to relax and then come back to it. Many people feel anxious when talking about their worries, but it's important to do this exercise because in the end it will help you understand your anxiety and feel better.

You may also benefit from learning relaxation skills to manage anxious feelings. Try some of the strategies in Anxiety Skill 2 and see if they make working on your feelings thermometer easier. You can also use the fear thermometer to remember to use relaxation skills (e.g., when your rating gets above a 4, it may be time to take some slow, deep breaths).

TEEN HANDOUT: DEEP BREATHING



What is Deep Breathing?

- ▶ Relaxation skills are ways to help relax our bodies and minds and increase feelings of calm and well-being.
- ▶ Our guide includes three different types of relaxation skills that can help you with anxiety. This handout provides an introduction to a skill called **deep breathing**.
- ▶ Deep breathing involves taking slow, deep breaths in which you fill your belly with air on the inhales (i.e., when you breathe *in*) and release the air on the exhales (i.e., when you breathe *out*).
- ▶ Try some of our strategies below and see if they help you feel calmer, more relaxed, and more in control.

Deep Breathing Practice

Deep Breathing Script: "Sit in a comfortable position and close your eyes. We are going to focus on our breathing. Start by taking some nice deep breaths, the same way you normally would. Notice how your stomach rises and falls as you breathe. You can put your hand on your stomach to help you feel the air going in and out. Now we are going to try to breathe in a way that will help us feel even more relaxed. Breathe in through your nose. This is the inhale. When you do this, make your stomach fill with air like a balloon. Now breathe out slowly through your mouth. This is the exhale and it makes you empty the air out of your belly balloon. Good. You can make a 'whoosh' sound on the exhale if that helps you. Now do that again, breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth. Try to take in as much air as you can, slowly and calmly. Take your time and focus on the rhythm of your breathing. Try to make your belly balloon fill with air on the inhale and empty on the exhale. Great job. If other thoughts pop into your mind, that's okay. Just try to stay calm and start thinking about your breathing again. Now take three more slow, deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth, making your stomach rise and fall three times. One. Two. Three. You can do this any time you need to relax. Great job! When you're ready, you can open your eyes."

Here's How to Use Deep Breathing

- ▶ Making relaxation an activity that you teach your family could help you practice your relaxation skills more consistently. Pick a time when you could begin giving one person, or your whole family, "relaxation lessons" (e.g., before saying goodnight and getting ready for bed).
- ▶ Encourage everyone to point out times when they used their new deep breathing skills. If you notice a family member looking anxious before or during an activity, you can also suggest they try deep breathing to see if it makes them feel better.



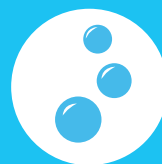
Check Your Form!

To make sure you are doing deep breathing properly for maximum anxiety relief, place your hand on your stomach. When you breathe in, your hand should move up slightly as air flows in. When you breathe out, your hand should sink slightly as air flows out.



Number Breathing

Once you understand how to breathe more deeply, try variations such as 3-1-3. This involves breathing in for a count of three, holding it for one, and breathing out for a count of three. You can try other numbers and combinations and use whatever you like and find comfortable.



Bubbles

Break out some bubbles and spend a few moments relaxing like a little kid! Notice that when you blow out slowly and calmly you can make bigger bubbles. Now try out some fast, anxious-style breathing: it doesn't work as well.



Pizza Imagery

A fun image that can help you practice this skill anytime, anywhere: Imagine you are breathing in the smell of a slice of hot, delicious pizza and then blowing out to cool the slice down. Or think of another hot food you love!

TEEN HANDOUT: PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION



What is Progressive Muscle Relaxation?

- ▶ Relaxation skills are ways to help relax our bodies and minds and increase feelings of calm and well-being.
- ▶ Our guide includes three different types of relaxation skills that can help you with anxiety. This handout provides an introduction to a skill called **progressive muscle relaxation**.
- ▶ Progressive muscle relaxation involves tensing different muscle groups one at a time and then releasing them. An example is flexing your arm muscle, then relaxing it.
- ▶ Try some of our strategies below and see if they help you feel calmer, more relaxed, and more in control.

Here's How to Use Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- ▶ Making relaxation an activity that you teach your family could help you practice your relaxation skills more consistently. Pick a time when you could begin giving one person, or your whole family, "relaxation lessons" (e.g., before saying goodnight and getting ready for bed).
- ▶ Encourage everyone to point out times when they used their new progressive muscle relaxation skills. If you notice a family member looking anxious before or during an activity, you can also suggest they try progressive muscle relaxation to see if it makes them feel better.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation Practice

Progressive Muscle Relaxation Script:

You can ask a parent or other support person to read this to you. Or record it on your phone or tablet and play the recording!

"Sit in a comfortable position and close your eyes. We are going to practice relaxing our muscles by squeezing them tight and then releasing them. Let's start with our legs. Stretch your legs out in front of you and point your toes. Hold your position and count to 5. Now relax your legs. Good job! Do that again. Stretch, hold for 5, and relax. Now make two fists like you are squeezing a lemon in each hand. Squeeze your lemons as tightly as you can to get the juice out for a count of 5. Now drop your lemons. Great job! Now repeat. Squeeze for 5 and drop. Let's next focus on our arms. Hold them out in front of you, stiff and straight for 5. Good. Now drop your arms to your sides like they are cooked, limp spaghetti. Now repeat. Stiff for 5 and then loose. Okay, now we're going to squeeze our stomach muscles as if we are trying to squeeze through a door. Hold them tight and count to 5! Now release. Great job. Repeat. Squeeze for 5 and release. Now we are going to scrunch up our faces like we are trying to get flies off our noses. Keep your face scrunched up for 5! Good. Release. Again, scrunch for 5 and release. For our last step we are going to hold our whole body as tight and scrunched up as we can. Tense all the parts and count to 5! Great job. Now release. Do that one last time. Tense for 5, now relax. Notice how good it feels to relax all your muscles. You can open your eyes."

Progressive Muscle Relaxation on Your Own:

Time to get creative and have fun! If you like this skill, try to come up with your own script or do an internet search for additional progressive muscle relaxation scripts. You don't have to stop there, you can create your own or search for other examples of all the relaxation skills in this guide! Find a bunch that suit your personality and lifestyle.

TEEN HANDOUT: GUIDED IMAGERY



What is Guided Imagery?

- ▶ Relaxation skills are ways to help relax our bodies and minds and increase feelings of calm and well-being.
- ▶ Our guide includes three different types of relaxation skills that can help your child and family. This handout provides an introduction to a skill called **guided imagery**.
- ▶ Guided imagery involves imagining a calm image or scene using all 5 senses (i.e., sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell), sometimes with the help of a script or recording.
- ▶ Try some of our strategies below and see if they help your child feel calmer, more relaxed, and more in control.

Here's How to Use Guided Imagery

- ▶ Making relaxation an activity that you teach your family could help you practice your relaxation skills more consistently. Pick a time when you could begin giving one person, or your whole family, "relaxation lessons" (e.g., before saying goodnight and getting ready for bed).
- ▶ Encourage everyone to point out times when they used their new guided imagery skills. If you notice a family member looking anxious before or during an activity, you can also suggest they try guided imagery to see if it makes them feel better.

Guided Imagery Practice

Guided Imagery Script:

You can ask a parent or other support person to read this to you. Or record it on your phone or tablet and play the recording!

"Sit in a comfortable position and close your eyes. I want you to use your imagination to go on a vacation in your mind. Think of a calm and peaceful place. It can be some place you have been before or some place you would like to go. The place doesn't even have to be real; it can be imaginary. Spend a few moments picturing your peaceful place. Now think about the things you **see** in your special place. Notice the colors, shapes, and patterns. Think about how peaceful it is to see the details of your special place. Now think about the things you **hear** in your peaceful place. Is there music, animal sounds, or ocean waves? Or maybe you hear something different. Now think about the things you **feel** in your calm place. Warm sunshine on your face, grass under your feet, or something else? Notice how these feelings help you relax. Now think about what you **smell** in your relaxing place. The salty ocean, cookies baking, or something else? Take a deep breath of the amazing smells. Now think about what you **taste** in your calm place. A popsicle? Or a fresh cookie? Or something else? Think about how good it tastes. You can always take a trip back to your relaxing place if you need to feel calm. This is a tool you can always use to feel better. When you are ready, you can open your eyes."

Mini Vacation

Once you have practiced with the script above, you can close your eyes briefly and go on a mini vacation to your calm place when you feel tense or down.

5-4-3-2-1 Relaxation

You can relax at any time by noticing 5 things you see, 4 things you feel, 3 things you hear, 2 things you smell, and 1 thing you taste. This technique is a **grounding exercise** and can help you feel better in challenging moments. Here's an example of using this in the kitchen: "I see my plate, the table, my sister sitting across from me, the clock, and the wall. I feel the chair, the floor, the table, and the warmth from the heater. I hear water running in the sink, water boiling on the stove, and my sister's voice. I smell cookies in the oven and the pasta I am eating. I taste the pasta."



How Can Relaxation Skills Help Me?

- ▶ Muscle tension is often associated with anxiety. Think about clenching your pen or pencil while taking a test. Your muscles are tight and you are likely feeling stressed. If you have anxiety, you may experience shoulder tension, stomachaches, headaches, and other physical symptoms.
- ▶ This is because the mind and the body are connected: calmer body, calmer mind. Learning to practice relaxation can help you calm your body, reduce anxiety, improve sleep, and experience many other benefits.
- ▶ Practice relaxation skills regularly during times of low anxiety so that you are better able to use the skills when you need them during times of higher anxiety. You can't use a skill well in "the game" if you don't practice!
- ▶ Relaxation skills are "portable." You can do them at home, school, or in public. Most relaxation skills can be done quickly and without anyone noticing.

Common Teen Concerns

The relaxation skills are too hard.

Relaxation skills may feel uncomfortable or challenging at first. Practicing regularly helps make the skills feel easier and more comfortable. Taking the time to figure out which skills (and methods of practicing the skills) you prefer will also be helpful. Ask a support person for help if you need it.

I can't get into the habit of practicing regularly.

Relaxation practice should not be another chore but something short and simple that you can work into your daily routine. For example, can you practice for a few minutes on the way home from school or use an app on your phone before getting ready for bed? Set a specific goal for regular practice (e.g., three times a week to start) and think of a small but fun reward you can earn for reaching it. These skills get easier the more you do them. Remember that this is one way you can gain control over your anxiety.

Relaxation practice is boring and/or strange.

What could make it more appealing? Do you prefer a certain skill over others? Do you want to use technology in your practice (e.g., relaxation phone apps, guided imagery videos, etc.)? Would you be more interested in an active practice like yoga? Keep trying new things until you find something that is enjoyable and comfortable.





What Are Thinking Traps?

▶ **Thinking Traps** are ways of thinking that increase anxiety, worry, and stress. They often involve jumping to conclusions, guessing that things will go badly in the future, and making connections that might not really make sense.

▶ Here are **4 Common Thinking Traps** that are often connected to anxiety. Read this guide and see if you can come up with more examples of thinking traps that apply to your life.

Here's How to Decrease Thinking Traps

Here are some questions to help you think in more positive ways:

- 1 **What are the facts? What is the likelihood that what you're worrying about will happen?** Often there is very little evidence that the things we are worried about will actually happen! Try to look at the facts to think more realistically and begin empowering yourself to notice that you are capable of facing your fears.
- 2 **What would you tell a friend in this situation?** Focusing on helping a peer may help you with perspective taking and problem solving. This strategy can help you feel calmer and more positive about the worry.
- 3 **What can you do to solve your problem or take your mind off the worry?** If possible, take concrete steps to solve the problem. If that's not possible, use relaxation or other coping skills (Anxiety Skill 2) to reduce your anxiety and take your mind off things.



FORTUNE TELLING

Predicting that bad things will happen in the future.

People with anxiety often spend a lot of time imagining bad things they fear will happen in the future.

Fortune Telling Example: "This is the longest car ride ever. We're going to get stuck in traffic and miss the whole soccer tournament. Or we'll get into an accident! Ugh, this is so stressful!"



CATASTROPHIZING

Making little problems or worries seem like big problems.

When we catastrophize, we make a big deal out of our worries, even when they might actually be pretty small.

Catastrophizing Example: "I'm feeling nervous about my learner's permit test. I'm going to get all the questions wrong and never be able to drive! I should tell my mom I'm sick."



OVERGENERALIZATION

Assuming that because we were worried or nervous in one situation, we will feel like that again.

When we overgeneralize, we ignore the unique facts about a situation.

Overgeneralization Example: "Madison laughed when I tripped in the cafeteria that one time. She's going to keep making fun of me and get other people to start doing it. Should I stop hanging out with her?"



ALL-OR-NOTHING THINKING

Seeing things as "all good" or "all bad."

When we use all-or-nothing thinking, we ignore the fact that many situations are somewhere in between and have both positive *and* negative aspects.

All-or-Nothing Thinking Example: "I got an '86' on my math exam; 7 problems wrong. I'm an idiot! Will my grade go down? What if my parents are disappointed?"

TEEN WORKSHEET: THINKING TRAP PRACTICE

Here's an example of how to use your new skills to deal with a **Catastrophizing** Thinking Trap:

"I'm feeling nervous about my learner's permit test. I'm going to get all the questions wrong and never be able to drive! I should tell my mom I'm sick."



What are the Facts?	"I read the manual tons of times and took the practice test. My parents quizzed me and said I know my stuff."
What Would I Say to a Friend?	"You've studied hard, it's going to go great!"
What can I do to take my mind off things?	"I'm going to go watch some funny YouTube videos to forget about this for a little while."

FORTUNE TELLING

"This is the longest car ride ever. We're going to get stuck in traffic and miss the whole soccer tournament. Or we'll get into an accident! Ugh, this is so stressful!"

What are the Facts?	
What would I say to a friend?	
What can I do to take my mind off things?	

OVERGENERALIZATION

"Madison laughed when I tripped in the cafeteria that one time. She's going to keep making fun of me and get other people to start doing it. Should I stop hanging out with her?"

What are the facts?	
What would I say to a friend?	
What can I do to take my mind off things?	

ALL-OR-NOTHING THINKING

"I got an '86' on my math exam; 7 problems wrong. I'm an idiot! Will my grade go down? What if my parents are disappointed?"

What are the facts?	
What would I say to a friend?	
What can I do to take my mind off things?	



How Can Understanding Thinking Traps Help Me?

- ▶ When people experience worry and anxiety, they often think about their present situation and things that might happen in the future in negative ways.
- ▶ By learning about thinking traps (i.e., ways of thinking that make us feel worried, stuck, or upset), you can start paying more attention to the ways you talk and think about anxiety.
- ▶ Once you have practice noticing thinking traps, you can take those thinking trap statements and make them more positive and realistic.
- ▶ Learning how to talk about anxiety in realistic and self-esteem boosting ways can help you feel more confident and capable when facing stressful situations.

Common Teen Concerns

Some of the thinking traps are hard to understand.

If a particular type of thinking trap is challenging for you, ask parents or friends for help brainstorming additional examples that might make it clearer. Thinking about ways your anxiety impacts your interests or activities (e.g., favorite sport or movie) can be very useful. For example, if you notice yourself stressing a lot during your after school club meetings, you may be falling into thinking traps. Can you notice what thoughts come up, then see if you can gently challenge them? For example, instead of thinking “No one liked my idea about the fundraiser. I bet no one likes me and I’ll get kicked out this club,” you could say something like the following: “People in this club like me and my ideas so much that I got voted secretary. Just because they didn’t like that one fundraiser idea, doesn’t mean they’re rejecting me.” If you struggle to separate the thinking traps into different categories, just focus on noticing worry-increasing thoughts in general and changing them. For example, call them “worry thoughts” or using your “worry brain.” You can still improve your thinking this way.

Changing negative thinking is very hard for me.

Negative thoughts are often automatic, like a habit. Becoming a more positive thinker requires breaking this habit. It takes a lot of practice to make a change like this! Start with more fun and playful topics if jumping right into your own particular style of anxious thinking feels overwhelming. Practice on a regular basis for a few minutes at a time (daily if you can manage it) to start forming a new habit of positive thinking. If you are still having a difficult time, talk to your primary care provider. They can connect you to a behavioral health specialist who can help.



Facing Your Fears Using Exposure

- ▶ **“Exposure”** is the clinical term for dealing directly with things that make someone anxious, instead of avoiding them.
- ▶ **Research shows that approaching situations we fear is the most effective way to decrease anxiety.** This can be challenging because avoidance of feared situations is a natural response. However, when we run away from our fear, we are “proving” to ourselves that the thing we are afraid of is too terrible to face.
- ▶ It doesn’t have to be this way! The skills in this guide are designed to help you face fears in a safe way. Exposure gives you a real world opportunity to see that you can overcome scary situations and reduce anxiety in the process.
- ▶ Exposure is most beneficial and straightforward to address at home when the fear is a specific thing (such as an animal) or situation (such as riding an elevator, speaking in class, or talking to new people).
- ▶ Making an **exposure plan** can provide you with repeated experience facing feared situations in a calm and organized way. In an exposure plan, exposures are organized in a hierarchy, from tasks that cause you the least amount of worry all the way up to situations that create more significant anxiety.
- ▶ These plans are most successful when the tasks are all related to each other and are increasing approximations of the worry that most gets in your way. An example exposure for someone with a worry about making new friends would be simply saying hello to a potential new friend in class, and then a later step on the hierarchy could be asking the person to eat lunch with you.
- ▶ Over time, exposure will help you become more confident and less fearful. You may potentially no longer feel anxious in situations that currently cause you to worry a lot! Or your anxiety may not go away completely, but you will feel more in control and more able to effectively manage worry. This helps you realize that you can achieve your goals and have fun even when anxious.

Here’s How to Create an Exposure Plan

You will need your Fear Thermometer from Anxiety Skill 1, plus our Create Your Own Exposure Plan worksheet on the coming pages, to help you create a plan. Make copies of the Create Your Own Exposure Plan so you can repeat this process for multiple worries and repeat certain exposures if needed. You can follow along with your parent as they help you review the steps below, as well as read through our examples on the Exposure Plan Examples worksheet before you begin. This will help you better understand the way exposures work before you get started. The examples show how all the steps of an exposure plan should be connected to your major worry. Adapt the steps as needed so you can create your own personalized plan. You may have a wide range of unconnected fears on your fear thermometer; this is okay. Brainstorm with your parent or other support person in order to pick one specific thing or feared situation to focus on at a time, as exposure works best when there is a clear target on which to focus.

Here's How to Create an Exposure Plan (continued)

Your parent can read the introduction script in quotes below to you or you can just read the script yourself. There are things for you to do in each step:

- 1 *"We are going to make a plan to help you face the fears that you put on your Fear Thermometer. One fear that you included is _____."* Work with your parent to choose a specific fear that may work well based on our tips, such as a specific thing or situation. Once you both agree, proceed to step 2.
- 2 *"We are going to use this worksheet to help us make a plan."* Look at the Create Your Own Exposure Plan worksheet. *"Here, the worksheet has a place for us to write down the name of the worry we will be working on in your exposure. Exposure is the word for facing the thing you are afraid of instead of avoiding it or running away."* You or your parent should write the worry you will be working on in the space provided.
- 3 *"Right here is a place for us to write down each part of the exposure."* Look at the empty rows 1-6. *"The worksheet also has a place for us to rate how you feel before and after you face your fears. The Worry Scale on the page can help us do those ratings."* Look at the Before and After columns and the Worry Scale.
- 4 *"Our goal is going to be for you to do the things you need and want to do without feeling too scared or running away. I think you will feel strong and brave!"* Think of more ideas about what it could be like to conquer this particular fear.
- 5 *"That might seem like it could never happen, but I believe in you and you can do it! We will take baby steps to get there."*
- 6 *"If you were afraid of swimming, we wouldn't plan for you to just dive into the ocean without any steps before that. First we might have you put your feet into the water to slowly start getting more comfortable. What is something we can do to that is like that, something that will help you begin to get comfortable?"* Share some responses applicable to the fear that are similar to steps 1 and 2 in our example plans. You are looking for steps that will be a "warm up" for facing the big fear. You or your parent should write these steps down.
- 7 *"Great idea! Now let's think about the next step with this fear. What comes after the steps we just put down? What will we need to do to get even closer to facing and overcoming your fear?"* Brainstorm responses similar to steps 3 and 4 on our example plans. Remember, we are taking bigger and bigger steps toward facing the fear! You or your parent should write these steps down.
- 8 Now you are ready to name the activities that will be near the top of the exposure plan. *"You've given so many great ideas for getting more comfortable with this worry! Now let's talk about what will be our big goal. What are the biggest challenges connected to this fear?"* Brainstorm responses similar to steps 5 and 6 in our examples. You or your parent should write these steps down. *"Good work! Let's review the worksheet and start to plan how we will begin our exposures."*



TEEN HANDOUT: EXPOSURE PLAN EXAMPLES



Example 1: Fear of Frogs

This example is for a younger kid who has a fear of frogs, but is also very interested in science and animals. The goal of these exposures is to help the kid hold a frog comfortably, a wish they have because of their interests. The example on the Fear Thermometer worksheet also deals with this worry; you can refer back to it now if needed (Anxiety Skill 1).

		Before	After
1	Looking at pictures of cartoon frogs on the internet or in a book.		
2	Looking at pictures of real frogs on the internet or in a book.		
3	Looking at frogs in aquariums at the pet store.		
4	Going near frogs in the pond at the science center.		
5	Touching a frog at the science center while an employee holds it.		
6	Holding a frog all by myself at the science center.		

Example 2: Fear of Elevators

This example is for a teen who has a fear of elevators. The goal of these exposures is for the teen to feel okay riding an elevator alone, an ability they wish to have as they increase their independence.

		Before	After
1	Looking at pictures of an elevator on the internet or in a book.		
2	Watching a video of someone riding in an elevator.		
3	Going to an elevator and standing inside it briefly with a parent.		
4	Going in an elevator and riding it with a parent.		
5	Going in the elevator and standing inside it briefly alone.		
6	Going in the elevator and riding it alone.		

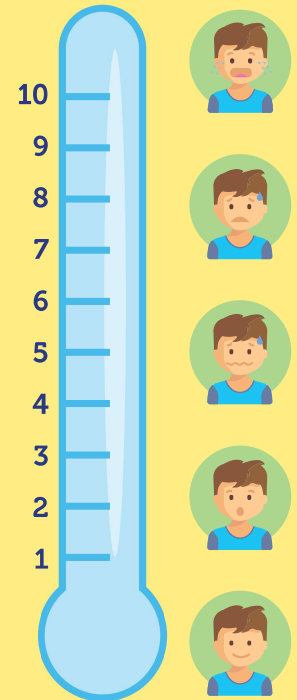
TEEN WORKSHEET: CREATE YOUR OWN EXPOSURE PLAN



Using Your Exposure Plan

- 1 You should pick a time when things are calm and not rushed at home to begin working on exposures. Start with step 1 on your plan, which is the exposure you rated as easiest to try.
- 2 Before each exposure practice, get a Worry Scale rating. Look at the Worry Scale. How worried/afraid do you feel? 1 is not that worried and 10 is the most worried.”
- 3 Great job! After each exposure practice, get a Worry Scale rating. Look at the Worry Scale. How worried/afraid do you feel? 1 is not that worried and 10 is the most worried.
- 4 Record these Worry Scale ratings next to the exposures listed on your plan. This will help you track progress over time.
- 5 You can repeat each step above until your ratings go down and you notice an exposure is less scary than it was before. Then, move onto step 2 on your plan, the next exposure. Go at a pace that is comfortable for you, but be consistent about moving through the exposures at a steady pace.

1-10 Worry Scale



Create Your Own Exposure Plan

Put your plan here:

		Before	After
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			



How Can Facing Fears Through Exposures Help Me?

- ▶ Teens who have anxiety often avoid necessary and positive experiences due to their fears. This can impact functioning at home, school, and with friends. Facing fears through exposures will help you tackle fears in a safe, controlled way and can improve your quality of life.
- ▶ Teens are often unsure how to address the things that scare them. These worksheets help you get organized by giving you a road map to use when tackling your worries. Remember to take your time moving through the plan. As you build confidence, it will get easier to face your fears.

Common Teen Concerns

I am having a hard time coming up with ideas for exposures.

Sometimes it is hard to figure out how to “expose” yourself to situations that aren’t part of daily life. You can use the internet, books, or magazines to help you look up realistic images and videos of fears (e.g., bugs and heights). You can also role play anxiety-provoking scenarios with others; these can be exposures, too. Use your imagination and get creative!

I don’t want to do my exposures.

We understand that this is very challenging. We believe in you! Exposures will help you worry less and have more fun in your life. Remember that avoiding things actually makes them seem scarier, but facing them helps us realize we can handle it. Remember to start with the first step of your exposure plan, which you rated as the easiest step, and move through the plan slowly. You can try planning small incentives to encourage and motivate yourself (e.g., a special activity once you get to a certain point on your Fear Thermometer).

When I do exposures, I get really stressed. Sometimes I even cry!

We know that that this can be tough and you might get upset when doing your exposures. Remember that completing exposures will help you feel less worried over time. If you are having a hard time, use deep breathing or another coping skill when doing your exposure (see Relaxation Skills, Anxiety Skill 2). If that doesn’t help, take a break from exposures to do something fun for distraction, but then come back to the exposure later and try again.

I did exposures and I still have anxiety.

Exposures won’t always “get rid” of anxiety completely. Anxiety at a low level is a normal part of life that can give us useful information about the world. The purpose of exposure is for you to be able to achieve your goals and have fun, even if you still feel anxious sometimes. If you have completed your exposures and are still having difficulty functioning at school, home, and/or with friends because of your fears, or if you are unable to complete your exposures due to anxiety, talk to your primary care provider. They can connect you to a behavioral health specialist who can help.