

TOOLS FOR MANAGING ANXIETY

NOTE:

- Don't use the same tool every time.
- Don't look at the tool, focus on the person.
- **What works for one may bring sad, bad memories to another.**
- Your mood greatly affects your ability to redirect anxiety in others. It is easy to become frustrated and that frustration is easily detected. Rather than a well thought out approach that is thoughtful and considerate you might end up saying simplistic things like "stop worrying" or "you have nothing to worry about". This belittles the person you are trying to help and shows them that you consider their feelings insignificant.

Tool of objectivity: Help them look at life objectively vs. subjectively

- Objectively recognizes that the mind can sometimes really mess you up, so you search for the truth of something beyond just what you think about it.
- *"Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers, they succeed."* Prov. 15:22
- Questions to ask/evaluate: What are the odds? What are the facts? If what I fear were to happen, what could I do?

Tool of R & R: Help them to Recognize & respond, not react

- *"Discretion will protect you and understanding will guard you."* – Proverbs 2:11

Ways to stop overthinking: worrying

1. Plan a time to worry
 2. Limit the worry time
 3. Have a notebook/pad to write down each worry
 4. Determine if you can change the worry or IF it is NOT in your control
 5. Give the worries to God. Pray and thank Him for taking care of the worries.
 6. If the worry comes back, TELL YOURSELF FIRMLY TO STOP THE WORRY THOUGHT
 7. Get physical (5 minutes: go for a walk, do chair exercises, etc.)
- "Yes, I hear you, but I'm choosing to listen to positive messages instead."
 - Fill that empty space (your heart, mind and soul) with positive, uplifting messages

Tool of Positive Thinking: Intentionally pushing out the negative with the positive

- Practice being optimistic (one who expects good things to happen)
- The most positive book: the Bible

- Look for God-sightings throughout your day
- Start & end each day with a devotional thought & a prayer of thanks
- **30-day Challenge:** (Accountability partner to text daily)
 - Write down 3 things you're thankful for each day
 - Write 3-5 sentences about 1 positive experience each day
 - Send a thank-you or word of encouragement to someone in your family, a friend...

Tool of MUSIC:

- Turn radio on K-Love: positive, encouraging (younger generation)
 - For 5 minutes a day, listen to any song of your choice.
 - How does it make you feel? _____
 - What is your favorite thing about the song? (a memory, a feeling...) _____
 - Try playing an instrument, harmonica or keyboard. One plays, the other sings!
 - SONG *Accentuate the Positive* – Bing Crosby **Concentrate on the words**
 - SONG *Intentional* – Travis Green (Younger generation) Romans 8:28
 - SONG: “Keep a Song in Your Heart,” “Put on a Happy Face,” “Adios, Au Revoir, Auf Wiedersehen” – Lawrence Welk
 - SONGS: *Happy* - Pharrell Williams SONG: *Oh Happy Day* - Edwin Hawkins
 - SONG: “Good Morning” – Mandisa HYMNS

Tool of Reading: Reading the lyrics to a song or beginning a “book club” where one can escape to a good, appropriate book and then discuss it with another. Reading the Bible or some specific book or story from it is extremely therapeutic. Psalm 23 (could bring anxiety or peace)

Tool of Journaling: Concentrate on the blessings and promises of God. Be as descriptive as possible. Use positive words to describe things. Give a prompt from one of those listed in *KSC's “Legacy Journal.” Thanksgiving Jar* to add something to daily.

Tool of Redirection. Redirection can be difficult but is made easier and more effective if you employ novelty. Engaging the person with a photograph they have never seen before that triggers a positive emotional response for example. A new baby, a new puppy, something that has a positive family connection. Getting the person to engage and discuss imagery is an excellent tool of redirection. The sooner it is employed the more likely it will be effective. Try the following exercises to redirect and calm:

- Deep breathing exercises – Psalm 46:10
- Count backwards from 100 by 3's
- Grounding exercises (help w/anxiety, anger, PTSD and focus)
 - 5 things you see
 - 4 things you feel
 - 3 things you hear
 - 2 things you smell
 - 1 thing you taste

Tool of Humor can be tricky. Many times an attempt at humor can generate anger in a person with anxiety. They don't feel like laughing. Worry is not something funny. On the other hand, if it is unexpected or presented innocently as a video of babies laughing it can work as a redirection tool. This tool can easily be overused. Because it was effective in one circumstance does not mean it will work the next time. Google “babies laughing” or “clean jokes.”

Tool of Story-telling is effective as a tool to counter anxiety and worry. Storytelling engages the brain in many different ways simultaneously. Curiosity, imagination, empathy, anticipation and the process of interpreting language and auditory stimulus as well as the visualization processes of the brain are all active. There is little available to foster anxiety when so much alternative activity is happening. Ex. Aesop's Fables

Tool of Pet Therapy: Animals, dogs, cats, etc. are very effective to divert anxiety if they aren't a source of aggravation. They can be extremely therapeutic. But the opposite is also true if there are allergies or if the person is afraid of animals. That could induce greater anxiety. What works for one person might have the opposite effect for another.

Tool of Television is rarely beneficial as a tool to counter anxiety. Because television is so ubiquitous it can be easily ignored and someone can be pretending to watch while actually stewing on worry and anxiety. Unless you have complete control over the programming, the news for example can be a source of anxiety. There are exceptions, for example there can be a religious broadcast or a therapeutic musical program such as a rerun of the *Lawrence Welk show* or *Leave it to Beaver* or *Andy Griffith show*. Generally speaking, television is typically a less effective tool and has many negative aspects.

Tool of Movement: According to some studies, regular exercise works as well as medication for some people to reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression. One vigorous exercise session

can help alleviate symptoms for hours, and a regular schedule may significantly reduce them over time. Water aerobics is easy on the joints. Try a prayer walk or the grounding exercises while walking.

Tool of Faith: religion and scripture are the most powerful tools to stop anxiety and worry. It is the most comforting of all approaches and lifts people up out of anxiety through inspiration and the power of faith. There are numerous scripture references regarding worry and anxiety that are powerful at redirecting internal negative feelings. Prayer, singing a hymn, reading a scripture or daily devotional are among the most powerful tools to use against anxiety and worry. The Bible reminds us of the importance to be thankful and to trust in God. Love is the answer to the problems of anxiety and worry and is presented nowhere with greater power and eloquence than in the Bible. Praying with them is highly encouraged if they are open to it. Focusing one's thought-life toward God, takes the focus off of you and your crisis.

* Have Scripture on a coffee mug, pillow case, memory frame or on refrigerator or mirror.

Tool of Healthy Eating: will help you feel better. Eat healthy, balanced meals w/fresh fruit, veggies and fish like salmon. Don't overeat. Avoid sugar & caffeine, limit alcohol, drink plenty of water, and eat protein at breakfast. Complex carbohydrates are thought to increase the amount of serotonin in your brain, which has a calming effect: whole grain breads & cereals, oatmeal and quinoa. Avoid convenient packaged and processed foods.

Tool of Relaxation: Anxious people rarely relax. It is a skill they need to learn. Some deal with their anxiety through a whirlwind of activities and tasks. Others by engaging in distraction activities like TV, video games, etc. Relaxation and contentment go hand-in-hand. If a person is content, then they can relax. Paul had to **LEARN to be content** in Philippians 4:11. He listed those circumstances in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28: working hard, in prison, flogged, in danger of his life, beaten, pelted with stones, shipwrecked, adrift in the sea, moving from place to place, in danger from rivers, bandits, other people, in danger in the city and in the country, long days and sleepless nights, hungry, thirsty, cold and naked, concerned about his ministry and work.

Daily relaxation techniques:

- Drink some hot tea and read a favorite book
- Take a short walk
- Shoulder massage

- Foursquare breathing – 10 times
 - Breathe in for a count of four
 - Hold your breath for account of four
 - Exhale over a count of four
 - Wait and do not breathe in for a count of four
- Find your happy place – for 10 minutes
 - Find a quiet place
 - Close your eyes and imagine a peaceful place where you feel comfortable
 - Breathe deeply and slowly
 - Imagine what this place looks like, feels like, smells like and sounds like. Mentally explore this quiet place, using your imagination.
 - Listen to relaxing music or natural sounds: waves on a beach, rain in a forest, wind blowing or the sound of birds
 - Neck rolls

Nightly Relaxation techniques for better sleep:

- Keep a regular sleep schedule and don't vary it by more than one hour each night
- Have the room dark, quiet, well ventilated, and a comfortable temperature & bed
- Avoid tobacco products
- Avoid alcohol right before bed
- Try drinking a small glass of warm milk before going to bed
- Take a hot bath or shower just before bed
- No screen-time 2 hours prior to bedtime
- Pray, thanking God for 10 things in your day