

How to Beat Anxiety: The Self-Experiment Approach

Not all of these strategies will work for you. Self-experiment to find out which techniques you prefer. Context is important, too; you may find that some strategies work in some circumstances but not in others. Experiment to observe what works best, and when.

Also: Try thinking about the strategies in three categories: *behavioral*, *cognitive* (thinking-related), and *physical*. Aim to find some strategies that appeal to you from each category.

Anxiety Relief Techniques

1. Take a slow breath. Continue slow breathing for three minutes.
2. Drop your shoulders and do a gentle neck roll.
3. State the emotions you're feeling as words, e.g., "I feel angry and worried right now." (Aloud, but to yourself.)
4. Massage your hand, which will activate oxytocin.
5. Put something that's out of place in its place. (Physical order often helps us feel a sense of mental order.)
6. Take a day trip somewhere with natural beauty.
7. Ask yourself, "What's the worst that could happen?" Then, ask yourself, "How would I cope if that happened?" Now, answer those questions.

8. Take a break from actively working on solving a problem and allow your mind to keep processing the problem in the background.
9. Take a bath.
10. Forgive yourself for not foreseeing a problem that occurred.
11. Throw out something from your bathroom. (The order principle again.)
12. Take a break from watching the news or reading newspapers.
13. Make a phone call you've been putting off.
14. Write an email you've been putting off.
15. Take another type of action on something you've been putting off.
16. Throw something out of your fridge.
17. Try a guided mindfulness meditation. (Use Google to identify free resources; there are some good ones out there.)
18. Take a break from researching a topic you've been over-researching.
19. Cuddle a baby or a pet.
20. If a mistake you've made is bothering you, make an action plan for how you won't repeat it in the future. Write three brief bullet points.
21. Ask yourself if you're jumping to conclusions. For example, if you're worried someone is very annoyed with you, do you know for sure this is the case—or are you jumping to conclusions?

22. Ask yourself if you're catastrophizing, i.e., thinking that something would be a disaster, when it might be unpleasant but not necessarily catastrophic.
23. Forgive yourself for not handling a situation in an ideal way, including interpersonal situations. What's the best thing you can do to move forward in a positive way now?
24. If someone else's behavior has triggered anxiety for you, try accepting that you may never know the complete reason and background behind the person's behavior.
25. Recognize if your anxiety is being caused by someone suggesting a change or change of plans. Understand if you tend to react to changes or unexpected events as if they are threats.
26. Accept that there is a gap between your real self and your ideal self. (This is the case for pretty much everybody.)
27. Question your social comparisons. For example, is comparing yourself only to the most successful person you know very fair or representative?
28. Think about what's going *right* in your life. Thinking about the positive doesn't always work when you're anxious, but it can help if anxiety has caused your thinking to become lopsided or is obscuring the big picture.
29. Scratch something off your to-do list for the day, either by getting it done or just deciding not to do that task today.
30. Ask a friend or colleague to tell you about something they've felt nervous about in the past, and to tell you what happened.

31. If you're nervous about an upcoming test, try these quick tips for dealing with test anxiety.
32. Do a task 25 percent more slowly than usual. Allow yourself to savor not rushing.
33. Check if you're falling into any of these thinking traps.
34. Try gentle distraction; find something you want to pay attention to. The key to successful use of distraction when you're anxious is to be patient with yourself if you find you're still experiencing intrusive thoughts.
35. Go to a yoga class, or do a couple of yoga poses in the comfort of your home or office.
36. Get a second opinion from someone you trust. Aim to get their real opinion rather than just reassurance seeking.
37. Allow yourself to do things you enjoy or that don't stress you out, while you're waiting for your anxious feelings to naturally calm down.
38. Go for a run.
39. Find something on YouTube that makes you laugh out loud.
40. Lightly run one or two fingers over your lips. This will stimulate the parasympathetic fibers in your lips, which will help you feel calmer.
41. Look back on the anxiety-provoking situation you're in from a time point in the future, e.g., six months from now. Does the problem seem smaller when you view it from further away?

42. Imagine how you'd cope if your "worst nightmare" happened, e.g., your partner left you, you got fired, or you developed a health problem. What practical steps would you take? What social support would you use? Mentally confronting your worst fear can be very useful for reducing anxiety.
43. Call or email a friend you haven't talked to in awhile.
44. If you're imagining a negative outcome to something you're considering doing, also try imaging a positive outcome.
45. If you rarely back out of commitments and feel overwhelmed by your to-do list, try giving yourself permission to say you can no longer do something you've previously agreed to do.
46. Do any two-minute jobs that have been hanging around on your to-do list. It'll help clear your mental space.
47. Jot down three things you worried about in the past that didn't come to pass.
48. Jot down three things you worried about in the past that did occur, but weren't nearly as bad as you imagined.
49. Do a form of exercise you haven't done in the last six months.
50. Allow time to pass. Often, the best thing to do to reduce anxiety is just to allow time to pass, without doing the types of activities that increase anxiety.