

FREE DOWNLOAD

A stylized treble clef logo with a rainbow gradient, transitioning from purple at the top to green at the bottom.

Anxiety Soothers

- **VISUALIZATIONS**
- **ACTIVITIES**
- **BODY CUES**

FOR A PEACEFUL DAY & A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

INFORMATION

My Dear Friend, Welcome to a pint size version of Anxiety Soothers: Mini Soothers.

It is so painful to think of hundreds of thousands of individuals and families enduring high anxiety at this time. We know some of you: lovely young people who have medical issues, small children, and now—no income. Wonderful impoverished elders who feel lonely and, in every way, vulnerable. Our offering of these anxiety-soothing tools is meager compared to the ferocity of this event-driven stress. Yet none of us is at our best when we are scattered and frazzled. Breathe deeply. Slow down. Use some of these resources to give a beautiful gift to yourself: a moment of relief and calm.

Herein are ten each of our favorite **Visualizations** (purple), **Activities** (orange) and **Body Cues** (green) from the book, Anxiety Soothers. Visualizations engage the imagination, Activities draw upon problem-solving skills and Body Cues ground us in physical awareness. The pairing of words with color and graphics engages both hemispheres of your brain, while the one-per-page format s-l-o-w-s down the feverish pace of anxiety. Take ten minutes and focus on a page. Let the words and visuals sink in as you take a deep breath. Involve your senses by letting yourself see, taste, smell, hear and feel a **Visualization**. Use a pen and paper, or computer keyboard, to do an **Activity**. Acknowledge appreciation for your physical body as you absorb a **Body Cue**.

The body loves moments of relief, which are often heralded by deep sighs as shoulders drop from up around the ears. The immune system gains strength from every little break. When you relax, your voice lowers and slows—and guess what? If you intentionally heave a sigh, slow down your movements and go “low and slow” with your voice, this alone will help convey to your inner self, ‘I’m okay’. Even standing next to a calm person helps re-regulate the body. Please share “Mini Soothers” with housebound family and friends. No worries: the only side-effect is relaxation. (For young children, you may have to simplify the language.) Wishing you the blessings of peace of mind.

INFORMATION

Anxiety Symptoms: Dictionary.com defines anxiety as “a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome.” In these times, it is quite normal to find that you and your loved ones experience a variety of these symptoms:

- **Breathing:** rapid, shallow, gasping, holding breath, fear of choking.
- **Heart:** racing, pounding, palpitations, chest pain, fear of a heart attack.
- **Digestion:** fluttering or sinking feeling in stomach, nausea, vomiting, intestinal cramps, diarrhea.
- **Sensation:** tingling in extremities; dry mouth, difficulty swallowing, sweating, feeling chilled or overheated and/or dizzy, lightheaded or faint; feeling ‘unreal’ or as if you’ve left your body.
- **Mentally:** thoughts racing, unable to think clearly or mind “blank”, irritable, escalation of phobias (snakes, spiders, heights, etc); catastrophic, repetitive thoughts (it’s hopeless!), fear of going crazy, fear of dying.
- **Behavior:** stammering, shaking, trembling, twitching, tics, jumpy, flushing red, turning pale, easily tearful, overeating or unable to eat, frequent urination, disturbed sleep.
- **Musculature:** neck tension, back pain, overall tightness in muscles.

About Us:

Jeremy Cole, MSW, LICSW, began her life as a psychotherapist in 1995. Dani Lee Croasdale is an artist and IT person who also works in landscape design.

For more information, please explore our website: www.anxietysoothers.com

VISUALIZATIONS: DESCRIPTION

Visualizations: Description

Visualizations are readily available for use anytime, anywhere, without anyone knowing and at no expense: all you need is your mind! That's right: fast, free, no side-effects and always available. **Imagining** engages the brain as much as **doing**. You may be surprised to discover that you are naturally visualizing all the time. Consider these every-day examples:

1. You have a crush on someone at work or in school (usually unattainable) and vividly imagine romance with this person. (Whew!) Your body responds...
2. You watch a scary movie and now you can't get to sleep. You lie there, imagining someone breaking into your home. Your body goes on high alert...
3. Your beloved chum has been away for three lonely months, and you are about to see her. You picture her face and suddenly you are smiling...

Just three to five minutes of *visualizing* creates natural physiological changes in our bodies, which may be **consciously directed** to improve health. ♥ The secret is to engage as many of your five senses as you can (touch, smell, sight, sound, taste) to evoke a full-body experience—the more sensory, the better! As you *live into* the positive images that you are visualizing, you engage your naturally *soothing* parasympathetic nervous system and transform that wild renegade, your mind, into a powerful, cost-free ally. *Ahhhh!*

Spend five focused minutes practicing a *visualization* when you are not in crisis (build the 'muscle') to strengthen its effectiveness in times of need. Use your senses: imagine it is real and incorporate smells, colors, textures, sensations and sounds. Enjoy playing with and personalizing these *visualizations*, and trust your ability to come up with your own. Congratulate yourself, for this is an *excellent* use of your energy and time.

VISUALIZATIONS

The Worrier

Ask yourself, *what does my Worrier self look like?* Try to get some objectivity by (metaphorically speaking) stepping back to look at this aspect of yourself. Is this grown-up me, sitting on a curb with my head dropped onto my folded arms? Am I striding back and forth? Is the *Worry* me a spouting teenager? A needy little kid? *Visualize your worrier self getting what you need:*

- ♥ Take exhausted *Worrier* to a spa. Imagine safe and loving people (or a person) tucking *Worrier* into a big fluffy bed or, if you prefer, a hammock by the beach. Lay a cool cloth over his or her forehead and feed *Worrier* a light and nourishing soup.
- ♥ Run agitated *Worrier* back and forth on a beach to get rid of excess energy.
- ♥ See safe and loving people listening attentively to teenage *Worrier*, and leave them to it.
- ♥ Rock little child *Worrier* on a safe and comforting lap.

Visualize tending to your Worrier self's needs.

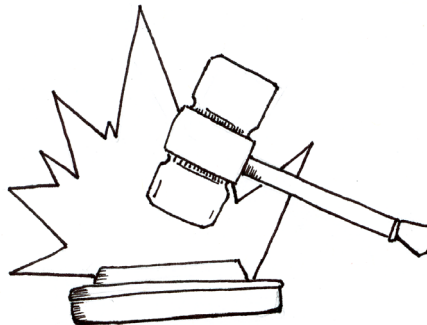


VISUALIZATIONS

The Judge

Is there a Judge aspect within you, pointing a finger at you and listing all your faults? If so, tell that part to Back Off! Visualize (see yourself) stepping out of the room and closing the door in his or her face. Send him/ her off to lecture to a classroom of interested cows. This Judge or Critic (some sort of authority figure) might ultimately be well intended (to be further explored...) but it often acts abusively, saying terrible things to your Self. (Ex: “If you weren’t so stupid, you’d....”) When hearing this voice, say firmly:

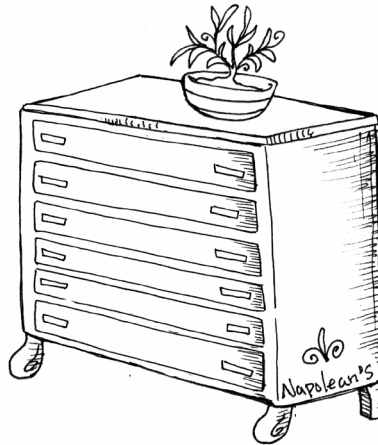
“Stop! I am not going to abuse my Self.”



VISUALIZATIONS

Napoleon's Bureau

The story goes that Napoleon used visualization. Every night before he fell asleep, he'd imagine a bureau with many slim drawers, used in his day for storing maps. He would visualize opening the top drawer and putting a concern or issue in it, closing the drawer, and then continuing down to the next one. By the time he'd finished with all the drawers in the bureau, he was ready to sleep. Imagine putting your concerns in the drawers of this bureau, and then shutting them **all** for the night. *Ahh!*



VISUALIZATIONS

Restful Scene

Soothe yourself by imagining a favorite scene, real or unreal. Include cherished sights, sounds, smells, textures and a calming mood. Use your senses to evoke a full body experience.

Example:

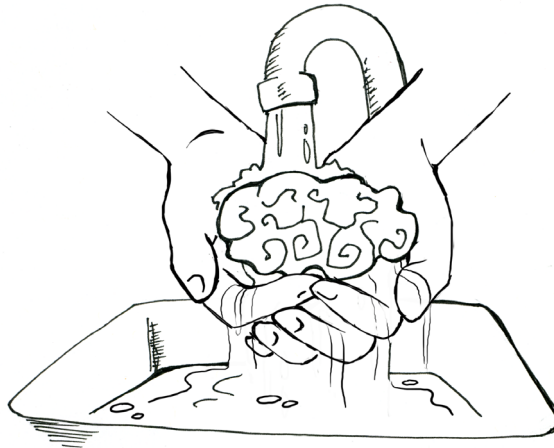
I enter a lovely, quiet, dimly lit room that contains a long pool of clear, revitalizing water. There's a faint hint of my favorite fragrance in the air. I slip out of my clothes and into the water, which is at just the temperature I need. Slowly I swim the length of the pool, feeling my cares wash off of me. I get out and wrap myself in the fluffy soft robe, in my favorite color, which is awaiting me. At this end of the room, there is an ample bed beneath a moonlit window. I climb onto this bed, pull the soft covers up over my shoulders, and rest or sleep in this lovely, safe space.



VISUALIZATIONS

Cool the Brain

If you are having what I call *brain fever*—head hot and clogged with jumbled thoughts—try this humorous image: imagine unscrewing the top of your head, reverently lifting out your brain, going to the sink, and gently running cool water over and through it. Sometimes you might very gently massage it. Then when it is all cooled down, reverently place it back in your skull. You are seeking to interrupt clogged thought patterns and introduce cooling self-care.



VISUALIZATIONS

Internal Smile

Smile to your different organs. This practice is from Chinese medicine, and is no doubt quite healthy. As you lie in bed with your eyes closed, imagine your heart and smile at it. You may find that your lips actually lift in a little smile. Smile at your brain, your liver, lungs, etc. Do this quietly and slowly, moving through whatever organs come to mind, and appreciating them. After all, they are beavering away all the time, just for you.

"I love you, liver."

"Thank you, lungs!"

"You are so beautiful, heart!"



VISUALIZATIONS

Pleasant Lists

People find it relaxes them, and takes their mind away from worries, to make simple lists (not related to work) in their head. No doing this ‘right’ or ‘perfect’: the goal is to relaxedly please yourself with images you enjoy, using the alphabet to gently keep your mind “on point”. For example: all the names for birds that begin with A, then B, then C.... etc. Visualize each bird. All the names of (flowers, tools, vehicles, singers, sport terms) that begin with A, then B, then C.... I do this lying in bed visualizing positive people in my life, real or fictional, whose names begin with A...B...C... haven’t met my “X” or “Y” person yet; could it be you? I visualize each smiling face as I think of the name, and if I don’t remember “Bertram” until I’m in the R’s—no worries! I’m happy to back-track and add dear Bertie to the B’s. Keep it loose, keep it simple, keep it relaxed. This is for you.



VISUALIZATIONS

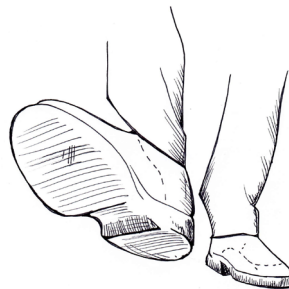
Taming the Task

Anxious about the tasks of the day? Use Visualizations to prepare yourself in advance:

♥ *Visualize* the panicky part of you, perhaps frazzled and vibrating, bundled off to rest with a nurturing friend/ elder/ healer in a cozy place—i.e., see that part moving aside. *Ahhh!*

♥ Ask yourself, how old do I feel? If you are feeling young and small, your child-self needs protecting. Children get overwhelmed when they try to do grown-up jobs! *Visualize* sending your child self to a delightful playground or some other age-appropriate place.

♥ Now you are free to consciously evoke the capable, resourceful adult in you to perform your difficult task. *Visualize* this side of you confidently stepping forward.



VISUALIZATIONS

Dust Bunnies

Are you lying in bed, too tired to combat negative thoughts, memories or images? It's time to pull out your vacuum cleaner! Visualize a white or pleasantly colorful hose coming to you from some celestial or divine source, and run that nozzle all over your brain. Get in the corners and over the bumps. Visualize those negative thoughts, memories or images being sucked right out, and relax in a fresh, cleaned-out space. *Ahhhh!*



VISUALIZATIONS

Warm and Relaxed

Find a quiet place to sit or lie down, where you will not be interrupted for five or ten minutes. **Breathe deeply** in through your nose; release your breath slowly and completely, out through your pursed lips, as if you were blowing into a balloon. Repeat two more times. Visualize a bright light that you can use as a spotlight to shine on various parts of your body. Visualize a source of heat (the sun?) you could use to warm your body.

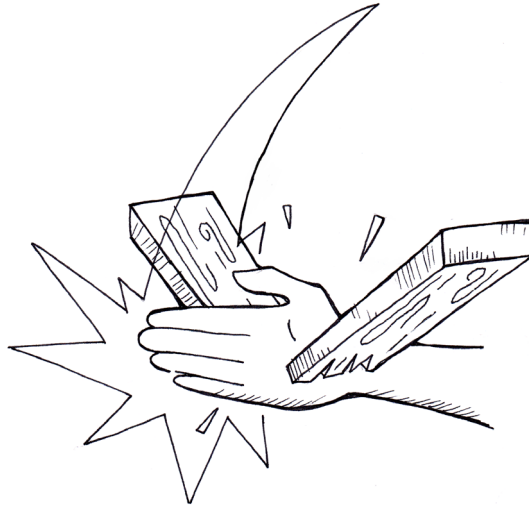
Beginning at the top of your head, picture the light and heat directed at the top of your head and say to yourself, “**The top of my head is warm and relaxed.**” Imagine this warmth, and continue breathing fully as you move the light to the back of your head and repeat: “The back of my head is warm and relaxed.” Slowly move this warm light over different parts of your body, repeating, “My _____ is warm and relaxed...” and letting yourself sink into that sensation. When you have finished, keep breathing deeply for another minute, then open your eyes.

The colleague who shared this **biofeedback exercise** with me writes, “when we are very tense, or in pain, our muscles tighten and restrict blood flow, particularly to the small capillaries in our head, hands and feet. This exercise gets the blood flowing again. People who have migraines often complain of cold hands before or during the headache. Once you become comfortable doing this exercise, you will find your extremities are warmer when you have finished.”

ACTIVITIES: DESCRIPTION

Activities: Description

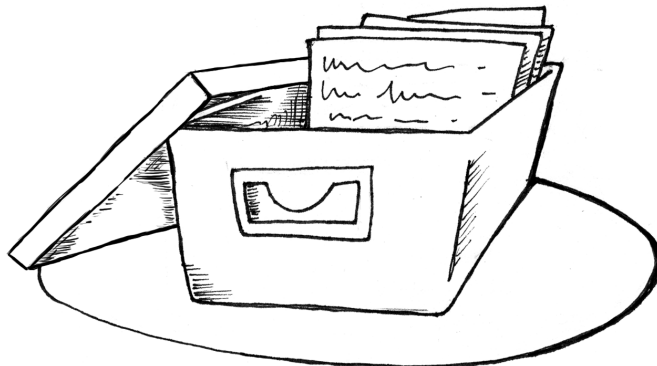
Activities engage the mind's problem solving skills. They galvanize the I-Can-Do-It Karate Master in you: she or he who fears **not** the pen, page or keyboard. Set aside ten minutes to **do** something about your anxiety. *Action stirs us out of helpless feelings.* Plan to do an *Activity* while you are alert: fresh and as rested as you can be. This is when your brain is best able to perform “executive functions”, i.e. thinking and organizing. Thoughtful (not impulsive) activity reduces anxiety and opens the way toward creative solutions.



ACTIVITIES

Contain It

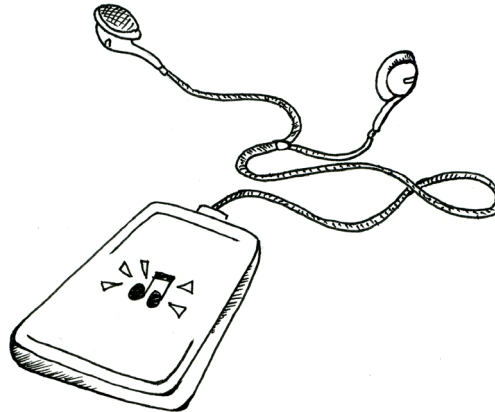
Write a list of things you are thinking about in an anxious or worrying way and physically place that list in an actual box or drawer or container before going to bed. When you start worrying, remind yourself: *“That’s written down, so I won’t forget it. I don’t need to think about that now.”* Some people like to think of the container as a “God box,” so they are putting their list in the care of their deity. The important thing is that it is physically placed in a location that is out of your mind.



ACTIVITIES

Listen

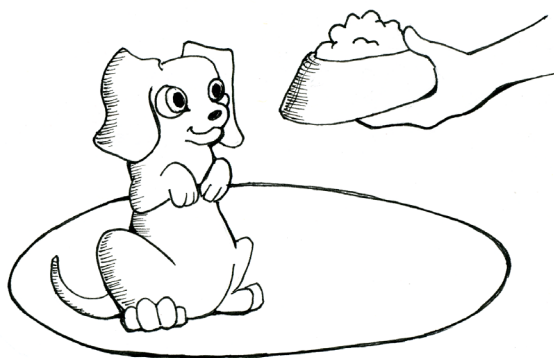
Download or purchase an audio file of visualizations, meditations, or stories designed to aid sleep. Listen to it, or play very soft and relaxing music (classical, jazz, New Age...). Studies show that accelerated respiration and heartbeat slow down as a person pays attention to gentle music. Auditory experiences influence our thoughts, transitioning them away from worrying topics. Be patient as you listen, and allow time (easily ½ hour or more) to gently unravel you toward sleep. Check ‘Resources’ on the website for samples of different types of music.



ACTIVITIES

Three Good Things

If you are kept awake by negative memories or thoughts about Self, break into them – disrupt them – by writing a list of three things I did today about which I feel good. It can be as simple as brushing your teeth, making a difficult phone call and feeding the dog. Or it can be quite complex, like three things you accomplished toward organizing a relative’s care. Don’t let your mind stray; stay focused on your list of three good things. Some people ask, “Why should I pat myself on the back for doing what everybody does—what’s baseline normal?” But there are days when anguish / pain / exhaustion / loss / **whatever**—make it immensely hard to “show up” at all. You fed the dog? *You showed up!* You brushed your teeth? *Good on you!* Praise yourself for the basics. There’s a battered place inside you that will be quite grateful.



ACTIVITIES

Laugh It Off

Anxious about a specific event (can't imagine what), or caught in a life of ongoing anxiety? Born anxious? Well, reach for the comedies! Laughter jiggles the organs and causes you to take deep, oxygenating breaths. It is not simply a distraction—science shows that it releases into your bloodstream chemicals that shut down “fight or flight” activity in the brain. When this happens, you are able to think more clearly and perceive situations with greater accuracy. Humor is fun in the moment, enhances your perception and counters the negative effects of stress on your body. Read humorists, listen to comedians, watch comedies. Enjoy a laugh!



ACTIVITIES

Forgive

Consider forgiveness. Some people find, to their surprise, that they can experience release from anxiety by forgiving. Write, “*I forgive...*” and see what comes next. “*Myself for being imperfect*” can be a good one while we are under all this strain. “*My friend/ parent/ partner for saying _____*” might help. “*The children, for being loud and needy*” softens the edge as you struggle to balance their needs with needs of your own. Consider, “*I forgive myself for being anxious*”. Practice forgiving, especially yourself, and see how that feels inside.



ACTIVITIES

Anyone There?

Talk with other people. You are not alone, so don't act alone. You never know who will say something helpful, or what they might say. Call, write, email, text a friend or friends, and request their help. Ask for a daily or weekly phone call, text message—whatever you need. Say, “I could really use your help right now” and describe what you would like. For many of us, it is so hard to ask—but it is vital, because asking for what we need makes it easier for others to know what to give, and tells our “inside self” that we can, indeed, advocate for ourselves.

What if you have no friends, or are ashamed of admitting to fear and loneliness, or are afraid of appearing weak? Negative riffs (no one cares; I'm such a loser; blah blah blah!) are so familiar. Don't fall for it. Not only are you wonderful, but also—there are good people available via virtual connection just about everywhere: Telehealth sessions with a counselor at your local clinic; groups at Al-Anon; individuals and group services at your church/ synagogue/ mosque... But, sadly, none of them can read your mind. Therefore, as hard as it might be—and it might be the hardest thing you have ever done—speak up. Prove to yourself that you are here for you by asking for what you need.

And one more thing: some people may turn you down. They've got their reason, and most likely it's nothing to do with you. Be proud of having the strength to ask, and move on to the next person.



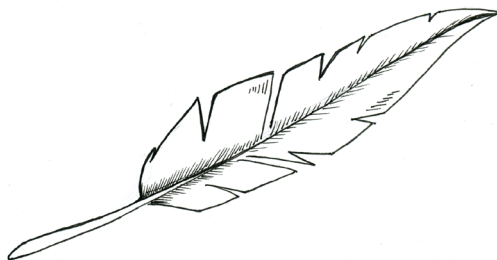
ACTIVITIES

Good Things Journal

Review your Good Things (or Go To) Journal.

♥ *What is this?*

If you don't have one yet, I recommend that you start your own *Good Things Journal* right away. Suggested basic materials: 3 ring notebook and a box of page-size, clear sheet-protectors (cheap at office supply places on-line). Into these sheet-protectors, slide items that are healthy, healing, fun, funny, wise, pleasing, to you. For example: photos of people, animals, places that you love; inspirational quotes, cards from loved ones, cards you have bought yourself because they are so beautiful (don't forget to write yourself a love note in the card!); compliments people have given you, cartoons that tickle you, lists of how to take care of yourself, lists of people you admire and/or love, treasures found in nature such as feathers and leaves, etc. In other words, fill your *Good Things Journal* with *things that feel good!* Then it becomes a "Go-To" resource for hard times--and you can continue to add to it for the rest of your life. Children in the house? What if each one of them started a "Good Things Journal" of their own? That would be wonderful!



ACTIVITIES

Observe and Accept

Observe. Get some internal distance by looking at what you are feeling, and then speak it to yourself: *Oh, this is fear! (pain, anger, jealousy, stress, etc.)* Objectively naming a feeling helps you not be engulfed by it, bumps you back and gives you a micro break from it. Then, *accept* it. “I accept that I am having fear.” Otherwise you will expend energy fighting with reality—and that is truly an exhausting and futile activity. *Accepting* is an *active* process: *choose* to accept, rather than resist. *Accepting* is NOT the same as *surrendering*, *agreeing* or *approving*. *Accept*, because then what is happening can flow through you and not get stuck. *Observe* what happens in your body when you sincerely say, “I *accept* this fear.” Is there a little shift? What happens to your shoulders, your breath?



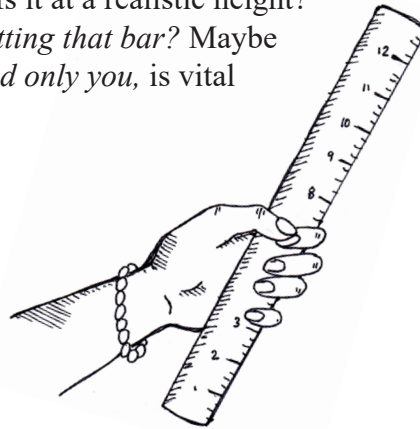
ACTIVITIES

Keeping it Real

Remember: *in order to improve outcome, you may need to reduce your expectations.* What are you asking of yourself? Is it realistic, or modeled on a world of remorseless ‘shoulds’? Pressure on self, or others, to be some form of *perfect*, just increases stress and self-doubt. Write down your expectations. How can you reduce them? Where can you let go?

♥ Imagine holding a measuring stick in your hand. Is it **your** measuring stick, or someone else’s? What if you are “not measuring up” because it is the *wrong measuring stick*?

♥ Picture a horizontal bar that you are going to jump over. Is it at a realistic height? If you jump it, does it immediately move higher? *Who is setting that bar?* Maybe you need to *lower* it. Awakening to what is right, *for you and only you*, is vital to keeping it real.



ACTIVITIES

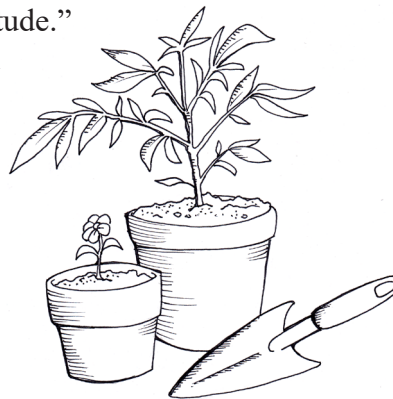
Active Meditation

Physical activity that has a lot of focus can be used as an active meditation. Think of an activity in which you may ‘lose’ yourself, such as gardening, preparing food, arranging flowers, painting a chair. Focus **only** on what you are doing: the movements, how your body feels, the texture of the soil, colors of food, smell of flowers, feeling of pulling a brush full of paint up the leg of a chair...

♥ If you are too anxious to focus, try chanting or walking while saying out loud affirmations that are an uneven number of syllables (3, 5, 7, 9). Thus you say a syllable or word with the forward movement of each foot, so that when you start saying it over again, you will be stepping out with the opposite foot: good for using both hemispheres of the brain.

Ex: “I am strong and I can cope.” “I am filled with gratitude.”

“This, here, now.” Remember that even when you are in bed, you can be active internally via prayer and use of imagination.

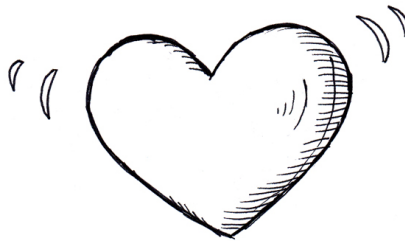


BODY CUES: DESCRIPTION

Body Cues: Description

Body Cues are simple tips for easing stress as you feel it in your body. They are actions and attitudes that, with very little effort, can be built into your daily routine. Body Cues support awareness of your body as a beautiful ecosystem that is doing its best for you all the time.

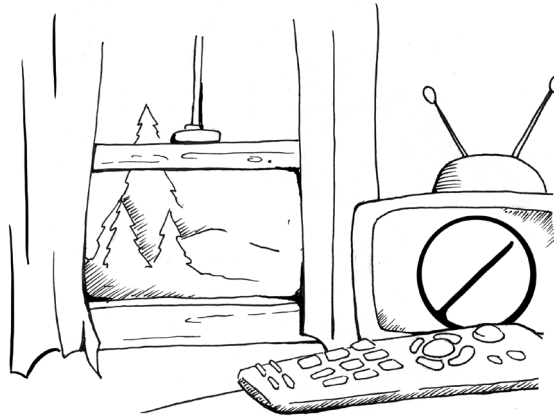
Our culture emphasizes The Head, as if it is in control and can boss everything else around. We frequently treat the body as a slave, a display case, or simply as a podium for our heads. But in many ways, the body holds the key. It is the truthful 'first responder' that lets you know when something isn't right, whether you are ill or under emotional strain. Thus you must be gentle with your body and pay attention to its needs. Remember that when you are anxious, your body bears the brunt of your suffering (nausea, light-headed, pounding heart, dry mouth, etc). Your body deserves your loving care.



BODY CUES

Edit Exposure

Restrict and edit the TV and other media that you listen to and watch. Recognize that you are not immune to the stresses of the world around you. For this period of time, while you are helping yourself manage anxiety, you may well benefit from limiting exposure to all its turmoil. For sleep's sake, stay away from the evening news. Remember, “the news” is only part of the picture—usually the frightening and negative part. There are people who have healed, or are healing, from COVID 19, and getting on with their lives. There are acts of compassion, generosity, heroism and selflessness going on every day. While you are healing anxiety, be careful what you allow yourself to see, hear or read.

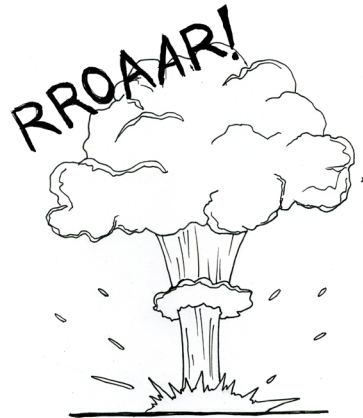


BODY CUES

Tension Release

Assess the level of tension in your body. Jaws clenched, back tight, knuckles white? Perhaps what is needed is physical release: walk briskly, run (screaming, if no one's around) through the woods, pound on pillows, kick empty boxes, throw rocks into a stream. (But don't do this in front of anyone who might burst out laughing, or else be frightened by your physical release. Explain yourself if another person is around.) City dweller? Stuck at home with children or others who are getting on your nerves? Scream into your pillow. Emcee--or have kids take turns emceeing--a regular, vigorous dance hour. Allow some "wildness" time. There are days I like to roar like a lion! *RRROAARR!!!* (*Ahh*: that felt good!)

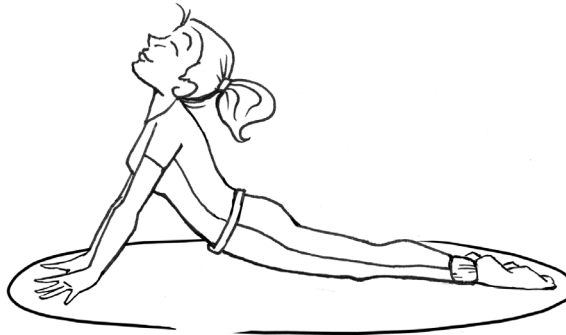
Get that tension moving **out** of your body.



BODY CUES

Stretch

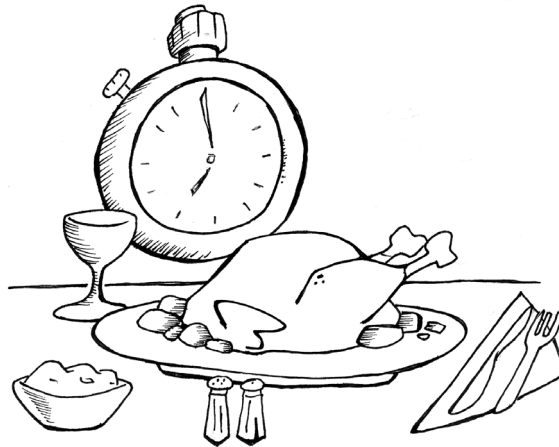
Stretch to relieve tension, and hold a stretch for at least thirty seconds to allow the message to enter muscle-memory. Fear and all its derivatives (anxiety, worry, stress, etc.) cause us to tighten our muscles. Gentle stretching is like telling yourself, *"It's okay; I can relax now."* There are excellent stretching books available, and gentle, affordable stretching and yoga classes online. Restorative Yoga is specifically designed to facilitate peace in an anxious and /or depressed physical-emotional system. Stretch in bed to help yourself release tension so you can have a better sleep.



BODY CUES

Three-hour Rule

Adopt the three-hour rule: don't eat a big meal or exercise strenuously less than three hours before bedtime. Either may interfere with sleep. A heavy meal may burden your metabolism, and strenuous exercise may boost your metabolism. A healthy snack is fine: nuts, cheese, yogurt, fruit, lean meat or tofu, baked potato, a bowl of soup.... Plan your snack with your individual needs in mind (food allergies, special diet, etc.).



BODY CUES

Sleep Routine

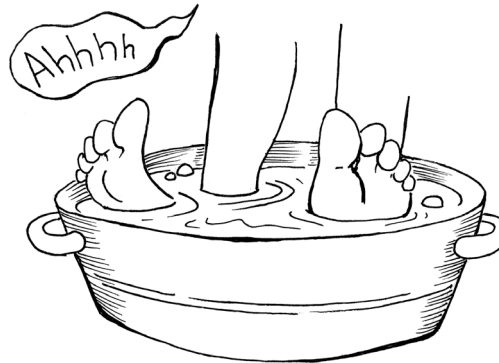
Develop a sleep routine: choose your bedtime to allow enough sleep, prepare the room in advance (darken the room, etc) so you do not have to **do** things as you get into bed. Consider: do I need an eye pillow to shut out light, ear plugs to shut out noise, good shades on the window? Is my mattress comfy? (You can add a comfortable layer to it.) Is there anything in the room that catches my eye in a disturbing way in the middle of the night? (Ex: reflection off a mirror. Try draping the mirror with cloth.) One-half hour before bedtime: wash face, brush teeth, take out contacts, put on PJ's, etc. Then do something relaxing for the rest of that ½ hour: drink herbal tea, read a light book, listen to soft music, watch gentle TV, pet the cat....



BODY CUES

Soak Your Feet

Chinese medicine, which is at least two thousand years old, advises: soak your feet in warm water before going to bed in order to facilitate sleep. This helps because all the body's energy meridians end in the feet. Consider this additional information: 1) the body's largest pores are on the face and the soles of the feet. 2) blood circulates through the body, start to finish, in about two minutes. Some holistic practitioners advocate a periodic twenty-minute Epsom salt foot-bath (since you can't soak your face ♥) for its blood cleansing properties. What about other herbs? Add some lavender oil?



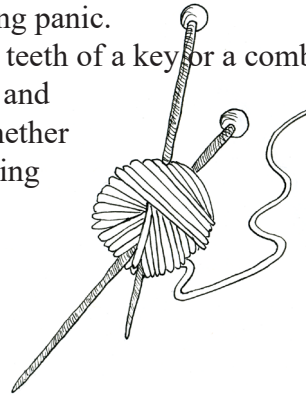
BODY CUES

Healing Hands

When anxious, what do you do with your hands? I rub mine together, fidget and pick at things. Many cultures and traditions incorporate worry stones, prayer beads or rosaries. Beyond the ineffable value of prayer, these items provide tactile focus that is soothing to the spirit.

- ♥ Carry in your pocket something smooth (or rough) to finger and roll in your hand during stressful times.
- ♥ Handcrafts, such as knitting, facilitate relief and create calm through their hypnotic, repetitive motion.
- ♥ Energy healers practice *laying on of hands*, believing that energy flows through the palms. Rub your hands together and gently place them on any part of your body that is tense. Breathe slowly into this place.
- ♥ Sensations help us break out of obsessive worry and/ or escalating panic.

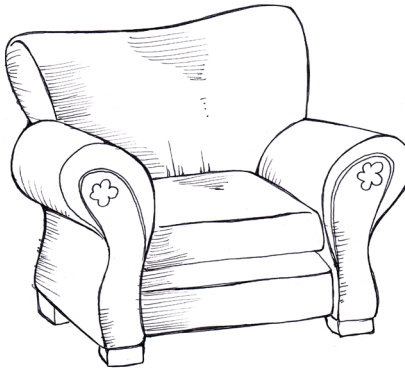
For example, around other people, secretly run your thumb over the teeth of a key or a comb in your pocket. In a private setting, wrap an ice cube in a washcloth and hold it in one hand until it feels too cold, and then switch hands. Whether pleasant or unpleasant, sensation gets the brain's attention, thus pulling it away from escalating anxious thoughts.



BODY CUES

Great Grounding

“Grounding” is an essential tool for slowing down the racing tempo of anxiety. Happily, it is simple: just grab a chair and sit down. Now close your eyes, take a deep breath, and concentrate on the sensation of your weight sinking down onto the seat of the chair. (*Ahh. I’m here!*) What does it feel like on your butt and thighs? What about the weight on your feet? Wiggle your toes and grind your heels into the floor. Keep breathing. Lean back and feel the support of the chair on your back. Clench your fists tightly and then relax your hands in your lap or on the arms of the chair. How does that feel? Continue to loosen your muscles: become a sack of potatoes. Let your weight sink down onto a sturdy, supportive, surface. Gravity pulls you toward the Earth, and the Earth is our ultimate support. It is strong beneath you. If you are anxious while sitting in any setting, focus on the sensation of where your butt, back and thighs rest on your seat and where your feet (wiggle your toes) rest on the floor. Let yourself feel thick and heavy: get physically grounded.



BODY CUES

Breathe

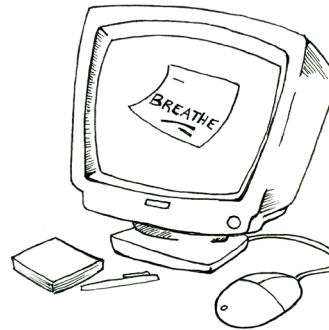
Don't forget to *breathe*! It's so essential, and so forgettable. Start the day with three deep breaths. ♥ Lie on the bed or floor and breathe in until your belly rises (the lower lungs are filled); breathe out slowly and when you feel empty, blow out three more short bursts (to really empty the lungs). Or, ♥ press your back and shoulders against the wall as you breathe in, then bend over slightly while exhaling—and slow it down by shaping your lips as if you are blowing through a straw. Exhaling twice as long as you inhale *cues* the body's "soothing" parasympathetic system—as does bending forward as you exhale. Observe how many times during the day you catch yourself holding your breath. *Remind yourself to breathe.* Stick 'post-its' on the bathroom mirror, computer monitor, car dashboard, refrigerator.

Nice breathing mantras: *breathe in the rose* (inhale), *blow out the candle* (exhale).

Breathe in: *present moment*. Breathe out: *pleasant moment*.

Breathe in: *(your name)*. Breathe out: "you're okay" or "let it go" or "release" or "not about you."

What simple message helps you?



This. Here. Now.

Metaphorically, wrap yourself snugly in this moment and attend to what is immediately in front of you. Don't go with racing, futuristic thoughts because right now, while they are anxiety fueled, they are not helpful. As they say in the Recovery movement, *"Keep your head where your feet are."* Think solely in terms of what is the immediate next thing to take care of: think brief and small. This. Here. Now. Simple tasks bring relief, like cleaning out the crumbs in the utensil drawer or scrubbing tile grout with a toothbrush. Keep it simple. Organize your shoes, or the medicine cabinet, or your wallet, or your socks. Be proud of yourself for accomplishing small things. Awake at 2 am? Thoughts drifting toward "stuff"? Return to "This": the sensation of soft sheets against your skin, the warm weight of blankets. "Here": you are in bed, not anywhere else. You are *here*. "Now": this is the only **real** moment; all else is ahead (maybe) or behind (surely). Stay in the reality of "now". Repeat *"This. Here. Now."* over and over again to yourself, and relax into this truth.

